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**A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY
OF THE NEW ZEALAND HORSE**



**CAROLYN JEAN MINCHAM
2008**

E.J. Brock, 'Traducer' from *New Zealand Country Journal*.4:1 (1880).

A Social and Cultural History of the New Zealand Horse

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Abstract

Both in the present and the past, horses have a strong presence in New Zealand society and culture. The country's temperate climate and colonial environment allowed horses to flourish and accordingly became accessible to a wide range of people. Horses acted as an agent of colonisation for their role in shaping the landscape and fostering relationships between coloniser and colonised. Imported horses and the traditions associated with them, served to maintain a cultural link between Great Britain and her colony, a characteristic that continued well into the twentieth century. Not all of these transplanted readily to the colonial frontier and so they were modified to suit the land and its people. There are a number of horses that have meaning to this country. The journey horse, sport horse, work horse, warhorse, wild horse, pony and Māori horse have all contributed to the creation of ideas about community and nationhood. How these horses are represented in history, literature and imagery reveal much of the attitudes, values, aspirations and anxieties of the times. Yet despite the clear significance of horses to this country, no one breed of horse has emerged to represent the country as a whole. Unlike many other modern nations, New Zealand has not identified a national horse. Close allegiance to the British heritage as well as a strong sense of local and regional identity has meant that there is no New Zealand Horse to take its place beside the Australian Stockhorse, the Canadian Horse or any of the other national horses.

Acknowledgements

On completion of my Masters thesis on horseracing in the colonial community in 2001, I knew that I wanted to explore the human-horse relationship in more depth. It also corresponded to a time when I was personally trying to learn about horsemanship, and became aware of the large body of knowledge about horses that existed outside the walls of the university or library. My depth of gratitude, therefore, extends to a wide range of people who have informed and assisted me in this project.

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List of Abbreviations

<i>A&P</i>	Agriculture and Pastoral (Association or Show)
<i>AJHR</i>	Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives
<i>ASHA</i>	Australian Stock Horse Association
<i>ATL</i>	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington
<i>DNZB</i>	Dictionary of New Zealand Biography
<i>DOC</i>	New Zealand Department of Conservation
<i>ENZB</i>	Early New Zealand Books Project, University of Auckland
<i>NZJH</i>	New Zealand Journal of History
<i>NZPCA</i>	New Zealand Pony Club Association
<i>NZRCA</i>	New Zealand Rodeo Cowboys Association
<i>RCMP</i>	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
<i>SPCA</i>	Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Introduction

This thesis investigates the social and cultural history of the New Zealand horse. For even the most casual observer it is evident that this country abounds in stories about men, women and children and their horses. A closer look reveals that horses and the skills associated with them played a key role in the process of colonisation, shaping the land and becoming part of the aspirations of its people. It is also clear that horses have contributed to how New Zealanders imagine themselves as a nation. Yet emerging from my investigation was the question: if horses had such strong socio-cultural significance here, why do we not celebrate a national horse? The background to my query lies with the fairly recent phenomenon by which a number of modern nations have identified and named a national horse. The construction of a national breed of horse not only raises the status of that breed but also makes it an active participant in its nation's histories and as such, an integral part of national myth making. To their respective countries, national horses have become a focus for national pride and identity and are drawn into the modern age in the business of heritage and tourism. New Zealand's agrarian roots and continuing emphasis on rural productivity and development have allowed the horse a firm place in the cultural memory of New Zealanders. The farm horse, the stationbred, the warhorse, and the school pony are as close to the hearts of most New Zealanders as the rural landscape that gave rise to them. New Zealand recognises equine heroes too; names like Phar Lap, Charisma and Sir Tristram evoke feelings of national self-congratulation for their triumphs on the international sporting stage. But none of these horses, or any other, have been singled out and made over to represent the country's past or to become the embodiment of national character. For all the importance of horses to this country, there remains no New Zealand Horse to stand alongside the Australian Stockhorse, Canadian Horse, Peruvian Paso or any other national horse.

Horses are an important part of my life and even in my small stable can be seen horses that represent something of the range of horse traditions that have evolved in this country. As long as I can remember I have always wanted a horse. When I immigrated to New Zealand over thirty years ago that dream moved a step closer.

Although I lived in Auckland, rural life did not seem very far away and many New Zealanders I met had some connection with farming in the present or the recent past. To my delight, there seemed to be a lot of horses around, grazing on blocks of land in suburban Auckland, a sight unseen in Toronto where I grew up. On retirement from teaching I took riding lessons and a year later acquired my first horse, an Anglo-Arab, named Minnie. As befitting her bloodlines, Minnie is beautiful, athletic and spirited. Although our partnership has often been challenged, it has endured and this year marks ten years together. To begin with Minnie was in livery at an equestrian property on the outskirts of Pukekohe and I drove out from the city several days a week to ride. This pattern continued for about a year until my husband and I found a lifestyle block for sale near where Minnie lived. We decided to try rural living and Minnie moved in. Soon after, a semi-retired palomino Quarter Horse joined Minnie as a paddock mate. Zeb proved to be a quiet mount for my husband as well as an opportunity for visiting friends to experience the countryside from the back of a horse. Earlier this year Tommy came into my life, a Māori horse, with Clydesdale and Appaloosa the dominant features of his mixed blood breeding. Solid, dependable and generous of spirit, Tommy is teaching me to jump and with this comes a whole new range of equestrian possibilities. My three horses have taken more time than I would have liked away from thesis research and writing but I feel that they have also motivated and informed my work. For me and my friends and neighbours, engaged recreationally or professionally with horses, the age of the horse remains very much alive.

Histories of animals have only begun to appear in recent years and as a new area of historiography have engendered debate among a still small group of international scholars. Erica Fudge is one of the new breed of historians who have contextualised such histories as well as raised some searching questions concerning the value and problems of studying animals in history. The emergence of animals as worthy subjects has risen from the social history sector; the so called 'history from below' that offers differing historical perspectives from those previously overlooked such as the poor, women, children, indigenous people or other marginalised groups. However ignored or silenced these humans may have been, they nevertheless still had a detectable voice. Animals do not, or at least one that is understood by humans, and furthermore produce no written records which have long been considered the gist of

the historian's craft. This makes the investigation into the history of animals fraught with difficulty. As Fudge insists, it is impossible to disentangle the human from the animal; the history of animals necessarily becomes the history of human attitudes towards animals. In emphasising the 'centrality of representation' to the historical process, Fudge has recognised the importance of animals in history.¹

As a number of historians of animals have shown, the human-animal relationship often reveals as much about humans as it does about the animal. Harriet Ritvo in *The Animal Estate* questions why Victorian attitudes varied so considerably to different animals, elevating some to the role of treasured pets and demonising and ridding the country of others. She concludes that the answers 'illuminate the history not only of the relations to people and other species, but also of relations among human groups'.² This is the position I have taken in my investigation of the New Zealand horse and horsemanship. The stories of New Zealanders and their horses can tell us much about the attitudes and preoccupations of the times. Human values were commonly projected onto horses; for example the courage, fortitude and self-sacrifice of the New Zealand warhorse or the honest, hard-working nature of the country's farm horses. The admiration for an imported English Thoroughbred³ bearing a lengthy pedigree and the corresponding disdain expressed for the 'mongrels' and 'misfits' that wandered the countryside at will, also reveal nineteenth century attitudes of racial superiority and fears of miscegenation. Anthropomorphism can be seen to serve history well.

Erica Fudge also proposes the idea of animal agency. She suggests that animals are not just 'blank pages' on which humans write meaning but they, like women, workers and ethnic minorities, have a role in effecting change. Fudge points out that regardless of whether conscious thought or an understanding of self is involved, the power to impact on the environment or affect the way humans live and think is within

¹ Fudge, 'A Left-Handed Blow: Writing the History of Animals', in *Representing Animals* Nigel Rothfels, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp.5-6.

² Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987, p.4.

³ Because 'thorough' was originally used as a descriptive term, rather than a name for a specific breed, traditionally 'thoroughbred' is not capitalised. I have chosen to follow the more modern usage by capitalising it to bring it in line with other breeds.

the capability of all organisms.⁴ Virginia DeJohn Anderson's *Creatures of Empire* demonstrates how domestic animals, unknowingly shaped the landscape as well as relations between English colonists and the native Americans in the development of the New England colonies.⁵ Anderson's discussion of how imported animals dramatically changed early America provides a useful model for the role of horses in the colonisation of New Zealand. Animal agency also appears to be a factor in the close bond between particular horses and their human handlers, a theme that runs through my thesis. Many of the stories that I have drawn upon illustrate that the horses of New Zealand's past were regarded as individuals with human emotions and personalities, strengths and failings. Horses were often portrayed as a child's playmate or explorer's travelling companion. They also could fulfil the roles of work mate, comrade-in-arms or a lively friend for women, escaping the strictures of Victorian domestic life in colonial New Zealand.

A recently published text relating specifically to the human-horse connection that has informed my work is *The Culture of the Horse: Status, Discipline, and Identity in the Early Modern World*, edited by Karen Raber and Treva J. Tucker.⁶ It includes a number of essays that discuss the importance of the horse in shaping ideas of self-definition and national identity. Of particular relevance is the development of national styles of riding where the kind of saddle, the rider's position in it, the types of horses bred and the degree of rider control can be seen to reveal much about national character and values. For example, it was in the seventeenth century that the English passion for horseracing and hunting on horseback across country, at speed, without regard for wall or fence that led to the development of the forward seat and shortened stirrups. The need for strong, athletic horses with the temperament to gallop freely over varying terrain and to overcome all impediments to onward progress motivated the creation of the English Thoroughbred. These developments resulted in a horse culture that Raber and Tucker contend is uniquely English and a point of difference between other nations. Taking this further, Donna Landry in her essay on the making of the English hunting seat, argues that regardless whether its users were English,

⁴ Erica Fudge, 'The History of Animals', URL:http://www.h-net.org/~animal/ruminations_fudge.html, Accessed 18 Oct 2006.

⁵ Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁶ Karen Raber and Treva J. Tucker (eds), *The Culture of the Horse: Status, Discipline, and Identity in the Early Modern World*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Irish, Scots or Welsh, it was developed out of a spirit of free enterprise and ‘with a sense of cultural superiority allied with imperial destiny’.⁷ The idea that horses and the traditions associated with them can reflect and even mould ideas about how individuals and nations imagine themselves becomes even clearer when the colonies came into play. Here horses and the knowledge of them provided a major point of difference among the colonisers and the colonised. Not all the features or fine points of European horsemanship were easily transferable. Rather they were acted upon by a range of natural or social conditions. The horses and traditions that the colonists brought with them were adapted and changed to suit the colonial environment. Raber and Tucker contend that it is in the colonial context that the horse plays its ‘most interesting and complex role’ for it is out of this setting that new types or breeds of horses can emerge and new horse cultures formed.⁸

Fragments of the age of the horse continue to pervade our language and culture. Even though most horses in New Zealand are now used only for recreation, the term ‘pleasure horse’ while in general common usage, is not favoured here and New Zealand horse people still like to state that their horse is ‘in work’. In this thesis, I have not shied away from using particular terminology or expressions of horsemanship. The use of the word ‘horsemanship’ is a case in point. It may grate against current sensitivities but I feel that its usage is warranted due to its long history of use and also the fact that it serves to highlight the situation that up until the middle of the twentieth century the horse world was essentially a man’s world. In war, farming, business and recreation, the horse was firmly under the control of men. When modern pedigrees are given, we are reminded of the perceived pre-eminent position of the male factor in the breeding process. To quote a recent sale advertisement, ‘JK Lucas filly out of a JK Romedeo mare’ mentions by name, the horse’s sire and the sire of its dam but the name of the mare is clearly considered not relevant to the purpose of selling its foal.⁹

⁷ Donna Landry, ‘Learning to Ride in Early Modern Britain or The Making of the English Hunting Seat’, in *The Culture of the Horse: Status, Discipline, and Identity in the Early Modern World*, New York, Karen Raber and Treva J. Tucker (eds), Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp.329-349.

⁸ Raber and Tucker, p.30.

⁹ Horse & Pony Sale Ring’ *New Zealand Horse & Pony*, 47:1, (2007), p.1.

The time span I have used is deliberately large, from the obvious starting point of 1814, with the documented arrival of the first three horses through to the present. The major emphasis has been on the colonial period up to and including the First World War because this was the closing phase of the golden age of the horse and provided the foundation from which New Zealand horse culture was built. I have drawn upon a few aspects of contemporary horsemanship because they can be read as vestiges of the past that offer valuable insight into the values, beliefs, aspirations and anxieties of New Zealand society of an earlier period in time. One of Anne Grimshaw's overriding findings in her extensive survey of British horse books published between 1851 and 1976 was the conservative nature of the British horse world.¹⁰ Horse traditions were so deeply engrained in the fabric of British culture that they proved remarkably resistant to change and adjusted only very slowly to the demands of modern life. Such conservatism can also be detected here. Why else would New Zealand hunt followers swelter in the March heat and suffer June downpours in sodden hunting attire designed for the English winter? The question arises too, why when other athletes use cutting edge equipment and clothing to provide optimum performance, dressage riders wear top hat and tails, utilising traditional saddlery that in the main has remained unchanged for hundreds of years? It is this determination to hold onto traditional practices that makes horses and the practices associated with them a revealing study. The stately Clydesdale horses paraded every November during Christchurch's show week with their jingling horse brasses attached to polished leather harnesses evoke warm memories of a distant and faraway past. The shining brasses are decorative rather than talismans as they may once have been to ward away evil spirits and the need to plait the tail up to keep it from being entangled in the traces no longer has practical purpose. The painstaking technique of dressing the Clydesdale's mane with red and yellow 'flags' to enhance the crest of the neck, thereby creating the impression of a draught animal of exceptional strength is also no longer a selling point. Equine pulling power is for the most part redundant and the majority of the Clydesdales on display would never have known a plough or heavy wagon. Nevertheless, it is with pride and nostalgia that their owners steadfastly maintain the traditions of their forefathers on show days, at least. But it is not just a

¹⁰ Anne Grimshaw, *The Horse: A Bibliography of British Books 1851-1976 with a Narrative Commentary on the Role of the Horse in British Social History, as Revealed by the Contemporary Literature*, London: The Library Association, 1982.

tribute to the British traditions that are recognised in contemporary New Zealand horse culture. The Christmas and Anniversary racing carnivals of Auckland, Christchurch and other centres recreate something of the atmosphere and purpose of colonial meetings where in the absence of the familiar institutions and entertainments of 'home', far flung friends and relatives are drawn to the races to celebrate the holiday together. Far from the sleek Thoroughbreds that grace the tracks of the racing clubs, saddle horses of no particular breeding are pressed into action at the popular beach or picnic races that take place at Onetangi, Karekare, Tolaga Bay, Glenorchy or a number of other places throughout New Zealand. In a similar vein, horse sports events with their various games and races offer outdoor fun for spectators and participants alike. These events continue the horse traditions established in the colonial period and like them are organised by the local community to assist fund raising efforts along with providing inexpensive family entertainment.

But if the human-horse relationship is one of continuity, it is also about change. The relationship with horses has never been static but changes over time in response to wider political, economic and philosophical movements. The Enlightenment's faith in human reasoning and progress opened the way for new ways of thinking about and interacting with horses. While once horsemanship was regarded as an art, under the influence of Enlightenment thought it became a science. Horses like other creatures were classified into types and breeds and their reproduction manipulated to better serve humanity. As Margaret E. Derry's book, *Horses in Society; A Story of Animal Breeding and Marketing Culture 1800-1920* demonstrates, nineteenth century capitalist forces fuelled the drive for the production of purebred horses needed to supply the growing colonial market.¹¹ The notion of race constancy, bolstered by social Darwinist theory, was supported by the public recording of pedigrees through breed stud books. Many New Zealand horse breeders eagerly embraced this fundamental shift and established stud books of their own based on pedigreed British horse stock. Opposed to Enlightenment's rationalism, Romanticism also had a profound effect on horses and horsemanship. It gave rise to the idea that knowledge of horses was not just acquired by empirical means but was something mystical and intuitive, a 'gift' bestowed on certain individuals. The representation of Māori as

¹¹ Margaret E. Derry, *Horses in Society; A Story of Animal Breeding and Marketing Culture 1800-1920*, Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 2006.

‘natural’ horsemen and the passionate plea of some New Zealanders to allow the country’s wild horses the freedom to exist in their natural state are both aspects of the Romantic impulse.

The thesis begins with an examination of the concept of the national horse. The size, speed and power of the horse made it the last of the domesticated animals to be tamed, yet from the time of first contact with such a creature, its value to humanity was appreciated and horses spread to just about every part of the globe. Its presence permeated almost every facet of human endeavour, finding a role in conquest, dispute, agriculture, commerce, leisure as well as mythical and spiritual life. Although horsepower is now provided by mechanised means, the horse’s centrality to the making of modern statehood has resulted in the establishment of one or a number of national horses by many countries. National horses are recognised as intimately connected with the land and its people and as such are imbued with desirable national characteristics as well as written into national histories. They provide a nostalgic link with the past, yet they and their particular rituals and customs are also used to define the contemporary nation. With this purpose in mind, I look at how British heavy horses have become closely associated with regional ruralism and how light horses have evolved to serve the essentially English sports of foxhunting and horseracing. Of particular interest to the New Zealand situation, I examine how the Australian Stockhorse and the Canadian Horse have come into being and what they reveal about how their respective nations see themselves.

Chapters Two and Three concern Imperial design and the colonisation of New Zealand. I look at how the horse itself was used by the British colonisers as an agent of colonisation and civilisation. As in previous colonial undertakings, the horse was considered a necessary element in taming the wilderness and the indigenous people who populated it. If the New Zealand horse could have a founding myth it would be based on the widespread and often repeated belief that the first horses to step foot on these shores were gift horses sent by Governor Macquarie of New South Wales to smooth relations with the Māori. There seems to be no evidence to support this but I draw attention to it as perhaps one of the factors that contributed to the long-held myth (although challenged more recently) of excellent relations between Pākehā and Māori. The colonisers brought with them their horses and traditions of their British homeland

which were altered to suit the colonial environment. In Chapter Four, 'Imperial Pedigree' I demonstrate the importance of equestrian sport to the Imperial cause. Like the British horses, the colonial landscape and social conditions meant that sports also had to be modified. During the course of the nineteenth century, we can detect a pride in the type of horse and the unique sporting features that evolved out of the colonial frontier but these were balanced by a determination to maintain British assumptions of class, gender and race.

New Zealand's temperate climate, sufficient rainfall and rich agricultural lands provided the foundation for the Arcadian vision that first inspired the settler population and remained a driving force through to the present day. In the fourth chapter I show how the work horse became part of this particularly rural vision. The land may have held unrealised potential, but it required the hard work of man and beast to make it bountiful. It was not an equal partnership, however. The Christian belief in man's dominion over all animals meant that the relationship was one rather of master and servant. The articles in agricultural periodicals and horsemanship manuals are revealing for they indicate how central the knowledge of horsemanship was to the success of the New Zealand farmer. Controversy and debate can also be detected from the written material. While some saw themselves as progressive farmers anxious to keep abreast of overseas scientific developments and to disseminate this knowledge through the establishment of agricultural institutions and breed societies, others saw themselves as practical men whose horsemanship knowledge and skills were rooted firmly in the land.

I have called Chapter Five, 'The Rise and Fall of the New Zealand Horse'. Its focus is on the attitudes towards the horses that developed in New Zealand up until the First World War. During the early part of this period, the breeding of utility horses of mixed blood origins with the versatility to perform a number of different tasks in the often demanding landscape engendered a sense of pride and of burgeoning identity. Towards the end of the nineteenth century as New Zealand horse breeders came under the influence of the purebred animal movement sweeping the Western world, the confidence in 'mongrel vigour' gave way to a belief in the importance of maintaining the purity of British bloodlines. What was perceived as the gradual degeneration of

the colonial horse, reflected wider anxieties in New Zealand and abroad about the maintenance of Empire and the very survival of the Anglo-Saxon race.

In the sixth chapter, I turn from the peaceful rural landscape to address the role of the warhorse in the emerging identity of New Zealand as a warrior nation. The New Zealand horse, bred with the stamina, strength and courage to cope with colonial conditions was able to be transformed into a worthy warhorse. Although charged with the British cavalry spirit in defence of Empire, it was as mounted infantry, suited to modern warfare, that the New Zealand soldier and his horse were able to make their mark. War in South Africa and the Sinai-Palestine theatre of the First World War provided the proving ground for the New Zealand warhorse. Like the soldiers that rode them, the New Zealand warhorse was perceived to demonstrate the physical and mental qualities needed to distinguish itself on international battlefields. The strongly masculine ethos of the 'roughrider' that grew out of the wartime experience continues in the Chapter Seven, 'The Wild Horse'. New Zealand has always had an ambivalent relationship with its feral horses that continues today in the controversy over the Kaimanawa wild horses. While the horse can be seen as product of culture, a mark of civilisation and order, it can also be seen as a creature of nature, wild and free and subject to no human control. For some, the wild horse represents resistance to progress and urbanisation and can be regarded as a lasting remnant of the frontier male culture.

The eighth chapter, 'The Pony' brings young people into the picture. It takes the pony as an attribute of the wild colonial child to one of the model junior Commonwealth citizen. The development of the Pony Club in New Zealand just prior to the Second World War had a major effect on the New Zealand horse world. Imported virtually unchanged from England, the Pony Club's structure and ethos based on discipline and iterance to traditional equestrian practices served to reinforce the 'Britishness' of New Zealand horse culture and to downplay any home-grown variations. But it also provided a point of entry for New Zealand girls and women to involve themselves in equestrian sport as trainers, administrators and competitors, a privilege that they had previously been denied. As is readily recognised today in a horse world largely dominated by girls and women, not only did they in a very short period of time enter the arena of equine sport but also found that it was there that they excelled. With the

exception of rodeo, the various equestrian sports remain some of the very few sporting codes in which women compete on an equal level with men.

Researching and writing Chapter Nine, 'The Māori Horse', to my mind, uncovered the most surprises and raised some interesting questions. Although on the surface, largely missing from the historical written and visual record, a flourishing Māori horse culture has existed from the time of early European contact and continues to thrive and grow in some parts of rural New Zealand. I discuss how horses were incorporated into traditional Māori cultural practices and how out of these grew new traditions which contributed to the wider New Zealand horse culture. While a few nineteenth and early twentieth century horsemen and women recognised and wrote enthusiastically about Māori horses and horsemanship, from that time onwards the records have been mostly silent. Nevertheless, the Māori horse maintains its presence. It has no stud book or breed society to represent it, nor are horses offered for sale or appear in the show ring under the designation of 'Māori Horse' as would a 'German Warmblood' or 'Welsh Cob'. This is curious as New Zealand horse people are well aware of the existence of Māori horses and can talk of their conformation and qualities, both positively and negatively, as readily as any other horse. By general consensus, the Māori horse is a sturdy, mixed blood horse; bred and raised in semi-feral conditions, it is recognised as an all-around saddle horse. While Americans make much of the horse cultures of the Blackfoot, Crow and other Indian tribes and recognise the Appaloosa, for example, as a breed developed by the Nez Percé, such national recognition for Māori horsemanship has been denied.

The question of identity and recognition leads back to the inquiry concerning the absence of a New Zealand national horse. My investigation shows that while the horse remains culturally significant to the New Zealand people, no one type or breed has been singled out for recognition. Instead a number of horses have come to have meaning for New Zealanders. For some it is the tremendous power of the Clydesdale that toiled alongside the pioneer farmers to break in the land and for others it is the Thoroughbred on which year after year New Zealand hopes ride in once more bringing home the coveted Melbourne Cup. The patient school pony bearing one or more children on the long trek to school or the soldier's horse left behind but not forgotten on foreign fields are all memories that dwell in the New Zealand

imagination. The thread that ties these images together lies for the present in the disappearing rural heartland and is drawn back in time to the colonial frontier, then further back again to their British beginnings.

Although the history of specific domestic animals has received very little scholarly attention in this country, the work of a number of New Zealand historians has both informed and supported my investigation into the horse culture of New Zealand. James Belich's theory of 'recolonisation' has relevance to my belief that there was a reassertion of ties between the horse traditions of New Zealand and Britain from the late 1880s through to the 1960s.¹² Miles Fairburn's discussion in *The Ideal Society and its Enemies* of the importance of the Arcadian vision in shaping New Zealand society has a strong bearing on how the nation's horses and associated traditions have been represented.¹³ His more recent investigation into New Zealand's 'exceptionalism' has relevance to my findings as well.¹⁴ I contend that despite the nation's strong sense of Britishness, from its early days New Zealand has been remarkably cosmopolitan in terms of its horse culture, readily borrowing aspects of Australian and American ideology and practices.

Although horses may be largely missing from New Zealand academic historiography, their presence is felt throughout the wider historical record. As horses were such an important element of colonial life, it is not surprising that they feature strongly in the newspapers of the time. We gain a sense of this through advertisement columns, offering horses and horse related products and services for sale, as well as reports on accidents, livestock markets and sporting events. The weekly newspapers such as the *Weekly News*, *Yeoman*, *New Zealand Mail*, and *Otago Witness* are particularly useful for their agricultural pages with articles relating to all aspects of horsemanship. The recent availability of Māori newspapers online has meant that the significance of horses to Māori culture can be more readily accessed. As far back as the 1870s New Zealand has supported a flourishing agricultural press with publications such as the

¹² James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders From the 1880s to the Year 2000*, Auckland : Allen Lane The Penguin Book, 2001.

¹³ Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society 1850-1900*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1989.

¹⁴ Miles Fairburn, 'Is there a Good Case for New Zealand Exceptionalism', in *Disputed Histories: Imagining New Zealand's Pasts*, Tony Ballantyne and Brian Moloughney (eds), Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2006, pp.143-167.

New Zealand Country Journal and the *New Zealand Farmer* offering valuable insight into matters relating to horses. There have also been a few books published dealing specifically with horsemanship in the New Zealand context. In the colonial period these mainly took the form of ‘self-help’ manuals. With the shortage of professional veterinarians and specialised horsemen such as grooms or coachmen, these publications offered practical advice on many different horse related issues such as the selection and training of a horse or how to deal with illness or injury. Some of these were published privately such as Robert Mitchell’s, *The Colonial Horse-Keepers’ Book of Recipes* (1900)¹⁵ while others were published by the Department of Agriculture by way of assistance to farmers, horse owners and blacksmiths¹⁶. One of the earliest of the self-help genre, *Our Horses: Or the Best Muscles Controlled by the Best Brains* (1886) was written by Alfred Saunders, a noted early colonist in Nelson, but as only a section entitled *The Perfect Draught Horse* was published here, it is little known.¹⁷ What distinguishes *Our Horses* from similar books published in England at the time is Saunderson’s description and clear admiration of Māori owned horses and horsemanship methods. The early years of twentieth century saw the first of what would be a clear pattern up to the present day in the proliferation of books on horseracing and other equestrian sports. Joseph Chadwick’s *Men of Mark in the World of Sport in New Zealand*¹⁸, as the title suggests, focuses on leading male citizens involved in what at the time were considered the main sporting interests of racing and hunting. While the style of presentation has changed over time, the emphasis on sporting success by key individuals, both human and equine, remains constant and illuminates the continued strong emphasis on sport in this country. Particularly valuable to my work are travellers’ journals, farm diaries and personal memoirs. I have also made free use of sketches, photographs and verse as material such as this can often offer an intimate glimpse into the close connection between the horse and the writer, artist or composer.

¹⁵ Robert Mitchell, *The Colonial Horse-Keepers’ Book of Recipes*, Oamaru: Oamaru Mail, c. 1900.

¹⁶ An example of these is Department of Agriculture veterinarian, Henry C. Wilkie, *Diagrams of the Foot of the Horse with Keys and Explanatory Notes*, Wellington: Government Printer, 1904.

¹⁷ Alfred Saunders, *Our Horses: Or the Best Muscles Controlled by the Best Brains*, London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1886, Alfred Saunders, *The Perfect Draught Horse*, Whitcombe and Tombs, 1886.

¹⁸ Joseph Chadwick, *Men of Mark in the World of Sport in New Zealand*, Auckland: Brett Printing and Pub., 1906.

Such records demonstrate the social and cultural importance of horses to New Zealand. They also show how horses continue to play a role in how we define ourselves as a people and a nation. For the time being, at least, we have no need of a national horse on which to base our stories, but this does not diminish the significance of our horses. Although my thesis highlights certain broad cultural shifts and patterns through the representation of our horses, it is important not to lose sight of the basic human-horse relationship. Underpinning the entire thesis and woven throughout the chapters is the individual relationship between one human being, and his or her horse.

1. Identity, Heritage and National Horses

This chapter introduces the concept of a national horse. New Zealand has no national horse of its own and so by way of comparison, it is necessary to discuss the idea as it applies to other nations. In many Western countries horses have become closely linked with the land and its people. The identification of a type of horse with a particular landscape has led to the development of breeds very often named for the locality from which they evolved. Old world countries like the United Kingdom, France and Germany have a number of horses that are named and celebrated regionally while new world countries such as Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Australia and Canada have each designated a national horse. In none of these former colonies did horses exist until brought there as part of their conquerors' imperial mission. From this founding stock and selective breeding, horses were gradually altered and shaped to suit the new environment. It was along the road to nationhood that each county's colonial horse acquired a name, history and characteristics unique to their particular country.

Horses are no longer the military and economic necessities they once were, but that does not diminish the importance of the horse breed that history, memory and myth have assigned national significance. Nostalgia and sentimental attachment to one's national or regional horse has meant that the horse has a significant role to play in the heritage movement of a number of countries. The role of the national horse will be examined, firstly in the United Kingdom and then in Canada and Australia, two nations that share New Zealand's British colonial background. All three claim particular breeds of horses as their own and by giving them either formal or informal heritage status, celebrate them as a link with their national past. While Britain recognises a number of breeds of horses that have evolved over time to serve various regional, sporting and military needs, Canada and Australia have fairly recently identified one national horse around which they have constructed national mythologies. The Canadian Horse and the Australian Stock Horse are regarded as emblematic in their respective countries with traits and histories that they share with the human population. The concept of a national horse is of interest to the social or

cultural historian because it reveals, not only identification with a common set of values and beliefs, but it also highlights key points of tension within those societies.

In 2004, two measures implemented by the British Labour government highlighted the position of the horse in contemporary British society. In February of that year the highly controversial Hunting Act came into effect that made the hunting by dogs of all wild mammals an offence. This much anticipated or dreaded piece of legislation, depending on one's viewpoint, seriously challenged the traditional foxhunt. Later in the year, Alun Michael, the United Kingdom Minister of State for the Horse announced that land grazed by horses would be eligible for subsidy under the Common Agricultural Policy new single payment scheme. In the publicity surrounding the subsidies administered by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Michael emphasised the government's current position on the horse:

It demonstrates the Government's commitment to boost the role of the horse in British Society. Horses provide healthy recreation for people of all ages and abilities; they are an integral part of the traditional landscape and make an important contribution to the rural economy.¹

For the Government to proclaim such a high regard for the horse and to encourage the keeping of horses by offering landowners financial incentives seems, on the face of it, rather extraordinary gestures in the contemporary age. British governments in the past have certainly not been so supportive with a former Minister of Agriculture going on record in 1981 as 'stating that his Ministry desired to have as little as possible to do with the horse'.² It is this recent national elevation of the horse that is of interest.

By placing the horse in Britain's 'traditional landscape', the government gave an indication that nostalgia for an imagined past in the countryside is at least part of the reason for the horse's renewed status. But as Alun Howkins in 'Rurality and English Identity' has pointed out, it is a particular kind of countryside that supported this rural ideal. It was first of all a productive landscape, a setting in which agriculture could flourish. It was also an ordered landscape, shaped by the endeavours of generations of

¹ *Heavy Horse World*, Spring 2005, p.9.

² Keith Chivers, *History with a Future: Harnessing the Heavy Horse for the 21st Century*, Peterborough: The Shire Horse Society, 1988, p.14.

landowners, farmers and peasants. Green rolling hills, tidy fields delineated by neat hedgerows, nourished by gently flowing streams and rivers comprised the ideal rural view. Far from detracting from this gentle landscape, the cluster of humble dwellings, church, pub, the village green and the grand country house added to the vision of social harmony and order. Although not specifically located in time or space, this rural idyll most closely approximates southern England before the encroachment of urban sprawl. According to Howkins, this cultural vision was firmly entrenched before the First World War and became a standard by which rural beauty was defined.³ The horse fits naturally into this vision, both the heavy horse that played a crucial role in creating the productive landscape as well as the more aristocratic light horse that featured strongly in country leisure pursuits.

The enduring image of an idealised countryside inhabited by a civil society is what lies at the heart of the modern British heritage movement. Although heritage has its dissenters, no one can dispute the fact that it has become a powerful force in British culture, recreation and tourism. Although in the past, heritage may have been a cause of the elite, it gained a popular following in the early decades of the twentieth century. Rural imagery was used to evoke national patriotism in both world wars but although the protection of an idealised rural living was deemed worth fighting and dying for, nothing could stem the flow of modernity and ever increasing urbanisation. It was at this point, when a real or imagined way of life is seen as passing that preservation becomes a common concern and the business of heritage gains fresh impetus. Raphael Samuel contends that it was progressive museum curators of the late 1950s and early 1960s that responded to popular interest by establishing working farms and open-air museums that not only preserved artefacts, but also made history more accessible to a broader base of the public.⁴ Heritage centres which portray the agricultural and industrial past have continued to grow in popularity and can be found in all parts of the United Kingdom.

Heavy horses play an important role at these heritage centres. Despite the high costs of maintaining such large, powerful animals, they are promoted as popular attraction

³ Alun Howkins, 'Rurality and English Identity', *British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality and Identity*, David Morley and Kevin Robins (eds), Oxford University Press, 2001, pp.145-56.

⁴ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory, Volume 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, London: Verso, 1994, pp.172-5, 259, 296.

and an enjoyable way of learning about the past. Their ability to attract the paying public is clearly evident in the advertising literature of working museums. Facilities such as the Acton Scott Historic Working Farm, Red House Stables Working Carriage Museum, the Norfolk Shire Centre and the Bradford Industrial Museum and Horses at Work all feature their working horses.⁵ Commercial organisations have successfully used heavy horses as a marketing tool; such is the case of the multi-national Molsen Coors Brewing Company's Shire horses at their Museum of Brewing in Burton on Trent. Presumably, to identify their product with its original roots and to dilute the taint of overseas ownership, their team of Shires emphasises the breed's long association with the local brewing industry.⁶ Local bodies also promote their civic heritage by bringing heavy horses back to their streets. Portsmouth, Birmingham and Liverpool have recreated the traditional May Day Heavy Horse Parades.⁷ The city of Glasgow advertises that 'it has turned back the clock and once again there are Clydesdale horses in our parks' with the city owned horses giving dray rides, attending gala days and competing in agricultural shows across the country.⁸ The organisers of the annual City of Aberdeen Clydesdale Show also use horses as a draw card by inviting visitors to 'come and join us to celebrate part of Scotland's living heritage and to enjoy being in the company of some lovely animals'.⁹

One of the reasons that heavy horses have particular appeal to the contemporary heritage market is that they can be seen to represent a democratisation of the national past. While the Thoroughbred and other light horses are associated with wealth and privilege, the heavy horse symbolises the life of ordinary working people. This is in keeping with the shift in British heritage in emphasis from great and powerful individuals and public institutions to the lives of ordinary people in their day to day environment. As a result of this, domestic servants, factory and agricultural workers

⁵ Acton Scott Historic Working Farm (Brochure 2005), Shropshire, Red House Stables Working Carriage Museum (Brochure 2005), Derbyshire, Norfolk Shire Horse Centre, URL:<http://www.norfolk-shirehorse-centre.co.uk>, Accessed 16 Feb 2006, Bradford Industrial Museum & Horses at Work, URL:<http://www.bradford.gov.uk/tourism>, Accessed 23 Feb 2006.

⁶ CoorsVisitor Centre & The Museum of Brewing, URL:<http://www.coorsvisitorcentre.com/vc-shirehistory>, Accessed 23 Feb 2006.

⁷ Chivers, pp.135-7.

⁸ Glasgow City, 'Living in Glasgow- Clydesdale Horses' URL:http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/Residents/Parks_Outdoors/Animals/HeavyHorses, Accessed 7 Dec 2005

⁹ Kate Stephen, 'Aberdeen's Heavyweight Event', <http://www.clydesdaleshow.htm>, Accessed 16 Feb 2006.

along with work horses have become meaningful heritage subjects. The country house still has its appeal but so too does the coach house and stables. However, as Raphael Samuel has pointed out, heritage's representation of work is a sanitised version. Labour, far from being despised as it has often been in the 'real historic past' has been 'retrospectively dignified'.¹⁰ The well fed and immaculately groomed work horses with their gleaming harnesses are as treasured and preserved from loss as any other museum exhibit.

The heritage centres that portray the nobility of work through heavy horse demonstrations often promote other cultural fictions as well. One of these is the notion that there is a national heavy horse tradition in Britain. Just as artefacts and buildings can be sourced from all over the country to be reassembled on a suitable museum site, various breeds of horses are also brought together. It needs to be born in mind, however, that as the names of the draught breeds infer, the various breeds were developed in particular regions, both reflecting and adapting to local conditions. They evolved over time and although ancient lineage is often claimed, the modern British breeds are really a product of the changing agricultural and industrial needs of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The lucrative export market for draught horses in the nineteenth century, driven largely by the colonies, meant that the regional identification of the horses was fiercely protected by zealous breeders for financial as well as cultural reasons. The Shire horse, for example, developed in the English shire counties of Lincoln, Leicester, Stafford and Derby. It is said that the Shire owes its ancestry to the great medieval warhorse but a more significant factor in its development was the introduction of the massive Flemish horses by the Dutch contractors to use in the draining of the fens.¹¹ Scotland lays claim to the Clydesdale, developed originally for agricultural work in the Clyde Valley and for hauling coal from the Lanarkshire mines. Its naturally good feet and flamboyant, high stepping action enabled it to make the transition to an elegant city horse while still hauling the heaviest loads.¹² Although said at one time to be the most powerful coach horse in Europe, the Cleveland Bay, from the Cleveland area of north-eastern England was

¹⁰ Samuel, pp.158-60.

¹¹ Elwyn Hartley Edwards, *The Encyclopedia of the Horse*, Surrey Hills, NSW: RD Press, 1994, pp.286-87, Maria Costantino, *The Handbook of Horse Breeds*, Enderby, Leicester: Silverdale Books, 2003, pp.90-91.

¹² Edwards, 284-85, Costantino, 99-100.

relegated to a farm horse in the eighteenth century when it could not meet the demands for greater speed made possible by the improved roads. Its breeders boasted that the horse was untouched by cart horse or Thoroughbred blood. Instead, it carried the exotic blood of the desert Barb, made possible by the sea traffic between the north-eastern sea ports and the Barbary Coast of North Africa.¹³ The Suffolk Punch was claimed as a native of the entire East Anglia region and was developed specifically for local farm work, offering great pulling power in the heavy soil and apparently requiring less food and rest than the larger breeds.¹⁴ The Irish Draught, on the other hand, evolved on small Irish farms as an all round farm horse, suitable for use under saddle or in harness.¹⁵

The discussion of the various regional breeds of heavy horse can be misleading as it serves to perpetuate the myth that the ordinary work horse was of one or other of these breeds. This was certainly not the case. The breeding of purebred horses was largely the domain of the gentleman farmer who had the resources to show their animals at various local and national horse shows and ploughing contests. Because pedigree horses were beyond the means of the average working farmer, their horses were normally part bred. They could have the attributes of a particular breed so could be said, for example, to be a 'Clydesdale type' without having the bloodlines necessary for inclusion in the Clydesdale Stud Book. Most draught horse work, whether in country, town or city, was carried out by non pedigreed animals. A matched team of purebred horses did create an eye catching display and were sought after by those individuals with the means to maintain an expensive 'turnout' or by companies who saw them as an advertisement for quality products or services.

Despite the fact that the average draught horse was not of any specific breed, it is the pure British breeds that are seen as worthy of heritage protection. The Cleveland Bay, Suffolk Punch, Clydesdale, Irish Draught and Shire are the heavy horses listed as 'priority equine breeds' by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust.¹⁶ The heavy horse historian, Keith Chivers, is resolute in his belief that as a heritage horse only pure-bred

¹³ Edwards, 304-5, Costantino, 144-45.

¹⁴ Costantino, pp.104-5.

¹⁵ Edwards, pp.374-75.

¹⁶ Rare Breeds Survival Trust, 'Watchlist – Horses and Ponies', URL:http://www.rbst.org.uk/html/rare_breeds/equine.html, Accessed 7 Apr 2005.

specimens should be used. Although he concedes that these animals may be overpowered for the work that is currently required of them, they should be bred as 'objects of admiration' and as such, 'the more powerful they are the better'. This emphasis on racial purity and superiority seems at odds with the notion of heavy horses as a democratic symbol. It also provokes the critics of heritage, such as David Lowenthal, to warn of the risks that heritage hold. When blood is seen as the carrier of physical, moral and intellectual qualities, determinisms are set in place that foster narrow minded notions of nationhood and race.¹⁷ The purebred horse sector, as part of the larger heritage movement enhances the idea that purity of blood is the ideal and the means by which superior appearance and performance can be sought while the infusion of 'outside' blood weakens the strain and ultimately causes its loss. Lowenthal also points out that the stewardship of heritage is 'riddled with blood ties'.¹⁸ Royal blood is associated with the preservation of traditional horses. The Duke of Edinburgh was one of a number of prominent supporters and contributors to a project commissioned by the Shire Horse Society to investigate the future use of heavy horses, resulting in the publication, edited by Keith Chivers, *History with a Future: Harnessing the Heavy Horse for the 21st Century*.¹⁹ The heir to the throne, Prince Charles uses a team of Suffolk horses on his traditionally run Highgrove Farm. The Queen is credited with saving the Cleveland Bay from extinction in Britain by purchasing the stallion, Mulgrave Supreme, to prevent its sale to the United States.²⁰ Currently, Her Majesty is Patron and President of the Cleveland Bay Society and heads its list of breeders.²¹

British royalty, however, is most visibly associated with light horse traditions and no more so than the sport of horseracing. The heritage of British horseracing is preserved at the National Horseracing Museum at Newmarket where the story of the sport is told through the long line of monarchs known as active patrons of the sport. From the time of King Richard I through to the present Queen, an almost unbroken succession of kings and queens have provided financial support and facilities for the sport as well as

¹⁷ Davis Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.192-3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.201.

¹⁹ Chivers, pp.v-vi,xiii-xiv.

²⁰ Edwards, p.305

²¹ Cleveland Bay Horse Society, <http://www.clevelandbay.com/breeders.htm>, Accessed 20 Mar 2006.

fine racing stock.²² It is perhaps this royal connection that has enabled horseracing to take on the characteristics of a national sport. Historian Mike Huggins argues that racing crossed the boundaries of class, gender and locality and in so doing highlighted collective ideas of Britishness. In terms of horseracing, there was no major division between England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales with great horseracing events like Ascot, the Derby or the St. Leger regarded as national occasions drawing people from throughout Britain and the Empire. During the interwar years, Huggins' contends that racing provided a reassuring myth about sporting glory and cultural cohesion. The colour and pageantry associated with the major racing events, particularly when a royal coach procession is involved serve, not only to confirm the traditional social order but also to evoke loyalty and identity.²³

National focus and the mingling of blood and soil are also revealed in the strong opposition to the Hunting Act. For many British people the sights and sounds of the hounds, red coated huntsmen on their gallant hunters are just as much a part of the traditional landscape as the gentle farmland. Alun Howkins has explained that at the heart of the conflict is 'a tension constantly reworked and evolving' between a recognition of Britain's intensive urbanisation over two centuries and a desire to cling to the memory of an imagined rural idyll.²⁴ For its supporters, foxhunting is an inheritance passed on by those forebears who lived and worked on the land and any attempt to deny them the freedom to hunt is greeted by fervent protest. The powerful lobby group, The Countryside Alliance, operating in all four parts of the United Kingdom, was formed ten years ago 'to campaign for the countryside, country sports and the rural way of life'.²⁵ A major focus of the organisation is its campaign 'to keep hunting alive and well in the mindset of the British people'.²⁶ If the crowds that attended the traditional Boxing Day hunt meets of 2006 are any indication, it would appear that the Countryside Alliance and foxhunting has many supporters. It was

²² Hilary Bracegirdle, *A Concise History of British Horse Racing*, Newmarket: The National Horseracing Museum, 1999.

²³ Mike Huggins, *Horseracing and the British 1919-39*, Manchester: University Press, pp.4-5,63-4,129-30,210.

²⁴ Howkins, p.146.

²⁵ Countryside Alliance, 'Our Aims', URL:http://www.countryside-alliance.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=.., Accessed 26 Jan 2006.

²⁶ Countryside Alliance, 'More on why the Hunting Act must be repealed'. URL:<http://www.countryside-alliance.org.uk/our-campaigns/our-policy-jigsaw/more-on-why...>, Accessed 31 May 2007.

reported that Boxing Day 2006 was the largest hunting day ever experienced with record numbers of people attending on horseback or on foot to show their support for their local Hunt.²⁷ David Itzowitz 's statement that that English foxhunting was 'a symbol of the rural way of life' appears to be just as relevant today as when he wrote it seventy years ago.²⁸

In turning attention to the New World it can be seen that a number of countries have formalised the relationship between their nation and the breed of horse they regard as their own. In South America, the horses that have evolved from the founding stock established by the former colonial masters have been reframed as national horses. The Argentinian Criollo, the Peruvian Paso, the Azteca from Mexico and the Mangalarga Marchador of Brazil are all regarded as national horses in their respective countries.²⁹ How each country recognises its national horse varies from country to country but there are some similarities. All national horses have adapted successfully to the climate and geography from which they have evolved and all carry traits that are regarded as desirable national characteristics. A strong work ethic and the versatility to perform a variety of tasks, mark the national horses of former colonies. Each national horse also shares a history with the people that developed it and is celebrated as part of that country's national heritage. Although very different animals from strongly contrasting environments, the Australian Stock Horse and the Canadian Horse, as national horses, have several features in common.

The Australian Stock Horse is the horse that Australia displayed to the world in the opening ceremony of the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. To the stirring music from the film, 'The Man from Snowy River', 120 riders clothed in the iconic Australian garb of Akubra hats and Drizabone coats and mounted on stock horses cantered into

²⁷ Countryside Alliance – 'Boxing Day Meets', URL:<http://www.countryside-alliance.org.uk/-campaigns/hunting-events/boxing-da...>, Accessed 31 May 2007.

²⁸ David C. Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege: A Social History of English Foxhunting 1753-1885*, Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1977, p.105.

²⁹ Anon., 'The Argentine Criollo Horse: King of the Pampa', URL:<http://www.conquistador.com/criollo.html>, Accessed 6 Jun 2007., Anon., 'Peruvian Paso', URL:<http://www.imh.org/imh/bw/peru.html>, Accessed 1 Nov 2005., Anon., 'Azteca ; The National Horse of Mexico', URL:<http://www.reachone.com/raindance/Mexico.html>, Accessed 1 Nov 2005., Anon., 'Mangalarga Marchador', URL:<http://www.imh.org/imh/bw/mmarch.html>, Accessed 1 Nov 2005.

the darkened arena in perfect precision. They were led by a single horseman who cracked his stockwhip while his black stallion reared centre stage under the powerful stadium lights. Before the athletes of the world and billions of television viewers, it is significant that Australia chose to showcase its own unique horse and outback traditions. It was also a presentation for the home country as well, deeply touching the hearts of every Australian with the warmth of national pride. While Australia is a highly urbanised society with only a diminishing fraction of its people living and working outside its towns and cities, the outback with its iconic figure of the mounted stockman remains essential to Australian national identity. The Olympic ceremony's lone horseman, sitting firmly in control of his rearing stallion represents the heroic male frontiersman, his power and potential for violence emphasised by the stockwhip he so adeptly wields. In Australian legend, whether it is wild horses, hostile environment or savage people, the stockman is said to have conquered them all. Behind him, united as one, ride his fellow stockmen. This is a powerful expression of the egalitarian ideal and frontier mateship so important to Australian mythmaking.

Although Australian stock horses emerged from the nineteenth century as a distinctive type, it was not until 1971 that the Australian Stock Horse became a recognised breed with its own society and stud book. The initiative came from a group of horse breeders who saw the need to preserve the working saddle horse that they saw as disappearing from even the remote outback stations. These horsemen also realised the commercial value in the formation of a nationally recognised breed intimately connected with Australia's landscapes and history. The business boom of the 1960s meant that more Australians than ever before were in a position to keep pleasure horses and the ownership of a pedigreed animal was seen by many as highly desirable. American interests had proven adept at promoting their saddle horses, notably the versatile Quarter Horse, to the Australian market and the newly formed Australian Stock Horse Society (ASHA) recognised that without quality standards and written records, their horses would be seen as having lesser status than the purebred imports and their offspring.³⁰ They saw the need to create an athletic horse suitable for a range of equestrian sports, while still able to fulfil its original role as a working saddle

³⁰ Ron Iddon, 'The Australian Stockhorse' in *The Stockman*, Hugh Sawrey (ed.), Sydney: Lansdowne, 1984, pp.189-224., Joan Starr, *The Horse that Calls Australia Home*, Adelaide: Equine Educational, 1966, p.8.

horse. The process whereby the Stock Horse became a breed involved breeders and owners offering their horses for inspection by a Society approved classifier. Horses were judged in terms of conformation, breeding and ability. Those that passed gained entry to the Australian Stock Horse Stud Book and could legitimately be called Australian Stock Horses. This became the conditions of entry until the registry of the Stud Book was closed in 1988, meaning that only horses that satisfied the Society's breeding requirements could be regarded as purebred Australian Stock Horses and inspection became no longer necessary.³¹

Not only did the stock horse 'type' become a recognisable breed in 1971, it also entered the realm of national legend. The Australian Stock Horse was the horse instantly recognised in A.B. Paterson's 'The Man From Snowy River':

And one was there, a stripling on a small and weedy beast;
He was something like a racehorse undersized,
With a touch of Timor pony- three parts thoroughbred at least -
And such as are by mountain horsemen prized.
He was hard and tough and wiry – just the sort that won't say die –
There was courage in his quick impatient tread;
And he bore the badge of gameness in his bright and fiery eye,
And the proud and lofty carriage of his head.³²

Patterson's Snowy River horse and the modern Australian Stock Horse share, in the words of the Society's promotional material, the qualities of 'toughness, endurance, resilience and strength' along with 'cat-like speed and agility'.³³ These attributes are the legacy of the horse's progenitors that were said to include 'good representatives of just about every breed ever imported' to Australia.³⁴ Important as the lineage is, the Australian environment has long been claimed as a factor in nurturing strong, healthy horses. As early as 1863, Edward Curr declared that 'the arid plains and burning hill sides of central Australia will produce a horse that will be famous all over the world

³¹ Australian Stock Horse Society URL:<http://www.ashs.com.au/horses/default.asp>, Accessed 16 May 2007.

³² A.B. Paterson, 'The Man from Snowy River', *Poems of Banjo Paterson*, Sydney: Ure Smith, 1974, pp.15-18.

³³ URL:<http://www.ashs.com.au/horses/default.asp>.

³⁴ Iddon, p.202.

and perhaps surpass even the Arab of the desert'.³⁵ Contemporary Australian horseman, Ron Iddon echoes the sentiment that horses prosper in the dry climate and warm or even hot temperatures that much of Australia provides. Furthermore, he contends that horses prefer to eat short grass that sees plenty of sunlight, keeping them on the move, rather than fenced in on lush pastures.³⁶ Of course, extreme heat and a lack of water can be an unforgiving environment but as an early twentieth century admirer of Australian horses pointed out; 'the severe selection of nature' when added to 'the fastidious choice of men of the English race' could not help but produce excellent horse stock.³⁷

On becoming a recognised breed, the Australian Stock Horse also gained a history that was recognised as closely paralleling that of the free European settlers. Its story did not begin in 1971 but rather one hundred ninety-three years earlier when its ancestors took their first steps on Australian soil. The horses of the First Fleet had been carefully selected for their 'strength and stamina', not only to survive the long sea voyage, but to begin work in the 'foreign, untamed environment of the colony'. Much like the early Europeans, only the strongest horses survived the demanding environment and rigorous culling. The sturdy saddle horses that had developed from good British stock along with other imports, carried settlers seeking land across the Blue Mountains and into the interior. The key figures of Australian national legend, explorers, settlers, stockmen, bushrangers and soldiers all relied on the versatile horses that could travel long distances for days on end with a minimum of food and water. It is recorded that 'despite the mixed origins of these horses, they developed into a strong handsome type' eagerly sought for export to New Zealand and India. Because of their origins in New South Wales, by the middle of the nineteenth century the Australian saddle horses were known collectively as Walers. The hardiness of such a horse made it the perfect choice for cavalry requirements and as its history relates, when the British found themselves short of horses during the Indian Mutiny 'the Waler came to the rescue'. Its battle worthiness was further enhanced during war in

³⁵ Edward M. Curr, *Pure Saddle - Horses and How to Breed Them in Australia: Together with a Consideration of the History and Merits of the English, Arab, Andalusian & Australian Breeds of Horses*, Melbourne: Wilson & Mackinnon, 1863, p.173.

³⁶ Iddon, p.200.

³⁷ Dale, 'Colonial Horses', in *The Horses of the British Empire, Volume I*, Humphrey Francis de Trafford (ed.), London, Walter Southwood & Co., pp.226-43.

South Africa and later in the Middle East during World War I. It was here that, according to its history, mounted soldiers of many nations could see for themselves that the Australian horses were 'more reliable and showed greater endurance than other breeds'.³⁸

The fact that other countries including New Zealand also claimed to have the world's best warhorses did little to dampen Australia's strong belief in the value of their tough little saddle horses that proved their worth on international battlegrounds. Much of the confidence stemmed from the notion that the mounted stockman had by the end of the nineteenth century become established as a figure of national identity. The stockman and his horse were the key figures in the literary and artistic 'bush' culture that had become firmly established by the 1880s. As Nanette Mantle in *Horse & Rider in Australian Legend* has shown, the particular attributes of the stockman and his horse were easily transferred to the mounted soldier.³⁹ To a patriotic Australian populace, the strength, courage, durability and fierce loyalty to one's mates as portrayed by their mounted soldiers were already the same qualities embodied in the iconic image of the Australian stockman. If anyone could survive and flourish in the hostile environment of war, it would be the Australian stockman and his horse, both well used to making their way through featureless terrain, largely devoid of sustenance for man or beast.

The close identification between rider and his horse that grew from their shared histories is a feature of all the contemporary descriptions of the Australian Stock Horse. Joan Starr begins her introduction to 'Australia's Own Horse' with the statement: 'the traditional Australian stockman is a tough, versatile, and resilient character – generally pretty reliable and dependable' and 'he needs a horse that has much the same qualities'.⁴⁰ Like the men who ride them, the Australian Stock Horse is presented as a kind of 'jack of all trades' with the versatility to excel in many forms of work or sport. According to a brochure published in 1973, the breed's natural athletic ability and intelligence enabled it to perform well for its rider 'with very little

³⁸ Australian Stock Horse Society, *The Australian Stock Horse Society Silver Jubilee: 1971-1996*, Scone, N.S.W.: The Society, 1996, p.8.

³⁹ Nanette Mantle, *Horse & Rider in Australian Legend*, Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2004, p.230.

⁴⁰ Starr, p.1.

education'.⁴¹ Performance over appearance is a desired national characteristic that Australians like to attribute to both their people and their horses. Just as any pretensions regarding manners, speech or dress that English colonists may have brought with them was readily dismissed in egalitarian Australia, the 'fancy points' of imported horses were similarly bred out of them. A graceful arch of the neck, high tail carriage or elegant knee action was of little use to the stock horse at work or play. In his description of the Australian Stock Horse, Ron Iddon uses a new word, 'ordinaryising' to refer to what he calls a distinctive Australian characteristic. It applied to their horses firstly, because the Australian way of life did not encourage hand feeding or frequent grooming and secondly, as knowledgeable horsemen, the Australian owner or rider could see beyond superficial appearance to determine what was a good horse.⁴²

While the Australian Stock Horse may be proclaimed as 'a true-blue Aussie horse that represents everything great about this country',⁴³ the identification between horse and human can also be seen to reveal deeper issues and anxieties. The legendary hardiness of the Stock Horse, able to thrive on little food, water or human care could just as easily be read as a reflection of ill-treatment on the part of its handlers. Certainly this was the attitude taken by some British commentators such as Anthony Trollope who in the 1860s wrote of the appalling over use and poor care of horses witnessed on his Australian travels. It was an attitude that continued to haunt Australian horsemen and even to tarnish their wartime exploits. Although widely acknowledged as daring and skilful riders, Australian soldiers were often criticised for neglecting basic horsemanship principles such as adequate training, care and conditioning of their mounts.⁴⁴

Issues surrounding bloodlines continue to concern Stock Horses breeders and owners. One of the current controversies is whether the Australian Stock Horse actually owes its ancestry, in part, to the Waler, a horse largely dismissed as a mongrel by the

⁴¹ Ibid., p.5.

⁴² Iddon, p.189-224.

⁴³ Paul Myers and Ainslie Nielson, 'My Kingdom For a Horse', *R.M. Williams Outback*, 28 (2003) pp.28-44.

⁴⁴ A.T. Yarwood, *Walers: Australian Horses Abroad*, Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 1989, p.175.

English elite.⁴⁵ Just as in tracing human lineage in Australia, some want to eliminate from their history all traces of lowly or bad blood but others are proud to boast of humble beginnings. Warnings of the risk of contamination to Australia's horses also arise from time to time. In the years leading up the millennium, the members of the Australian Stock Horse Association signalled their desire to showcase their horse and its traditions at the Sydney Olympic Games but they also expressed their reservations. Just as the people drawn to the event posed a potential threat to national security, so too the 'influx of foreign horses' entering the country to compete instilled a degree of fear. In light of this, the ASHS warned that Australia must 'remain ever vigilant in maintaining our quarantine regulations, while at the same time, continue to conduct daily research into common horse diseases and sicknesses.'⁴⁶

A look at the Canadian Horse as the official national horse of Canada highlights geographical as well as cultural similarities and variation between Canada and Australia. Like the Australian Stock Horse, the Canadian Horse had its inception in the early colonial period. Both colonies needed a plentiful number of tough, versatile horses, capable of working long days with little pampering. But while Australia needed rugged saddle horses to work the vast pastoral properties, Canada's needs were best served by versatile, light draught horses that could be used on farms, in the timber industry or for year around transport. The horse that became the Canadian came into its own in the winter when it could haul sledges or sleighs over snow laden tracks. Frozen rivers took the form of highways during the winter and loads could be pulled quickly over the smooth surface. A far cry from the bush racetracks of outback Australia, Canadian frozen rivers became improvised racetracks with sleighs drawn by fast trotters, racing each other and providing welcome winter entertainment. The transition from colonial to national horse also shows some variation. The preservation and making of the Canadian Horse was largely made possible by government intervention, rather than solely by the efforts of individual horse breeders as was the case in Australia.

The Canadian Horse became the officially recognised national horse of Canada in April 2002 with the passing by parliament of the National Horse of Canada Act. This

⁴⁵ Starr, pp.2,7.

⁴⁶ Australian Stock Horse Society, p.30.

was largely due to the persistence of Murray Calder, a member of parliament from south western Ontario who for five years promoted the idea that the Canadian, a breed unique to Canada, should be recognised for the role it played in building the Canadian nation. Although Calder acknowledged that Canada had a number of indigenous creatures that it celebrated such as the beaver, loon and Canada goose, he argued that the Canadian Horse was a fitting symbol for a nation of immigrants. Like its human counterparts, the Canadian Horse journeyed across the Atlantic and adapted itself in its harsh new environment.⁴⁷ In speaking to his bill, Calder added to the symbolism by his personal observation of how the horse that had brought together horse breeders and horse lovers from all parts of the country. United in a single cause, party allegiances were put aside as were traditional differences of east and west, French and English, in the making of a national horse. Calder reminded his colleagues of how, members forgot about their partisan differences to sit beside each other in carriages drawn by Canadian horses.⁴⁸ The occasion alluded to was a splendidly orchestrated piece of theatre in which four Canadian horses with carriages were brought to Parliament Hill for the parliamentarians' inspection. A new song written and sung by popular Canadian singer, Marie-Lynn Hammond, was broadcast during the horses' visit.⁴⁹ The song, 'the Canadian (P'tit cheval de fer)' with its chorus in French and verses in English supported Calder's idea of the horse as a symbol of national unity.

Both Hammond's song and Calder's account of the Canadian Horse created what was effectively a new and English Canadian dominated history of the breed. The highly selective version of the history of the Canadian Horse as presented by Calder not only placed the horse at landmark events in Canadian history but gave it a long and heroic history that, like the Australian Stock Horse, closely followed that of the European settlers. The grand narrative opens with the acknowledgement of the high quality of the founding stock, carefully selected from the stables of Louis XIV and sent to New France. These horses were reputedly descendants of the great Norman warhorses, the very horses pictured on the Bayeux Tapestry that crossed the channel in 1066 with the

⁴⁷ Murray Calder, 'Murray Calder Press Release' 7 Feb 2002',

URL:www.murraycalder.ca/news/2002%20releases/horse070202.htm, Accessed 6 Dec 2002.

⁴⁸ Canada House of Commons Debates, Official Report (Hansard), 'National Horse of Canada Act', Hansard, Canadian House of Commons Debates, 22 Apr 2002',

URL:http://www.parl.gc.ca/37/1/parlbus/chambus/house/debates/173_2002-04-22/han173_1..., Accessed 1 Nov 2005.

⁴⁹ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 15 Mar 2003, p.R19.

Norman invaders.⁵⁰ The horses in the colony worked alongside the habitants to clear the land, plough the fields and to maintain links between the remote communities. Those horses that survived the tough work regime and the demanding Canadian environment became the foundation stock of a new type of colonial horse. As Hammond's song indicates:

See there's royal blood in their pedigree
'Cause the Sun King sent them by sea
He chose the best from his stables
For his noblemen in New France
And some never made it through the winter gales
But the horses that did grew tough as nails
And strong and clever, and wove their way through history at every chance.⁵¹

The Canadian Horse survived the conquest and in time gained the respect from the British conquerors. The horses bred by the French Canadians proved sturdy and sure footed enough to carry survey parties to prepare the way for settlement of the expanding colony. They facilitated trade with the American colonies and became a valuable trading commodity themselves. Canadian horses were said to have had a pivotal role in the westward expansion of Canada and when lawlessness threatened the western frontier, it was the Canadian horse that accompanied the newly formed North West Mounted Police on their famous trek in 1874, earning their place in the 'mountie' legend. As befitting its ancestry, the Canadian horse also proved its worth as a warhorse:

They were there on the Plains of Abraham
Carrying men fighting Montcalm
They were prized by the Yanks as trotters,
And mounts in their civil war
They were ridden by the North West Mounted Police
In that sad campaign against the Métis
And they stood their ground in World War I
Through the battle's bloody roar.

Now ain't that just the Canadian way it goes
To have something special and no one knows
And to let it fade and dwindle till it almost disappears

⁵⁰ Lawrence Scanlan, *Little Horse of Iron: A Quest for the Canadian Horse*, Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2002, pp.8-10.

⁵¹ Marie-Lynn Hammond, 'The Canadian (P'tit cheval de fer)',
URL:http://www.marielynnhammond.com/mlh_65_cdnhorse.htm, Accessed 16 Nov 2005.

Thirty years ago they were almost gone
But the Little Iron horse is hanging on
And I figure they deserve to be around
For the next four hundred years.⁵²

Hammond's verses acknowledge the breed's role in war and also as a survivor. Surviving adversity with little recognition was a theme that also ran through Calder's address. He related how the Canadian in the early years adapted to the cruel winters, shortage of barns and fodder by developing into a short, sturdy animal with small ears and a thick mane and coat. Survival also meant retaining its identity against the new breeds developed by American breeders. When first of all threatened by specialised and fashionable imports, later by mechanisation, Calder marvelled at how the breed with the help of its human supporters resisted disappearing altogether and in doing so became a potent symbol of Canadian resilience.

Twice the Canadian Horse came close to extinction. Twice it has rebounded, thanks to the dedication of the breeders in all parts of the country. I like to think it shows the resilience we have as Canadians and as a country when on the world stage we are looked upon by other countries as the builders of bridges and not fortifications in our reputation as great peacekeepers.⁵³

It was in large part the character of the horse that was responsible for the survival of the breed. Sharing desirable traits with successful European pioneers, the Canadian horse is notable for its work ethic. Man and horse, claimed Calder knew the 'merits of hard work' as they worked together 'forming this great country of ours'. Like their masters they were versatile workers, able to approach all tasks whether rural or urban and in peace and war with strength, courage and stamina. From its colonial beginnings the horse along with the people had matured and mellowed into the idealised Canadian as Calder expressed:

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Murray Calder, 'Hansard Feb 8 2002, 'Debate on Bill S-22 National Horse of Canada Act', URL:http://www.murraycalder.ca/issues/horse/hansard_feb_8_2002htm, Accessed 12 Dec 2002.

This hardy horse with almost infinite endurance is often called ‘the little iron horse’. It is gentle natured, hardworking, loyal and intelligent breed. In fact, that pretty well describes a Canadian. Our gentle nature is one of the values we as a country hold dear.⁵⁴

Yet despite widespread support for the Bill in both the House of Commons and the Senate, not all their members shared in Calder’s vision. The members of the Bloc Québécois saw the Canadian Horse not as a symbol of national unity and peace, rather one of appropriation and cultural clash. They had a point. The horse under discussion, they claimed, was not Canada’s but their own, one that had already gained heritage status in Québec.⁵⁵ Generally missing from the official histories of the Canadian horse is the acknowledgement that for most of its history, the horse was known, not as the Canadian but as the French Canadian horse. Concern that the mass exportation of French Canadian horses to the United States and other parts of Canada could lead to the eventual loss of the distinctive horse resulted in the provincial government of Québec establishing a French Canadian Stud Book in 1886.⁵⁶ Before the close of the nineteenth century, however, federal agricultural officials complained that Québec had failed to maintain the standards of the breed. What they saw as a Gallic reluctance to geld stallions resulted in ‘promiscuity’ that led to a lack of standardisation and a decrease in size.⁵⁷ English Canadian authorities favoured the English breeding practice of inbreeding to allow greater control of offspring. As a result, the first Stud Book was closed and a new one established, to be overseen by federal agricultural officials which required horses to be examined to ensure they reached a new fixed standard. Although the breeding programme largely supported by the government resulted in the recreation of a unique and protected Canadian breed, it also saw the loss of control by French Canada. The appropriation was complete when in 1935 the prefix ‘French’ was dropped and all official records changed accordingly.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ *Kitchener and Waterloo Record*, 25 May 2002, p.G1.

⁵⁶ Robert Leslie Jones, ‘The Old French-Canadian Horse: Its History in Canada and the United States’, *The Canadian Historical Review*, 28:2 (1947), p.129; Jones, p.152-3., Anon., ‘Cherry Creek Canadians – Canadian Horse History’, URL:<http://www.3.telus.net/cdnhorse/history.htm>, Accessed 25 Oct 2005. p.5.

⁵⁷ Dominion Experimental Farms and Stations (Canada), *Twenty One Year ’Work (1919-1940) For the Improvement of the Canadian Horse Breed as Carried out at the St. Joachim Horse Farm Quebec*, Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1943, p.8., Jones, p.129.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.8.

None of the contemporary histories of the Canadian Horse give any indication of any contentious issues between the French and English Canadian people. An article ‘The old French-Canadian Horse: Its History in Canada and the United States’ published in 1947 in *The Canadian Historical Review* reveals more of the contested history of the horse. The author, Robert Leslie Jones was highly critical of the harsh treatment the horse received from their French Canadian habitant owners. He claimed that in summer the horses had little protection from flies due to the French custom of tail docking and that in the winter they suffered from lack of shelter and hay, sometimes reduced to eating frozen fish for sustenance. Jones also complained when the French Canadians ‘took to the road with their horses, they thought nothing of driving them as fast as they would go for a dozen miles or more, and then of leaving them to stand uncovered for hours in the blizzardly snow’.⁵⁹ By portraying the French Canadians as ignorant and cruel horsemen, Jones’ position provides added justification for English Canada’s takeover of the horse once identified solely with French Canada.

Federal government interest in the Canadian Horse waned as horse use dwindled, finally withdrawing support for the breeding programme at the St. Joachim experimental farm in 1940. Private breeders from across Canada endeavoured to keep the breed alive although by the 1970s, the number of Canadian Horses fell to an all time low. Since then, however, the popularity of Canadian horses has steadily grown until the present when the demand exceeds availability.⁶⁰ This was partly due to the growth in the recreational horse market to which the Canadian Horse breeders promoted their horses as having the strength and docility to make ideal ‘family’ horses suitable for driving, jumping/hunting or as a pack or endurance horses.⁶¹ But just as has been demonstrated in Britain and Australia, it was the expanding heritage movement that gave the national horse the wide appreciation it needed to ensure its future. Upper Canada Village Heritage Park in Morrisburg, Ontario began a Canadian Horse breeding programme in 1978 with the intention to help represent pioneer life in

⁵⁹ Jones pp.131-2.

⁶⁰ Personal Communication, Belinda Panting, Hidden Meadow Farm, Orton, Ontario, Canada.

⁶¹ Anon., ‘History of the Canadian Horse’, <http://www.eidnet.org/local/cdnhorse/history.htm>, Accessed 25 Oct 2005.

the 1860s as well as to preserve the breed believed to be desperately in need of protection.⁶²

The story that the heritage centre and other contemporary histories present is of a horse with the ability to unite a land and a people. Its role in building a nation has made it 'a proud part of Canada's national heritage'.⁶³ It shares with the Australian Stock Horse the strength to survive and an adaptability to perform a range of roles, from practical pioneer horse to present day national symbol. It has become an embodiment of national character, representing the virtues that Canadians cherish; a peaceful and unassuming demeanour concealing its legendary strength. Fittingly, in national myth at least, it is identified with the 'mountie', the federal policeman on his horse who has long served Canadians by ensuring peace and security throughout their vast country. Like the Australian stockman, the mountie has become an iconic figure who participates in displays of national pageantry and ritual. Rather than stockman displays or sport, however, it is the Musical Ride, an equestrian spectacle of intricate figures and cavalry drill choreographed to music that is enacted. Dressed in the tradition uniform of scarlet tunic, navy breeches with yellow stripe and stetson hat, the members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) perform the Musical Ride to audiences from around the world. Horsemanship is no longer a compulsory skill for its officers; nevertheless the RCMP retains its equestrian tradition because, in the organisation's own words, 'the Musical Ride provides Canadians from coast to coast, with the opportunity to experience part of our heritage and national identity'.⁶⁴

As has been seen in Britain, Canada and Australia, horses unique to their respective countries play an important part in the celebration of national heritage. In memory, such national or heritage horses are associated with particular landscapes, whether a rich farming region of Britain, Australia's sunburnt outback, or a snow laden Canadian winter scene. They are also intimately connected with their nation's people; sharing with them a perceived character and history. While they no longer supply the horsepower to drive their nation's economy, their power still remains and is utilised

⁶² Upper Canada Village Heritage Park, URL:<http://www.uppercanadavillage.com/02061001.htm>, Accessed 25 Oct 2005.

⁶³ <http://www.eidnet.org/local/cdnhorse/history.htm>, Accessed 25 Oct 2005.

⁶⁴ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 'RCMP Musical Ride and Equitation', URL:http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/musicalride/index_e.htm, Accessed 10 Jun 2007.

by commercial, governmental or other factions to bolster national pride and identity. Because of this, national horses are treasured possessions that have ensured themselves a future as well a past and a present. Having established the role of horses in ideas about nationhood, it is time to turn attention to the representation of the horse in New Zealand.

2. The New Zealand Horse: Agent of Colonisation

The arrival of the first documented horse to step ashore on New Zealand soil was recorded by John Liddiard Nicholas. Accompanying his friend, Reverend Samuel Marsden, Nicholas described the incident that took place on the beach at Rangihoua on 24 December 1814 at in the Bay of Islands before an interested group of local Māori.

Mr. Marsden, mounting the horse, rode up and down the beach, exciting their wonder in a tenfold degree. To see a man seated on the back of such an animal, they thought the strangest thing in nature; and following him with staring eyes, they believed at the moment that he was more than mortal.¹

Marsden did not come with an army of mounted soldiers to subdue the New Zealand people in order to lay claim to their lands. Instead he came with a contingent of missionaries, armed with the word of God and the tools of agriculture to bring the gifts of civilisation to the natives of New Zealand. Horses were an integral part of his mission. They provided the power needed to introduce English farming practices and were also the means by which to extend the mission's reach, deep into the interior of the country. Marsden's vision of a peaceable kingdom of bountiful fields of crops, grazing livestock and contented labourers was shared in the decades to follow by his countrymen seeking land to settle. Settlers also brought horses with them to assist in their colonial cause. These horses carried the colonists from the coastal settlements into the hinterland. The journeys were both physical and metaphorical. Travelling over the land, identifying and naming its features was a first step in acquiring land to settle or to gain control of its resources. The direction they took and the paths they travelled can also be read as progressing the cause of colonisation. Horses assisted in this process. They quickened the journey, they were capable of carrying large loads and provided safe passage across rivers and up mountains. As accounts attest, they also provided companionship for the solitary traveller. This chapter will consider the role of the New Zealand horse in the early colonial period from 1814 to the early years

¹ John Liddiard Nicholas, *Narrative of a Voyage to New Zealand, Performed in the Years 1814 and 1815 in Company with the Rev. Samuel Marsden, J. Black 1817*, Volume 1, Auckland: Wilson & Horton, 1971, p.172.

of the 1880s. Documented records for this period can be sparse, but travellers' tales, memoirs and visual material have been used to give evidence of the role of the founding horses in advancing the colonisation of New Zealand.

While it is acknowledged that the first horses to arrive in New Zealand were a stallion and two mares landed by Samuel Marsden from his brig, *Active* in December 1814, the intended purpose of these first horses is clouded with misunderstanding. A number of New Zealand secondary sources state that these founding horses were gifts of goodwill sent by Governor Macquarie of New South Wales to local Māori chiefs.² However, any reference to these horses by Marsden or by his fellow travellers makes no suggestion that these first animals were intended for anything other than for use on the mission station.³ Expenses of the *Active's* second voyage in 1814 list among the 'necessaries for forming the settlement of New Zealand' one horse and two mares, valued at £80, along with a saddle and bridle worth £5.⁴ The first horses were likely what can be described as 'utility saddle horses' destined for use by the missionaries as a means of transport and for general use around the mission. It is also quite possible that these horses were from Marsden's own horse stud. By the time that Marsden began his work among the Māori, he had already established his reputation as a leading New South Wales landowner and as a breeder of fine wool producing sheep and pedigree cattle. He was also known for his part Thoroughbred horses, many sired by his colonial bred stallion, *Champion*.⁵ When mated with mares originally sourced from the Cape of Good Hope and Calcutta, the result was a sturdy general purpose animal that served the penal colony as saddle, pack and carriage horses. The proven versatility and ruggedness of such horses would have been seen as best serving the needs of the establishment of a mission station and farm in New Zealand.

² This is the version given in the following books: Miriam Macgregor Redwood, *Proud Silk: A New Zealand Racing History*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1979, p.7., Elaine Power and Leon McClelland, *The Horse in New Zealand*, William Collins, 1975, pp.8-9., Joan Druette, *Exotic Intruders: the Introduction of Plants and Animals into New Zealand*, Auckland: Heineman, 1983, p.31.

³ John Rawson Elder (ed.), *The Letters and Journals of Samuel Marsden 1765-1838*: Coull, Somerville, Wilkie and Reed, 1932., John Rawson Elder (ed.), *Marsden's Lieutenants*, Dunedin: Coull, Somerville, Wilkie and Reed, 1934, p.71, Nicolas, pp.172-3.

⁴ Marsden, *Letters and Journals*, pp.262-3.

⁵ Keith R. Binney, *Horsemen of the First Frontier (1788-1900) and The Serpents Legacy*, Neutral Bay N.S.W.: Volcanic Productions, 2004, pp.xix, 58-63.

In Virginia Anderson's *Creatures of Empire*, she emphasises the critical role that domestic animals played in the colonisation of the early American colonies. Given the English people's close association with livestock through their long established agrarian traditions, it was inevitable that the nation's colonisation schemes would include domestic animals. Herds of grazing cattle, horses and sheep became an important part of the Imperial vision. They not only evoked memories of rural England but they also helped to legitimise the newcomers' presence on the land. As Anderson points out, English colonisation was driven by the Roman legal theory of *res nullius* that deemed 'empty' land as common property until put to use. Farming the land through the investment of labour and capital meant that an individual could claim private ownership of that land. This principle could be extended so that the act of turning what was regarded as wilderness into productive farmland conferred on a nation similar ownership rights. Domestic animals that occupied and worked the land were regarded as contributing to colonisation. The presence of domestic animals on the land also suggested divine as well as worldly order. As the scriptures related how God gave mankind dominion over all animals, so animal husbandry could be identified as a Christian enterprise. Transplanted British livestock on American land, Anderson contends, were vital to ensuring that 'England's empire would be an agricultural one'.⁶

New Zealand was the last and most distant of the lands to become part of the vast British Empire but even so, the role of agriculture was to remain as powerful a driving force as ever before. A more ideal candidate to champion the cause than the Reverend Samuel Marsden probably could not have been found. Marsden's evangelical energy, physical strength and early years as a blacksmith, gave him the ability to combine his agricultural interests with his various religious and civil duties in the colony of New South Wales. Along with livestock breeding, Marsden made a significant contribution to pasture improvement. In *The Australian Ark*, Ian Parsonson recognised Marsden as a visionary thinker who was one of three leading agriculturalists who in 1814, the same year of the founding of New Zealand mission, put forward the idea of

⁶ Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp.75-78, 82.

establishing an agricultural society to disseminate practical and scientific knowledge for the benefit of all the farmers of New South Wales.⁷

Given Marsden's background as an improving farmer and livestock breeder, it is not surprising that his avowed mission to introduce the 'arts of civilisation' to the New Zealand Māori put a major emphasis on agricultural practice and trade.⁸ From Ruatara and a number of his countrymen who worked on the Marsden farm at Paramatta, Marsden had formed a favourable impression of the New Zealanders' work ethic and desire to acquire knowledge of all aspects of farming.⁹ It was no accident that Marsden sought to establish his mission with missionaries having the practical skills of carpentry, rope making and metal working. As Marsden stated, 'since nothing in my opinion can pave the way for the Introduction of the Gospel, but Civilisation, and that can only be accomplished amongst Heathens by the Arts'.¹⁰ Agriculture, he believed, would supply food and employment to the Māori and in so doing would reconcile the different tribes and prevent their costly wars. Livestock were essential to Marsden's plan for New Zealand because along with providing food, power and clothing, they provided manure to enrich the soil.¹¹

Although the first horses were in all likelihood imported for use on the mission station, there is no doubt that gift horses played a prominent role in pre-treaty relationships between Māori and Pakeha. In both missionary records and oral traditions, Samuel Marsden is credited with giving horses to Northland Māori. It was probably the offspring of one of the first mares that Thomas Kendall makes mention of when he informed Marsden in 1815 that the colt that had been presented to Korokoro had been killed during a raid by a rival chief.¹² In his 1819 report to the Church Missionary Society, Marsden indicated that he had promised local Māori more horses to be put 'into their own charge'. This was despite an incident in which two mission horses had been killed by the natives for 'trespassing in their gardens' and rooting up sweet potatoes to eat. Marsden, however, put the blame on the

⁷ Ian M. Parsonson, *The Australian Ark: A History of Domesticated Animals in Australia*, Collingwood, Victoria: Csiro Publishing, 1998, p.26.

⁸ *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 7 Dec 1816, p.2 and 11 Dec 1823, p.4.

⁹ P.Havard-Williams (ed.) and W.P. Morrell (introd.), *Marsden and the New Zealand Mission: Sixteen Letters*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1961, pp.30-47.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.41.

¹² Marsden, *Letters and Journals*, p.81.

Europeans for not fencing in their horses and allowing them to run free. The Māori, Marsden insisted, were ‘very fond of horses’ and well understood their value in ‘all agricultural purposes’.¹³

Governor Grey also recognised the value of agriculture in what he saw as the civilizing mission of the native population. To further the process Grey, like Marsden, gifted horses and ploughs to Māori prepared to engage in food production.¹⁴ By 1845 he was able to report to Earl Grey as Colonial Secretary his pleasure that Māori were turning their attention away from the export of goods and towards the growing of wheat and farm produce, an undertaking which he felt was more profitable to them and ‘most consistent with their habits’. He reported that the native population was ‘making rapid and remarkable progress in the arts of civilised life’ and the attention they paid to ‘improved modes of agriculture and to the rearing of horses and cattle’ was commendable.¹⁵

The encouragement of Māori agriculture by secular and religious leaders needs to be seen in the context of deeply rooted Western ideology that gave agriculture a privileged place over other human endeavours. Biblical references to the plough and the use of such symbolism as turning swords into ploughshares were often invoked to emphasise the peace and prosperity that rewarded the settled population that diligently worked their fields in accordance with the God-given rhythms of the days and seasons. The cultivation of land was promoted among Māori as a means of progressing towards a civilised society but it was also recognised that such economies also supported settler colonisation. As Hazel Petrie explains in *Chiefs of Industry*, Māori food production not only sustained the early years of settler communities but also provided a community with cash reserves that meant a ready market for manufactured European goods. Furthermore, it was felt that the protection of property accrued by a native agricultural development such as mills, farm buildings and implements, as well as livestock would be a disincentive to war.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., p.230.

¹⁴ James Patrick Kalaugher, *Gleanings from Early New Zealand History, Particularly of Auckland and Including the Story of the Auckland Agricultural and Pastoral Association 1843-1950*, Auckland: Unity Press, 1950, p.31.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.24-5.

¹⁶ Petrie, Hazel, *Chiefs of Industry: Māori Tribal Enterprise in Early Colonial New Zealand*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2006, pp.103-4, 109.

It was not surprising that it was adherence to British agricultural practices that Marsden maintained when he created an inland mission and farm at Waimate in 1830. The prominent traveller, Charles Darwin, visiting the station in 1835, commented on the range of English produce grown and on the stables and other buildings reminiscent of a typical English farmyard. Yet for all its apparent activity, the Waimate mission farm was not to be a financial success in large part due to an increasing labour shortage. Although local Māori initially showed enthusiasm for learning English farming methods and livestock management on the mission farm, many found the benefits of farming their own land more to their liking, as did some of the missionaries' families.¹⁷ Yet the legacy of Marsden's agrarian vision remained. In the late 1860s when New Zealand's agricultural prospects were well on the way to being realised, a fellow missionary, Richard Taylor, identified Samuel Marsden, second only to Captain Cook as the greatest benefactor to the new colony. Apart from his spiritual offerings, Taylor also recognised Marsden's temporal contribution by establishing mission farms as 'a nucleus for disseminating our domestic animals throughout the island'.¹⁸

The notion of a founding myth for New Zealand horses originating from Marsden's mission farms does not portray the entire picture of importations in the early years of the colony. Advertisements in the early newspapers indicate that imported horses, along with cattle and sheep, were offered for sale by a considerable number of individuals and partnerships. Most of the early shipments of horses came from the Australian colonies, mainly New South Wales but also from Victoria and Tasmania. Hobart was important to the Australian horse trade as it was the first port of call for ships sailing the long voyage from England via the Cape of Good Hope and livestock were sometimes unloaded there for recuperation. Some horses found buyers there and either stayed, or were shipped to the mainland colonies or New Zealand.¹⁹ Horses were also imported directly to New Zealand from Britain, the Cape Colony, Chile and India. In 1842 the *New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator* reported that in October that year five ships had arrived from Sydney and two from Valpariso, landing

¹⁷ M.W. Standish, *The Waimate Mission Station*, Wellington: R.E. Owen Government Printer, 1962, pp.23-6.

¹⁸ Richard Taylor, *The Past and Present of New Zealand With its Prospects for the Future*, London: William Macintosh, 1868, pp.291-92.

¹⁹ Keith Binney, p.v.

a total of 35 horses.²⁰ Rather than wait until the stock had disembarked, some importers placed newspaper advertisements notifying the imminent arrival of ships carrying horses for sale. In May 1851, Langden and Le Cren placed a notice in the *Lyttelton Times* advising that horses broken to harness and saddle were due from Sydney any day.²¹ Some importers took advance orders for stock. For example, Thomas Currie, advertised that he would give the 'greatest possible attention' to the selection of clients' horses and would ensure their 'first class' passage from Sydney.²²

The shipping of horses was a costly exercise and importers took measures to ensure that their charges were well provisioned and cared for during the voyage. In a letter to his wife in 1844, John Betts detailed the arrangements for four horses he contracted to be brought from Sydney on the *Isabell Anne* along with some sheep and cattle. He paid £4/10/- shipping for each horse with the captain to provide hay and four quarts of water per day for each horse. To look after the stock, Betts' groom was to travel without charge.²³

Because of the expense and dangers associated with long voyages, it was only the most valuable horses, generally purebred stallions, that were imported in the early years directly from Britain. Importers were prepared to risk the loss of mares that could be purchased inexpensively at such places as Chile and the Cape Colony. For example, it was only mares; seventy-one of them newly arrived from Chile, that were advertised for sale in the *New Zealand Advertiser and Bay of Island Gazette* in 1840.²⁴ The diary of Ellen Petre, which recorded her passage to Wellington in 1842 as a new bride, gives an insight into the importation of horses. Her husband, the Honourable Henry Petre, was returning to Port Nicholson with a wife, servants, household goods and two Thoroughbred stallions, Aether and Riddlesworth. As valuable cargo, the two stallions stood in horse boxes on the deck. Great concern was expressed when Aether fell down during one of the frequent squalls and showed clear signs of distress. While Ellen stayed alone in their cabin during further rough

²⁰ *New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator*, 8 Nov 1842, p.2.

²¹ *Lyttelton Times*, 17 May 1851, p.4.

²² *Lyttelton Times*, 7 June 1851, p.8.

²³ John Betts, 'Across the North Island of New Zealand' ATL, MS Papers-7092.

²⁴ *New Zealand Advertiser and Bay of Island Gazette*, 1 Oct 1840, p.1.

weather, Henry was obliged to personally supervise moving the two stallions each time the ship tacked. Nearly two months after setting sail from Portsmouth, the ship docked in Cape Town, where Henry made several excursions into the country to purchase an undisclosed number of mares. These mares were clearly considered less precious than the stallions; they remained nameless during the voyage and travelled in the cramped and stale air of the ship's hold.²⁵

It is quite striking how costly Thoroughbreds were sought in the early years of settlement. The English Thoroughbred which combined elegance, power and speed became the horse of choice of colonial gentry or those aspiring to such status. Henry Petre, son of Baron Petre, a director of the New Company demonstrated the aristocratic partiality for the racing Thoroughbred. Another early settler with ambitious designs, George Duppa, drew a horse in his notebook with the inscription, 'The style of animal I intend to get hold of when I come' (Figure 1). The sketch is clearly of a Thoroughbred of the old English type; a powerfully built body with a long neck, bred to carry heavy weight amateur jockeys over long racing distances. The first acknowledged Thoroughbred into New Zealand was Figaro, a stallion bred by Thomas Icely of New South Wales in 1838. The yearling colt was brought to Port Nicholson in 1840 by a former Bathurst resident, James Watt, later to become foundation President of the Auckland Racing Club.²⁶ Despite the undoubted pedigree of Figaro and his racing successes, stud notices in 1843 clearly show that the Australian bred stallion ranked below Petre's English bred horses. While the services of Aether and Riddlesworth could command ten guineas a mare, Figaro was charged out at five guineas, although seven guineas gave mare owners a foal guarantee.²⁷

Describing what constituted a purebred animal at this early stage in New Zealand livestock breeding is problematic. Some breeders, in advertising their horses for sale or for stud, carefully listed their animal's pedigree in the customary way by including sire, dam and often dam's sire; others just as carefully avoided such detail. For example, an item in the *Weekly News* advertised 'new blood stock' from Victoria as the 'purest blood that England has produced' with the claim that the fifty-five horses

²⁵ Mary Ann Eleanor Petre, Journal /Transcribed by June Stark, ATL, MS-1772, 2001-060-08, pp.1-22.

²⁶ Keith Binney, p.190.

²⁷ *New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator*, 4 Nov 1843, p.1.

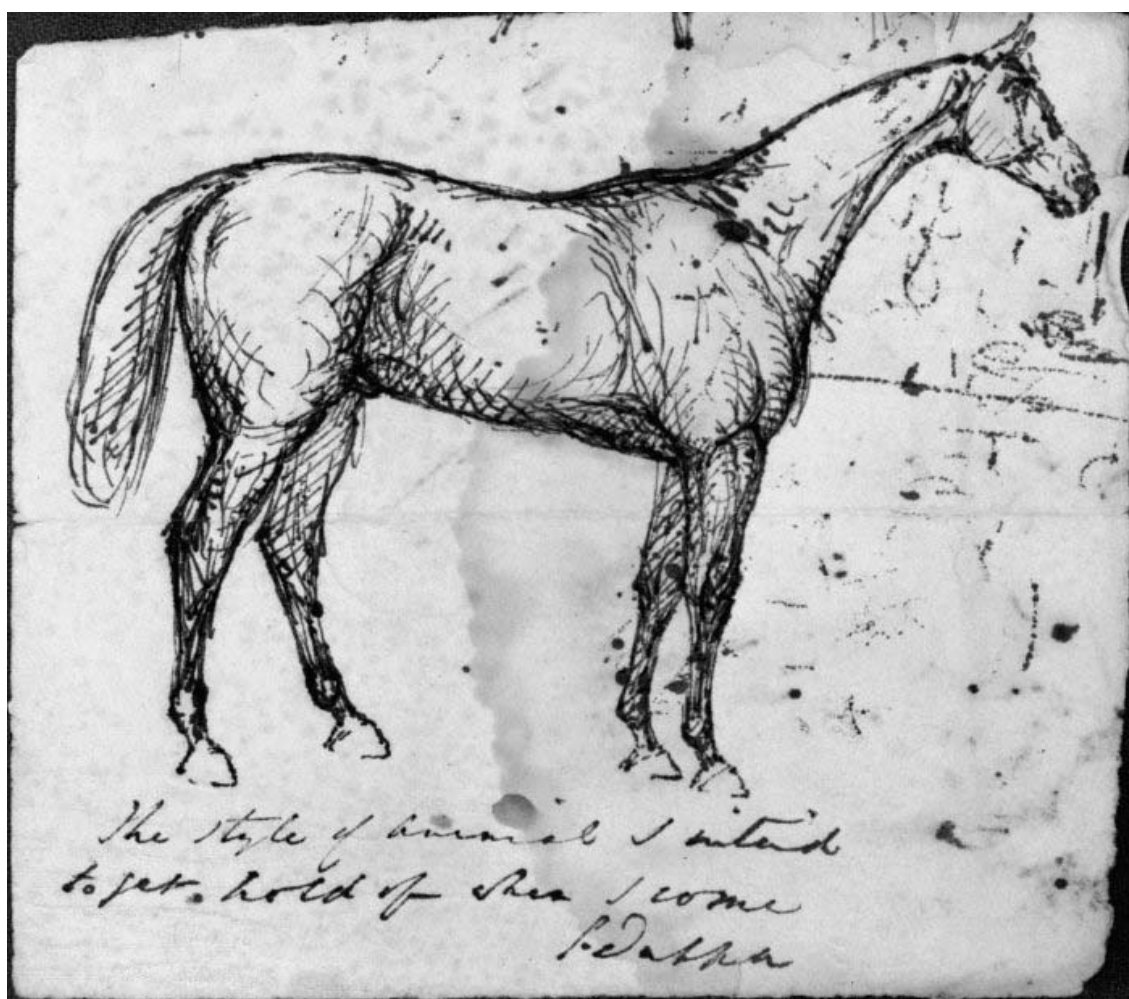


Figure 1: George Duppa, The style of animal I intend to get hold of when I come (c.1839), Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, NON-ATL-0059.

on offer were 'expected to cause an almost entire revolution in our racing stock'.²⁸ Whether any of these animals could claim entry into Britain's General Stud Book for Thoroughbred horses is highly unlikely. The difference between Arab horses and Thoroughbreds with their common Eastern origins is also unclear at this time. The owner of a mare named Haidee advertised her as a Thoroughbred yet indicated that her sire was Haji Baba, a 'fine imported Arab of the highest caste'.²⁹ Although the secondary material on New Zealand horses makes much of the early Thoroughbreds, probably due to their position as foundation stock of the sport of horseracing, it is apparent that Arab horses were early arrivals to these shores as well. Horses of Arab blood, mainly imported from India, were popular in early nineteenth century New South Wales and some of these bloodlines came by way of the Australian colonies to New Zealand. One of these was Mahomet, described as a 'beautiful Arabian horse' imported from Sydney by Dr Le Cour and whose progeny provided 'the principal inhabitants of Auckland' with fine saddle horses.³⁰

However desirable an imported purebred Thoroughbred or Arab might be, the overwhelming demand in the young colony was for a mixed breed horse that could be used for saddle or light draught work. Typically these were strong, middle sized horses with varying mixtures of Thoroughbred, Arab, pony and heavy horse blood. Since so many of this general utility type animal were exported from New South Wales, they became known in later years as 'Walers'.³¹ The stud services of three such stallions, Paritutu, Ploughboy and Young Farmer were advertised in the *Taranaki Herald* in 1852. While no claims of noble pedigree were made for any of these stallions, their abilities as superior performers in work and as 'foal getters' are emphasised.³²

Of the horses that worked as agents of colonisation in the early colonial period, those sometimes referred to as 'journey horses' were of prime importance, for it was by means of such horses that access to the interior of the colony could be achieved. Edward Curr's description of the qualities of the journey horse in the Australian

²⁸ *Weekly News*, 19 Dec 1863, p.7.

²⁹ *New Zealand Spectator and Cooks Strait Guardian*, 13 Nov 1852, p.2.

³⁰ *New Zealander*, 4 Oct 1845, p.1.

³¹ A.T. Yarwood, *Walers: Australian Horses Abroad*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1989, pp.15-17.

³² *Taranaki Herald*, 6 Oct 1852, p.1.

colonies could equally apply to New Zealand. Hardiness was essential as a journey horse was required to carry a rider and his provisions long distances over successive days, surviving on what fodder could be found. The journey horse, Curr believed, was unique to the colonial experience as there was no call for such a horse in England. The English horseman seldom embarked on testing horseback journeys and even if he did, he could draw upon the services of experienced grooms, veterinarians and farriers to care for his horses. As the early colonial horseman did not have such support, he was forced to be self-sufficient and to acquire a wide range of horsemanship skills and this, Curr contended, made for more 'intimate and responsible relations' with horses than could be found in England.³³ The journey horse in New Zealand was both a means of transportation and a companion in travel. In *The Road to Botany Bay*, Paul Carter writes of how central the act of travelling over the land was to the process of colonisation. For European colonists, 'knowing' the land by identifying, naming, mapping and writing about the land was preliminary to the appropriation of the land.³⁴ With few navigable rivers in New Zealand, the interior had to be accessed by foot or by horse. Riding a horse or using one as a pack animal meant that greater distances could be covered and more land encountered. Samuel Marsden, who first foresaw the need for mission saddle horses, was followed by later clergymen who used horses to further their ministries. The Bishops, Selwyn and Harper, were remembered and respected for their long, often arduous journeys on horseback. For other travellers, including surveyors, artists, land seekers and those who journeyed for the sake of adventure, horses were a necessity.

The recording of travel, either by written or visual means, was an important part of the journey. One such account was published in the *Lyttelton Times* in 1852. It was Edward James Lee's description of his journey with packhorse from Nelson to the Port Cooper plains to look for land suitable for establishing a pastoral run.³⁵ Lee narrates the unfolding of his journey as he progresses from start to finish. But as Giselle Byrnes contends in her cultural study of land surveying in New Zealand, it is not with a neutral gaze that the traveller viewed the land. The surveyors, Byrnes

³³ Edward M. Curr, *Pure Saddle Horses and How to Breed them in Australia; Together with a Consideration of the History and Merits of the English, Arab, Andalusian & Australian Breeds of Horses*, Melbourne: Wilson & Mackinnon, pp.xi-xii, 33.

³⁴ Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: an Essay in Spatial History*, London: Faber and Faber, 1987

³⁵ *Lyttelton Times*, 17 Jan 1852, pp.8-9.

argues, 'saw the land not as it was but as it might be'. To do this they employed two 'primary modes of vision,' firstly the 'material gaze' and secondly the 'aesthetic gaze', both of which were fundamental to constructing of a cultural space'.³⁶ As Lee passed through the landscape he read it in terms of his future pastoral run. A week into his journey, he paused to camp at a place where he could imagine his station, in a commanding position 'just above the plains' that had 'lots of wood and water about it'. Further along, another potential resource was realised: 'the grasses appear good, where the fire has passed over the country the tussock grass has nearly disappeared'. Lee also called upon the aesthetic gaze to create a landscape that conformed to Western cultural perceptions. From one vantage point he noted 'manuka dotted about in clumps over a gently rising ground, with the river, backed by high hills (that) gives the whole scene quite a park like appearance'. A view of limestone outcrops was seen as shaped 'by the hand and line of the mason' that led Lee to imagine himself 'in the midst of some gigantic ruin of past ages'. Still his material gaze returned with the revelation that this limestone, 'if limestone it be, will no doubt become valuable in course of time, the supply must be inexhaustible'.³⁷

The traveller's horse was closely bound up in the journey. Throughout his recorded journey of discovery, Lee made reference to his 'good mare', marvelling how she kept her footing in difficult terrain, avoided being bogged and maintained her condition on what grasses could be found. Less obliging but no less significant to the journey was the Chevaliers' horse, Tomboy. Artists and travellers, Nicholas and Caroline Chevalier were granted £200 in 1866 by the Canterbury Provincial Council to illustrate a journey by horseback to the West Coast and back with the aim of encouraging settlement.³⁸ Despite the difficult nature of the journey, recorded domestic incidents gave the journey a sense of intimacy with which readers and viewers could identify. A sketch entitled 'Tomboy Very Wild' illustrates a situation that would have been all too familiar to those who were dependent on the horse for travel. (Figure 2) Tomboy, having pulled free from his tether, is bolting from camp

³⁶ Giselle Byrnes, *Boundary Markers: Land Surveying and the Colonization of New Zealand*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2001, pp.39-40.

³⁷ *Lyttelton Times*, 17 Jan 1852, pp.8-9.

³⁸ Melvin N. Day, 'Chevalier, Caroline 1832-1917; Chevalier, Nicholas 1828-1902', *DNZB*, updated 7 Apr 2006, URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>, Accessed 14 Jul 2007.



Figure 2: Nicholas Chevalier, Tomboy very wild (1866), Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, A-102-032.

while the Chevaliers' servant, well aware of the consequences of a lost horse, hides a bridle behind his back while anxiously trying to coax the errant horse back.

The descriptions of early journeys by horses make much of the difficulties encountered along the way. Laurence Kennaway in *Crusts* related the incident where Henry Harper, as Bishop of Christchurch, arrived at his camp, foot sore and cold, having lost his horse.³⁹ This was not an uncommon occurrence as Harper's horse, Dick, was renowned for his uncanny ability to find his way back to his Otago birthplace whenever he found himself free.⁴⁰ Inadequate horsemanship plagued Samuel Butler on his searches for land, his efforts to conceal his poor riding skills from fellow travellers made difficult by one horse named Doctor, who, on taking great leaps over even the smallest of streams, easily managed to unseat his rider.⁴¹ The journey's progress was often hampered by the nature of the land. Lee related how slowly he was forced to ride through what he described as the 'most savage' country with cutting Spaniard and spear-grass.⁴² Another traveller, Otago Presbyterian minister William Bannerman, suffered a serious accident in 1861 when his horse fell in the snow and crushed his leg.⁴³ The tutor and diarist, William Hawkins, wrote of his horse, Mameluke, being bogged in a swamp on a journey to Christchurch. Stuck fast, with only his head showing above the mud, for five hours Hawkins and his companion struggled to free the horse until help arrived in the form of 'two strong cart-horses and three strong men' from Glenmark Station.⁴⁴

But all these obstacles to travel paled in comparison to the dangers associated with New Zealand rivers. Often deep and fast flowing at the best of times, rivers in flood held additional hazards, the murky water obscuring the footing, as well as carrying boulders, fallen trees and other debris. The risks to human and horse are evidenced by

³⁹ Laurence J. Kennaway, *Crusts: A Settler's Fare Due South*, London: Sampson Low, Marston, Lowe & Searle, 1874, pp. 106-7.

⁴⁰ J.W. Stack, *Through Canterbury and Otago with Bishop Harper in 1859-60*, Christchurch: Nag's Head Press, 1972, p.10.

⁴¹ Samuel Butler, *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement*, A.C. Brasington and P.B. Maling (eds), Auckland: Blackwood & Janet Paul, 1964, p.48.

⁴² *Lyttelton Times*, 17 Jan 1852, pp.8-9.

⁴³ Dorothy Page, 'Bannerman, Jane 1835?-1923; Bannerman, William 1822-1902', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 16 Dec 2003, URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>, Accessed 20 Jul 2007.

⁴⁴ William Webster Hawkins, *Diary/Transcribed by Helen Loftus (1864-1866)*, ATL, qMS – 0934 (91-239) pp.114-16.

the wide range of visual and written accounts of river crossing. The time needed to assess the river and to cross in safety allowed those with the inclination to pull out their notebooks to illustrate the crossing. William Hawkin's diary contains illustrations of riders on a river bank, their gestures clearly indicating the discussion amongst themselves about planning their best course of action.⁴⁵ Another traveller, Edward Arthur, shows a horse swimming alongside a canoe crossing a creek near Ngaruawahia while a second horse, bearing saddle and swag, waits on the bank for its turn. (Figure 3) Newspaper obituaries were a constant reminder to colonial travellers of the perils of rivers, such as the account of William Scott, an Invercargill livery-stable keeper who was washed off his horse and drowned while crossing the Ohau River.⁴⁶ Although rivers were a constant threat throughout the colonial period, there was also a feeling that once known, rivers would be less threatening. Edward Lee noted that although the river he crossed ten times was large and strong, once the fords were better known, 'much of the danger will be removed'.⁴⁷

The obstacles to the journey's progress played a key role in the making of the colonist for it was in overcoming these challenges that imbued him with power and strengthened his hold on the land. Laurence Kennaway saw the colonist, in his struggle to surmount nature's barriers and to make way for civilisation, as following the footsteps of his ancient British forebears.

I never remember recognising so distinctly as on that morning (of our Ashley camp) the full advantages of Huns and Celts, and Picts and Scots, and ancient Britons, and old-world fellows generally. It became at once clear that their mission (even though they ground themselves away in the operation) was to rub down the rough edges of the world, in order that we, whose time has fallen in later days, might walk through the earth safely, and at our own sweet will. It is one thing to fly over a deep but civilised stream in an express train, to hear a little extra rattle, to look out the window and say "Oh! – Bridge," and before you have settled yourself into your corner again, to be half-a-mile on the other side; but it is quite another to come up, on a streaming evening, to a wild, uncurbed river, and look hopelessly across two hundred yards of thick, rapid water, and wonder how on earth you are to get yourself, your horses, your baggage, and a thousand sheep to the other side.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Hawkins, Illustration from Diary, ATL, E-370-009.

⁴⁶ *Press*, 30 Jun 1865, p.2.

⁴⁷ *Lyttelton Times*, 17 Jan 1852, pp.8-9.

⁴⁸ Kennaway, p.52.



Figure 3: Edward Arthur Williams, 'Crossing the creek just below Ngaruawhia 6 March (1864)', Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, E-349-088.

In sharing the dangers, hardships and triumphs of travel, the journey horse was perceived as a partner in travel. Their names, character and adventures appear frequently in travellers' tales. Although not necessarily faultless, many journey horses remained with their masters for years. Marred by his pronounced homing instinct as well as the tendency of his forelegs to give way suddenly causing his rider to pitch forward over his neck, Bishop Harper's horse, Dick, was appreciated for his 'weight carrying capacity and reputation for steadiness while crossing rapid rivers.'⁴⁹ Reverend Stack kept his 'Māori horse', Bob, for many years despite the horse's unfortunate appearance and ungainly paces.

Though I suffered much pain and discomfort from being obliged to ride this horse for so long a time, he proved so gentle in temperament, so free from vice, so sure-footed on the narrow hillside paths of Banks Peninsula, and so steady in the rushing rivers of the Plains, that I learnt to value old 'Bob' very highly and felt quite a heartache when, after many years of service and companionship, I was obliged to part with him.⁵⁰

The unique conditions of the colonial frontier that gave rise to the emergence of particular types of horses were not lost on British commentators. In his chapter on colonial horses in *The Horses of the British Empire* published in 1908, T.F. Dale outlined three phases of development that he believed each British colony passed through on the road to civilisation. Each of these phases, Dale contended was associated with distinct types of horses. The first was the pastoral period, where lack of fences and shelter meant that horses were forced to 'shift for themselves' and where 'draught and cold and competition for food' served to 'weed out the weakly ones, leaving only the strong and healthy ones'. From this sound foundation of 'hardy, healthy horse stock', knowledgeable Englishmen could improve these animals by the 'importation of choice stock, chiefly Thoroughbred but including other horses as well'. Dale's second phase took place when 'the farmer gradually (took) the place of the great squatters and their vast territories (were) cut up for agricultural purposes'. This heralded the development of the light or heavy draught horses imported from Britain to work the land. The third and final phase of colonial progress, Dale labelled the mining and manufacturing phase. This stage required a great variety of horses, not just the work horses to supply the power to drive the growing industries but the

⁴⁹ Stack, p.10.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.13.

‘horses for show and use’ in the colonial towns and cities. It is at this stage in its development that the colony would be able to claim ‘as many strains of blood as the mother country’. There remained, however a critical point of difference; while the mother country’s horse stock may have evolved over the centuries without a clear sense of direction, the ‘daughter country’ benefited from the ability to select only the very best blood to import as their foundation stock. This advantage, Dale believed, was responsible for the ‘rapid though not uninterrupted development of (colonial) horse stock in numbers and quality’.⁵¹

Dale noted that although New Zealand owed much to the ‘skill and enterprise’ of the Australian pastoralists for its prosperity in its early days, its differing political and climatic conditions meant that ‘once started (it) travelled on its own road to progress’. Dale drew attention to New Zealand’s diversity of landscapes, from mountains or rolling hills with deep valleys, to wide stretches of fertile plains, making every kind of agriculture and stock raising possible. It was during its pastoral period, that Dale could attribute the development of a unique type of saddle horse.⁵² This was the horse that in later years would become known as a station hack, a sturdy horse associated with the vast and remote pastoral runs established in the early colonial period. The station hack is portrayed as physically and mentally strong to survive the testing terrain, harsh climate and long working days. Generally a station hack was a mixed blood horse with a strong Thoroughbred component combined with some draught horse blood to give added weight and strength. The nature of the work influenced the breeding as did the owner’s taste. Very often, the preference for certain characteristics in a horse was passed down through the generations, which resulted in the association of an individual station with a particular type of horse. Ben Rutherford described how his family bred their station hacks from half draught mares by a Thoroughbred, or near Thoroughbred stallion.⁵³ Mesopotamia, the station established by Samuel Butler, became known for their low-set hardy hacks due, in part, to the influence of a Welsh cob stallion.⁵⁴ It is noticeable that the language and preoccupations of pedigree breeding is largely missing from the accounts of station

⁵¹ Dale, ‘Colonial Horses’, 1908, p.227.

⁵² Ibid., p.239.

⁵³ Ben Rutherford, *A View from the Brothers*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1970, p.88.

⁵⁴ David McLeod, ‘Station Hacks and Packhorses’, in *The New Zealand Horseman*, Duncan Holden (ed.), Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1967, pp.17-22.

hacks; performance was what really mattered. Depending on the nature of the land, some stations bred horses to be good walkers, not only having the stride to cover a lot of ground but also being comfortable for the rider to sit in the saddle for hours on end, day after day.⁵⁵ The horse that was worked on high country needed to be sure-footed and strong enough to carry a rider's weight up the steep gradients. Rutherford noted that 'the strong, fit horse always seems to have another leg ready if one foot should slip from under it or if a boulder on which he has put his weight should roll'.⁵⁶ There were other qualities, generally more associated with humans that appear in the commentaries of the station horses. Courage to face raging rivers, rough country, and 'wild' cattle is frequently mentioned as was the ability to work independently. Kennaway remembered a 'most perfect stock horse' named Wild Dayrell who could chase wild cattle, 'dodge and turn them with extraordinary skill, - the reins loose on his neck, - leaving the rider to use his stock-whip and keep his seat'.⁵⁷ In such demanding conditions, a good temperament was also deemed necessary, not only for safety reasons but also because a stockman's horse was also seen as a working partner. In a twentieth century tribute to station hacks, Len McClelland wrote, 'the silent man at a backcountry hut often had no-one to speak to for weeks on end, and when snowfalls or days of mist cut him off completely, his horse and his dogs were his companions and his lifeline'.⁵⁸

While Dale linked the draught horse to the development of productive farms, he failed to note that in New Zealand at least, oxen, and more commonly bullocks, were preferred over horses by some colonists in the early years of settlement. In 1840, a £10 reward was offered in Wellington for four working cattle that had apparently been driven away soon after being loaded from the vessel, *Earl of Stanhope*.⁵⁹ In the 1850s when many of the large pastoral runs were established in Canterbury and Otago, bullocks were generally used for cartage. They were slow but more easily kept than horses and it was said by one High Country historian that they could be driven up a gradient three times as steep as any horse could be persuaded to haul.⁶⁰ Perhaps

⁵⁵ Peter Newton, *Five Hundred Horses*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1978, p.77.

⁵⁶ Rutherford, p.88.

⁵⁷ Kennaway, p.104-5.

⁵⁸ Elaine Power and Len McClelland, *The Horse in New Zealand*, Auckland: Collins, 1975, p.16.

⁵⁹ *New Zealand Spectator and Cooks Strait Guardian*, 25 Apr 1840, p.2.

⁶⁰ R.M. Burdon, *High Country: The Evolution of a New Zealand Sheep Station*, Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1938, pp.47,49.

influenced by his own ineptitude with horses, Samuel Butler was a strong supporter of the steady bullock:

His heavy lumbering carcass is mated with a no less lumbering soul. He is a good, slow, steady, patient slave if you let him take his own time about it; but don't hurry him. He has played a very important part in the advancement of civilisation and the development of the resources of the world, a part which the more fiery horse could not have played.⁶¹

This early use of oxen in New Zealand is a reflection of British farming practice. Up until almost the middle of the nineteenth century, British progressive agriculturalists favoured the use of oxen as they were cheaper to feed and harness, less susceptible to disease and injury and at the end of their working life could be sold as meat.⁶² This was the fate of one of the first animals in Wellington when one resident, John Pierce, recorded that he had sold his bullock in 1840 for one shilling per pound.⁶³

As the colonial settlements grew, the requirements of greater speed and versatility, swung in the favour of heavy horses as the draught animal of choice. As with the light horses, the stud notices which appeared every spring and summer gave an indication of the desired characteristics of a draught horse. The names of the stallions and their descriptions emphasise size, strength and the ability to do heavy work. Sampson was advertised in Wellington as an animal of 'strong muscular power' while a horse named Giant, stood in East Taieri and another called Drayman was offered in Nelson.⁶⁴ No pedigrees were given for these three horses; their ability as heavy work horses was their main selling point as stud animals. Many more stallions were advertised in the 1850s and 1860s under the general term, 'Draught Horse'. Yet even in this early period, some owners were claiming purebred status for their heavy horses. From the early 1850s, the *Lyttelton Times*, *Otago Witness*, and *Nelson Examiner* carried advertisements for Clydesdales for sale or for stud.⁶⁵ Whether

⁶¹ Butler, pp.86-7.

⁶² Terry Keegan, *The Heavy Horse: Its Harness and Harness Decoration*, London: Pelham Books, 1973, pp.14-15. Stephen J.C. Hall and Juliet Clutton-Brock, *Two Hundred Years of British Farm Livestock*, London: British Museum, 1989, p.225.

⁶³ R.O. Carrick (ed.), *Historical Records of New Zealand South Prior to 1840*, Dunedin: Otago Daily Times and Witness, 1930, p.30.

⁶⁴ *New Zealand Spectator and Cooks Strait Guardian*, 13 Nov 1852, p.2., *Otago Witness*, 23 Oct 1858, p.4., *Nelson Examiner*, 15 Oct 1863, p.4.

⁶⁵ *Lyttelton Times*, 22 Mar 1851, p.1, 22 Nov 1851, p.5, 18 Sep 1852, p.12, *Otago Witness* 3 Oct 1857, p.8, 2 Jan 1858, p.8., *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 13 Sep 1851, p.1.

these were purebred Clydesdales or not is not important here, what is significant is that the heavy horse of the Scottish lowlands was seen to be a desirable addition to colonial settlement. The situation concerning the comparable English heavy horse is more complicated. During the same early period as the Clydesdale appeared in the newspapers, horses advertised as 'Cart Stallions' or 'Cart Horses' made their appearance in the newspapers of Auckland, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki, Wellington, Nelson and Canterbury.⁶⁶ This could mean either horses suitable for pulling carts, or what is more likely, it could refer to the particular breed of heavy horse developed in the English Midlands. Prior to 1884, the horse now identified as the Shire, was known as the English Cart Horse.⁶⁷ More will be said about the intricacies of pedigree breeding in later chapters, but it will suffice to indicate that some early New Zealand importers and owners were aware of the desirability of tracing their horses' ancestry to Scottish or English bloodlines. Caution also needs to be exercised in basing assumptions about the breeding and type of horses sought in the founding years solely on newspaper stud notices. These valuable horses with their accordingly high stud fees would have been representational of only a minority of horses in the colony at the time. For ease of handling, most male horses were gelded and even as far as stallions were concerned, the majority were mixed breed animals whose stud services would have been limited to their owner's mares or perhaps those of their neighbours.

Colonial progress quickened with the discovery of gold in Otago in the early 1860s. It was gold that commenced the process that Dale would have identified as his mining and manufacturing phase, opening the way for fresh imports of horses. Men as well as large amounts of supplies needed to be moved from the ports of entry into the interior and speed became more important than ever before. Cobb and Co., a coaching firm initiated by four Americans on the goldfields of Victoria met this need in their reputation for reliability, punctuality and speed. They used a light coach, the Concord, named for its birthplace in Concord, New Hampshire. A proprietor of one of these coaches, Charles Carlos Cole arrived in Dunedin from Geelong in 1861 with fifty-four horses along with his coach and a number of other vehicles. Within a week of his arrival, Cole silenced his critics by driving his Cobb and Co. type coach and

⁶⁶ *Weekly News*, 5 Nov 1864, p.2., *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 2 Jan 1858, p.1., *Taranaki Herald*, 29 Oct 1859, p.1, *Wellington Independent*, 3 Jan 1860, p.4, *Nelson Examiner*, 15 Oct 1863, p.4, *Timaru Herald*, 3 Nov 1866, p.4.

⁶⁷ Diana Zeuner, *Heavy Horses*, Risborough, Buckinghamshire: Shire Publications, 2004, p.10.

team of four horses from Dunedin to Gabriel's Gully in the promised one day's travel.⁶⁸ The speed of the journey remained significant throughout the coaching era in New Zealand. Competition was keen on many routes and drivers of rival coaches were known to race each to make the quickest trip to their destination. Changing the teams of horses frequently was a means of making for a faster journey. Accommodation houses and hotels en route provided refreshment for the passengers and fresh animals for the coach. For the time that the gold seekers remained in and around Gabrielle's Gully, four changing stations were needed along the way from the Provincial Hotel, Dunedin, to the United States Hotel in the new town of Tuapeka. Later in time when coaches ran in conjunction with the railway, the ability of the coaches to meet the arrival and departure times of the trains was crucial to the success of the operation.⁶⁹

Hand in hand with speed and reliability went showmanship. Commercial rivalry between coaching firms vying for business saw brightly painted coaches drawn by well turned out horses. Matching teams of greys, chestnuts, bays and blacks were considered particularly desirable. The Newman brothers who began in the early colonial period what was to develop into a nation-wide transportation network were recognised for their ability to select good coach horses and to look after them well, along with their business acumen. They kept a 'show team' for the first and last stages of the Nelson to Blenheim route. These were lighter horses with more Thoroughbred blood than those used for the middle stages or for hill work. The first team of horses would have made an impressive display as they reared and plunged in harness to begin their run as would the final team as they raced through town at journey's end.⁷⁰ The drivers themselves became heroic figures, often flamboyant in manner and dress, they were seen to get their passengers and mail through at all costs. More than a few of the early drivers were Americans who came via the Australian goldfields but there were Australian, Canadian, British and New Zealand drivers as well. Lovell-Smith in *Old Coaching Days* quotes the *Tuapeka Times* in its image of the coach driver:

⁶⁸ E.M. Lovell-Smith, *Old Coaching Days in Otago and Southland*, Christchurch: Lovell-Smith & Verner, 1931, pp. 1-6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.7,40,42,94.

⁷⁰ J. Halket Millar, *High Noon for Coaches*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1953, p.95.

The driver of the olden days was usually a fine burly man, fearless and dauntless, caring not for danger, be it flood, bushrangers or intricate roads hewn out of forest, beset with boulders or tree stumps; the greater the danger the better he seemed to like it.⁷¹

The coach journey did hold many dangers with fatalities and serious injuries amongst passengers and drivers not uncommon. Fractious, shying and bolting horses could cause the coach to capsize, fall into ditches or tumble down banks. River crossings, high winds, snow, fog and bush fires could take their toll. Because of the inherent risks and discomfort associated with coach travel, passengers were not passive participants but often took an active role in the journey. It was not unusual for passengers to walk up hills to ease the load for the horses or to assist the driver in getting the coach and horses, sometimes separately, across hazards such as road slips, bridge washouts, and rivers in flood. Passenger recording of such adventures made for lively travel writing. More skilled with the pen than others, the novelist and world traveller, Anthony Trollope, wrote of his winter coach journey from Lawrence to Tokomairiro in the early 1870s. When snow blocked the road at the Waitahuna cutting, Trollope along with the driver, Tommy Pope and the one other male passenger, was obliged to shovel snow to clear the coach. Further into the journey, Pope found the snow on the road too deep and decided to take the coach instead over the crest of the hill. While the horses were taken out of the coach to be held by the other male passenger, Pope and Trollope pulled the coach downhill by hand and guided it to safety at the bottom of the hill. Meanwhile Mrs. Trollope made her own way down the hillside, her progress impaired by the soft snow that stuck to her sweeping petticoats.⁷²

Reliable estimations of the number of horses in the colony do not exist prior to 1861 and even at this point may be underestimated due the difficulty in counting horses that roamed in a semi-feral state. As Table 1 shows, there were 28,270 horses in the colony in 1861, rising to 161,033 in 1881. When this is compared to the European population, it can be seen that despite the fact that the number of people more than quadrupled in the twenty year period, even greater growth took place in the horse population, multiplying 5.7 times.

⁷¹ Lovell-Smith, p.87.

⁷² Ibid., pp.92-3.

Table 1: Population and Horses by District 1861-1881

	1861		1871		1881	
	POPULATION	HORSES	POPULATION	HORSES	POPULATION	HORSES
Auckland	24,420	5,621	62,335	11,620	99,451	25,545
Taranaki	2,044	220	4,480	1,825	14,858	5,959
Hawke's Bay	2,611	1,782	6,059	4,375	17,367	7,561
Wellington	12,566	5,117	24,001	11,246	61,371	21,149
Marlborough	2,299	1,519	5,235	2,646	9,300	4,454
Nelson	9,952	2,360	22,501	4,518	26,075	6,634
Westland			15,357	759	15,010	1,103
Canterbury	16,090	6,049	46,934	17,654	112,424	45,609
Otago	29,039	5,602	69,491	25,804	134,077	43,019
Total New Zealand	99,021	28,270	256,393	80,447	489,933	161,033
Growth:						
10 years to 1871			2.6	2.8		
10 years to 1881					1.9	2.0
20 years 1861 - 1881					4.9	5.7

Note: Population figures exclude Māori population.

Data taken from B.L. Evans, *Agricultural and Pastoral Statistics of New Zealand 1861-1954*, Wellington: Department of Statistics, 1956, pp.A7, A29.

Despite the fact that horses commanded high prices throughout the 1850s and 1860s access to a horse was an attainable goal for Māori and European settlers alike. It cost the clergyman, Bannerman, half his yearly salary to buy his first horse⁷³ but he would have found that, once bought, it was reasonably inexpensive to keep. The colonial horse did not need to be stabled and it was found that it could live year around on so called 'native' grass that was both palatable and sustaining. Even if the purchase price could not be met by an individual, there were other ways of gaining use of a horse. Māori tribal ownership of some horses meant that all members of that tribe had use of that particular animal.⁷⁴ The pastoral runs developed large herds of horses that employees could ride. Large sections of William Hawkins' diary are devoted to his difficulties with various station horses. After many falls from the aptly named Mischief, he was given a horse which he scorned as 'the smallest horse I ever saw'. His pride returned when he was allowed to ride Mameluke, a 'stunning horse' and the

⁷³ 'Bannerman', *DNZB*.

⁷⁴ Stack, p.12.

‘most like an English hunter’ he had seen in the colony.⁷⁵ On smaller holdings, it was not unusual amongst neighbours to share horses. William Ayson recalled how in the early 1850s when he was working as a ‘cowboy’ on a farm on the Inch Clutha, his employer would lend his mare to a neighbour for ploughing.⁷⁶ Some horses were gift horses. In an odd twist of fate, Bishop Harper convinced the Kaiapoi Māori to give James Stack, the newly appointed superintendent of the Christchurch Diocesan Maori Mission, the horse he named Bob.⁷⁷

Horse ownership was regarded as a significant marker on the road to colonial progress. The editor of the *Nelson Examiner* enthused how agricultural workers who, a mere ten years ago would have been labouring in the fields of Britain for someone else, in 1851 worked their own land with their own ploughs and that ‘the teams of bullocks and horses they drive to market with carts heavily laden with grain, are their own property’.⁷⁸ In *The Farthest Promised Land*, Rollo Arnold showed how immigrant letters sent back to England in the 1870s at a time when horse prices were beginning to drop, made much of their acquisition of horses. George Douch, after nearly two years in the Inglewood settlement, was able to report that he was able to ride his own horse to work felling bush.⁷⁹ For the former English rural labourers that Arnold discussed, horse ownership represented elevated social standing as well as a means of future prosperity. He quotes one young woman’s comment that appeared in the *Labourers’ Union Chronicle*; ‘You would think father and uncle quite swells if you were to see them going off to work on their horses every morning’.⁸⁰ Another satisfied settler wrote that his son, Tom, presently in service, intended to buy a horse with his pay and when he had saved enough to get a second horse, a dray and a plough would be able to make a good living by making roads and ploughing land.⁸¹

Photographic records also give a good indication of pride of ownership of horses. A common theme from the 1870s onwards is the posed family portrait with two valued

⁷⁵ Hawkins MS, pp.55-8, 66.

⁷⁶ William Ayson, *Pioneering in Otago: The Recollections of William Ayson Set Down in His 97th Year*, Christchurch: Kiwi Publishers, ca 1995, p.15.

⁷⁷ Stack, p.11.

⁷⁸ *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 19 Apr 1851, p.34.

⁷⁹ Rollo Arnold, *The Farthest Promised Land: English Villagers, New Zealand Immigrants of the 1870s*, Wellington: Victoria University Press with Price Milburn, 1981.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.178.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.257-8.

possessions, their house and horse. In the 1880s a family pose in front of their modest weatherboard house with their two saddle horses against a backdrop of their recently cleared land. (Figure 4) The grey is ridden side saddle by one of the women in the household dressed in formal riding habit. The picture reveals that not only has the family acquired two horses but also that they want to be seen as engaged in an equestrian lifestyle that back 'home' in Britain would have been the preserve of gentry. In another photograph, a middle aged couple's apparent agricultural prosperity is represented by their house set amongst a young but flourishing garden and their two draught horses. (Figure 5) The lady of the house stands by her front door, while her husband proudly poses with his harnessed Clydesdale team at the side of the house. Out of their usual context in paddock or stable, the horses are nevertheless deliberate inclusions in the carefully composed photograph. These photographs and many more like them serve as a permanent record of a family's social and material progress. Like the published letters that Arnold referenced with their inventories of livestock, photographs of this genre would have been sent home to Britain as concrete proof of colonial success.

As well as related to private fortune, horses were also seen to relate to community progress. In 1841 Charles Heaphy of the New Zealand Company made a watercolour sketch showing the apparent agricultural and commercial progress of the fledgling Wellington settlement (Figure 6). His high viewpoint allows an expansive, yet highly detailed vision. Cows and goats graze contentedly in the foreground while pair of riders on fine Thoroughbreds trot along the well formed road. The Māori presence is not ignored but is revealed by two canoes. Significantly, however, they are immobile, drawn well up on the foreshore, and it is European sailing vessels that ride gracefully on the harbour. A sense of passage is suggested by the winding road that begins in the foreground, makes its way gently alongside the harbour, through the town with its neat domestic and commercial premises and on into the green rolling hills where it disappears on the horizon. The earliest Wellington settlers, however, probably would not have recognised this tidy township and its benign landscape. Created with the intent of attracting colonists, it is a vision for the future, a sense of what Wellington could be rather than what it was in the present. In similar compositions, horses with humans appear in the foreground. In almost all cases they have a sense of direction, captured by the artist in the process of going somewhere.



Figure 4: 'Holises', (c.1880), ATL, Picture File – Houses-728,
National Library of New Zealand.



Figure 5: Untitled, ATL, Picture File – Houses-728,
National Library of New Zealand.



Figure 6: Charles Heaphy, 'View of part of the town of Wellington' (1841), ATL, National Library of New Zealand, C-025-009.



Figure 7: William Howard Holmes, 'Wellington Beach' (1856), Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, A-032-040.

It could be said that the artists who employed this were following the European spatial convention of using foreground figures to draw the eye into the composition. The moving horse motif that appears in colonial picture is more meaningful than mere pictorial device. The colonial artist associated the horse under human control with the steady, measured march of civilisation. In a painting of the following decade, also of Wellington, the artist William Howard Holmes again depicts a couple on horseback in the foreground. (Figure 7) This much closer view reveals that one of the riders is a lady, top hatted and dressed in elegant riding habit. Her companion is equally well attired and they pause their journey momentarily to engage in polite conversation with an unmounted gentleman. Signs of prosperity are all around them, the horse with cart waiting patiently on the wharf, the attractive frontage of Barrett's Hotel as well as the spacious road and footpath. Although specifically located as a northward view of Lampton Quay, it is a scene that could just as easily be a peaceful English seaside village. The journey as suggested here is not complete but there is time, at least, for the colonists to stop for a while and enjoy the fruits of their labour.

By the early 1880s horses had clearly stamped their presence in New Zealand. Colonial conditions allowed their numbers to increase to the extent that access to horses became a reality for many people. Horses fulfilled a range of practical and symbolic purposes in the early colonial period but central to these was their role in furthering the cause of colonial progress. They were used by missionaries to assist in their civilising mission amongst the Māori and to justify the presence of the Europeans on the land. Horses assisted in the process of finding land on which to settle and helped transform the landscape into rich farmland and prosperous towns. They served as a mark of colonial success for individuals as well as for the colony as a whole. The early colonial period is important to the study of New Zealand horse culture as it provided a solid foundation from which this nation's horse traditions grew. While Britain provided some of the founding horse stock, as has been stressed here, horses also came from Australia, South Africa, Chile, and India. But already by the early 1880s a cultural shift was in the air, one that would see British horses and practices emerge as the dominating force in New Zealand equestrianism. Nowhere is this more evident than in sport, the subject that the next chapter will address.

3. Imperial Pedigree

Not for the lust of killing, not for thee places of pride,
Not for the hate of the hunted we English saddle and ride
But because in the gift of our fathers
The blood in our veins that flows
Must answer for ever and ever the
Challenge of 'Yonder he goes!'¹

This verse in Will Ogilvie's well known hunting poem with its reference to blood is relevant in a number of ways to the establishment of equestrian sports in New Zealand. First of all, it acknowledges the hereditary principle in the assertion that the English passion for foxhunting is passed on by blood. The belief that this is a 'gift' bequeathed from generation to generation helps explain the determination the British colonists felt in introducing hunting and related horse sports as part of the colonial process. It can also be read as part of British imperial culture that sought to emphasise the links between the motherland and her scattered colonies. The creation of blood ties through foxhunting and horseracing, sports so intimately connected with the rural landscape, can be seen as a means of binding 'for ever and ever' distant New Zealand to Great Britain. There is something, too, in the compulsion to 'saddle and ride' suggestive of a call to arms. Women seem excluded from Ogilvie's vision; it is the 'blood of our fathers' that drives men to hunt down their prey. Unspoken but ever present is the acceptance of the dangers of the pursuit. The blood shed, although intended to be that of the hunted, could just as easily be that of the hunter, who driven by some higher ideal beyond mere sport, is prepared to offer his life in the service of empire.

This chapter will look at the role of imperialism in the establishment of equestrian sports in nineteenth century New Zealand. It is a complex question but one that a number of historians have looked at in an international context. J.A. Mangan has examined many aspects of imperial sport and the connection he makes between militarism and English foxhunting is drawn upon here. Richard Holt's work is important too, for the creation of what he calls 'cultural bridges' through sport

¹ Anne Holland, *Hunting : A Portrait*, London: Little Brown, 2003, p.74.

between Britain and her colonies. These bonds became increasingly important in the nineteenth century as the size of the Empire expanded.² Of particular relevance to the Australasian context, Claire Brennan's doctoral thesis, 'Imperial Game' examines the imperial significance of sport hunting in nineteenth century New Zealand and Victoria.³ Although Patrick McDevitt sees sport as playing a key role in the creation and maintenance of the power relations between metropolitan Britain and its peripheral colonies, he also acknowledges that the colonies did not unreservedly adopt the practices and values of British sport. Rather, they brought their own experiences and meanings to sport and in so doing developed 'something new, a mixture of British and colonial'.⁴ This is the position that this chapter takes. While the English sports of horseracing and mounted hunting were transplanted to New Zealand, by necessity they were modified to suit colonial conditions. Variance to tradition, however, was contested and it is the dialogue surrounding such change that is of interest here. The main emphasis is on horseracing and harrier hunting as these sports were early additions to the colonial scene. Polo was not introduced until late in the nineteenth century but the fact that it was so closely aligned with British imperialism makes it of interest.

The period in which British horseracing and hunting were introduced to New Zealand also marked a time of wide reaching change to these traditional sports. By the middle of the eighteenth century both mounted sports had become well established rural activities, closely tied to the local community. However, by the early nineteenth century horseracing and hunting were increasingly challenged by changing social, cultural, and technological conditions and as a result, evolved into sports far more urban and national in focus. To understand the nature of equestrian sport in New Zealand, it is important to look at horseracing and hunting in their traditional forms as well the modern face of the sports that developed during the course of the nineteenth century.

² Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p.212.

³ Claire Brennan, 'Imperial Game: A History of Hunting, Exotic Species and the Environment in New Zealand and Victoria 1840-1901', University of Melbourne: PhD Thesis in History, 2004.

⁴ Patrick F. McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and Empire, 1880-1935*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p.3.

Horseracing in the eighteenth century was a popular form of recreation in all parts of the British Isles. It was generally associated with the celebration of holidays or local fairs with horseracing just one of the attractions. Travelling shows, gaming booths, beer and food tents, cock fights, boxing and wrestling matches along with other athletic contests were also part of the festivities. Before the advent of modern transportation, horses raced only locally. This meant that few horses at the country meetings were specialised racehorses. Hunters, farmers' hacks and ponies, ridden by their owners or their friends, competed against each other, often running in a number of heats before an eventual winner was declared. Because of the localised nature of horseracing at this time, British race tracks were marked by difference rather than standardisation. Some reflected the particular landscape, while others evolved from the whims and preferences of individual landowners.⁵

Even more so than horseracing, foxhunting was closely associated with the English rural countryside, even to the point of shaping the landscape in some localities. As Tom Williamson contends in *The Transformation of Rural England*, the sport's development was related to the enclosure and grassing down of the Midland shires during the shift from arable to pastoral farming in the late eighteenth century. Extensive stretches of grassland not only held the fox's scent but it also provided long gallops for hard riding huntsmen, broken only by low cut hedges ideal for jumping. Williamson adds that many sporting landlords also established coverts, small areas of gorse and other scrub, with some trees for ornamental purposes, where foxes could find shelter to breed until sought out for sport. The pastoral farming of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Rutland, characterised by a few large tenant farms allowed foxhunting to develop in its classic form. Carefully designed eighteenth century landscape parks of 'Capability' Brown and others like him that grew up around grand country houses were extensions of the idea of providing a landscape that offered a picturesque setting and provided the elements for foxhunting and others forms of rural recreation.⁶

⁵ Wray Vamplew, *The Turf: A Social and Economic History of Horseracing*, London: Allen Lane, 1976. pp.17-19.

⁶ Tom Williamson, *The Transformation of Rural England: Farming and the Landscape 1700-1870*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002, pp.45-6.

In other parts of Britain, hunting adapted to fit the local physical and social environment. For example, in areas marked by small family farms, it proved more expedient to hunt hare that circled back to the start of the chase rather than fox that tended to run for miles in a more or less straight line. Hunting hares meant that a smaller area was hunted, resulting in fewer farmers from whom to gain permission to hunt their land. Such were the harrier hound packs developed by the farmers who hunted the west country of Cornwall, Dorset and Devon.⁷ Foxhunting in Ireland dates from the mid-eighteenth century and was renowned for its fearsome banks and stone walls that tested the skill and nerve of horse and rider. The mountainous landscape of Wales also offered testing terrain and it was such country where the pack was often out of sight that required the breeding of hounds with the ability to hunt with little direction from the huntsman.⁸ Although fishing and shooting were part of Scottish rural life, mounted hunting had a more limited following than the rest of Britain and developed only on the English borders.

Both racing and hunting flourished widely in Britain because they were regarded as sports with a purpose that went beyond providing a rural leisure activity. First of all, they provided the means by which the athleticism, soundness, stamina and courage of horses could be tested. These were the recognised qualities of a good cavalry horse and as long as the horse remained essential for warfare, the track and the hunting field provided the breeding necessary for warhorses. The close connection between British equestrian sport and war cannot be underestimated. To highlight this particularly British attitude a comparison can be made with the Continental approach to breeding for mounted warfare. Because the land-locked countries of Europe were always at risk from invasion, governments needed to maintain well trained and equipped standing armies even in times of peace.⁹ This resulted in a pattern extending back to the middle ages in which horse breeding was carefully regulated by the various European states to provide a ready supply of high standard horses. Britain, on the other hand, did not have the need for large numbers of cavalry at the ready; her main point of vulnerability was the threat of invasion by sea and was best protected by a

⁷ Holland, p.47.

⁸ Ibid., p.114.

⁹ John Clarke, 'The Warmblood Approach to Breeding: An Historical Introduction Using the German Warmblood as an Illustration', in *The International Warmblood Horse: A Worldwide Guide to Breeding and Bloodlines*, 2nd ed., Debbie Wallin, Jane Kidd & Celia Clarke, Addington, Bucklingham: Kenilworth Press, 1995, pp. 14-22.

strong navy. Historically, British horse breeding was dominated by landed gentry who bred race horses and hunters for their own pleasure, independent of state intervention. During times of war it was the animals, whose forefathers' success on the track or hunt field ensured that their bloodlines were maintained, that were transformed from British sporting horses to warhorses.

Racing and hunting were also seen as manly sports that provided the training and proving grounds for soldiers. Victory on the racecourse required bold riding as well as the ability to make split second decisions irrespective of danger. Risk taking was part of the hunting and racing ethos in which success was measured in the skill to 'ride straight', overcoming every obstacle along the way and, in the case of hunting, to be 'in at the kill' at the end of the chase. Riding straight was equated in a moral sense to straight living. As J.A. Mangan and Callum McKenzie have pointed out, hunting was believed to be character forming, developing the masculine virtues of courage, endurance, confidence and self-sacrifice. Respect for what was believed to be the 'natural leadership' of the upper classes, so visibly displayed on the racecourse and the hunting field also served to separate the officers from the lower ranks. Foxhunting along with other field sports became an important part of nineteenth century officer training for the moral qualities they imparted as well as the ability to ride, read the terrain and to accept killing.¹⁰

Separate but related to the idea of sustaining a sense of war readiness, was the belief that equestrian sports helped to maintain rural harmony and order at home. Traditionally horseracing and hunting were seen to be inclusive activities that brought all levels of local society together. This is not to suggest that social divisions were irrelevant; if anything the various rights and responsibilities of different levels of rural society were accentuated on the highly visible space of the racecourse or hunting field. Local landlords not only hosted the hunt on their land but also provided the hounds and hunt leadership. Privately owned packs of hounds varied in size, quality and status, depending often on whether kept by a modest yeoman farmer or by one of the great territorial lords. In any case, hunting was regarded as a private affair in which

¹⁰ J.A. Mangan and Callum McKenzie, 'Pig-Sticking is the Greatest Fun': Martial Conditioning on the Hunting Fields of Empire', *Militarism, Sport, Europe: War Without Weapons*, J.A. Mangan (ed.), London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003, pp.97-119.

the master invited friends and neighbours to join him in his sport. Yet rather than being seen as an exclusive sport undertaken by the gentry, hunting was heralded for its egalitarian principles that served to bind the rural community together. This accounts for the fact that in England, at least, up until the middle of the nineteenth century there was little opposition to foxhunting. As one of the few institutions locally situated, it included in some way or other all members of the community regardless of class or occupation.¹¹ Gentry on their well turned out hunters, grooms on animals in training, as well as shopkeepers and tradesmen on their hacks or cart horses mingled together on the hunting field. For those without horses the occasion of the hunt was a much anticipated spectacle of lively horses and baying hounds with the ever present chance to glimpse visiting dignitaries.

Mike Huggins' analysis of British horseracing shows how the traditional form of racing served to create among the population a sense of identity and purpose at the local, regional and national levels.¹² The patronage of the local gentry at small country meetings was highlighted by their public roles as race stewards and presenters of prizes. By the mid-eighteenth century, racing at the provincial level such as at Epsom, Ascot, Goodwood and Doncaster was dominated by Thoroughbreds, bred specifically for racing. As well as attracting the aristocrats of the equine species, racing at this level also drew the human elite often from well beyond the surrounding area. Although meetings here were regarded as society events, with racing conducted generally under the patronage of the peerage, they remained regionally focussed. As was the case with the smaller local events, no gate money was charged, race committees were motivated by feelings of social responsibility to provide entertainment for the broad spectrum of people who flocked to the races. But it was the segregation by class and gender on the public space of the racecourse that stood to emphasise the established social order. Those who could afford to pay for the privilege of sitting in the grandstand were positioned above the crowds, their elevated viewpoint equating clearly with their higher social status. The most exclusive space, however, was the saddling enclosure reserved for those most closely connected with the race horses and where it has been said that on Derby Day at Epsom, half the male

¹¹ Itzkowitz, pp.105, 141-2.

¹² Huggins, p.210.

peerage of the realm could be seen.¹³ Horseracing functioned as well at the national level and it was here that royal patronage was its single most distinguishing feature. The history of Newmarket as the national centre of racing is firmly anchored in its connection between race horses and monarchs. Back in the distant past, Boadicea, Queen of the Iceni, first raced her war chariots on the heath; later it was Richard II who began royalty's purportedly long and unbroken association with racing at Newmarket.¹⁴ Since 1872 royal patronage at Newmarket was supported by the Jockey Club. Begun as a select organisation of wealthy and aristocratic race owners, it came to control racing at the national level with what has been described as a kind of 'benevolent autocracy'.¹⁵ While these two institutions gave a clear national focus to the sport, they also reinforced British racing's conservative and traditional nature.

As the pace of change quickened during the nineteenth century, the traditional order came under threat. Not only could an increasing number of urban elite afford to hunt but the developing train network made the countryside within easy reach. More crowded fields meant greater risk to farmers' fences and land. Some damage could be tolerated in times of prosperity but with the agricultural depression biting by the late 1870s, many farmers were forced to forgo their own hunting as well as to press the Hunt for compensation for damages. Landlords were also affected and some found the time and costs of maintaining their hounds and hunt staff, as well as the responsibilities of hosting the large fields, no longer tenable. As Itzkowitz contends, it was convenient to blame the deteriorating conditions of hunting on the 'outsiders'. Those who travelled to the countryside only for their sport were said to lack respect for farmers' property and for the rural way of life in general and hence should be made to contribute to the upkeep of the Hunt. The restructuring of hunts that turned previously privately owned hounds into subscription packs with hunt club membership fees and a daily 'cap' for visitors was strongly resisted as a threat to the egalitarian tradition. Change was necessary, however, to allow the sport to continue in many areas.¹⁶

¹³ Vamplew, p.26.

¹⁴ Rebecca Cassidy, *The Sport of Kings: Kinship, Class and Thoroughbred Breeding in Newmarket*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.15-16, Bracegirdle, pp.2-7.

¹⁵ Huggins, p.29.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.74-5,164-5.

Horseracing became even more commercially and nationally focussed. An increasingly well-to-do, urban middle class was able to invest in costly Thoroughbreds and join the ranks of racehorse owners. To give their horses a better chance of winning, owners employed professional, light weight jockeys. Handicap races that gave even inferior horses a chance at the prize money became increasingly popular. The glory of winning was no longer enough and large purses were considered important to draw the best horses. This motivated the need to enclose racecourses so that entrance fees could be charged. Race committees often fought to maintain the local character of their meetings by excluding professional jockeys and running races limited to horses of the particular locality, but generally their efforts were in vain. While country meetings suffered from a loss of support, the sport thrived at the provincial and national level. Spectators and horses could now reach distant events by train and gambling assumed a more prominent role. Racing became more centralised with the Jockey Club taking on the position as the governing body of British horseracing. Although the Jockey Club was a key to the modernisation of the sport, it is important to acknowledge that its governance stood to reinforce the existing social structures. The Jockey Club remained a small, all male body, dominated by aristocratic and landed gentry.¹⁷

It was against this background of change that horseracing and hunting were transplanted in colonial New Zealand. The British settlers brought with them fond memories of the festive, community based horse sports of the past. But they were also aware of the more recent challenges confronting them, and the development of horseracing and hunting in New Zealand needs to be seen in this context. Colonial horseracing and hunting both reflected the traditional rural and inclusive nature of the sports as well as the newer elitism with its emphasis on financial viability that had become a part of Victorian sport. Imperialism with its associated militarism was never far from the lives of settlers. Along with these sometimes conflicting views, the colonists were faced with a new physical and social environment which forced them to alter elements of their sports.

¹⁷ Huggins, pp.29-31.

Horseracing was the less complex of the equestrian sports and was readily adaptable to the New Zealand environment. The sport could commence with a minimum of two horses and enough land to race. The hard packed sand of beaches at low tide provided an ideal racing surface and it was likely Northland beaches that saw the earliest racing. It is impossible to determine when the first impromptu horse race took place but certainly organised horseracing was established as early as the second half of the 1830s in New Zealand. In 1839 the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* indicated the outcome of 'the famous Kororarika races' in which disappointed onlookers reported only one race that year as only two horses made their appearance.¹⁸ As the New Zealand Company settlements put down roots, events were planned to both reflect the colonists' British heritage as well as to respond to their new environment. In January 1841, the people of Wellington celebrated the first anniversary of their settlement with a hurdle race for four horses, along with rowing and whale boat races.¹⁹ Nelson marked its first anniversary with a hurdle race, described as a gruelling contest up and down steep terrain and through heavy bush.²⁰ Christchurch offered a less demanding racecourse amongst the tussocks of Hagley Park for their first anniversary celebrations. The organising committee reported that it wished to include the 'popular English amusements' of cricket, shooting, wrestling, pig chasing, wheelbarrow racing, along with the horseracing.²¹

Although far from home, the settlers would have felt comfort in establishing the familiar traditions in their new land. They found that they could maintain emotional ties with their homeland as well as build new community relationships by coming together to mark days of imperial or religious significance. Horseracing also became a feature of Christmas, Easter, New Year's Day and Saint Patrick's Day observances in various communities. Despite the small number of settlers in the pastoral area of Wairau near Nelson, horseracing was established as a popular 'Christmas sport' in 1855.²² Further south, on two days over Christmas in 1868, over one hundred people converged on Tekapo in the Mackenzie basin to enjoy horse races, a regatta on the

¹⁸ *Sydney Gazette & New South Wales Advertiser*, 4 May 1839, p.2.

¹⁹ *New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator*, 30 Jan 1841, p.3.

²⁰ *New Zealand Turf Register*, 1876, p.xi.

²¹ *Lyttelton Times*, 13 Dec 1851, p.1.

²² *Nelson Examiner*, 6 Jan 1858, p.2.

lake and Caledonian sports.²³ Like the British rustic sports days they resembled, events such as these served as social occasions offering an opportunity for all members of the community to enjoy the entertainment provided and to catch up with far flung friends and neighbours. Local newspapers painted a lively picture of the festive atmosphere that prevailed at these holiday gatherings. Merry-go-rounds for the children, sparring matches and the music of local bands competed for attention as did the gaily decorated booths offering games of chance such as ‘Aunt Sally’ and ‘Three Pins’. Local publicans and other businesses made sure that the holiday makers were well supplied with food and drink.

Imperial Britain’s association with colonial horseracing was particularly apparent in the areas where Her Majesty’s troops had a presence. As in Britain, horseracing was considered healthy exercise for enlisted men and their horses and had the added benefit of maintaining good relations with the local population. Aware that the Māori as well as settler population would be drawn to the races, the officers who organised race meetings realised that galloping horses urged on by dashing soldiers provided an impressive demonstration of British military power. Officers of the 80th Regiment, along with Lieutenant Henry Dalton Smart of the 28th Regiment who was Aide-de-Camp to the Governor and Commander of Mounted Police, took a leading role in the organisation of Auckland’s first race meeting in December 1841. Furthering the link between Old World sport and the new, the organisers rather ambitiously named the rough course they hacked out of bush on the outskirts of the town, ‘Epsom Downs’.²⁴ When fear of native unrest caused Governor Grey to establish a military garrison at Wanganui, the officers and men of the 65th Regiment formed a race track through sand hills and hosted the settlement’s first race meeting in December 1848.²⁵ Military involvement in organised racing could also be seen in a more benevolent light. With the war in the Waikato, the profits of the Auckland troop races in 1864 were donated to the Relief Fund Committee to benefit the wives and families of fallen soldiers.²⁶

²³ Oliver A. Gillespie, *South Canterbury: A Record of Settlement*, Timaru: the South Canterbury Centennial History Committee, 1958, p.219.

²⁴ William Mackie, *A Noble Breed: Auckland Racing Club 1874-1974*, Auckland: Wilson and Horton, 1974, p.4.

²⁵ Flora Spurdle, *More Stories of Old Wanganui*, Wanganui: L.W.L. van den Broek, 1963, pp.81-2.

²⁶ *Weekly News*, 12 Mar 1864, p.4.

Hunting was more difficult to transplant into the colonial setting because it required not only horses but also hounds and prey. There are indications that the strong desire to pursue mounted hunting arose early in settlement history. The presence of Imperial officers in the upper North Island in the 1860s with their fine horses and likely background of hunting was a further incentive to the introduction of the sport. The earliest hunting took the form of paper chases in which riders followed a previously set trail. To give more of the atmosphere of the pursuit, officers of the Auckland garrison on occasion became designated hounds.²⁷ But the ‘music’ of the hounds was so firmly etched on the memory of those who had followed the hounds that efforts were undertaken to establish game and hounds in the colony.

The increasing prosperity of some of the colony’s earliest settlers meant that by the final quarter of the nineteenth century, a fortunate few were in the position to recreate, in their adopted home, the idealised rural settings of the British upper classes. Large elegant houses, extensive, well maintained grounds and stables of fine horses became the trappings of the aspiring colonial gentry. Maintaining their links with the homeland, they dignified their properties with names such as Sylvia Park, Hampton Park, Buckley Manor and Bleak House. English sport became part of their colonial Arcadian vision. Tom Brown, brought up in the strong hunting tradition of his native Leicestershire, found that the rolling hills of his Auckland farm could be transformed into prime sporting country with hedges, rail fences and sweeping elms. On a nearby farm, Reverend Gideon Smales built imposing stone walls, seen as testing the courage and skill of horse and rider and equal to anything found in County Galway.²⁸ George Bayntun Starky, recognised as ‘the first member of an English county family to come to Canterbury’, created elegant parkland at his Brackenfield estate.²⁹

It was not only the natural environment of the colony that had to be considered but also the social conditions. The colony, for the most part lacked the aristocratic patronage that had provided the leadership and resources for British organised sport. Accordingly, it was often the collective efforts of a number of leading colonists who

²⁷ P.W. Eisdell Moore and D.A. Bingley, *A Great Run: One Hundred Years with the Pakuranga Hounds 1872-1972*, Auckland: Tonson Publishing, 1972, p.8.

²⁸ Moore and Bingley, pp.13-14, 35.

²⁹ Theo Herbert, *Harking Back II: A History of Hunting in New Zealand 1870-1989*, Waipukurau: Central Hawkes’s Bay Printers and Publishers, 1989, p.34, Barbara Deans, *Brackenfield: A Family Hunt*, Amberley: Brackenfield Hunt, 1984, p.10.

initiated sport in New Zealand. A group of fifteen Auckland men, all with farming interests, are recognised as the ‘founding fathers’ of hunting in New Zealand in the establishment of the Pakuranga Hunt Club in 1872.³⁰ They realised that the best means of funding a first rate pack of hounds and maintaining a kennel property was through club subscription fees. Some of the founders and club members were also closely connected with the Acclimatisation Society formed five years earlier and had, either through the Society or as individuals, attempted to establish hares in the Auckland area. As was the situation in those parts of the British Isles where the smaller holdings of yeomen farmers dominated, hares were the preferred choice because they provided good sport within the confines of a reasonably limited space. Hares took longer to establish than hounds and so most hunts began by ‘drag hunting’ whereby the hounds followed a course set by dragging a sheepskin or aniseed scented bag.

The situation was often different in the colony’s pastoral areas. Here well established landowners often took on the role of British landlords in establishing hunts on their large properties. At least five packs of privately owned hounds hunted in South Canterbury prior to the 1880s. The importation of hares was also undertaken by pastoralists such as Michael Studholme who brought hares back with him from a visit to England. These were released at his Te Waimate Station in 1865. The Hawke’s Bay and Rangitikei regions were also known to have early hound packs in private ownership.³¹ The high costs associated with maintaining the quality of a hound pack, particularly in times of agricultural downturn meant that by the close of the century all private packs had been absorbed into the hunt clubs that were being established throughout the colony.

Despite the widespread use of the club structure to establish hunting in New Zealand, strong leadership was still needed. The high mobility of settlers during the colonial period both benefited and disrupted hunting. Seagar Buckland, a founder of the Pakuranga Hunt Club was instrumental as well in forming the Waikato Hunt before moving to Poverty Bay where he took a leading role in establishing the Poverty Bay Hunt Club, serving as Master for two years. In the South Island, Edward Saunders was

³⁰ Moore and Bingley, pp.7-20.

³¹ Herbert, pp.108, 197, 216,226.

founder and Huntsman of Southland's Birchwood Hunt until he left after two years to take over the Ashburton Hounds from his brother, William. With no one to replace him, it looked for a while as if the pack would have to be sold until Captain Gardner, as Master, decided to act in the role of Huntsman as well.³² Short periods of service as Masters and Huntsmen were the norm rather than the exception and clubs sometimes suffered when an effective leader was lost to another region or even a trip 'home' which meant many months absence. For example, over a period of only two years from 1893 to 1895 the followers of the Pakuranga Hunt were under the leadership of five different Masters.³³ On the other hand, frequent vacancies gave opportunities to a greater range of men to take on leadership roles than would have been the situation in Britain.

The accessibility of horses discussed in the previous chapter meant that a wide range of the colonial population was in a position to participate actively in equestrian sports and this undoubtedly had social implications. There is evidence that even servants, both male and female, were able to enjoy the pleasure and privileges that riding bestowed. Mary Anne Broome, or Lady Barker as she preferred to be known, who lived in Canterbury from 1865 to 1868, expressed dismay when a housemaid at the Christchurch boarding house she was staying at announced her intentions of leaving her position in order to attend the races everyday on a horse she had been given.³⁴ A young Scottish groom who worked at Fen Court Station near Cambridge was delighted to be given a horse, bridle and saddle for his exclusive use, a privilege he recognised, that would certainly have been denied him in the old country.³⁵ Having access to a horse conferred on the colonial workforce freedom to travel beyond the workplace and with this came a greater awareness of the possibilities open to them. The higher status associated with the mounted rider that was so deeply embedded in the British mind could not help but instil in the rider an awareness of his or her social progress and material success in the colony.

³² Ibid., pp.22,55-6.

³³ Ibid., p.176.

³⁴ Barker, Lady Mary Anne, *Station Life in New Zealand*, London: Virago Press, 1984, pp.44-5.

³⁵ Letters from James M. Baxter to 'James' in Scotland, , Misc – MS – 0878, K. Vogelsanger, Hocken Library, Dunedin.

Apart from the ability to participate in equestrian sport, the sparse settler population in the early colonial period meant that the participation of all who were willing and able was actively encouraged. The organisers of early colonial meetings sought to tailor their races to the local community, reflecting the localised nature of traditional horseracing. With a shortage of specifically bred race horses, the Canterbury Jockey Club in the 1850s held races for both riding hacks and cart horses.³⁶ To give the local horses a fair chance at the prize money, the Mauku Races, south of Auckland, held a Settler's Stakes, eligible to horses of settlers owning fifty acres or less in the Waiuku Military District.³⁷ Where a community had a number of men engaged in the same or similar occupation, races were often held specifically for them. Hokitika's 1868 race meeting offered the 'Butcher's Purse' for horses that belonged to retail butchers on the West Coast.³⁸ The *Turf Register*, detailing the programmes of race meetings throughout the colony listed races held in various communities for horses belonging to miners, shepherds, rabbiters and bullock drivers.³⁹

Early trotting events also tended to be regionally located. The flat terrain of the Canterbury Plains with its dry, straight roads meant that some of the earliest harness racing took place in and around Christchurch. Riccarton and Papanui Roads were the location of many informal races as the town's businessmen in their smart 'turnouts' responded to the challenge of a rival.⁴⁰ Otago and Southland also lay claim to pioneering the sport of trotting in New Zealand. As early as the 1860s, station hacks, untrained for racing, but having the stamina to trot at speed for two or three miles competed at goldfield race meetings. Trotting races, which could be either in harness or under saddle, were popular at places such as Queenstown, Alexandra, Dunstan, Cromwell, Tuapeka and Naseby. Gamblers favoured trotting as they afforded greater scope for speculation.⁴¹

The inclusive nature of colonial horseracing extended as well to the Māori population. Races specifically for horses owned and ridden by Māori were a feature of many of

³⁶ George Robert Hart, *Canterbury Jockey Club: Jubilee Meeting 1854-1904; Old Time Racing Records and a Brief History of the Club*, Christchurch: Christchurch Press, 1904, p.46.

³⁷ *New Zealand Turf Register*, 1876, p.141.

³⁸ *West Coast Times and Observer*, 1 Jan 1868, p.2.

³⁹ *New Zealand Turf Register*, 1876, pp.36,178., *New Zealand Turf Register* 1881, pp.2,57.

⁴⁰ Karl Scott, *Turf Tufts and Toe-Weights*, Christchurch: Carlton Printing, 1950, p.16.

⁴¹ W.A. Saunders, *Historical Racing Records and Inauguration of the Racing and Trotting Clubs in Otago and Southland*, Dunedin: Dunedin Evening Star, 1949, pp.213-15.

the earliest race meetings. Canterbury's first anniversary races included a 'native race' and the organisers of Otago's tenth anniversary celebrations advertised a Māori race 'open to all horses the property of the natives'.⁴² Otahuhu, New Plymouth and the Hawke's Bay towns of Napier and Clive were among the settlements in the early 1850s and early 1860s offering Māori races as part of their race meetings.⁴³

In its founding years, mounted hunting was also presented as a community based sport open to all. When Buckland, and a few of his fellow Poverty Bay farmers who shared with him nostalgia for English hunting, sought to introduce the sport to their neighbours they invited the Hawke's Bay Hunt for a fortnight's visit. Almost the whole population of Gisborne turned out to greet the coastal steamer that carried the hounds and huntsman. On the day of the first meet between four and five hundred mounted followers turned out on what was described as 'the weirdest and most wonderful collection of horseflesh it would be possible to imagine'. By the end of the visit, hunting had gained enough new supporters to form the Poverty Bay Hunt and to begin the process of establishing a hound pack of their own.⁴⁴ This scenario was in no way unique. Clubs needed a sufficient number of members to be viable and by giving the uninitiated a taste of the pleasures of the chase and by welcoming their presence, the sport was able to gain a strong following in the colony.

Rather than being seen as compromising the traditional English sports, some of the necessary modifications became a source of colonial pride. Although fox may have been the prey of choice in England, New Zealand sportsmen were able to boast that hare hunting was the purest and most difficult form of the sport. While it was believed that a mediocre horse and rider could get by in foxhunting, the twists and turns of the elusive hare required a more skilful partnership of man and horse.⁴⁵ Furthermore, once hares became well established in most parts of the colony, they not only thrived but were said to be 'bigger, better and stronger' than their English counterparts.⁴⁶

⁴² *Lyttelton Times*, 20 Dec 1851, p.1, *Otago Witness* 20 Feb 1858, p.3.

⁴³ *Southern Cross*, 6 Feb 1855, p.2., *Taranaki Herald*, 4 Apr 1855, p.2., *Hawkes Bay Herald*, 16 Mar 1861, p.5., 8 Feb 1862, p.2.

⁴⁴ Herbert, p.188.

⁴⁵ Moore and Bingley, p.45.

⁴⁶ Herbert, p.2.

Colonial hunt followers were also tested by wire fencing. In Britain, wire fencing was considered a serious impediment to hunting and the use of it for mending purposes or to construct fences was strongly discouraged. Being difficult to see at speed, it had the potential to trip up the unwary, resulting sometimes in fatal accidents.⁴⁷ Although traditional stone walls, hawthorn or gorse hedges and post and rail were preferred fencing by New Zealand settlers, they were expensive to construct and maintain. In consequence, wire became increasingly popular in the second half of the nineteenth century and the hunting folk were forced to adapt. In 1895 Colonel Dawson of the Pakuranga Hunt proposed what he called 'bare wire jumping.'⁴⁸ While colonial sportsmen and women soon found themselves jumping wire as readily as any other fence, they took obvious pleasure in the fact that English visitors and newcomers found facing wire a daunting prospect. If the visitors were of high standing or were noted for their connection with one of the prestigious English hunts, the satisfaction was even more complete. The story is related that when the English staff of the Governor, Lord Ranfurly, turned out for a day's hunting with the Pakuranga Hunt, they found colonial hare hunting more challenging than anticipated. Having declined to jump the wire fences, they were astonished to see the Master's daughter, Blanche Gorrie on her father's hunter, take the wire fences with ease.⁴⁹

Aware that their dress and knowledge of traditional hunt etiquette did not always match English standards, New Zealand hunters took consolation in their perceived bold riding over 'sometimes fearsome country'.⁵⁰ Followers of the Egmont Hunt boasted that 'no hounds ever hunted over stiffer as far as both wire and banks are concerned, in the world'.⁵¹ Colonial horseracing also provided a means for sportsmen to demonstrate courage, along with other manly traits, as befitting their British heritage. In the first volume of *The New Zealand Turf Register*, Editor Charles Elliot made clear the relationship between such qualities and sport:

⁴⁷ Itzkowitz, pp.123-4.

⁴⁸ Moore and Bingley, pp.45-6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.48.

⁵¹ Laraine Sole, *Gone Away: One Hundred Years with the Egmont-Wanganui Hunt*, Wanganui: Egmont-Wanganui Hunt Club, 1994, p.43.

The intimate connection between sports and pastimes of a people and their national character has often been dwelt upon and fearlessness, energy and enterprise of our race, if not due to our national sports, are qualities that have at best been promoted and fostered by them.⁵²

Riding prowess, along with the ability to overcome all difficulties to carry on their sport, was attributed to the frontier spirit believed imbued in the successful colonist. Even getting to the hunt or race meeting was a trial in itself. It was considered appropriate for a sportsman to ride, tow behind a buggy or even drive their hunter between the shafts up to twenty miles or so to get to the meet, then engage in a demanding full day's hunting, arriving home well after dark. Before the advent of rail travel, racing too demanded the same degree of hardiness and determination. Arthur Joseph Ward described how he combined clearing the bush on his remote Marlborough farm with training and competing racehorses. Undeterred by the two days that it took to get to the Nelson races and the longer journey needed to cross Cook Strait to attend an Otaki meeting, Ward managed to race a string of five horses in 1898.⁵³ The perseverance to keep the sports and clubs alive, despite fluctuations in population and changing fortunes was celebrated in much the same way as the persistence in creating farms, roads and towns in the wilderness. In his 1906 *Men of Mark in the World of Sport*, Joseph Chadwick outlined the contributions of a number of sporting pioneers, almost all of whom had connection with one or more equestrian pursuits. He recognised Hawke's Bay's William Russell as a 'straight goer' who was a 'turf legislator' as well as Leader of the Opposition in the House of Representatives.⁵⁴ Canterbury's George Clifford was applauded for developing a 'country home' out of 'wild uncultivated waste' that became a breeding ground for fine Thoroughbreds.⁵⁵ William McLaughlin was described as 'hale and hearty ... a typical English hunting squire' who helped establish hunting and horseracing in Auckland.⁵⁶

Colonial horses were also seen to possess frontier qualities of stamina and courage, often over and above mere appearance. The hunter, Auckland Kate, who contested three events, winning two of them and coming second in the third at the 1875

⁵² *New Zealand Turf Register*, 1876, p.ix.

⁵³ Arthur Joseph Ward, 'Arthur Joseph Ward – Diary'. ATL, Wellington, MS- Papers – 5115 -01.

⁵⁴ Chadwick, p.17.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.11-14.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.239.

Pakuranga Hunt race meeting, was lauded as an ‘outstanding colonial bred horse’ despite her ‘unattractive’ appearance.⁵⁷ Special pride of place was given to the New Zealand bred race horses that found fame on the Australian race tracks. Attracted by the rich prize money and no doubt the honour, Henry Redwood of Nelson began to take his best race horses across the Tasman in 1858. His modest successes inspired others to undertake the journey and their fortunes were followed closely by the New Zealand press. The race that really mattered was the demanding two mile run for the Melbourne Cup, the handicap race that continued to elude New Zealand horses until won by the three year old colt, Martini-Henry. Although sired by the English born stallion, Musket, and out of the Australian bred mare, Sylvia, then sold as a seven month old foal to an Australian owner, Martini-Henry was nevertheless born on Auckland soil and so claimed as New Zealand’s own. The colt’s victory was toasted throughout the colony and produced an outpouring of celebratory prose and verse. One such offering, ‘Sylvia’s Dream’ published in the *Observer* could well be entitled New Zealand’s dream, leaving no doubt as to the emotional significance of the victory.

I put my lips against her cheek
And whisper soft and low;
Then thus to Sylvia slowly spake,
As though the mare could know:

“Well old girl, what’s thee thinking of;
Thy oats, or dinner-bell-
Or what thy fav’rite colt will do,
The son of Musket? Tell!”

A gentle neigh the old mare gives,
As we both move away,
Which tells as plainly as can be,
“Our” Son will win the day.⁵⁸

But it was another of Musket’s sons that was to establish New Zealand’s reputation as a breeding ground for powerful Thoroughbreds with the staying ability to contest middle and long distance races. That horse was Carbine, who having proved his ability as a two year old in the South Island, was taken by his owner, Dan O’Brien in 1888 to race in Victoria. Under the stewardship of a new owner, Donald Wallace, a

⁵⁷ Moore and Bingley, p.34.

⁵⁸ *Observer*, 10 Nov 1883, p.14.

wealthy Australian grazier and racehorse owner, Carbine won the 1890 Melbourne Cup in record time carrying the previously unheard of weight of 65 kilos. Five years later the horse was sold for the princely sum of 13,000 guineas to the Duke of Portland and shipped to England to stand at stud at the Duke's Welbeck Abby Stud.⁵⁹ The circle was now complete; in the space of less than fifty years New Zealand could boast that it could produce race horses equal to, if not better than the world's best. Although only a few horses gained international fame, the *New Zealand Referee* optimistically foresaw the future role of New Zealand sires in 'replenishing the horse stocks of England'.⁶⁰

Proud as they were of their sporting achievements, at the same time many of the colonists sought to distance themselves from the frontier past and to align themselves more closely than ever with Imperial Britain and its assumptions of class, gender and race. Evidence for this can be seen clearly in the changing attitude towards equestrian sports. While egalitarianism was a feature in the establishment of both horseracing and hunting in New Zealand, these sports could be used in the construction of a colonial elite as well as to emphasise differences between Māori and settler, men and women. Knowledge of the complex skills of horsemanship, along with the rules and rituals associated with equestrian sports, became a point of difference between those who were brought up in the traditions of the sport and those who sought to acquire them. Here, too, the hereditary principle comes into play. As Rebecca Cassidy has discussed in her study of the English horseracing and breeding industry at Newmarket, knowledge of the intricacies of horseracing practices is revealed as a talent, not learnt, but passed on from father to son. In this way she argues that 'knowledge is the mechanism by which pedigree is translated into class'.⁶¹ The importance of the knowledge of horsemanship becomes particularly significant in the colonial situation where access to horses was open to a greater range of the population than in Britain. The acquisition of horses was one thing but having the ability to ride them in style was quite another. This was regarded as a point of difference between the British colonists and the Māori in the early years of the colony. Ellen Petre in her journal mentioned

⁵⁹ Max Lambert, *November Gold: New Zealand's Quest for the Melbourne Cup*, Auckland: Moa Publications, 1986, pp.20-29., Peter Willet, *The Classic Racehorse*, 2nd ed., London: Stanley Paul, 1989, pp.195-8.

⁶⁰ *New Zealand Referee* 16 Feb 1898, p.25.

⁶¹ Cassidy, pp.29-30.

the eagerness of the Hutt Valley Māori to trade flax for horses but she claimed that they were afraid to ride them.⁶² This differed from the view of Abel Dottin Best who expressed his admiration for the courage of the participants in the Māori race at the 1842 meeting in Auckland, noting that they had received their horses in part payment for land only a few days before. Significantly, Best claimed that the Māori race provided ‘the best fun in the whole day although not highly scientific’.⁶³ What appeared to the colonists to be an inability of Māori to understand the principles of European horsemanship effectively separated them from the settler population. William Strutt’s 1856 sketch of a group of three Māori riders also illustrates this point. (Figure 8) Although the riders appear to be sitting correctly, cantering abreast on fine Thoroughbreds, a closer look reveals that all is not as it should be. British horsemen and women would have realised that the high head carriage and tense necks of two of the horses indicate the hard, unrelenting hands of the riders. The nearest horse is resisting too, but in this case his back is stiff and his neck over bent to avoid the punishment of bit and rider as his tormentor bumps up and down while liberally applying the riding cane. In dress as well, the artist is keen to point out the riders’ ignorance. The woman in side-saddle habit lets her long hair stream out wildly from under her top hat, unrestrained by the traditional hairnet. The two men also fail to note the finer points of dress by mixing military and hacking attire and, worse still, riding in bare feet. As with the written descriptions of Māori horsemanship, this was an attempt to ridicule those who attempted to adopt the customs and dress that distinguished the colonial elite.⁶⁴

It was not just Māori who were excluded in this way. The colonists brought with them the attitude that the knowledge of horsemanship with its accompanying rituals of dress and etiquette was the domain of the upper classes. Although colonial conditions offered opportunities for other classes to share in equestrian pursuits, they were often censored for doing so. Lady Barker professed concern for the safety of the maid who wished to attend the races on horseback despite the fact that the girl had never been on

⁶² Petre MS., p.23.

⁶³ Abel Dottin William Best, *The Journal of Ensign Best 1837-1843*, Nancy M. Taylor (ed.), Wellington: Government Printer 1966, p.331.

⁶⁴ Leonard Bell, *Colonial Constructs: European Images of Maori 1840-1914*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1992, pp.80-1.



Figure 8: William Strutt, 'A Group I Once Saw in Maori Land New Plymouth' (1856),
ATL, E-453-f-005

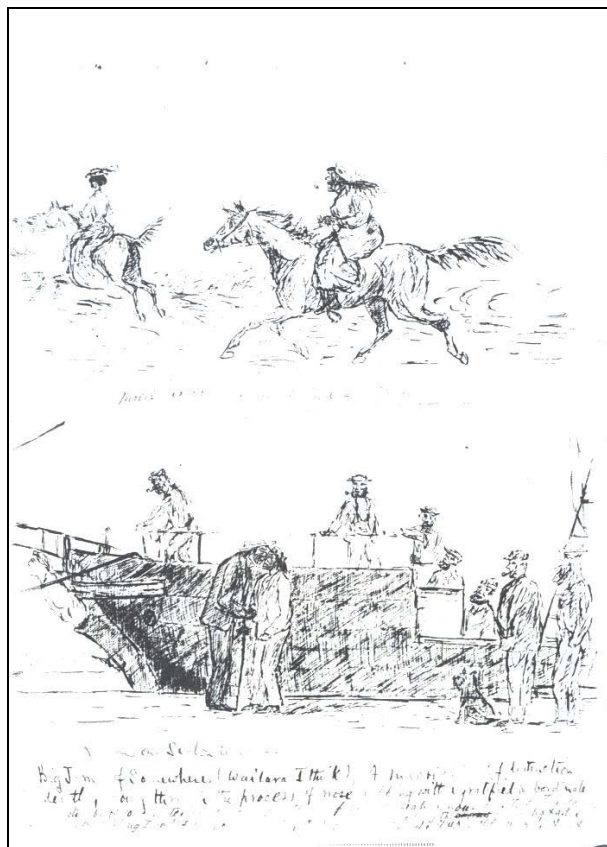


Figure 9: William Webster Hawkins, 'Maori ladies near Waikawa - Picton' (1867)
ATL, E-370-013

a horse before. But it is clear that the English woman was more alarmed by the impudence of the colonial servant to appear mounted alongside the Canterbury gentry than by any real concern for her welfare. At least, Barker reasoned, the maid's identity would be revealed as she would in all likelihood be mounted on 'a very old station screw'.⁶⁵

As befitting a woman of her station, Lady Barker would, of course, learnt to ride side-saddle in her native England. Despite being a difficult technique to master, it was the style of riding preferred by colonial women throughout the nineteenth century. The side-saddle was a convention developed in continental Europe around the early sixteenth century to compensate for what was believed to be a lack of strength in women to maintain themselves in a traditional cross-saddle on an active horse. It was also considered a modest and elegant means of displaying the female form on a horse and became the accepted method of riding for women of means and fashion throughout the Western world. The addition of a 'leaping-head' to the side-saddle in the nineteenth century, which held the rider's left thigh in place, gave greater security allowing women to ride at speed and, as the name suggests, to leap over obstacles. Despite the improved saddle, women's mounted attendance at British hunts was more as spectators than as active participants. It was not until the second half of the century that some women joined the men in following hounds across country although these few always remained a minority.⁶⁶

The use of the side-saddle did not transfer easily to the colonial environment. Horses needed special training to respond to an uneven distribution of weight and to the one-sided leg aids. Riders could not mount or dismount without assistance; some insisted that two helpers were needed which was difficult given the shortage of colonial servants. The ability to look graceful in the side-saddle, keeping her riding habit neatly arranged while maintaining control of a spirited horse was technically demanding, requiring a skilful and practiced rider. Some women such as Ellen Petre and Lady Barker came to the colony as skilled riders and were able to travel confidently on horseback and to enjoy riding parties. Other women without such privileged background but seeking fashionable status had to learn the techniques and

⁶⁵ Barker, pp.44-5.

⁶⁶ Charles Chenevix Trench, *A History of Horsemanship*, London: Longman Group, 1970, pp.272-289.

there is evidence that ‘horsemanship’ was taught in the early years of the colony. With his only qualification a one shilling book on the subject, Andrew Kay set himself up in 1860s Auckland as a riding master. While hiring out saddle horses he realised that a lucrative sideline to his business was teaching ‘town girls’ how to mount, dismount, sit gracefully in the saddle and to handle the reins so that they might ride out to visit friends.⁶⁷ Some twenty years later, a more professional service was offered by G.Hazell, a former Rough Riding Major and Equitation Instructor in the British military service. He operated a school appropriately called the Auckland Select Riding School, in which he offered tuition to Auckland ladies and gentlemen in the ‘art of equitation’. By setting out his military qualifications as well as the language used in his book, *Aid Book on Graceful Riding*,⁶⁸ it is clear that the standards set for correct riding were placed firmly within British upper class and military traditions. This position was also undertaken by colonial women who made a clear distinction between those who knew how to ride in the accepted British fashion and those who did not. The contrast between themselves and Māori women was particularly striking. Strutt’s equestrienne was riding side-saddle but there are other references to Māori women who rode astride. In 1867 William Hawkins Webster drew a sketch in his diary of two Māori women riding near Picton. While one is riding side-saddle, the other appears to be riding astride with no saddle at all. (Figure 9)

The idea of women riding astride would have seemed outlandish and a clear indication of the distinction between Māori and colonist. Patrick McDevitt’s argument of how gender constructions in sport helped the colonial elites to distinguish themselves from both the colonised as well as those beneath them in the Imperial power structure⁶⁹ can be applied to the New Zealand colonial situation. While the image of the hard riding frontier jockey and bold hunt follower was a model for colonial manhood, colonial women were given a separate but still vital function in the Imperial cause. They were seen as having a civilising influence on what could be regarded as the coarseness of colonial life. Although colonial women were excluded from competitive participation

⁶⁷ Maurice Lennard, *The Road to War: The Great South Road 1862-64*, Whakatane: Whakatane and District Historical Society, 1985, p.5.

⁶⁸ G. Hazell, *Aid Book on Graceful Riding, How to Ride and School a Horse, and on Training and Handling Young Horses*, Auckland: John Brame, 1882.

⁶⁹ McDevitt, pp.1-13.

in equestrian sports, their presence as spectators and as hostesses was appreciated and commented on by the colonial press. The *Wanganui Herald* noted that at the 1878 race meeting the grandstand was crowded with ‘the number of ladies giving the stand a remarkably pretty appearance’.⁷⁰ The society pages of publications aimed at women named and photographed the prominent women who attended such gatherings, often including detailed descriptions of their dress and hats.⁷¹ To appear in such publications as the *New Zealand Graphic* was a clear indication of colonial success.

Polo in various forms is an ancient Eastern game but its modern form was developed by British officers serving in India. Calcutta saw the establishment of the first club in 1862 and from there the game spread rapidly amongst cavalry officers and local Indian rulers.⁷² However it was the polo playing officers of the Royal Navy that can be credited with taking the game to the ports of towns and cities throughout the Empire. Although the notion of sailors promoting a land based sport seems an anomaly, K.M. Little, author of *Polo in New Zealand*, points out that nineteenth century naval officers ‘were drawn from families whose knights were well horsed and took to polo when it came to England, as readily as they took fences on the hunting field’.⁷³ Like other horse sports, polo kept soldiers fit and active but it had the added benefit of being a team sport. Men who worked together under dangerous circumstances to achieve a common goal made polo a game of Imperial purpose. The presence of five Royal Navy ships anchored in Waitemata Harbour in 1888 for the opening of Devonport’s Calliope Dock provided the opportunity for Teddy O’Rorke, a noted colonial horseman, to found the Auckland Polo Club for the purpose of organising games with the British visitors. The donation of a silver cup by Robert Stewart Savile of the Royal West Kent Yeomanry Cavalry who was in New Zealand as ADC to Lord Onslow was the impetus to establish further clubs and to initiate an annual tournament. Savile’s gift came with the stipulation that the tournament should be played according to the rules of England’s Hurlingham Polo Club and that right of entry granted to any team of the Imperial Services.⁷⁴ Although New Zealand cities saw the first polo matches, the game was taken up with enthusiasm in the country

⁷⁰ *Wanganui Herald*, 9 Mar 1878, p.2.

⁷¹ *New Zealand Graphic*, 26 Jan 1895, p.90, 4 Jan 1896.

⁷² Holt, pp.209-10.

⁷³ K.M. Little, *Polo in New Zealand*, Wellington: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1956, p.7.

⁷⁴ T.P. McLean, *Polo: The Saville Cup: The First Hundred Years*, Cambridge: New Zealand Polo Association, 1990, pp.28-9.

areas and by the close of the nineteenth century over thirty polo clubs had been established throughout the country, all playing by the Hurlington Rules.

For the successful and ambitious colonial, active participation in hunting, racing and polo could be seen as a stepping stone to gentry status. The belief that sport could assist in the process is evident in the comments of a member of Canterbury's Brackenfield Hunt who insisted that 'hunting ought to teach their young men to love honest sport, to speak the truth and excel in good manners and gallant conduct'.⁷⁵ There is also the suggestion that equestrian sports could provide the platform from which colonial leaders could emerge. Those men who could respond to the challenging nature of colonial sport, displaying sound horsemanship skills along with the qualities of courage, confidence and dedication to duty, were regarded as having the attributes needed to lead others in the service of Empire. Robert Heaton Rhodes Junior typified the young colonial gentleman who immersed himself in traditional equestrian pursuits. Eldest surviving son of George Rhodes, who had established the massive South Canterbury run, the Levels, Robert was educated at Christ College, Christchurch, before going to England to complete his education at Exeter College, Oxford. On his return to New Zealand in 1879 Rhodes purchased Blue Cliffs station and with the assistance of a farm manager and a staff of fourteen assumed the role of a country squire. Continuing the military training begun at Oxford, Rhodes enlisted as a trooper in the Canterbury Yeomanry Cavalry and was commissioned in 1884. Along with another pastoralist, Sugden Armitage, he imported twenty hounds from England and established the Waimate County Harriers. With Armitage as Huntsman, Rhodes became Master and together they hunted their hounds as a private pack throughout the 1880s. When they combined with another private pack, the Geraldine Beagles, to initiate the first of several steeplechases Rhodes joined other amateur jockeys to contest the demanding course of sod walls, post and rail fences, water jumps and gorse fences. Rhodes' allegiance to English tradition was evident in his choice of racing colours, the magenta and black of his old college at Oxford.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Barbara Deans, *Brackenfield: A Family Hunt*, Amberley: Brackenfield Hunt, 1984, p.14.

⁷⁶ A.E. Woodhouse, *Bluecliffs: The Biography of A South Canterbury Sheep Station 1856-1979*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1982, pp.33-5, 42-44, 49., A.C. Kerr, *South Canterbury Hunt: A Centennial History 1882-1982*, Geraldine: South Canterbury Hunt, 1982, p.7.

Rhodes was one of a number of well-to-do colonists with first hand English experience who saw themselves as upholders of the standards of Old World sporting traditions. Demonstrating knowledge of proper etiquette and dress was a distinguishing characteristic of such sportsmen. Edward Jerningham Wakefield described the preparations for his official role at the early race meeting on Petone Beach:

By dint of begging and borrowing, I had managed to dress myself out in very great style for the performance of my duties; and when I rode out of the inn-yard in full Clerk-of-the Course's uniform, the pink coat-the only one in the colony, belonging to Mr Watt-excited universal admiration.⁷⁷

A lack of understanding of the protocols of hunting by many of the settlers new to the sport was often cause for complaint. When the Auckland farmer, Tom Brown, steeped in the hunting traditions of his native Leicestershire took the Pakuranga Hunt club pack to the Waikato in 1884, he was dismayed by the large number of inexperienced riders who turned out for a day's sport. Wildly enthusiastic but uncontrollable, many of them broke fences and over-rode the hounds causing the irate Huntsman to demand that they practice with paper chases before he would consider a return visit.⁷⁸ Around the same time, the Master of the South Canterbury Hounds was faced with 'a motley crowd of horsemen' who had little appreciation of the sport. He was particularly annoyed by one 'frantic Highlander' who rather than follow the hounds seemed to think the idea was to keep the hare rounded up until it could be killed.⁷⁹

Intolerance for seemingly minor misdemeanours became more evident in the closing years of the century. When Harry Hassell, renowned for his immaculate dress and deportment, came to the Egmont Hunt Club in 1897 as Huntsman he began by imposing a fine of 2/6 to anyone heard referring to the hounds as 'dogs'.⁸⁰ Standards of dress also became more vigorously enforced by some clubs. While some followers of the Pakuranga Hunt club began to wear the traditional green coat, that distinguished English harriers from foxhunters, as early as 1877, there was increasing pressure to

⁷⁷ E. Jerningham Wakefield, *Adventure in New Zealand*, Joan Stevens (ed.), Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1955, p.255.

⁷⁸ Moore and Bingley, p.37.

⁷⁹ Kerr, p.6.

⁸⁰ Sole, p.41.

make it regulation dress for male members. Concern about the alleged havoc caused by non-members who turned out to hunt, led the Master, Teddy O'Rorke, to insist in 1902 that members be clearly identified by the club's green coat with black collar. Such measures had the effect of making the sport more exclusive and in so doing paralleled the tightening of attitudes that had marked British horse sports.

The drive for greater standardisation and control extended beyond the playing fields and into the administration of the sports. The New Zealand Polo Association was organised in 1891 and before the end of the century horseracing, trotting and hunting had also formed national bodies. Although the reasons for nationalising the individual sports were complex and varied, one of the key arguments for central control was to maintain the quality of colonial horses. The racing historians, John Costello and Pat Finnegan, concede that it is difficult to say when the New Zealand Racing Conference for gallopers actually came into being but they agree that from the late 1880s there had been moves by prominent racehorse owners such as Captain Sir William Russell and Sir George Clifford to establish uniform rules of racing throughout New Zealand. As part of the process, Auckland, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki, Wanganui, Wellington, Greymouth, Canterbury and Dunedin were designated 'metropolitan clubs' to hold jurisdiction over all the race meetings in their districts. Representatives from these clubs attended an annual conference and although the Racing Conference remained an association of racing clubs without statutory authority or power, it gained effective control of New Zealand horseracing. Significantly, official acknowledgement for the organisation came in 1900 when the English Jockey Club recognised the New Zealand Racing Conference as the governing body of racing in the colony.⁸¹ The trotting branch of racing became a national organisation with the establishment of the New Zealand Trotting Conference in 1896.⁸² The year 1900 marked the establishment of the New Zealand Hunts' Association. Although the pressing cause for its formation was to set rules for the qualification of hunters at race meetings, like horseracing it sought to encourage the breeding of good horses.⁸³ Also in common with horseracing, control of the sport was motivated by sportsmen with a vested interest in

⁸¹ John Costello and Pat Finnegan, *Tapestry of Turf: The History of New Zealand Racing 1840-1987*, Auckland: Moa Publications, 1988, p.113.

⁸² E.G. Sutherland (ed.), *The New Zealand Turf: Historical Review*, Auckland: Newmarket Printing, 1945, p.19.

⁸³ Herbert, p.9.

horse breeding. The first president was Dan Riddiford, colonial born but English educated, who as well as being Master of the Rangitikei Hunt since 1885 was also a keen polo player and breeder of sporting horses.⁸⁴

By the beginning of the new century horseracing, hunting and polo were firmly established in New Zealand as sports that reflected their traditional English roots as well as responding to the new colonial environment. Over and above this, however, was the belief that horse sports could help serve the needs of Empire. Breeding and training good horses and soldiers were Imperial imperatives as was the maintenance of close links between Britain and New Zealand. The frontier features of colonial sport that engendered a sense of colonial pride were celebrated not so much for their uniqueness but for what they could bring to the relationship with Britain. Lively competition in sport was regarded as a worthy pursuit that supported and focussed Imperial purpose. Colonial leadership emerged from the ranks of the colonial elite, who in emulating British gentry, took it upon themselves to initiate, support and lead New Zealand equestrian sports. The activities associated with horses and their connection with Imperial power structures was carried well into the twentieth century and will be examined in subsequent chapters. The martial spirit of mounted horsemen also remained and is captured by the Governor General, Sir Willoughby Norrie, in his forward to K.M. Little's history of polo in New Zealand.

Good luck to you, men and horses! What better music, what braver sight, than the thunder of hooves, the straining of leather, the jingle of bits, the colour flashing down the field, and the waving of flags?⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Chadwick, p.241.

⁸⁵ Little, p.xvi.

4. The Work Horse

While race horses, hunters and polo ponies played a key role in the social life of colonial New Zealand, it is important to remember that the majority of horses would have been regarded as working animals. This chapter will look at the representation of the working horse in nineteenth century New Zealand. During the century, the drive to develop and cultivate land for pastoral and agricultural purposes meant that the focus centred on the sturdy farm horse. Whether it was the general utility type horse adaptable for saddle or harness, or the heavyweight draught used for drawing farm implements and vehicles, the farm horse was the animal on which the prosperity of the colony depended. To harness its potential power, the farm horse needed to be trained to work, and here the complex knowledge and skills involved in horsemanship came into play. Educating the colonial horseman became one of the factors behind the establishment of lasting institutions, such as Agricultural and Pastoral (A&P) Associations and Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). This chapter addresses the changing attitudes towards the human-horse relationship, as experienced in Britain and how it developed in nineteenth century New Zealand. While the settlers showed a respect for traditional horsemanship practices, new ideas and methods found fertile soil in the new environment to flourish.

Miles Fairburn has discussed in *The Ideal Society and its Enemies*, the portrayal of New Zealand as a rural Arcadia; its temperate climate, ample rainfall, empty and fertile land, conceived as a paradise of natural abundance. Fairburn explains that while the idea of a bountiful landscape was in accordance with the classical Arcadian tradition, the colonial version demanded much more human interaction with the land. In keeping with the Victorian principles of social and material progress, the land had to be worked before its riches could be realised.¹ Hard work and perseverance were the means by which settlers could prosper, as one English commentator on the colony's agricultural prospects concluded in 1880:

¹ Fairburn, *Ideal Society*, pp.29-41.

We believe that any English farmer of industry and perseverance, possessing a little capital and a good knowledge of his business, may make a very good living for himself and his family, and will have better opportunities of settling his children than he would in a country like ours, which after centuries of occupation, is crowded in every corner with members of every trade, profession or calling.²

New Zealand historians have made much of the high value placed on work that permeated all levels of settler society. In *The Farthest Promised Land*, Rollo Arnold shows how British immigrant labourers of the 1870s, although often penniless, arrived with the notion that through hard work and careful management, their ambitions of becoming a well off yeomen farmer could be realised.³ Of course this was not the reality for every ambitious immigrant. Miles Fairburn tells the remarkable story of the labourer and diarist, James Cox, whose belief in the virtue of work was so deeply engrained, that despite suffering deprivation beyond his control, he never gave up his quest to better himself.⁴ Jim McAloon's *No Idle Rich* reveals that the work ethic played a key role in shaping the perceptions and fortunes of the wealthy in colonial Canterbury and Otago.⁵

The colonial press promoted the value of manual work, regardless of the settlers' social standing in the Old World:

No one succeeds here who does not work hard personally. No one must be above saddling his own horse and doing the little grooming which is required. Men belonging to the best families in England who have made considerable fortunes are not thought any the worse for putting their own hands to the plough.⁶

This doctrine of work, important as it was to self-advancement, also served in the British mind to distinguish themselves from all others. An article that appeared in the *Otago Witness* in January 1858, gives some insight into this Anglo-centred approach. The author claimed that England's success of ruling 'an empire more vast than the

² S. Grant and J.S. Foster, *New Zealand: A Report on its Agricultural Conditions and Prospects*, London: G. Street & Co., 1880, p. 82.

³ Rollo Arnold, *The Farthest Promised Land: English Villagers, New Zealand Immigrants of the 1870s*, Wellington: Victoria University Press with Price Milburn, 1981, p.271.

⁴ Miles Fairburn, *Nearly Out of Heart & Hope: The Puzzle of A Colonial Labourer's Diary*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995.

⁵ Jim McAloon, *No Idle Rich: The Wealthy in Canterbury and Otago 1840-1914*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2002.

⁶ *Farmers' Supplement to the Yeoman*, 1880, p.8.

Roman; greater, richer, more productive, more populous' was due to the industrious nature of its citizens. Manual labour was not degrading as it purportedly was in Russia, Poland, Spain, the southern American states, the Eastern Empire and parts of Italy. Proudly proclaiming to be slave free, all labour was undertaken by free Englishmen. But the author warned that England's wealth and power, dependant on its hard working free citizens was threatened by a widening of the franchise. In every 'free state' that vested its institutions and political power in the hands of the people, there was a tendency for citizens to shirk their responsibilities and to shift all manual labour to slaves or 'something thinly disguised substitute for it'. This, he felt, was a particular risk to the colonies where as recent events in India had shown, the natives proved untrustworthy.⁷ The nobility of labour was a rallying call to British citizens throughout the world, and one that New Zealand settlers were prepared to heed.

Colonial work horses were also expected to work every bit as hard as their masters. A Wellington correspondent to the *New Zealand Farmer* wrote that any draught horse stallion of his intended for breeding purposes 'must be a worker, and do his share of ploughing'. The stallion, like the mares and every hand on the farm, was required to 'earn his tucker'.⁸ Creating 'a cheerful worker' was the objective of an article in the *New Zealand Mail* on training young draught horses.⁹ Draught horses were generally required to work every day except Sunday and working shifts was recognised as an efficient way to manage farm work. When South African agricultural delegates were shown a 10,000 acre Waimate Farm in Canterbury, they were impressed to see two self-binders each drawn by three Clydesdales that worked three hours at a stretch. Relays were kept on the field so that no time was lost.¹⁰ 'Weed' or 'Monday Morning Disease', according to A. M. Paterson's *Colonial Horse Doctor*, was a disease that was common among such working horses. Overfeeding and laziness were believed to be its cause. Horses that were stabled and received the same amount of feed on Sunday or on a wet day as they did on a working day were likely to fall ill with their 'system overloaded'.¹¹ Horse laziness was a constant

⁷ *Otago Witness*, 23 Jan 1858, p.6.

⁸ *New Zealand Farmer*, 7:3 (Mar 1887), p.70.

⁹ *New Zealand Mail*, 11 Oct 1900, p.53.

¹⁰ William Macdonald (ed.), *Agriculture Within the Empire; Being the Report of the Boer Delegates on the Agriculture and Stock Farming of Canada, Australia and New Zealand*, Pretoria: Transvaal Agricultural Department, 1905, p.107.

¹¹ A. M. Paterson, *The Colonial Horse Doctor*, Dunedin: James Hunter, 1906, p.72.

concern and regarded as an intolerable vice, to be dealt with firmly. In another New Zealand publication, the author stated his 'horsemanship in a nutshell: keep a steady rein on the fractious ones, kind and gentle with the shy ones, wallop the lazy ones till your arms ache'.¹²

Traditional Western horsemanship was based on the premise that a master/servant, even slave, relationship should exist between human and horse. The horse was expected, not only to submit to his handler's demands, but to do so in a willing manner. In return, it was the owner's responsibility to see that the horse's needs were met, although the motivation for this was generally to get as much work as possible out of the horse. One writer expressed the sentiment that it was the duty of the owner to see to the 'wants of the noble (though dumb) animal, whose life, whose comfort, and future usefulness depend so much on the humanity of his present master'.¹³ Another commentator stated that working horses should be kept fit and well for the same reason that the ancient Romans fed and housed their slaves comfortably to get the 'best return out of them in the shape of work'. He added that horses are 'usually willing and able slaves'.¹⁴ The key to this relationship was control; the mastery of man over horse. As one English book on horsemanship stated; 'the rider needs to have perfect control of the horse. The master and servant should have but one will between them, and that will be the master's'.¹⁵ Regard for, even fear of man, was a quality that the horse needed to have and handlers were told not to reveal fear themselves but to exert the full extent of their power until the horse submitted.¹⁶

In matters of horsemanship, the nineteenth century colonial farmer very often had to rely on his own devices. The general shortage of skilled agricultural labour meant that proportionately few men could be hired as specialised grooms, waggoners, ploughmen or coachmen. What the aspiring horseman did have was a number of manuals from which to glean the principles and practices of horsemanship. Initially, these were of British origin, written by distinguished horsemen. Advertised in 1862 in the *Southern Cross* were two respected books on modern horse husbandry. Already a classic with

¹² Mitchell, p.25.

¹³ *Otago Witness*, 1 Feb 1873, p.8.

¹⁴ *Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association Journal*, 5:2 (1903), p.37.

¹⁵ T. F. Dale, *Riding, Driving and Kindred Sports*, London: T. F. Unwin, 1899, p.13.

¹⁶ *New Zealand Mail*, 23 Nov 1894, p.6. and *New Zealand Farmer*, 13:11 (1893), p.40.

several new editions, veterinarian William Youatt's, *The Horse: With a Treatise on Draught*, could be purchased in Auckland as could *Illustrated Horse Doctor*, by William Mayhew, published only two years previously.¹⁷ These books and others that followed were in the tradition of self-help manuals, popularised by Scottish doctor, Samuel Smiles, during the middle years of the century. Dealing with a variety of aspects of horse husbandry, including breeding, training and veterinary care, they were written to support and advise the self-reliant horseman or farmer. *The Horse in Stable and Field* by 'Stonehenge' (J.H.Walsh) and *The Book of the Horse* by S. Sydney were two other publications of this genre that were available for purchase in New Zealand.¹⁸ Although not aimed specifically at New Zealand, Sydney's book did mention the use of the 'straightjacket' when dealing with 'wild colonial horses'.¹⁹

Educating the colonial farmer in matters pertaining to livestock husbandry was a motivating factor in the establishment of agricultural associations. Such organisations were established early in various colonial centres, beginning with the Auckland and New Ulster Agricultural and Horticultural Society in 1843. The Ahuri Agricultural Society was formed by a group of Hawke's Bay settlers in 1858. While there appeared to be livestock exhibitions in Canterbury by the late 1850s, the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association was not officially established until 1863. The Otago-Taieri A&P Society was the first of its kind in Otago but by the close of 1880, it was joined by eleven others south of the Waitaki River.²⁰ New organisations throughout New Zealand continued to be established into the twentieth century, with 102 associations incorporated under the Agricultural and Pastoral Societies Act of 1908.²¹

The New Zealand organisations were modelled after their illustrious British counterparts. The high standing of the British agricultural societies was due in part to their venerable age. In 1871 the *Weekly News* printed the article, 'The Origin and History of Agricultural Societies' in which it was stated that such organisations dated

¹⁷ *Southern Cross*, 16 May 1862, p.3., *Southern Cross*, 21 Mar 1862, p.3.

¹⁸ *North Otago Times*, 4 June 1895, p.2.

¹⁹ Grimshaw, p.109.

²⁰ *Otago Witness*, 21 Jan 1881, p.6.

²¹ 'Agricultural Societies', from An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, A.H. McLintock (ed.), Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, URL:<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/1966/A/AgriculturalSocieties/en.>, Accessed 4 Jun 2007.

back to the ninth century when six or so individuals of limited means pooled their resources ‘to produce a plough and oxen wherewith to drive it’ for the benefit of all in the group. Such mutual assistance evolved to the point where not only farm implements were shared but also information and experience. The writer pointed out that the modern associations owed much to their ancient predecessors, with their aim of disseminating knowledge to benefit all those who worked the land and in so doing became active participants in the ‘march of civilisation’.²² Despite their supposedly ancient origins, the agricultural societies were a product of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In May 1838 the Royal Agricultural Society was established in London, an organisation that the *Weekly News* heralded as ‘the most important association in the world in matters pertaining to agricultural interests’.²³ The patrons of the national and local associations were in large part gentry and aristocratic livestock fanciers who had the time and the resources to exhibit their carefully bred horses at the annual shows. Agricultural association meetings and publications also provided the platform for eminent horsemen to debate the finer points of breeding. The knowledge they contributed was ostensibly for the enlightenment of their tenants or local yeomen farmers. The fact that these more modest farmers often failed to show much interest in the activities of the agricultural societies was a source of complaint in the editorial pages of the British nineteenth century agricultural periodicals.²⁴

The establishment of agricultural and farmer’s associations in New Zealand had the same aim as their British models of advancing livestock and farming development through competition. Like their British predecessors, ploughing matches were an important activity in the early years of the organisations. The Taieri Society’s first recorded ploughing match of 1863 had fifty-two entries, comprising forty-one horse teams and eleven bullock teams.²⁵ The annual show, was the culmination of every association’s effort, where livestock, produce and farming implements were judged against others of their kind. A letter from J. Anderson in 1858 to the editor of the *Otago Witness* urged the support of competition as a ‘healthy stimulus towards perfection’. This he felt was particularly apparent in agriculture and stock breeding

²² *Weekly News*, 18 Nov 1871, p.10.

²³ *Weekly News*, 18 Nov 1871, p.10.

²⁴ Ritvo, *Animal Estate*, pp.47-9.

²⁵ Otago-Taieri Agricultural and Pastoral Society: Records 1863-1997, Hocken Library, 99-003.

where competition or ‘the desire to excel’ had led their ‘country men at home’ to great success. Anderson expressed his view that the high standard of livestock in New South Wales and Victoria was attributable to the importance given to agricultural shows ‘where the judicious and successful breeder receives a just reward for his care, anxiety, and expense and where his less experienced brother settler can acquire a knowledge, beneficial to themselves and the colony’.²⁶ As a publication of the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association, the *Country Journal*’s unquestionable support and enthusiasm for agricultural shows is understandable. Although it appreciated the local show’s social role as a pleasurable holiday outing, it regarded its main function as the interchange of experience and ideas. Show day provided opportunities for comparison, criticism, and instruction, necessary to advance colonial livestock breeding.²⁷

In terms of horses at the colonial shows, the major emphasis was on the working draught horse. Auckland’s 1850 show offered only three prizes for horses, awarding £3 each for the best cart stallion and mare and £1 for the best plough and pair of horses.²⁸ The prize list of Otago’s Northern Agricultural and Pastoral Association 1864 event indicated that ten out of the fifteen horse classes were for draught horses. Significantly, the best draught stallion was awarded £10, while the best Thoroughbred stallion won half that amount at £5.²⁹ When horses used for urban transport were exhibited, they did not always excite the admiration as did the heavy farm horses. The journalist who reported on the 1867 show run by the Agricultural and Pastoral Society of Otago, commented that the two horses presented by the Dunedin City Corporation ‘looked well in their brilliant harness but they wanted weight to compete with the farm horses’.³⁰ Substance, over mere beauty and show, clearly mattered to the colonial horseman. As the century progressed, a greater variety of classes were offered at most shows but the working farm horse still featured prominently. Along with its other horse competitions, Wanganui’s ‘Grand Annual Show’ in 1880 offered a prize for the best pair of draught horses for farm purposes³¹ and the Otago Peninsula Agricultural

²⁶ *Otago Witness*, 8 May 1858, p.4.

²⁷ *New Zealand Country Journal*, 14:6 (1890), p.451.

²⁸ *Report of the Committee of the Auckland and New Ulster Agricultural and Horticultural Society for the Year 1850*, Auckland: Williamson and Wilson, 1851, pp.10-11.

²⁹ *North Otago Times*, 17 Nov 1864.

³⁰ *Otago Witness*, 19 Jan 1867, p.5.

³¹ *Yeoman*, 25 Sep 1880, p.15.

and Pastoral Society's 1896 show held a class for 'horse best adapted for farm purposes' belonging to a peninsula farmer.³² By the end of the century, light horse classes, particularly those that included jumping competitions were attracting crowds of spectators. Consequently, it fell to the agricultural press to remind its readership that the real purpose of horse competitions was to foster improvement in working horses. One commentator in the *New Zealand Farmer* complained that the jumping competition at agricultural shows, while a pleasing way to 'wile away an idle hour', had 'no practical connection whatever with agriculture or legitimate horse breeding'. What he wished to see instead was a prize for the plough horse with the best walking pace, a trait he felt could be bred into the work horse that could be enhanced by careful training.³³

As well as providing opportunities for healthy competition, the agricultural shows were also taken as a measure of community progress. In 1890 the *Country Journal* stated that agricultural shows were 'among the most conspicuous institutions of the country' and so provided 'proof of the combined industry, skill and public spirit of the inhabitants'. It went on to conclude that 'each successive annual show is a gauge of progress or reverse'.³⁴ Of course, local pride and a parochial press tended to highlight signs of the desired annual improvement and overlook any impediments to progress. The Canterbury Agricultural Association in its annual report of 1878 said of its past show:

The quality of exhibits as a whole showed a superiority over those of the previous year and it is gratifying to be able to notice that the number of inferior exhibits becomes less in each succeeding year; thereby proving that the Association is fulfilling its proper functions, by causing an improvement in the Stock and Agricultural Products of the country.³⁵

At the 1880 stud horse parade run under the auspices of the Patea Agricultural and Pastoral Association, the *Yeomen* noted that although there was no increase in the number of stallions paraded from the previous year, the 'quality of horses (was) unmistakably superior'. It claimed that the general verdict of the judges present was

³² Otago Peninsula Agricultural and Pastoral Society: Records 1886-1984, Hocken Library, AG-707.

³³ *New Zealand Farmer*, 7:1 (1887), pp.37-8.

³⁴ *Country Journal*, 14:6 (1890), pp.451-2.

³⁵ An Account of the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association For the Year Ending January 3, 1878, Christchurch, 1879, p.9.

that 'for general purposes a better class of sires had never been seen on the coast at one time before'.³⁶

Not all felt that the colonial agricultural associations fulfilled the rural community's needs of encouraging agricultural enterprise. For many years the editorial pages of the *New Zealand Farmer* raged with contempt for self-serving agricultural association committees who failed 'to provide good service to the class who for whose benefit they were supposed to exist'.³⁷ While it recognised the contribution of the leading stockowners in their generous subscriptions, it felt that the executive powers of an agricultural society should not be allowed to fall into the hands of a small wealthy clique who ran shows principally in the interests of large stockbreeders.³⁸ In order to attract the co-operation of a larger number of 'practical farmers' throughout the colony, the *New Zealand Farmer* advocated that the societies should attach less importance to their annual shows and to put more effort into providing formal educational opportunities. It suggested that 'gentlemen of colonial knowledge and experience' could be asked to contribute papers to be read and discussed at regular meetings. Lectures on subjects 'connected with scientific agriculture (such as) the laws which govern the physiological development of animals and plants' were also proposed.³⁹ This is not to say that the small farmer escaped censure. The *New Zealand Farmer* criticised the apathy of farmers who failed to contribute to their local association by not joining as members or who were unwilling to exhibit their stock. Whether any were roused into action by the editor who commented that many colonial farmers 'have not sufficient mental energy and education to appreciate the benefits derived from a properly managed organisation',⁴⁰ it is difficult to say.

The emphasis on education and its relationship to class reflected the changing face of British horsemanship. Traditionally the knowledge and practice of horsemanship had been solidly vested in the rural working class with specialised horsemen employed by landlords and tenant farmers to acquire, train and work their horses. During the eighteenth century, however, there was a discernable rethinking of the relationship

³⁶ *Yeomen*, 25 Sep 1880, p.5.

³⁷ *New Zealand Farmer*, 5:12 (1885), p.369.

³⁸ *New Zealand Farmer*, 5:6 (1885), p.178.

³⁹ *New Zealand Farmer*, 7:1 (1887), p.17

⁴⁰ *New Zealand Farmer*, 5:6 (1885), p.178.

between animals and men, and new sectors of the population took an interest in the welfare of horses. Ironically, this coincided with the demographic shift that saw more people moving from a rural to an urban setting and in so doing became distanced from the day to day aspects of animal husbandry. Accompanying this displacement was the growth of a more affluent middle class with access to formal education. Ray Porter, in his analysis of the British Enlightenment movement, discussed the new attitude towards domestic animals. In his words, ‘the educated came to relate to animals, not through working with them but through mind and heart’.⁴¹ A new sensibility towards animals emerged from the ranks of the country gentry and urban elites who took up the relief of suffering animals as a worthy cause. The plight of over-worked and cruelly treated horses was highly visible in an urban setting and was a motivating factor in the formation of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in London in 1824. The SPCA became highly fashionable and effective with the patronage of Princess Victoria in 1835, followed by the granting of a royal prefix on her accession to the throne. In class conscious Victorian society, royal endorsement was sure to guarantee a following of the upper and the aspiring middle classes.⁴²

The nature of the knowledge of horsemanship also changed over this period. In the past, knowledge of the skills needed to work effectively with horses had a mystical quality to it, and its practices were tightly guarded within a particular rural community. During the course of the nineteenth century, however, horsemanship came to be regarded as a commercial commodity that could be taught through demonstrations and books by skilled middle class practitioners to anyone who had the resources to pay for them.

An Irishman, James Sullivan, described in contemporary accounts as ‘an awkward rustic of the lowest class’, gained a reputation for subduing even the most vicious horses during the late 18th and first decade of the 19th centuries. He gained his nickname, ‘The Whisperer’ for his seemingly magical power to tame a horse by whispering in its ear. He insisted on working in absolute secrecy, often locking himself overnight in the stable of the fractious horse. When he signalled that he had

⁴¹ Ray Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, London: Penguin Books, 2001, pp.348-50.

⁴² Richard D. Ryder, *Animal Revolution: Changing Attitudes Towards Specieism*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989, pp.99-101.

completed his work, witnesses were astonished to see the previously dangerous and untameable horse lying down in his stable with the whisperer at his side, fondling the animal as if it was a domestic pet.

The reason for such secrecy had to do with the power such knowledge conferred on the bearer. Throughout eighteenth and nineteenth century rural society, the British farm worker was highly subservient to his employer and in times of agricultural depression, jobs were scarce and living conditions meagre. Due to the special nature of the skills they acquired, a horseman, although a rural labourer, generally working for wages, stood somewhat apart from his fellow workers. Farmers, so dependent on horsepower, could not afford to be without skilled horsemen, especially those who knew the characteristics and quirks of individual animals. Consequently, horsemen, particularly head horsemen, were often able to retain their jobs in times of low employment and were also in the position to demand a certain level of working conditions.

So valuable were horsemanship skills that it was not surprising that the idea that accomplished horsemen had special powers was perpetuated. So mysterious and effective were their practices that many people, even co-workers on the same farm, believed that black magic or witchcraft were part of the horseman's art. Many horsemen used amulets, charms or substances, said to have supernatural power over horses. Hanging a hag-stone, a holed flint, over the back of a stabled horse to prevent a witch mounting to ride, was a documented custom well into the twentieth century. Secret oils, said to have a calming effect on horses, were also a part of traditional horsemanship practice.⁴³

Certain groups of people, such as the Irish, Gypsies, Arabs and some indigenous peoples were said to have an innate affinity for horses. Horsemanship skills were also believed to be vested in particular families, passed on from father to son. There were also organisations that brought horseman together. The roots of Horsemen's Societies probably are probably very old but it is known that they prospered in certain parts of Britain in the early nineteenth century as the horse's economic role became more

⁴³ George Ewart Evans, *Horse Power and Magic*, London: Faber and Faber, 1979, pp.35,74-5,148-9, Clive Richardson, *The Horsebreakers*, London: J.A. Allen, 1998, p.205-6.

important. These were mysterious, male only organisations with secretive meetings and rituals to enable horsemanship knowledge to be shared within a carefully selected membership.⁴⁴ According to Ian Carter in *Farmlife in Northeast Scotland*, such organisations functioned as a levelling device between farm workers and their employers.⁴⁵ The Society of the Horseman's Word is an example of such an organisation in northeast Scotland that ritualised the bond between members and horses. A secret word given to an entrant at his initiation, not only symbolised the identity between horse and horseman, but was also an ideal of mutual trust to strive for if the horseman was to have complete and lasting control over the horse.⁴⁶

Whether within a family or a horseman's society, horsemanship knowledge and 'tricks of the trade' were carefully protected and passed on to appropriate individuals. George Ewart Evans, an English rural historian relates a story he was told by the son of an East Anglian horseman that emphasises this point. The story teller, a thirteen-year-old boy at the time, was with his father when they came upon a horse lying down with a wagon of corn bound for the railway station. Since the driver had no success in getting the horse up, the horseman offered to help. In front of a gathering crowd, he stood over the horse and appeared to whisper into his ear. The horse immediately got on his feet and began to run with the heavily laden wagon. To the onlookers, the horseman demonstrated extraordinary power over the horse by a mere whispered message, but as he later revealed to his son, the whispering was only for the benefit of his audience. What he had secretly done was pour some shot from a gun cartridge into the horse's ear from a little tin he kept in his waistcoat, especially for that purpose. The pellets would have so irritated the horse that the animal jumped up and ran, vigorously shaking his head in an attempt to rid himself of the nuisance. The storyteller, was clearly aware of the significance of the entrusted information and kept it to himself.⁴⁷

By the middle years of the nineteenth century, a new breed of horsemen emerged. The impetus came from the ranks of the American middle class. The first of the new

⁴⁴ Richardson, pp.211-12.

⁴⁵ Ian Carter, *Farmlife in Northeast Scotland 1840-1914*, Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1979, pp.4-5.

⁴⁶ Evans, pp.137-8.

⁴⁷ Evans, p.123-4.

practitioners was John Rarey, son of a successful Ohio farmer and tavern keeper. From boyhood, Rarey had made a study of horsemanship, and learning from experienced horsemen and circus trainers, he developed a system of working with horses that was both effective and humane. He gained a reputation for working with problem horses but he also broadened his reach by writing about and teaching his methods. Rarey promoted his so called rational and 'scientific' method of horsemanship. Its premise was that horses generally fear man and will willingly submit to his control. But there were some horses Rarey felt, that due to bad handling or character, were 'of stubborn or vicious nature' and in order to obtain perfect obedience from them, it was necessary to first make them fear humans. To affect this end, he devised a way in which he tied up one of his subject's forelegs, and then threading the rope through a pulley system with steady pressure laid the horse down. His reasoning was that a horse's main defence was to run away but once immobilised, was likely to give in. As Richardson points out in *The Horse Breakers*, casting horses had been known and used for centuries, but Rarey took it a step further by calming and caressing the horse once it was down. Having mastered the horse, he made friends with it and all accounts claim that once the horse rose from such treatment, he was reformed and did all that Rarey commanded.⁴⁸

However scientific Rarey's horsemanship practices may or may not have been, the marketing of himself and his horsemanship methods were very much in keeping with nineteenth century free enterprise ideology. Rarey's international acclaim began when he formed a partnership with a shrewd Canadian businessman with British cavalry connections. This was important in gaining entry into upper class circles when the pair arrived in England late 1857. Early the next year Rarey was requested to give a demonstration to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert at Windsor, using a difficult stallion especially selected by the Prince. Following this successful exhibition, he took up the challenge of Lord Dorchester's Cruiser. Reputedly the 'most vicious stallion in England', Cruiser as a two year old showed enormous potential as a racehorse but became more and more dangerous, killing two grooms and savaging others. Not only was Rarey able to subdue the former outlaw, but he took him back to London to appear in his demonstrations. The news of Cruiser's reformation assured

⁴⁸ Richardson, pp.164-5, 171-3.

Rarey his celebrity status with many willing to pay the high price required to see the American horse tamer at work.⁴⁹

Showmanship played an important part in Rarey's demonstrations and extraordinary stunts were performed as evidence of his complete mastery over previously savage horses. A popular trick was to lay a plank against the shoulder of a prostrate horse and run a wheelbarrow up it.⁵⁰ There is no doubting the appeal of Rarey's demonstrations. Small private showings for the elite became glittering social occasions while public exhibitions attracted huge audiences such as his closing performance at the Crystal Palace with 8000 in attendance.

The phenomenal success of Rarey's 'modern' horsemanship seems at first puzzling. To begin with, it owed much to the traditional horsemanship practiced for centuries in various horse cultures. Many of the techniques were common knowledge such as laying down a horse, a practice that had long been used by horsemen. Audiences were accustomed to seeing circus horses and ponies performing stunts equally if not more dazzling than those demonstrated by Rarey. The much heralded philosophy that promoted kindness and respect for the animal would have always been a mark of those singled out as successful horsemen and women. Behind the veneer of kind and gentle treatment, the underlying principle of the new horsemanship was the same as the old, which was to establish and maintain dominion over the animal so that it would submit to doing the work required by its master. That this was a God given right is summed up in Rarey's statement about the role of the horse in human society: 'God has wisely formed his nature so that it can be operated upon by the knowledge of man according to the dictates of his will; and he might well be termed an unconscious, submissive servant'.⁵¹

The new horsemanship that took Britain by storm in the second half of the nineteenth century was a product of the times. Its practitioners were drawn from the burgeoning middle classes and, if not actually from towns and cities, certainly appealed to modern urban taste. At least in public, horsemanship was an all male domain and most of the

⁴⁹ Nancy Bowker, *John Rarey: Horse Tamer*, London: J. A. Allen, 1996, pp.9-27.

⁵⁰ *Otago Witness*, 3 Jul 1858, p.7.

⁵¹ *Otago Witness* (supplement), 26 Feb 1859, n.p.

new kind of horsemen sought to individualise their practice, stressing its originality and uniqueness. Far from being portrayed as rural rustics, they went out of their way to be seen as respectable gentlemen. Some, like Rarey, conducted their demonstrations in top hat and tails and sought to mix socially with the urban elite. The title of 'Professor' or 'Doctor' was adopted by most of the new horsemen to give their work professional credence. For all their theatrics and entertainment value, Rarey's exhibitions were never represented as circus acts. They were demonstrations of 'scientific' horsemanship and he performed 'experiments' not mere stunts. Horse taming was replaced with 'educating the horse'. Although the knowledge that the new horsemen had acquired through study and experimentation was considered every bit as valuable as that of the traditional horsemanship kept within the family or horseman's society, it was recognised that the knowledge could be sold for profit. Above all, the new horsemanship of the mid-nineteenth century exploited commercial opportunities. Making use of tools such as the thriving popular press along with business acumen, the new horsemen sought to gain a respectable and profitable living from their work.

Even during the founding years of the colony, New Zealand horsemen and women had access to information about the new developments in horsemanship that were being discussed in the English and American press. John Rarey's philosophy, methods and achievements were detailed in a lengthy article taken from the *Illustrated News* and printed in the *Otago Witness* in July 1858.⁵² The following February, the *Witness* published Rarey's pamphlet, *Principles of Horse Taming*.⁵³ Professor Belew, one of the many imitators of John Rarey operated as early as 1864 in New Zealand. The *Weekly News* described the large crowd that gathered in the old market under the impression that they were to see a 'practical illustration' of the American horse tamer's skills. However, using the ploy that had proved so successful overseas, Belew, on conclusion of his advertised free lecture, invited those who wished to join a class to see him tame an unbroken colt were asked to step forward to pay a fee of a guinea and sign a bond promising not to reveal the secret of Belew's method. About thirty to forty people did so including the reporter, who having signed the bond, could only confirm that no cruelty was involved and that complete mastery was

⁵² *Otago Witness*, 3 Jul 1858, p.7.

⁵³ *Otago Witness* (supplement), 26 Feb 1859, n.p.

demonstrated when the horse showed no resistance or fear when the professor stood on his back with an open umbrella over him. Opening and shutting an umbrella around a horse was part of Rarey's repertoire but when questioned, Belew acknowledged that he had taken two or three 'points' from Rarey but claimed that he had developed the better system. Despite the high cost, there was enough interest in Auckland for Belew to conduct four lectures, followed by his demonstrations of his humane method of breaking in and taming a wild horse. Although the reporter could state that in every instance the horses presented 'yielded to the superior power of man's intellect and science', he regretted that Auckland could not produce a Cruiser as there appeared to be a scarcity of vicious, untameable horses in the town.⁵⁴ Christchurch hosted Professor Belew in July 1865, again attracting his audience by placing an advertisement in the paper advising of a free lecture on horse taming and horsemanship by the 'Great American Horse Tamer'.⁵⁵ Following the formula that proved so successful overseas of combining education with social occasion, Belew announced that holders of tickets to the next demonstration were entitled to bring a 'lady friend' to witness his exhibition.⁵⁶ The Superintendent of Canterbury was the guest of honour at Belew's final demonstration in Christchurch. As with the preceding presentations, this received a highly favourable review in the *Press*, concluding with the statement; 'we do not hesitate to say that the valuable principles inculcated by Professor Belew's visit to this town will long be remembered and practiced in Canterbury'.⁵⁷

Although Professor Belew and other travelling horsemen teaching the skills of modern horsemanship created a flurry of interest in the towns they visited, it was the practical, hard working men with colonial experience that had the most lasting effect on New Zealand horsemanship. The 'Old Colonist', in his 1863 pamphlet, *Speed the Plough* emphasised that to be of any value to his owner, the working horse had to be broken in with kindness and gentle treatment.⁵⁸ One of the most respected colonial authorities on the use of horses was Alfred Saunders who arrived in Nelson in 1842. Saunders pursued many careers and interests, remembered as a miller, farmer, reformer,

⁵⁴ *Weekly News*, 12 Mar 1864, p.4

⁵⁵ *Press*, 10 Jul 1865, p.1.

⁵⁶ *Press*, 11 Jul 1865, p.2.

⁵⁷ *Press*, 14 Jul 1865, p.2.

⁵⁸ Anon., *Speed the Plough: The Colonial and New Zealand Farmer's Guide by an Old Colonist*, Auckland: E. Wayte, 1863, p.51.

politician, provincial superintendent and historian. In 1886 his book, *Our Horses or the Best Muscles Controlled by the Best Brains*, was published in London. To make his material more accessible to the colonial readership, Whitcombe and Tombs published a section of the book, dealing specifically with farm horses, as an inexpensive pamphlet. Called *The Perfect Draft Horse*, it also included reviews of *Our Horses* by English and New Zealand newspapers as well as by influential horsemen. Extracted from the *Spectator* was the statement; ‘Saunders belongs to the new school of horse training, discards the cruel methods of old fashioned breakers and rough riders and shows us how horses may be rendered tractable and obedient by kindness and good management’. The *Whitehall Review* acknowledged Saunders as ‘a past master in equine science’ who demonstrated ‘the thorough practicality of the theory that perfect knowledge insures almost perfect control of nature’. It was also acknowledged that Saunders was able to address issues unique to the colonial experience, for example, his suggestion to adopt uniform voice commands for use with draught horses. As Saunders explained, colonial work horses were commonly driven by ploughmen from differing parts of Britain, some Scotch, Irish, and others from the West counties or the south of England, causing confusion among the horses by hearing entirely different words intending to direct the same action.⁵⁹ Sharing the colonial sentiment, Saunders was of the opinion that ‘every horse must do his share of work’ but added, ‘providing you know how to master him without resorting to cruelty’.⁶⁰

Andreas Reischek was another writer on New Zealand horsemanship who, like Saunders, believed that many colonial horses were ruined by harsh handling. His occupation while in New Zealand as a collector and taxidermist was hardly conducive to sensitivity to all living creatures, but towards dogs and horses he showed utmost kindness and understanding. In *The Story of a Wonderful Dog with Some Notes on the Training of Dogs and Horses*, he wrote of the necessity of the traveller or explorer to be in possession of a well-trained horse that would come at a whistle and be a companion to him in his often lonely existence. Reischek also recognised the dangers of crossing New Zealand rivers on horseback and gave instructions on how a young

⁵⁹ Alfred Saunders, *The Perfect Draft Horse*, Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1886, pp.24-5, 30.

⁶⁰ Charles Frederick Lichtwark, *Educating the Horse by Professor Lichtwark*, Kate Robertson (ed.), Te Anau Mahoe Books, 1998, p.66.

horse should be trained to cross them, initially accompanied by an ‘old river horse’, then being led in shallow water before getting used to swimming with a rider and increasing the distance to be swum gradually.⁶¹

By the 1880s New Zealand could claim its own ‘professor’ of horse training. Professor Lichtwark was born in Germany and immigrated as a boy to Australia where he developed his interest in horses. Later he settled in New Zealand to give lessons in horsemanship and in 1895 published his book, *Educating the Horse*. He professed an admiration for Alfred Saunder’s work and the chapter ‘The Theory of Horse Education’ was taken entirely from Saunder’s book. Lichtwark, however, was less enthusiastic about the American horse tamers who had demonstrated their systems in New Zealand. Although he respected Rarey as the ‘pioneer of modern horsemanship’, he felt that his method of bringing horses down to subdue them was not suitable for the colony. It might work in a loose box or a riding school with their soft surfaces but it could not be done on a colonial bush farm where stumps and stones would seriously injure the horse. He was highly critical of the visiting American horseman, Professor Sample’s ‘smart’ performance that created a sensation everywhere he went in New Zealand, making its creator a lot of money. His methods were much too cruel for Lichtwark’s liking and he described an 1889 performance in Hawera where a reluctant filly who refused to get up had water poured in her ear and was dragged in harness by three heavy draught horses.⁶²

The teaching of modern horsemanship in the Australasian colonies proved to be as lucrative as it was in other parts of the world and not surprisingly it became a competitive enterprise. Each practitioner sought to create and market a system of training horses that was quick, effective and suited colonial conditions. The ‘Lichtwark Tackle’ which composed a pole about eight feet long, three pieces of rope, each about twenty four feet and a fifteen inch leather strap, was developed by its namesake because it was not too expensive and could be easily come by.⁶³ With the use of the long pole and one of the ropes, Lichtwark addressed one of the problems

⁶¹ Andreas Reishok, *The Story of a Wonderful Dog With Some Notes on the Training of Dogs and Horses: Also some Hints on Camping, Bush and Mountain Exploration in New Zealand*, Auckland : Auckland Star, 1889, pp.41-2.

⁶² Lichtwark, pp.86-97.

⁶³ Lichtwark, pp.12-16.

that horse tamers from more developed parts of the world had overlooked which was catching the 'wild' horse in the first place. However, the Australian horseman, D. McGillivray, complained in his book, *Australian Horses from Paddock to Park*, that the New Zealand professor had stolen the method from him.⁶⁴ The competitive spirit that was a key feature of agricultural development also appeared amongst horse trainers with the strange phenomenon of horse taming contests. Lichtwark describes one such event at Hawera in 1889 between himself and a travelling horse trainer, Professor Hickton, who was reputedly the winner of thirty previous contests. Each contestant was given two horses and with a time limit of two hours whoever showed the most humane, simple and effective style of handling the horses was declared the winner. At the conclusion the judges were unanimous in their decision to award Lichtwark the stakes and 'Championship of New Zealand'.⁶⁵

While there is ample evidence to support the view that the modern Western theories and methodology of horsemanship were emulated in nineteenth century New Zealand, there are far fewer clues on whether the traditional lore surrounding the horse survived in the New World. There are logical reasons for this; first of all, as has been discussed, much of this knowledge was not documented but part of an oral tradition that could die with the holder. Secondly, as Evans experienced in Britain, the information is often very difficult to access due to the sensitive nature of the knowledge.⁶⁶ Lastly, this kind of traditional lore was often actively suppressed by the scientific and agricultural journals. In promoting the 'best' agricultural journals and the need for formal education on livestock, an article in the *New Zealand Mail* stated that 'under the diffusion of correct knowledge, a vast army of cruel and injurious superstitions would be put to flight'.⁶⁷ The colonial press also promoted the notion that it was the employer rather than the employee who had access to the knowledge of horsemanship. As one writer claimed, servants who worked with horses could be 'extremely ignorant upon the simplest points and practice' in following what

⁶⁴ D. McGillivray, *Australian Horses from Paddock to Park: A Treatise on the Scientific Handling, Breaking, Educating and the General Handling of Horses*, Sydney: William Brooks, 1902., p.30.

⁶⁵ Lichtwark, pp.98-99.

⁶⁶ Evans, pp.203-4.

⁶⁷ *New Zealand Mail*, 6 Mar 1885, p.11.

they had learned from ‘equally ignorant men’. It was up to the horse owner to educate those in his employ on matters pertaining to horsemanship.⁶⁸

As was experienced in Britain, in New Zealand, the urban middle class undertook the role as guardians of the horses they saw as ill treated by those who worked them. In 1862 an indignant colonist complained in the *Southern Cross* that ‘the wanton way in which horses are daily tortured and abused in the streets of Auckland is a disgrace to a Christian community.’ It was with a kind of colonial cringe that in 1883 another commentator claimed, ‘one can see almost daily in the public streets of Auckland and its suburbs instances of brutality as regards the treatment of animals (notably horses) which would never be tolerated a moment in London or any large English town’.⁶⁹ Sympathy for the domestic animals in their midst as well as the desire to create a more civilised society led to the establishment of Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in New Zealand. In 1882 the first such organisation was formed in Dunedin with Judge Williams as President. Two years later, Wellington established its SPCA, and by the turn of the century, the major cities and towns had founded their own organisations.⁷⁰ The Wellington Society’s report of 1900 left no doubt that cruelty to animals continued to exist in the city, ‘whether from callousness or ignorance or both’. The Society endeavoured, the report indicated, to deter those who are callously cruel by prosecuting flagrant cases and to educate those lacking humane instincts by warnings of its inspector’.⁷¹

Other material suggests that the men who worked with horses were far from callous or ignorant and showed genuine concern for the animals in their care, often regarding them as workmates. James Baxter, a homesick young Scottish horseman who worked with Clydesdales on Fen Court Station, near Cambridge in the early 1880s, found it a lonely life but still he stayed partly because of his attachment to the horses. He was also aware of the value of his skills. When he expressed his desire to leave, his employer promptly doubled his wages and offered a month off work to visit friends in

⁶⁸ *Weekly News*, 3 Aug 1900, p.42.

⁶⁹ *The North New Zealand Settler and Land Buyers’ Guide*, 2:10 (1883), p.291.

⁷⁰ ‘SPCA - New Zealand Origins’, URL:<http://www.rspcanz.org.nz/introduction.html>, Accessed 18 Oct 2006., Veronika Thornburrow (ed.), *The Compassionate Years: an Introduction to the History of the Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals*, Auckland: RNZSPCA, 1993, 23-7.

⁷¹ *New Zealand Mail*, 25 Oct 1900, p.59.

Canterbury in return for a written agreement to stay for thirteen months.⁷² It was also not just agricultural workers that felt a special affinity for their horses. Memoirs of those who worked in the mines, transport and logging industry remembered by name and by personality, animals they counted amongst their friends. Jack Nelson recalled, Bell, the leader of a four horse tram team that hauled logs to a mill in the Bay of Plenty at the turn of the century. Bell was described as ‘beautiful, upstanding, intelligent animal’ that needed no reins to guide her but would begin her work with the simple command of ‘Come on Bell’.⁷³ The antics of Dolly, the pit pony who worked in the Waihi mines were also recalled with fondness by Les Morgan. Despite living nearly all her life underground, except for her three week break at Christmas, Dolly was clearly well treated with the miners taking her sugar bags full of grass to mix with her staple diet of hard food. She was also offered bread crusts, if she had not already raided a ‘crib tin’, that some unfortunate miner had forgotten to secure its lid. As Morgan, the former miner mused, ‘whenever the talk goes to the time I was underground I remember old Dolly, the almost human pony, and am thankful for having worked with her’.⁷⁴ Bob Henderson, a West Coast teamster wrote of his experiences and affection for the horses he drove in a book aptly named, *Friends in Chains*. In looking back with nostalgia to his days of driving draught horses, he insisted that it was patience rather than speed was needed to get the work done:

Slow-moving days perhaps they were, days when patience and determination were the things that counted and speed applied only to the racecourse and not to the rutted road and bush track. Friendship with man and beast was, I believe, more treasured then, and the mates I camped with and the horses that pulled are much more than names today.⁷⁵

Despite the emphasis on progress and education, promoted by the colonial middle class, there remained some vestiges of traditional horsemanship with its elements of secrecy and superstition. Some of the old knowledge and beliefs that accompanied the first settlers proved more durable than the newspapers and agricultural journals would have us believe. Robert Mitchell’s *The Colonial Horse-Keepers’ Book of Recipes*, published around 1900 included some of the old folklore. One of his ‘recipes’, called

⁷² ‘Letters from James M. Baxter’ MS.

⁷³ Jack Nelson, ‘Memories of Logging Days’, *Ohinemuri Regional History Journal*, 8 (1967), p.8.

⁷⁴ Les Morgan, ‘Dolly: Our Mine Pony’, *Ohinemuri Regional History Journal*, 13 (1970), p.26.

⁷⁵ Bob Henderson, *Friends in Chains*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1961, p.12.

‘How to Make a Horse Follow You’, he supposedly bought from an Indian groom. It involved going to the spot where a mare had foaled and finding a small piece of matter called the milt, which was expelled from the foal’s mouth at birth. This was dried and ground into a powder. When a mare was given a lick of the powder from a colt’s milt and a stallion from a filly’s, the horse would follow you for eight days.⁷⁶ There are still some horsemen today that will find and keep the milt as a good luck charm.⁷⁷ In the name alone, the horse whisperer’s legacy still remains as well as some of the tricks of the trade. Lichtwark himself taught an old, quick fix method of getting a horse that had stopped to go forward again, if all else failed. He advocated putting in a handful of dirty, sand or fine gravel into a horse’s mouth as a sure way of curbing the animal’s stubbornness and getting him back to work.⁷⁸ There are stories, too, that are passed on indicating that horses, like other creatures of nature, may have ways of knowing that the sensitive horseman or woman would do well to heed. Some believe that the four pit ponies detected impending disaster at the Brunner Mine on Thursday 26 March 1896 when, not once but twice they refused to enter the tunnel, wheeling away and galloping back to their stable. This was out of character for the usually willing ponies, but eventually the snorting and frightened animals were led into the tunnel to begin the day’s work.⁷⁹ As history records, sixty-five men along with the four ponies, never returned alive to the surface, all victims to the fatal explosion that remains New Zealand’s worst mining disaster.

The work horse had a particular significance to nineteenth century settler culture where the ethos of hard physical work became the cornerstone of success in the New World. Colonial New Zealand inherited many of the attitudes and knowledge surrounding the animal that had toiled for centuries alongside its human masters. Some of this was traditional horsemanship knowledge that had been carefully nurtured and practiced by successive generations of rustic horsemen. But along with this came a modern culture of horsemanship that stressed education and rational understanding as the means to achieve greater results from the work horses that fuelled nineteenth century economies. The practitioners of the new horsemanship were largely drawn from the middle classes who rallied to the demand for greater speed, competition and

⁷⁶ Mitchell, p.22.

⁷⁷ Personal correspondence with horse breeders.

⁷⁸ Lichtwark, p.66.

⁷⁹ Henderson, p.13.

progress. Their attitudes appealed to the progressive agriculturalists of New Zealand who, holding steadfastly to their belief in the land's Arcadian prospects, endeavoured to work for personal gain as well as for the prosperity of the colony. Touched upon here, but developed further in the next chapter is the role of science in New Zealand horse husbandry. Scientific horsemanship defined the new approach to managing horses but science was to have an even greater role in breeding the kind of horses needed to serve in the modern world.

5. The Rise and Fall of the Colonial Horse

A topic that exercised the minds of many colonists was how best to produce the horsepower so essential for colonial growth and development. This chapter looks at horse breeding as practiced in New Zealand during the colonial period up until the eve of World War I. Along with their horses, the early colonists also imported from their homeland the principles and practices of British horse breeding. Foremost amongst these was an apparent relentless determination to improve the standard of their horses by the control of breeding animals. What determined breeding objectives and decisions varied considerably and can be seen to shift in response to a number of cultural and social factors. During the founding years of the colony, a high priority was placed on building up the numbers of horses. The uses to which horses were put in the colony were sometimes very different from those in the Old World and consequently there was an acceptance that the character and physique of the imported horses needed to be reshaped to suit their colonial purpose. While the colonists admired the proud bloodlines of the established British horses, they were also aware that by crossing different strains, they could create a type of general utility horse, readily adaptable to colonial conditions. By the closing years of the nineteenth century new factors, generated both internationally as well as within the colony, came into play that affected the kinds of horses bred in the colony. As the colony prospered and became more urbanised, greater specialisation of horse stock was required. Along with this arose the perception that although the quantity of horse stock increased; the quality of the animals had deteriorated. The progeny of the fine English Thoroughbreds and powerful draught horses, so carefully bred, selected and shipped at considerable cost to the colony were believed by some commentators to have become degenerative examples of their species. Notions of hybrid vigour that had marked the early colonial period, increasingly gave way to an obsession with pedigree and racial purity.

While the focus of this chapter is on the breeding of horses, it is also clear that this particular kind of human endeavour provides insight into human values and attitudes of the time. Late nineteenth century horse breeders' preoccupation with race

constancy and the supposed pre-eminent role of their stallions in the breeding process reveal deeper concerns in the community about race, class and gender. Awareness grew that if the breeding of animals could be controlled to produce offspring with desirable traits, so too could human reproduction be subjected to scrutiny and possible controls. The ideas that surrounded domestic animal breeding can be seen to foreshadow the eugenics movement in New Zealand and overseas.

The background to horse breeding as it developed in nineteenth century New Zealand lies in Britain of the previous century. While the power of horses had been utilised for centuries, it was not until the mid eighteenth century that horses became vital to the British economy as a whole.¹ Systematic breeding needs to be seen in the context of the widespread scientific and technological changes that took place in British agriculture in which more land was brought into production to feed the burgeoning population. For centuries oxen pulled farm implements and loads, but increasingly faster and more manoeuvrable horses took their place. The bulk transport of raw materials and finished goods also created a demand for horses, pulling a variety of wheeled vehicles as well as canal barges. Apart from providing draught power, horses also powered industry, turning gins and mills. Not only were greater numbers required, but more types of horses were called for to fulfil a wider variety of roles. As landowners, farmers and the urban middle class became more prosperous, a demand grew for the breeding of horses specifically for recreation, such as racing and foxhunting. This created in the horse world a division into two major classes, making the distinction between heavy and light horses. Heavy horses were essentially the work horses, bred for size, strength and temperament, their great power harnessed for transport, industry and agriculture. Light horses were the riding or light harness horses, more associated with leisure and the elite, their speed, action and elegant appearance separating them from their working cousins.

So vital were horses for the economic and social life of Britain, that there remained a strong incentive to improve upon the existing horse stock. Eighteenth century British livestock breeders were also emboldened by Enlightenment faith in human progress and the ability to exercise control over nature which included including other species.

¹ Grimshaw, p.xi.

By identifying advantageous traits and allowing only selected animals to mate, breeders could strive to make each generation an improvement on the previous one. The key to systematic breeding, progressive livestock breeders recognised, lay in science. While once horse breeding was seen as an art, the success of a mating being more of good fortune and intuition, science was increasingly called upon as a tool to livestock breeding.

It is important to note that although horses were classified during the eighteenth century into heavy or light, largely determined by their usage, no officially recognised breeds existed at this time with the exception of the Thoroughbred. The creation of the English Thoroughbred, not only of the horse itself but the culture that surrounded it, had widespread implications for the purebred livestock movement that swept the Western world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The desire for a swift saddle horse to satisfy the royal and aristocratic passion for horseracing was the impetus for the development the Thoroughbred. This breed was created over the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in the spirit of Enlightenment experimentation and innovation. Essentially the Thoroughbred came about by crossing selected native British mares with imported Arabian stallions. It was recognised by British horse breeders that Arabian and other Middle Eastern horses not only had the speed, beauty and stamina that they sought, but also very importantly that they seemed able to impart these desirable characteristics onto their offspring. This tendency to breed true to type was undoubtedly the result of intense selective breeding practised by the Arab peoples on their horses over hundreds of years. By mixing the blood of the exotic imports with the best of the British stock, a new type of horse was created which was named the Thoroughbred; ‘thorough’ used in recognition of the supposed pure breeding of its Eastern forebears, considered the first true ‘blood horse’.²

At around the same time as the sporting elite were engaged in developing the racing Thoroughbred, an English tenant farmer, Robert Bakewell was achieving success in breeding prime agricultural livestock. A profound believer in science, Bakewell found that through careful observation, experimentation, meticulous recording of

² Ibid., pp.31-3.

results, and systematic planning, he could achieve his objective of producing better and more profitable animals. Although perhaps better known for his sheep, cattle and pigs, Bakewell is also credited with developing a strong but lively farm horse, which became known as the Leicestershire black cart-horse. Like the Thoroughbred, Bakewell's distinctive draught horse was also initially a mixture of foreign and native blood when he crossed selected English heavy horses with compact and active black coach horses from Holland. Once he achieved the kind of animal he desired, Bakewell found that by inbreeding, that is the mating of closely related animals, he could breed a distinctive black draught horse with a high degree of uniformity. The innovative Bakewell also developed a unique system of hiring his stallions out to farmers for the breeding season. This not only proved highly profitable but it meant that Bakewell could study the performance of a greater number of progeny in a variety of situations and under different environmental conditions.³ The knowledge gained by progeny testing allowed him to make further improvements to the horses and other livestock on which his fame and fortune rested. What was later to be called the 'Bakewellian Method' laid the foundation for selective breeding practices.⁴

It was not just horses that could be improved by mixing blood. Historian David Lowenthal argues that up until, and even during the course of the nineteenth century, the mixing of human races was often praised, with the merging of Celts with Saxons, Danes and Normans seen as having an invigorating and lasting effect on the British population. He cites Anthony Trollope, 'No Anglo-Saxon could be what he is now but for that portion of wild and savage energy which has come to him from his Vandal forbears.'⁵ A comparison was sometimes made between the process of improving horses and the making of superior people. The English draught horse, known in the late nineteenth century as the Shire was likened to its breeders by one enthusiast:

³ Cecil H. Pawson, *Robert Bakewell, Pioneer Livestock Breeder*, London: Crosby, Lockwood and Sons, 1959, pp.61-3, 68.

⁴ Derry, *Horses in Society*, pp.7-9, Grimshaw, p.xii.

⁵ Lowenthal, pp.212-3.

The majestic Shire horse of today as we see him represented in our show yards is the very embodiment of power and courage, resembling at least in one respect his Saxon masters, in that he is the outcome of the blending of national and alien races, moulded by the persistent efforts of the breeder to fulfil the varying functions for which his services are required.⁶

The message here is clear; the physique and character of both English horses and men have been strengthened by their legacies of racial mixing.

Science alone is only one strand of the complex process of animal breeding; class provides another strong thread. The importation, breeding and exhibition of superior animals have long been associated with royalty and nobility. Harriet Ritvo makes the point that a prize animal was valued for its dignity, status and breeding, the same qualities that distinguished the human elite.⁷ By association with the rich and powerful, the Thoroughbred became regarded as the aristocrat of the horse world. An interesting parallel exists between the various catalogues of the peerage and baronetage that first made their appearance in Britain during the late seventeenth century and the *General Stud Book* for Thoroughbred race horses, established by James Weatherby in 1791. When Weatherby began to compile and publish records of racing horses, he did so not with the intention of assisting in breeding decisions, nor to replace breeders' private records. Rather he did so in an effort to regulate the racing industry by preventing the falsification of information that could give a horse an unfair advantage in a race. The concept of a stud book, nevertheless, was to have wide reaching effects on the development of a purebred horse breeding industry. First of all, it served to differentiate one type of horse from another and secondly, it created added value to a horse with a publicly registered pedigree.⁸ Like its human equivalents, the *General Stud Book* allowed for a clear delineation of those individuals whose ancestors were included and those who were not.

The early settlers to New Zealand had a deep regard for the efforts of British breeders, who they believed over time had brought British heavy and light horses to such a high state that they were sought all over the world. While they felt a sense of responsibility to maintain the standards set by their forefathers, they also were aware that the

⁶ *New Zealand Country Journal*, 9:6 (1885), p.477.

⁷ Ritvo, *Animal Estate*, 1987, pp.60-1.

⁸ Derry, *Horses in Society*, pp.4-6.

colonial environment provided a unique opportunity to make further breeding progress. With no existing horse population prior to colonisation, the Australasian colonies were seen as blank canvases on which to begin their work. Free from Old World equine diseases and protected from subsequent contamination by vast distances, colonial horsemen also recognised that they could leave behind them the breeding mistakes of the past.⁹ Imbued with the popular enthusiasm for science, they understood that the colonial situation gave rise to unique ‘opportunities studying the effects on the horse of natural and artificial selection combined in different climates in varying quantities and contrasted conditions’.¹⁰

Given their optimistic outlook, it was not surprising that New Zealand horsemen sought to establish the best strains of British horseflesh in the colony. By the time that the colonists began putting down roots in New Zealand, the Thoroughbred had become widely esteemed internationally, notably because its stamina, speed, even willpower, could be tested publicly against others of its kind on the racetrack. It was also acknowledged that while draught horses and so called ‘half-breeds’ were generally linked to a particular locality; this was not the case with the Thoroughbred. As a carefully cultivated and nurtured animal, the Thoroughbred was said to be able to ‘withstand external influences’, therefore ‘capable of being transported to all parts of the globe’ and to flourish ‘without essential deterioration’. One commentator, Georg Hermann Albrecht Lehndorff, whose work on horse breeding was published in Britain and America, positioned the relationship between the Thoroughbred and half-bred horse to that between the ‘plantation’ tree to the wild tree of the forest. While he asserted that the cultivated tree would thrive in any locality that sustained trees, the wild tree could only grow where it ‘first struck roots’, supposedly lacking ‘those fibres’ needing to draw nourishment from the new soil.¹¹

The first colonists who established themselves in New Zealand could well have likened themselves to the fine Thoroughbreds that they imported, bred and raced, assuming that their prosperity in the new land was attributable to their strong physical and moral fibre. As much as they wished to emulate the landed gentry of their

⁹ Yarwood, p.16

¹⁰ Dale, ‘Colonial Horses’ p.226.

¹¹ Georg Hermann Albrecht Lehndorff, *Horse Breeding Recollections*, Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1887, pp.10-13.

homeland, it is also apparent that they desired their own sense of colonial identity. This can be seen in their efforts to create a new identity and history for the Thoroughbred in New Zealand. As early as 1854, Edward Jerningham Wakefield made known his intention to found a stud book for Canterbury race horses¹² but it was not until 1862 that Charles Elliot, Secretary of the Nelson Turf Club and proprietor of the *Nelson Examiner* published the first *New Zealand Stud Book*. In his own words, Elliot's objective was to publish a 'reliable book of pedigrees of the thoroughbred horses imported into or foaled in New Zealand' before 'the little knowledge we possess of the breeding of our best horses was in part or wholly forgotten'.¹³ In his historical sketch of the English Thoroughbred, Elliot leaves his readers in no doubt as to the desirability of mixing blood, both human and horse:

The English thoroughbred horse is as little indebted for his excellent qualities to the native horse of our country, as are the present race of Englishmen to the Ancient Britons for their national character. The mixture of Saxon and Norman blood in Britain, which followed the Conquest, created, in fact, a new race, and one that has ever since been distinguished for its vigour of mind and body; and so, likewise, by the blending of the blood of the Arab, the Barb, and of other Eastern horses introduced into England, a breed of horses was created superior to any other in the world.¹⁴

The Thoroughbred of Australia and New Zealand, Elliot claimed, owned its origins to 'imported English blood' as well as to 'an admixture of Arab blood obtained from India', thereby creating a distinctive colonial Thoroughbred. Although Australia was acknowledged as the chief source of New Zealand Thoroughbreds, Elliot indicated that the recent importation of stallions 'of good blood' as well as mares directly from England meant that there was good reason to believe that in 'no long time' the New Zealand Thoroughbred would 'rank with the greatest of his ancestry'.¹⁵ Such confidence in the Thoroughbreds of his adopted home inspired Elliot to include in his stud book horses with 'imperfect pedigrees' but 'whose performances on the (New Zealand and Australian) turf show them to be well entitled to the rank of Thoroughbred'.¹⁶

¹² *Lyttelton Times*, 8 Nov 1854, p.1.

¹³ *The New Zealand Stud Book: Containing Pedigrees of Race Horses, Volume 1*, Charles Elliot (ed.), Nelson: Nelson Examiner, 1862, p.b.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.b.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.xx.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.xi.

Like his British counterparts, Charles Elliot also recognised the advantages of Thoroughbred blood, not just for race horses, but for improving other horses. He was clearly aware of the significance of Thoroughbred blood as outlined in the classic work of William Youatt, *The Horse* first published in 1831 with new editions appearing through most of the nineteenth century.¹⁷ He quoted the English veterinarian as writing, ‘By judicious admixture and proportion of (Thoroughbred) blood, we have rendered our hunters, our hackneys, our coach, nay, even our cart-horses, stronger, more active, and more enduring, than they were before the introduction of the race-horse’.¹⁸

The initiative to set up a stud book for draught horses came from a group of Canterbury pastoralists and farmers. The draught horse was more associated with the farm than the sporting world, so it is not surprising that the promoters of the working horse took their model from the *Canterbury Herd Book* established to record the pedigrees of ‘good’ cattle in the province. The financial advantages of having bulls and cows entered into the book had become clear when such animals came to market for sale. Breeders who produced the heavy horses for farm or transport work, realised that a ‘reliable printed record’ for their stock would offer the same material benefits to the breeder while giving confidence to the buyer that the pedigrees given were ‘neither spurious or doubtful’. The first part of the *New Zealand Stud Book of Draught Horses* was published in 1878 and proved so successful that a second part followed in 1882. The Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Society, the organisation that published both parts, boasted that they had not only recognised the growing international trend for livestock stud books but that they offered what they claimed was a world first, a book that included draught horses of all kinds. In Britain, societies representing the Clydesdale, the Suffolk Cart Horse as well as the English Cart Horse had each published separate stud books for their own horses, but the creators of the *New Zealand Stud Book of Draught Horses* allowed entry of any ‘good’ horse suitable for draught purposes. The preface to Part II stressed that a horse without an established pedigree would not necessarily be excluded, and furthermore

¹⁷ William Youatt, *The Horse with a Treatise of Draught*, (1843), n.p., Ebron Classics, 2005. The National Library holds editions from the years 1849, 1872 and 1876.

¹⁸ *New Zealand Stud Book*, p. xv.

‘that the mere entry of an animal whose antecedents are entirely unknown will result in a pedigree being built up which in a very few years will be of considerable value’.¹⁹ As was the case with colonial Thoroughbreds, the initiators of the draught horse stud book emphasised that performance was at least as important as pedigree.

A feature of colonial horse breeding, not new, but conforming to prevailing Western ideology was the pre-eminent role of the breeding stallion. Readers of the *New Zealand Stud Book* and other racing literature were well aware that all Thoroughbred race horses were descended from the ‘line of kings’, the imported Darley Arabian, the Godolphin Arabian and the Byerly Turk.²⁰ With all horses, it was the male of the species, very often costly imported stallions that were sought to improve the colonial stock by mating them with local mares. Advice on how to best choose the breed and type of stallion to suit New Zealand mares frequently appeared in the agricultural journals and newspapers. An article entitled, ‘On Selecting a Stallion for a Half-Bred Mare’ suggested that since the breeding or pedigree of a farm riding horse was generally unknown, it was recommended that they be crossed with ‘a prepotent and impressive sire so as to reduce to a minimum the element of chance which so often upsets ones calculations in breeding from non-pedigree or cross-bred stock’. Pedigree alone was not sufficient in a stallion, the writer insisted, individual prepotency was required.²¹ Prepotency was considered a male characteristic and was taken to mean the strong power of an individual stallion to override the characteristics of the mare and so to pass on his qualities to the progeny. The disproportionate importance given to the stallion is part myth and part due to the demographics of horse breeding.²² While a mare can only have one foal a year, a stallion can breed with any number of mares during the same time, thus potentially producing a large number of offspring yearly. The notion that a superior stallion could somehow correct the faults of the mare and in so doing result in improved offspring was a key feature of colonial horse breeding practice.

¹⁹ *The New Zealand Stud Book of Draught Horses: New Series Volume 1*, Christchurch: Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association, 1889, pp. iii-v.

²⁰ *New Zealand Stud Book*, p.xviii.

²¹ *Canterbury Agricultural & Pastoral Journal*, 5:4, 1903, p.78.

²² Stephen Budiansky, *The Nature of Horses: Exploring Equine Evolution, Intelligence and Behaviour*, New York: The Free Press, 1997, p.259.

Stud notices printed in colonial newspapers every spring and summer give a revealing insight into the qualities most valued in a horse at the time. Details suggesting the high monetary value of the stallion, his outstanding attributes and his illustrious British ancestors were included to entice owners of broodmares. In 1851, the Thoroughbred horse, St George, was advertised in the *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle* as having ‘immense power, his sire being imported into New South Wales as the most powerful blood stallion that could be obtained at a cost of £1,000 to improve the breed of horse in that colony’.²³ Matchless was represented as ‘the finest horse ever imported into the province of Auckland’, a draught horse that was ‘descended on both sides, from the very best breed of cart-horses in England’. On the same page, Earl Cardigan, a newly imported grey stallion was described in glowing terms as ‘unsurpassed for beauty and symmetry of form; also perfectly quiet to ride or drive.’²⁴ Royal Conqueror’s successes at the Royal Agriculture Society of England and the Royal Highland Society shows were listed as a testament to his potential as an outstanding Clydesdale sire.²⁵ The royal and aristocratic names given to these stallions suggest an unmistakable impression of power and prestige. One imported stallion, England’s Hope²⁶, by its very name evoked a promise of establishing a fine line of English horses in the colony. An imported Clydesdale stallion named, Pride of Scotland, could be said to represent Scottish interests in the colony.²⁷ Stallions such as these were highly visible, not only in newspaper pages, but also due to the fact that they travelled from place to place during the breeding season. Following the British practice, stallions whose stud services were advertised were generally led or ridden a weekly route to cover mares as they came into season. In 1863 the dappled bay horse, Bay Duke, stood Mondays at Mr Gaukroger’s Fox Hill, Wednesdays at the Wakefield Arms, Waimea, Fridays, the Star and Garter at Richmond and the Trafalgar Hotel, Nelson on Saturdays with ‘no attendance on Sunday’. Owners of mares paid the owner £3 plus 5s to the accompanying groom.²⁸ Fifteen years later, the draught stallion, Lord Nelson’s weekly route in the Hawke’s Bay took him to Te Aute, Tarandale and Clive, his service costing £5 per mare.²⁹

²³ *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 13 Sep 1851, p.127.

²⁴ *Weekly News*, 5 Nov 1864, p.2.

²⁵ *Nelson Examiner*, 15 Oct 1863, p.4.

²⁶ *Wellington Independent*, 3 Jan 1860, p.4.

²⁷ *North Otago Times*, 1 Dec 1876, p.1.

²⁸ *Nelson Examiner*, 15 Oct 1863, p. 4.

²⁹ *Hawke’s Bay Herald*, 11 Oct 1878, p.4.

Although from the early days, the progressive colonial farmer would have had British books and periodicals to draw upon; from around the 1880s an increasing body of literature related to horse breeding was generated by the growing agricultural press. Weekly newspapers, appealing to farmers, such as the *Yeoman*, the *New Zealand Mail* and the *Otago Witness* kept their readers up to date with horse importations, agricultural show results and the prices received at horse sales throughout New Zealand. During the 1880s the *Yeoman* and the *Otago Witness* both had a feature called 'Chats with Farmers' in which each week a lengthy description of a well established farm in the district was given, including the attributes and pedigrees of its horses. The *Yeoman's* 'rambling reporter' was profuse in his praise for Warrengate Farm's Clydesdales and Thoroughbreds, many he described as having the 'choicest of pedigrees'. A Thoroughbred colt named The Buzzard, was described as 'a young aristocrat' who can boast of some of the Riddlesworth, Pacific and Touchstone blood in his veins, and is a fine, trim built, go-a-head looking fellow as one would wish to pace one's money upon'. Due credit was given to the colt's breeder, H. N. Harrison, who 'like many other good men and true of the English sort, he finds a well bred a thing of beauty and a joy forever'.³⁰ Complimenting the descriptions of local well-bred horses and successful breeders were excerpts and often full articles reprinted from international publications. For example, as early as 1864, the *Weekly News* published a letter from the well known Jockey Club identity, Admiral Rous headed, 'The Breeding of Thoroughbred Horses' that had appeared four months previously in *The Times* and an item, 'Care of Horses' from *The American Agriculturalist*.³¹ The cosmopolitan nature of the information pertaining to horses is a striking feature of nineteenth century New Zealand.

Access to international material increased with the introduction of periodicals aimed specifically at the farming and pastoral market. The first of these was the *New Zealand Country Journal* published by the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association from 1877 to 1899, continuing as the *Canterbury Agricultural & Pastoral Association's Journal* which ran from 1903 to 1912. Its aim as stated in the first issue was to provide an 'interchange of opinion on subjects related to rural life', which

³⁰ *Yeoman*, 28 Aug 1880, p.7.

³¹ *Weekly News*, 5 Nov 1864, p.12., *Weekly News*, 7 May 1864, p.19.

included agriculture, grazing, gardening, forestry, racing, hunting, shooting and ‘other manly pursuits’. It was intended to be a colony wide publication and to appeal to ‘every country gentleman or farmer who is imbued with the true spirit of English country life’. Significantly, contributions for the new journal were called for from ‘practical men’ as the editors claimed to be ‘all busy men, actively engaged in different pursuits of colonial life’ and so were unable to write much themselves.³² Clearly their readers were too busy to write as well as there was very little New Zealand content other than reports of agricultural shows, meetings and conferences. The majority of the articles were taken from British publications such as *Farm, Field and Fireside*, *The Squire*, *The British Agricultural Gazette*, and *The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society* but Australian, American and Canadian publications were also sources of information on a diverse range of topics pertaining to horse breeding. ‘The Breeder’s Art’, ‘The Breeding of Carriage Horses’ and ‘Profitable Horse Breeding’ being examples of the type of international material reproduced in the *Country Journal*.³³ The long running *New Zealand Farmer*, published in Auckland from the early 1880s featured more articles pertaining to New Zealand conditions than the *Country Journal*, but also had features of overseas origin. A feature of the publication was the inclusion of ‘livestock portraits’ in which each month engravings of several prize winning animals were depicted. As with the written articles, most of these were British although occasionally they were taken from other sources. By the mid 1890s, the drawings were replaced by photographs of celebrated horses with the same intention of showing the standards to which the ambitious colonial breeder could aspire. Increasingly, photographs of New Zealand horses were included. An article written for the *New Zealand Farmer* entitled, ‘Breeding Heavy Horses – The New Type’ included photographs of two Clydesdale stallions; the imported horse, Sir Thornley as well as Ranfurly Yet, bred by T. Liken of Oamaru. The local stallion, described as a good specimen of the colonial bred horse, reflected a shift in attitude that recognised the qualities and show ring successes of horses bred in New Zealand.³⁴

³² *New Zealand Country Journal*, 1:1 (1877), pp.1-2.

³³ *New Zealand Country Journal*, 21:2 (1897), pp.134-39, 15:2 (1891), p.118, 21:6 (1897), pp.134-39.

³⁴ *New Zealand Farmer*, 29:3 (1908), pp.211-12.

Corresponding with the development of a specialist agricultural press in New Zealand was the assumption of values and methods associated with modern purebred breeding. When Robert Bakewell's practice of mating closely related animals was combined with the use of public stud books, the purebred method of animal breeding came into being. As historian, Margaret Derry has stated, the practice of inbreeding became 'attached to the ideas of maintaining purity, as evidenced in pedigrees, and in turn, purity came to define the meaning of quality'.³⁵ This approach was at variance to the traditional approach which recognised that an animal strain could be improved by the input of fresh blood. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the concept of race constancy, supported by written pedigree, became the dominant trend in livestock husbandry throughout Northern Europe.³⁶ The effect that this new approach had in the British horse world was the development of breed societies that sought to define and maintain the standard of their particular breed through the use of pedigree. While various types of heavy horses had been developed over the years in different parts of the country, they were not officially registered and as such were generally only known locally. Bakewell's black cart horse continued to evolve in its native Leicestershire and officially became the English Cart-Horse with its breed society formed in 1878 and its stud book a year later. Across the border in Scotland, the Clydesdale gained its own stud book in 1878, following the establishment of its breed society in 1877. This was carried out in an effort to distinguish it from its English equivalent and to keep the Scottish bloodlines pure. The smaller Suffolk Punch was only really used in East Anglia and became a breed with a society and stud book in 1880. In 1884, the name of the English heavy horse was changed to the more distinguished sounding, Shire.

The establishment of the heavy horse breeds in the final decades of the nineteenth century, accompanied by their stud books, was closely linked to the valuable export market for them. As Margaret Derry has explained in *Horses in Society: A Story of Animal Breeding and Marketing Culture*, the demand for stronger and faster horses for greater efficiency in farm or city work from the large North American and smaller but still lucrative colonial markets. Overseas buyers who often purchased stock unseen, wanted proof of the quality of their expensive imported horses. They demanded authenticated pedigrees that could be verified by the purebred stud books as

³⁵ Derry, *Horses in Society*, p.11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.13.

a guarantee of the value of their purchases. In this way, the quality of heavy horses became increasingly related to purebreds and Clydesdales, Shires, and Suffolks were able to stand proudly alongside the older established Thoroughbred.³⁷

Informed as they were by their agricultural press, New Zealand horse breeders were well aware of the increasing emphasis on purebred horses. During the founding years of the colony the priority had been increasing the numbers of horses. Although there were concerns expressed about the scarcity of horses in some regions and the high prices they commanded, complaints about the quality of horses were few. By the mid 1880s, however, references to the deterioration of horses became more frequent. Describing undesirable horses as ‘misfits’, ‘mongrels’ and ‘weeds’ appeared within the sporting and agricultural articles, yet writers seldom indicated precisely what was wrong with the current state of New Zealand horses. Instead, most nostalgically recalled the splendid pioneering animals first brought to the colony. An article on draught horses in the *New Zealand Farmer* noted that the Clydesdale of the day lacked the size, strength and robustness of its forefathers of forty years ago.³⁸ A commentator on the light horse, complained about the great numbers that were ‘defective in form, deficient in strength and bone’ and how they had ‘lost the hardy quality of the older races’.³⁹

The rhetoric concerning the deterioration of the colonial horse reveals a striking parallel to the prevailing ideology of human racial degeneration. For most of the nineteenth century and throughout the English speaking world there was a widespread belief that the Anglo-Saxon race was ‘fast absorbing or displacing all the sluggish or barbarous tribes of men that (had) occupied the continents of America, Africa, and the islands of the ocean’.⁴⁰ To the New Zealand colonists this was borne out in the popular conception of the Māori as a dying race believed to be fast approaching extinction.⁴¹ The deterioration of the Māori was seen within the context of Darwin’s theory of natural selection. Biological laws governed humans, like all organic forms, and when the pressure of population growth generated a struggle for resources, those

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.48-78.

³⁸ *New Zealand Farmer*, 5:6 (1885), pp.164-5

³⁹ *New Zealand Farmer*, 5:9 (1885), pp. 261-2.

⁴⁰ *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 10 May 1851, p.48.

⁴¹ *New Zealand Graphic*, 6 April 1895, p.1.

that had traits that gave them an advantage over competitors survived to be able to pass on these advantageous characteristics to their offspring. The converse also applied. Those lacking the advantageous traits failed to survive to reproduce. Over time, the cumulative effects of selection and inheritance resulted in the emergence of new species or races and the elimination of others. Social Darwinism embraced this biological determinism and added a further assumption; that this determinism extended not just to the physical traits of humans but also to their whole psychological, moral and intellectual being.⁴² In the colonial mind, the fate of the Māori was sealed in the face of perceived Anglo-Saxon physical and mental superiority. Although some mourned the passing of a people ‘admitted to be the finest savage in the world, brave, intelligent, athletic, ingenious, companionable, and apt to learn’, their demise was believed inevitable, governed as it was by the laws of nature.⁴³ It is in this light that the concerns about the degeneration of the colonial horse should be seen.

Underpinning the anxiety concerning horses was the seemingly unquestioned belief that the founding stock, particularly the animals imported from England, were fine representatives of their breeds, having the strength, stamina, soundness and character to fulfil all the tasks required of them in the new colony. Although the British horse breeds were essentially eighteenth and nineteenth century creations, they were all attributed a far longer lineage. Colonial horsemen were made well aware of their English ancestors’ proud legacy of breeding light as well as draught horses, purportedly dating back hundreds of years. An article in the *New Zealand Farmer* based on a paper given by the renowned English author and horseman, Sir Walter Gilbey, informed readers of some of the history of English horse breeding. No expense had been spared to improve the horse, and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries commissioners were sent to all parts of the world to select the best horses of each country for importation into England. English draught horses were descended from ‘old stock common to Britain centuries ago that were built up and improved to create the old war horse’.⁴⁴ Even the humble cart or farm horse in English hands

⁴² Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp.30-1.

⁴³ *Bay of Plenty Times*, 11 September 1872, p.3.

⁴⁴ *New Zealand Farmer*, 5:9 (1885), pp.261-2.

became a mark of excellence, as outlined by an article reproduced in the *Country Journal*:

But it is in England that the cart horse, like every other kind of livestock valuable in agriculture, has attained the greatest average perfection because the principles of breeding have been more considerably considered by our farmers than in any other country, and also because it is the country, where as compared to the rest of Europe, the roads are good, the farmers are rich, and the hereditary land owners as a matter of pride and duty, without regard to immediate profit, have led the way in this and every other stock-breeding improvement.⁴⁵

Given the firmly held views of the high standard of English horses along with the Darwinian concepts of natural selection and scientific determinism, it was not surprising that anxiety arose over the colonial horse. An article entitled 'Origin of the Horse' that appeared in the *Country Journal* in 1885 discussed Darwin's theory that all domestic horses descended from a single primitive stock and that it was through human selection that the horse was known in its present various forms. Without human intervention, the horse was subjected to what it called the 'dwarfing of the horse'. It noted that when the horse spread to islands and the mountainous regions of the world, it dwindled to a pony.⁴⁶ The risk of this happening in the mountainous island colony of New Zealand would have been obvious to the readers. Reverting to ancestral types was a popular theme in New Zealand and British literature. In an 1886 issue of *New Zealand Farmer*, breeders were warned that unless they carefully chose their best animals for breeding they 'would gradually revert to the original type, from which derived'.⁴⁷ Horses were thought to be particularly susceptible to reversion. Dale's discussion of colonial horses in *The Horses of the British Empire* warned that horses were especially sensitive to changes of climate and work variations and altered by inheritance more quickly than other animals. In a reasonably short period of time, he claimed, horses reverted to ancestral types, habits and colours, and tame horses returned to their wild state.⁴⁸ Strength, stamina, endurance, and behavioural characteristics were also recognised as inherited traits that could deteriorate naturally

⁴⁵ *New Zealand Country Journal*, 22:4 (1898), pp.373-4.

⁴⁶ *New Zealand Country Journal*, 9:2 (1885), pp.149-51.

⁴⁷ *New Zealand Farmer*, 6:4 (1886), p.102.

⁴⁸ Dale, 'Colonial Horses', 1907, p.226.

over time, if horses were left to breed at will.⁴⁹ Clearly, this would have been especially worrying to colonists so highly dependant on the use of the horse.

Size was only one feature that natural selection could affect. As well as physical attributes, it was assumed that behavioural characteristics were inherited. The author of an item in *The Yeoman*, asserted that, ‘nothing is more hereditary in the horse than disposition’.⁵⁰ Such social Darwinism attitudes appeared in many of the discussions of horse breeding in the agricultural journals and newspapers. Good breeding practices were said to develop ‘intelligence’ and ‘ambition’, both desired qualities in a ‘serviceable farm horse’.⁵¹

If natural selection was seen to be a risky business leading to the eventual degeneration, so too were haphazard breeding practices. As early as 1854 at the Auckland Agricultural and Pastoral Show Dinner, William Buckland in his presidential address warned of the careless breeding of inferior horses by natives.⁵² The Māori practice of running horses semi-wild up river valleys was deplored. Allowing horses to roam and mate indiscriminately was seen to result in inferior horses of unknown parentage.

Blood was conceptualised as the medium that carried all traits passed on to offspring and a constant refrain throughout the period was ‘blood will tell’. Also implicit in this emphasis on blood is the imperative of racial purity. Although once lauded, the breeding literature of the late nineteenth century mostly condemned the mixing of blood. One writer complained that while ‘there were few outstanding horses available in the saleyards, mongrels abound’.⁵³ Another expressed his belief that a half-bred is generally a poor horse with ‘soft’ bone. All good horses this commentator insisted ‘must have breeding’.⁵⁴ A writer for the *New Zealand Farmer* outlined the hereditary process through which high quality horses could be bred.

⁴⁹ *New Zealand Farmer*, 5:6 (1885), pp.164-5.

⁵⁰ *Yeoman*, 11 Sep 1880, p.2.

⁵¹ *Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Journal*, 5:4, (1903), pp.84-5.

⁵² J.P. Kalaugher, *Historical Chronicles of the Auckland Agricultural and Pastoral Association and Early Days of the Auckland Province*, Auckland: Dawson Printing Co., 1925, pp.42-3.

⁵³ *New Zealand Country Journal*, 12:5 (1888), pp. 418-9.

⁵⁴ *Weekly News*, 24 August 1900, p. 44.

To breed superior colts we must have a superior pedigree or one that contains in its genealogy many renowned horses. As 'like produces like', we may expect to get their equals. The produce will not run out of the line unless there are some flaws in the links of the pedigree that compose that line. The blood that has been purified through several generations will flow down the line of succession as naturally as water flows to the ocean. If there is not an inferior horse in the pedigree, there will be nothing but superior stock in the produce. When the pedigree is pure and of undoubted excellence it will produce its own likeness or the likeness of individual ancestors.⁵⁵

English breeders were shown to be superior in their efforts to keep bloodlines pure. Admiral Rous, president of the prestigious Jockey Club, was quoted in the *Weekly News* for his boast that not one drop of mixed blood had contaminated the English Thoroughbred for thirteen generations since the importation of the three famous Arabian stallions.⁵⁶ In a similar vein, an opinion was expressed in the *New Zealand Farmer*, that the English Shire Horse made the best sire with 'more grit in him, more substance, more durability, more stamina, because he is of an older race, of higher lineage and of better family than the popular Clydesdale'.⁵⁷ Although Darwin himself had disparaged British animal breeders who 'cling with superstitious tenacity to the doctrine of pure blood',⁵⁸ in the English eye racial purity was the ideal, mixing blood was ruinous.

If the New Zealand colonists felt threatened by half-breed horses in their midst, they were also concerned by the taint of mixed blood in the human population. The colonies could be seen as particularly at risk from contamination of European by native blood.⁵⁹ Racial inter-marriage was believed to damage the Anglo-Saxon stock and the fear of miscegenation remained a potent force throughout the nineteenth century.

When the ideology of social Darwinism is considered along with the changes the colonists in New Zealand were facing, the perceived threat of the degeneration of their horses becomes clearer. By 1890, a number of demographic shifts were discernable. The non-Māori population had grown from 256,393 in 1871 to 626,658 in 1891, a

⁵⁵ *New Zealand Farmer*, Vol. 6:10 (1886), p.292.

⁵⁶ *Weekly News*, 5 November 1864, p. 12.

⁵⁷ *New Zealand Farmer*, 5:6 (1885), p.165.

⁵⁸ Lowenthal, 1998, pp.206-7.

⁵⁹ Diane B. Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity; 1865 to the Present*, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995, p.106.

144% increase in only twenty years.⁶⁰ During this period immigration had slowed, indicating that the huge increase in population was more the result of higher fertility and falling mortality rates. By 1891, 62.1% of the population had been born in the colony.⁶¹ The uneven sex balance in favour of males that marked the frontier society was becoming more normalised. Although men still outnumbered women in the rural areas, by 1900 the male/female ratio was evenly balanced in the four main cities as well as the towns. The population was also aging, with the middle aged and elderly becoming a more significant proportion of the population. But as Erik Olssen points out, the most significant demographic feature in the closing decades of the century was urbanisation with a quarter of the non-Māori population living in the four main cities of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.⁶² Towns also grew rapidly in size and number.

Although their fledgling towns and cities bore little resemblance to the industrial centres of Europe, New Zealanders still worried about the physical and moral effects of modern urban living. As Caroline Daley points out in *Leisure and Pleasure*, New Zealanders shared the same concern as those in the Old World that the modern body was degenerating.⁶³ The anxieties that New Zealand society had about their own state of well-being were projected on to their horses. City living was considered unnatural to both human and horse populations. Horses that were pampered and overfed, spending most of their lives in ‘the awful solitude of a darkened box’, were considered unfit for breeding.⁶⁴ What was needed, one writer asserted, was sires from the hill country, ‘inhaling purest ether’, and fed naturally in the open air. Such a horse, he wrote, walks firm, holds his head up, looks as though he could carry fifteen stone on his back and will be more likely to be fertile, better paced and better tempered than any stallion pent up in a stable.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ G.T. Bloomfield, *New Zealand: A Handbook of Historical Statistics*, Boston: Hall & Co., 1984, pp.42-3.

⁶¹ *ibid*, p.78.

⁶² Erik Olssen, ‘Towards a New Society’, in *the Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd ed., Geoffrey W. Rice (ed.), Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp.254-84.

⁶³ Caroline Daley, *Leisure & Pleasure: Reshaping & Revealing the New Zealand Body, 1900-1960*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003, pp.7-8.

⁶⁴ *New Zealand Farmer*, Vol. 19: 4 (1899), p.114.

⁶⁵ W.F. Doney, ‘Essay on Bush Farming’, in *Farming in the Bush Districts*, Woodville and Pahiatua: E.A. Hagen, 1891, p.8.

Just as an increasing percentage of the human population were colonial born by the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the same could be said of the horses and this in itself was a cause for concern. Some worried that as the number of horses imported from Britain declined, so too would the quality of horse stock. An apparent shortage of English mares from which to breed was seen as a disturbing trend. The agricultural journalist for the *New Zealand Mail* commented that it was very annoying for a resident to continually hear the remark from visitors, ‘what bad horses you have here’. Yet rather than defend the local horses, he is quick to assert that the fault lies with the colonial mares. He claimed that a brood mare hack is generally chosen because she is a favourite of the owner and has proven to be a hardworking, honest mare. But these are not the right ‘class’ of mare to breed, he insisted; far more desirable would be to use the hunters bred at ‘home’.⁶⁶

In an increasingly modern and materialistic society, falling horse prices in New Zealand was a cause of some concern. During the early 1860s, prices for all types of horses remained high. For example, a report on the Auckland livestock market in December 1863 revealed that seventeen draught horses sold for an average of £63, the highest price for one heavy draught was £85. Saddle and light harness horses were bought for £11 to £40.⁶⁷ The same year, the Dunedin market was experiencing similar good returns with first class draught horses listed at between £80 and £100 and second class draught receiving between £50 and £75. Good quality saddle and harness horses in Dunedin fetched prices between £35 and £65.⁶⁸ By the 1880s, the stock reports revealed a much different picture. A Hawera Livestock report of October 1880 showed that a good saddle horse could be bought for £8 to £10 and horses referred to as ‘screws’ sold for a mere 20 to 35 shillings.⁶⁹ Draught horses also fell in value during the decade. Poor prices at the Christchurch sale yards prompted one commentator to note that while a three horse team could be purchased at around £50 in 1888; £60 would have been paid for a single horse a few years previously.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *New Zealand Mail*, 18 Feb 1887, p.18.

⁶⁷ *Weekly News*, 19 Dec 1863, p.7.

⁶⁸ *Nelson Examiner*, 14 Feb 1863, p.2.

⁶⁹ *Yeoman*, 23 Oct 1880, p.12.

⁷⁰ *New Zealand Country Journal*, 12:3 (1888), p.274.

Another significant change towards the end of the nineteenth century that impacted on attitudes towards horse breeding were the government land reforms that saw the breaking up of many of large pastoral estates. Erik Olssen makes the point that although the run-holders in the earlier settled areas of Canterbury, Marlborough, Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay lost much of their social and economic power; they continued to maintain their lifestyle of English gentry farmers.⁷¹ The breeding of pedigree horses was part of this tradition. Whether it was Henry Redwood's renowned Thoroughbred racing and breeding centre near Nelson, John Grigg's Longbeach Clydesdales or John Little's powerful Shire horses, the establishment of a horse stud was one of the trappings of the English gentleman farmer that was aspired to by upwardly mobile run-holders. The colonial pastoralists were also aware that it was not only the financial resources and acquired knowledge that would make a successful livestock breeder. In Britain with its established traditions of elite breeders, it was acknowledged that breeding pedigree stock was the almost exclusive preserve of the gentry. Only the well bred themselves could be expected to produce the aristocrats of the horse world. There is no doubt that the aspiring colonial gentry carried this conviction with them to the New World. As the *Auckland Weekly News* stated; 'breeding for sale easily becomes a losing game unless there is a taste for horseflesh in the blood of the breeder and unless he has the means or facilities for obtaining the right class of breeding stock'.⁷²

With the subdivision and sale to the government of many of the large runs came the increasing number and importance of the small family farm. This gave rise to the question of who should control the breeding of horses. The Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association's *Journal* promoted the view that 'small farmers' were short-sighted in their breeding practices and were largely responsible for the deterioration of the horses in many parts of the country.⁷³ It also recognised the contribution of the colony's first livestock fanciers and commended those following in the family tradition of breeding. In 1910 the president of the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association acknowledged several members of his committee by remarking;

⁷¹ Olssen, pp.260-1.

⁷² *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 Aug 1900, p.42.

⁷³ *Canterbury Agricultural & Pastoral Journal*, 5:2 (1903), p.37.

We of today are greatly indebted to the good work done by those sterling pioneers (many of whom crossed the border) who spent so much time and money in procuring the best that could be got, in horses, sheep, cattle and pigs and although the first generation has passed away, it is most encouraging for the future outlook of the country that quite a number of young men are continuing and carrying on the work of pure stock breeding so ably commenced by their fathers.⁷⁴

The author of an article in the *New Zealand Farmer* promoted the idea that although the 'average farmer' was unlikely to be as successful at pedigree breeding as the gentry farmer, he could with diligent effort, make progress in the field:

The average farmer may not be as successful as those who devoted their time entirely to the improvement of the breeds, but he can adhere rigidly to the practice of careful selection of the best ... By careful selection even among the mixed stock of the country a gradual improvement will be found, and the farmer has nothing to risk and everything to gain by the practice.⁷⁵

Although individual breeder responsibility was stressed, increasingly evident by the end of the century was the call for government involvement. What action the government was expected to take over the state of the colony's horses took several forms. A few of the ideas put forward seem quite ludicrous such as the group calling itself the Waimea Political League who wrote to the local county council urging that a tax be levied on bicycles as 'they are purely a luxury, injurious to farmers and horse breeders, and so numerous to be a nuisance'.⁷⁶ Some suggestions centred on state supported education and research.⁷⁷ A proposal was put forward at the 1900 Agricultural Conference that the government should authorise 'competent' men to deliver lectures in various centres on the essential points of breeding both light and heavy horses. It was stressed by the delegates that a particular emphasis should be made on horses suitable for military purposes.⁷⁸ As pedigreed stallions, whether Thoroughbred, Clydesdale or any other purebred breeds were costly with high stud fees, the government was called upon to make them more accessible to the average farmer. Some wanted to see the government offer a premium to owners of selected stallions so that the animals could travel specific districts at a moderate price.

⁷⁴ *Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Journal*, 12:2 (1910), pp.33-4.

⁷⁵ *New Zealand Farmer*, 6:4 (1886), p.102.

⁷⁶ *New Zealand Farmer*, 16:9 (1896), p.315.

⁷⁷ *New Zealand Farmer*, 13: ? (1893), p.315.

⁷⁸ *New Zealand Mail*, 12 Jul 1900, p.43.

Another means of suggested assistance was free, or subsidised use of government railways for approved stallions or mares travelling for breeding purposes.⁷⁹

State ownership of suitable breeding horses was a solution that many commentators favoured and one the government was prepared to act upon. In 1901 the Chief Veterinarian to the Government, Scottish born and educated, John A. Gilruth, travelled to England to purchase cattle as well horses. Part of his commission was to purchase a few stallions suitable for breeding cavalry mounts when mated with New Zealand mares. Although he reputedly had trouble finding what he wanted, he eventually settled on three Thoroughbreds and one Arab horse. He also accepted on behalf of the government the gift of two prize Shire stallions from the prominent breeder Lord Rothschild. These horses were later joined by four others and in 1903 the Department of Agriculture, who retained the control of the stallions, were able to report earnings of £1,008 15s 6d in stud fees the previous year.⁸⁰

Government encouragement of horse breeding was not considered enough for many of the concerned, and various controls and regulations were suggested. Much discussion focussed on stallions, both ridding the country of poor ones as well as ensuring that there were sufficient suitable for breeding purposes. The thought that inferior stallions were allowed to reproduce generated a great deal of strongly worded statements. Fairly typical is the statement in *New Zealand Farmer*: 'the breeding of a male animal called a scrubber is a curse to the livestock industry and should be regarded by all sensible stock owners, great and small, as a noxious weed among farm stock'. The same writer went on to suggest that Agricultural and Pastoral Associations could keep stallion registers in which owners of stallions could have them certificated as having passed tests pertaining to soundness, pedigree and quality.⁸¹ But most advocates of control called for government intervention. Both the *New Zealand Farmer* and the *Country Journal* initially favoured the idea of a tax or license fee on keeping stallions over a certain age. The purpose of such a measure was twofold: to ensure that only quality sires were kept and to prevent undesirable

⁷⁹ *New Zealand Mail*, 2 May 1901, p.25.

⁸⁰ *AJHR*, 1903, 'Government Stud Horses', p.H-35.

⁸¹ *New Zealand Farmer*, 19:10 (1899), p.358.

ones from breeding.⁸² Some felt licensing was only the first step to improvement, and called for the ‘rigid elimination’ of unfit stallions and the compulsory spaying of ‘mongrel weedy mares.’⁸³

The issue that was of most concern and the one the government was willing to investigate and legislate if necessary was the matter referred to as ‘hereditary unsoundness’. In 1902 the Joint Agricultural, Pastoral and Stock Committee was given the task of investigating a proposed Stud Bill. In his role as Chief Government Veterinarian, Gilruth strongly supported the bill that would require owners, who wished to sell the stud services of their stallions, to have their animals declared free from hereditary disease by a qualified veterinarian. Gilruth justified the need for such legislation on the basis that so many horses had been rejected by government veterinary surgeons when purchasing mounts for the New Zealand contingents in South Africa. There was, he claimed, an urgent need to prevent stallions afflicted with hereditary unsoundness from reproducing and passing on these traits to their offspring. A list of hereditary diseases drawn up by veterinarians at a recent conference in Wellington included bone-spavin, ringbone, side-bone, roaring and whistling, navicular arthritis, shivering, stringhalt, multiple recurrent fibroids and bad hooves. Gilruth emphasised that a foal was not necessarily born with unsoundness, but it was born with a tendency to ultimately develop certain ‘unsoundnesses’ from which one or other of the parents might have suffered. To support his position on licensing, Gilruth drew on the examples of France and Belgium where stallions were required to pass an examination, an annual one in the case of France. While there was no compulsory examination in England, he claimed that it was very rare for any horse over £50 to be bought without a veterinary examination and certificate. He also pointed out that almost all British show-ring prizes awarded to a stallion or brood mare required a veterinary examination to prove that the animal was free from hereditary disease. What made the New Zealand situation different, Gilruth stated, was that there were ‘probably more crocks in this country than in any other under the sun’. He estimated that at least one third of the horses should be debarred from breeding on the grounds of hereditary unsoundness. Furthermore, he insisted that the

⁸² *New Zealand Farmer*, 16:1 (1896), p.368., *New Zealand Country Journal*, 12:2 (1888), p.155 and 12:5 (1888), pp.418-9.

⁸³ *New Zealand Farmer*, 16:1 (1896), p.4.

majority of New Zealanders knew nothing about horses and many could not even detect obvious lameness. With little regard for the average horse owner, it is revealing that Gilruth was not inclined to take on the powerful racing men, being well aware that the Committee's chairman, Hon. J. D. Ormond, was one of them. He stated that horseracing was a business by itself and he did not feel it was absolutely necessary to include Thoroughbred stallions used only for racing mares in the legislation. Racehorse owners could look after themselves, he told the Committee; it was the general public that needed the protection that the Stud Bill offered.⁸⁴

When the Agricultural and Pastoral Associations and other farmers' groups were asked to comment on the proposed legislation, it was found that much of the previous enthusiasm for government control of horse breeding had waned. The members of the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association made the point that it was not right for 'ill bred' and 'ill-formed' stallions to be permitted to serve while an exceptionally good horse in all respects but one be debarred.⁸⁵ Despite the veterinarians' recommendations, there still remained a wide difference of opinion amongst horsemen on what constituted hereditary disease. With the apparent lack of support for the proposed Stud Bill, it was shelved in 1903.

The concern in New Zealand over the deterioration of horses and the increasingly persistent demands for government action can be seen in a broader context. By the end of the nineteenth century the eugenics movement had gained credence amongst the scientific and intellectual communities in many western countries. Works such as Francis Galton's *Hereditary Genius* and Cesare Lombrosco's criminological studies while proclaiming the importance of the hereditary principle also fuelled fears of racial degeneracy if breeding was uncontrolled. Although eugenics can be seen as related to social Darwinism in the heritability of physical and mental characteristics, their approach to human reproduction differed. While social Darwinism saw the decline of the 'lower' races and classes as beyond society's control and so cautioned against state involvement, eugenicists felt that human reproduction could and should be carefully managed. The state had a role to play in controlling the hereditary make-up of its citizens thereby allowing the nation's vigour and power to grow.

⁸⁴ *AJHR*, 1902, 'Joint Agricultural, Pastoral and Stock Committee (Reports of)', pp. 1-12.

⁸⁵ *Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Journal*, 5:4 (1903), p.90.

The similarities between the selective breeding of domestic animals and the management of human reproduction were not lost on the followers of eugenics. Although not a eugenicist, Darwin in the *Descent of Man* suggested that people should pay as close attention to the ancestry of their prospective marriage partners as to those of their horses and dogs.⁸⁶ Eugenicists used literature such as Harvey Jordon's *Eugenics: The Rearing of the Human Thoroughbred* and William Stoke's *The Right to Be Well-Born, or, Horse-Breeding in its Relation to Eugenics* to further their argument that just like horses, the pedigree of future children should be carefully considered, with government intervention if needed, to eliminate undesirable inherent traits and enhance the good ones.⁸⁷

Much of the discussion lamenting the degeneration of the horses preceded the arrival of the eugenics movement to New Zealand. Although eugenic literature from overseas was known in the 1890s, there is some agreement that the publication of the New Zealand born surgeon, W. A. Chapple's *The Fertility of the Unfit*, in 1903 (the same year that the proposed stud Bill was put aside), marked the beginning of eugenics in this country.⁸⁸ Chapple's work was highly controversial, advocating the segregation of the 'fit' members of society from those deemed 'unfit' in order that 'good' genes remained untainted from 'bad' ones. He suggested that couples obtain a medical certificate before marriage, indicating their genetic suitability to have children. Another recommendation was the sterilisation of 'unfit' women as well as women married to 'unfit' men.⁸⁹ The objectives and methods of reproductive control seem very similar to those advocated for the control of the horse population. Less contentious were the Eugenics Education Societies aim to concentrate largely on public education. Here again the language echoes that used for some two decades to disparage undesirable horses. The Honorary President and Attorney-General, the Hon. J. G. Findlay in a public lecture on 'Urbanisation as an agent of National Decadence' in 1911, denounced the 'steady multiplication of weeds and degenerates'.

⁸⁶ Paul, p.34.

⁸⁷ Lowenthal, 1998, p.196.

⁸⁸ Robert W. Metcalfe, 'The Debate about Eugenics: Eugenics and Social Legislation in New Zealand, 1900-1930. Four Case Studies', MA Thesis in History, Massey University, 2000, p14 and Philip J. Fleming, 'Eugenics in New Zealand, 1900-1940, MA Thesis in History, Massey University, 1981, p.12.

⁸⁹ Daley, p.38.

Urbanisation was his main target but he did see the role of the government in prohibiting the marriage of those with ‘the gravest transmissible diseases or taints’.⁹⁰

Although it is argued that eugenics was at its height in this country between the end of the war and the beginning of the depression, influencing some key legislation,⁹¹ this was not the case for state control of horse breeding. By the eve of World War I, the complaints about horses lessened, as did the demands for government involvement. This was in part due to the realisation that the New Zealand horses sent to the South African War compared favourably with other horses. An article in the *Auckland Weekly News* stated that the war in the Transvaal emphasised the fact that the majority of horses used by the mounted troops were ‘too well bred’ and too fine and light for the difficult terrain. Of the horses employed there, those from New Zealand were the best as they could carry plenty of weight, were good climbers and as they could go anywhere at all, they were ideal for scouting purposes.⁹² The South African War had become the proving ground of New Zealand horses and a new feeling of confidence grew in the colonial bred.

Another factor to be considered is that by the time war broke out in Europe the use of horses was already in decline. Graph 1 depicts the percentage increase in the horse population and the percentage increase in the non-Māori human population between 1861 and 1961. It shows that the horse population grew at a faster rate than the Pākeha population through to around 1911 when the number of horses in New Zealand peaked. From that time the total horse population declined. It is important to note, however, that the drop in numbers did not signify the demise of horses. As will be discussed in further chapters, horses continued to play an important role in the social, cultural as well as economic life of many communities.

It is impossible to say whether the quality of the horses degenerated in the years leading up to the twentieth century nor is it possible to estimate how widespread was this anxiety. What can be said with certainty is that the perception arose in the agricultural and popular press that the deterioration of New Zealand horses was of

⁹⁰ Fleming, p.23.

⁹¹ Metcalfe, p.14.

⁹² *Weekly News*, 13 Jul 1900, p.42.

such serious concern as to generate government action. Such fears were raised in a climate of rapid change in New Zealand with demographic shifts resulting in a population that was losing many of its colonial characteristics. While the number of people of European descent was steadily increasing, with a higher percentage of those being born in the colony, there remained the firm belief that the Māori population was dying out. The character of the colony was changing too, with a greater emphasis on small family farms along with more of the population earning their livelihood in the growing towns and cities. Mechanisation had begun its steady march to overtake the horses that had provided the power to drive colonial progress. But as New Zealanders confronted the profound changes to the nature of their own society, they were also aware that the world was facing the challenges of modernisation as well. The immense British Empire, of which New Zealand was keen to assert itself as its far but loyal outpost, was increasingly feeling vulnerable. The ideology of social Darwinism reinforced firmly held views of the superiority of New Zealand's Anglo-Saxon heritage but it also carried with it the threat of deterioration. This fear manifested itself in the perception that colonial bred horses measured poorly against purebred British horses. It was, however, a short lived anxiety. With war clouds gathering over Europe, New Zealand horses would once more be called in defence of Empire and the reputation of the colonial horse would be redeemed in the eyes of the New Zealand people.

Graph 1: Comparison of Population (People and Horses)

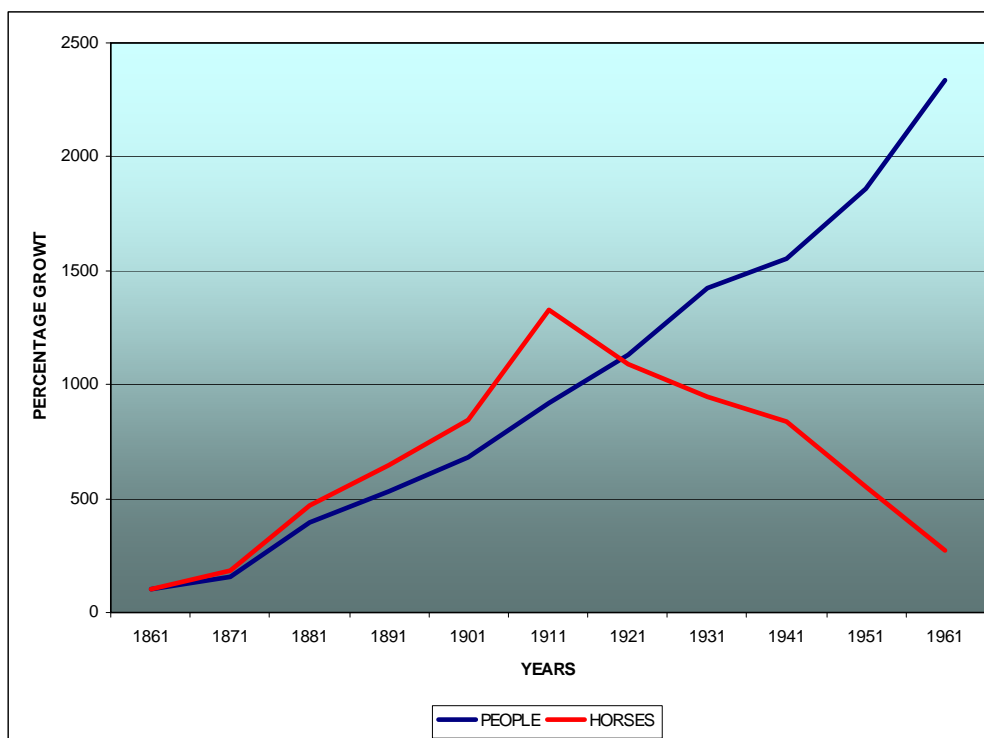


Table 2: Comparison of Population (People and Horses)

YEAR	PEOPLE	HORSES	INDEX PEOPLE	INDEX HORSES
1861	99021	28275	100	100
1871	256393	81028	159	187
1881	489933	161736	395	472
1891	626658	211040	533	646
1901	772719	266245	680	842
1911	1008468	404284	918	1330
1921	1218913	337259	1131	1093
1931	1511700	295743	1427	946
1941	1636230	266066	1552	841
1951	1939472	183972	1859	551
1961	2414984	104995	2339	271

Notes:

1. Years 1861 to 1951 extracted from Agricultural and Pastoral Statistics of New Zealand
2. 1961 is extracted from 1960 New Zealand Official Year-Book (horses), Population Census 1961 (people)
3. Index People is the percentage increase in population using 1861 as the base year
4. Index Horses is the percentage increase in horses using 1861 as the base year

6. The Warhorse

On a tall plinth, high above the Cenotaph in Wellington, the sculptor, Richard Gross, placed a life sized equestrian group consisting of a male nude astride a winged, powerful stallion (Figure 10). At first glimpse, this bronze sculpture, created in 1932 might seem to conform to the tired academic convention of the period. But there is something more compelling in the work that invites a better vantage point and a closer examination. The viewer cannot help but follow the determined upward gaze of the youth, emphasised by the thrusting right arm. The awareness dawns that it is not just the youth's reach, but the horse he rides that seems to impel him skywards. The stallion's raised leg begins the lift, and then from the powerful crest of the neck to the elevated tail, every muscle in the stallion's body is tensed as if to push away from earth. The uplifting spirit of the work is unmistakeable, but the artist's explanation of the iconography is more revealing:

... it is the figure of victorious youth holding the victor's wreath; but who in order to rise above the mundane or material things has mounted the winged horse of inspiration to seek something finer and more ethereal: Pegasus spurning underfoot the victor's spoils of war, and rising into the heavens enables his rider to emerge from the deluge of blood and tears, and to receive the great spiritual assurance of peace.¹

Named by the artist, 'The Will to Peace', the sentiment, at first, seems uncomfortable and ambiguous today. It seems neither a tribute to the wartime dead or a celebration of peace. Rather, it appears to glorify war with its implication that peace is accorded to those who rise victorious out of the ruins of war. But Pegasus, born of the blood of the slain Medusa, and who became the winged warhorse of Bellerophon is both a symbol of inspiration and of immortality.² On reflection, it is fitting that that the Wellington citizen's memorial to their fallen soldiers should feature a mythic warhorse and his rider, for it is the mounted soldier that has emerged as an enduring symbol of New Zealand's experience of war. This chapter looks at the development

¹ Michael Dunn, *New Zealand Sculpture: A History*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2002, pp.50-2.

² Betty Radice, *Who's Who in the Ancien tWorld: A Handbook to the Survivors of the Greek and Roman Classics*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin books, 1971, pp.76-7,186.



Figure 10: Richard Gross, 'The Will to Peace', Wellington Citizens' War Memorial (1932), ATL, National Library of New Zealand, 114/137/11-F.

of this image and explores how mounted soldiery contributed to New Zealand's growing identity, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a warrior nation of adapt fighting men, fiercely loyal to the British homeland.

The horse has long been associated with war. New Zealand's use of the warhorse is far shorter than most nations but that does not diminish the significance of its mounted soldiers and their horses. The rawness of the land, tamed by sturdy pioneers within living memory, served to enhance the reputation of the mounted soldiery. It was out of this frontier heritage that the New Zealand male emerged as a naturally skilled horseman and soldier. Jock Phillips, Ian McGibbon, John Crawford, Glyn Harper and Christopher Pugsley have all written about the role of the mounted soldier in the shaping of a national consciousness. McGibbon goes a little further by suggesting that the quality of the New Zealand horses was also an element that contributed to the growing pride and confidence in New Zealand's military prowess. As military historians have indicated, horses along with mules and donkeys, have served Imperial and New Zealand military forces at home and abroad in a variety of roles. The focus of this chapter is on the mounted soldier from the early colonial period through to his final call to arms during World War II.

Māori warriors had a relatively small role to play in the history of mounted warfare in New Zealand. Rather, it was the aristocratic cavalry traditions of the Old World that the settler population aspired to emulate. Mounted soldiery was of limited military significance in the New Zealand wars of the early colonial period, but the conflicts initiated the tradition of the elite amateur soldier. The mounted volunteer corps raised by the colonists for defensive purposes also played an important social role in their communities. It was on foreign land, first in South Africa, then in the Middle East, that New Zealand mounted soldiers and warhorses gained their reputation as an effective fighting force. It is important to note, however, that it was not as traditional cavalry that their achievements were recognised. New Zealand mounted soldiers fought as mounted infantry, armed with muskets, not swords or lances, and their horses were used to carry them swiftly to the battlefield where they dismounted to fight on foot. The New Zealand warhorse was never part of a massed cavalry charge in battle and hardly ever did the New Zealand soldier fight from horseback.

Nevertheless, the culture that surrounded New Zealand's mounted soldiers remained charged by the Old World 'cavalry spirit'.

The pre-eminence and continuance of the cavalry is largely because of its close association with the ruling elites. It was a key element of feudal society, an era in which land was allocated by the ruler to those who served him as mounted warriors. Land was worked by peasants, allowing the warrior class, or knights, the resources to obtain horses, equipment and time to develop the skills of mounted warfare.³ Even after Western Europe had lost its feudal characteristics, the cavalry maintained its close links with the aristocracy.⁴ From the fifteenth century through to the nineteenth century, horsemanship and swordsmanship were regarded as fine arts, requiring wealth and dedicated training under accomplished masters, to achieve their highest forms. A feeling existed that, while anyone could be a foot soldier, only a superior person could be a cavalryman. Of all the branches of the armed services, the cavalry carried the most prestige.⁵

Mounted warfare also carried with it a moral quality, harder to define but expressed as cavalry 'dash' or 'spirit'. This emulated from the power of the horse and manifested itself in the rider as conviction and courage of the highest order. The assumption that the aristocracy had unlimited courage and dedication to duty is a longstanding one and nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the cavalry.⁶ It also helps explain why there was so much emphasis on the cavalry charge over the more routine work of mounted troops in intelligence gathering, reconnaissance and patrolling. Probably no other military action in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries generated as much romantic imagery, verse or stories of gallantry as the offensive action of the cavalry charge. The charge of the Scots Greys at the Battle of Waterloo and the charge of the Light Brigade during the Crimean War were expressed not as spectacular failures, rather as heroic but tragic actions. During the nineteenth century there was awareness that British aristocratic officers, skilled in riding to the hounds, led the charge at the gallop with the same reckless zeal that they displayed hunting on their country estates.

³ John Ellis, *Cavalry: The History of Mounted Warfare*, Newton Abbot, Devon: Westbridge Books, 1978, p.56.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.59.

⁵ Philip Warner, *The British Cavalry*, London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1984, p.41.

⁶ *ibid.*, pp.127-9.

Even the Duke of Wellington criticised his cavalry officers for their unthinking habit of ‘galloping at everything’.⁷ Lack of order and discipline meant that even if some initial success was gained by the charge, it was often lost by the cavalrymen’s inability to control their horses to regroup, or to offer support. However devastating the outcome, horse and rider together shared in the triumph of the charge and were credited with the same selfless courage.

Old world cavalry spirit undoubtedly had a bearing on New Zealand mounted soldiery. When James Cowan wrote his account of the New Zealand Wars in the early 1920s, the cavalry charge still had enough grandeur for him to describe, in colourful detail, charges with the sabre at Hairini Ridge and Orakau in the Waikato, Nukumarū on the West Coast and at Kiorokno on the Opotiki Flat.⁸ Most of these were skirmishes involving small numbers of horsemen, although cavalry action at Orakau did inflict many casualties. The Auckland Division of the Defence Force, a colonial force of mounted soldiers riding their own horses, carried this out. A contemporary illustration, ‘The Charge of the New Zealand Cavalry at the Battle of Orakau is in the romantic tradition of cavalry depictions, showing a dense mass of spirited horses and courageous cavalrymen with drawn swords glinting in the sunlight (Figure 11). But the expectant clash was not the swords of an opposing army but rather the running down of the survivors, in a desperate escape from their besieged Orakau Pa.

While by the early 1860s sufficient horses existed among the European and Māori populations to supply mounted troops, traditional cavalry was of little use. Geography was the real deterrent. The rugged terrain, wet climate and few tracks suitable for large scale horse traffic of the North Island meant that the usual cavalry advantage of mobility was negligible. Not only was the dense bush often impenetrable for horses, but it also provided excellent cover for marksmen to shoot a soldier out of the saddle at close range. Swampland was a major obstacle to the soldier riding a horse that could be easily become bogged down in its depths. Even the most basic cavalry manoeuvres needed clear open space and this was something lacking in most of the locations that saw action.

⁷ Ellis, pp.143-4.

⁸ James Cowan, *The New Zealand Wars and the Pioneering Period*, Wellington: R.E. Owen, Government Printer, 1922-3, v.1 pp.357-60, v.2, pp.46-7, 106-14.



Figure 11: Frank P. Malony, 'The Charge of the New Zealand Cavalry at the Battle of Orakau' [1864], ATL, Library, National Library of New Zealand, PUBL-0197-3-569.

The development of road access from Auckland south into the Waikato facilitated the use of horses in the Waikato War. The main requirement for horses was as draught animals with the Imperial Transport Corps dispatching 1,516 horses along with 729 bullocks from its depot on Great South Road at Penrose.⁹ But when Lieutenant General Duncan Cameron began his march into the Waikato, the Colonial Defence Force Cavalry rode with him. Popularly known as Nixon's Horse, it was commanded by George Marmaduke Nixon, a former English officer serving in India, who had resigned his commission to take up farming near Mangere. In 1860 Nixon raised a group of volunteers to protect the communication and supply lines south of Auckland and also to form flying columns in response to Māori attacks on outlying farms. Nixon recruited almost 200 farmers, along with their horses, to support the Imperial troops in their Waikato campaign. Basically untrained and ill disciplined, this makeshift colonial cavalry was placed in the vanguard of a surprise raid on the Māori supply base at Rangiawhia. Dismounting to shoot indiscriminately, Nixon led his men on foot until felled by a defender's bullet. His enraged men retaliated by burning the village, resulting in a death toll that included many women and children.¹⁰

This form of mounted soldiery falls within the bounds of what is now known as irregular or guerrilla warfare. The speed and mobility of horses meant that small groups of mounted soldiers were able, not only to exploit surprise in attack but were also in position to withdraw quickly. The demoralising and devastating effect of surprise raids was a guerrilla technique utilised by horse cultures throughout the history of mounted warfare and was to see resurgence in the nineteenth century, particularly on the colonial frontiers.¹¹ With an environment unsuitable for traditional cavalry, New Zealand soldiers, nevertheless, found that the horse served them well for raiding, scouting and communication purposes. It was as small, mobile units on hardy colonial bred horses, first glimpsed during the Waikato War and later utilised on foreign land that was to establish in the minds of New Zealanders, their reputation as natural soldiers, dedicated to duty.

⁹ Maurice Lennard, *The Road to War: The Great South Road 1862-64*, Whakatane: Whakatane & District Historical Association, 1985, p.24.

¹⁰ Laurie Barber, 'Nixon, Marmaduke George 1813/1814? – 1864', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, updated 15 Dec 2003, URL:<http://www.dnzb.govt.nz>, Accessed 2 Aug 2004.

¹¹ Ellis, p.156.

Although largely omitted from written accounts of the New Zealand Wars, there remains evidence that Māori made use of their horses in much the same manner as the settlers. Te Kooti's surprise attack of about 60 mounted warriors on the Poverty Bay settlement of Matawhero is well documented.¹² It was recognised that information could be gathered, reported and spread much more quickly by riders on horseback. From their trading base in Maugatautari in the Waikato, Ann and James Shepherd in the late 1850s observed groups of mounted Māori bringing news of government injustices in Taranaki that promoted much uneasiness among the Waikato Māori.¹³ Māori, like Pākehā, made use of warhorse symbolism. Judith Binney relates the legend of the white horse, one of the oral traditions surrounding Te Kooti. Many of his followers believed that the white horse that was identified with Te Kooti had mystical power and was able to spirit his rider away from his would be captors time and time again.¹⁴ As Te Kooti was well aware, the white horse had Biblical significance as Christ's emblem of conquest. As written in Revelations 'And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True... And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses'¹⁵ Te Kooti joined St. James, St. George and Napoleon and a long line of conquerors that were known to ride into battle on white chargers.¹⁶

A significant feature of the New Zealand Wars that was to have a lasting impact on warfare of the future was the establishment of organised groups of amateur soldiers throughout the colony who volunteered their services for defensive purposes. Fear of Māori attack led to the formation of volunteer corps in the early 1840s in various North Island settlements as well as in Nelson. These followed the British tradition of volunteer service during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹⁷ Yeomanry regiments of mounted volunteers had existed since 1794 when the threat of a French invasion loomed. These were highly localised organisations, sometimes being raised from a single estate. Others formed what one commentator has called, a

¹² Judith Binney, *Redemption Songs: A Life of Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki*, Auckland: Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books, 1995, p.147, pp.119-21.

¹³ Margaret Shepherd and Rowland Green, 'Three Pioneer Sisters', *Auckland Waikato Historical Journal*, 73 (1999), pp.1-24.

¹⁴ Binney, p.147.

¹⁵ *The Holy Bible, King James Version*, Chapt. 19, Verses, 11,14.

¹⁶ M. Oldfield Howey, *The Horse in Magic and Myth*, London: William Rider & Son, 1923, pp.17-30.

¹⁷ John Crawford, 'Volunteer Force', in *the Oxford Companion to New Zealand Military History*, Ian McGibbon (ed.), Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp.566-67.

‘gentlemanly riding club’ in which every member from the commanding officer to trooper were either landed gentry or their tenants.¹⁸ This accounted for the close-knit nature of the regiments and for their reputation of loyalty and reliability. Each man supplied his own horse and equipment and although they received a small grant and pay if called up, this was not enough to meet expenses. It was in a spirit of service as well as comradeship and adventure that those with the means joined the yeomanry cavalry. As amateur troops, these regiments varied considerably in quality but most cavalymen had at least enough experience to ride and to manage their horse in the field.

The formation of the New Zealand volunteer troops needs to be seen in this light. Although initially formed to protect their communities, they also served a social function in the new colonial settlements. The formation of a Wellington cavalry unit, as related in Ellen Petre’s journal is revealing. She describes how the Wellington settlers reacted to the news of the Wairau affray in 1843. Up to this time no arrangements had been made for the defence of the settlement, so volunteers for a militia were hastily summoned. The construction of a fort began and Ellen recorded how volunteers were assembled and drilled by Major Baker and a ‘few gentlemen on horseback’. Despite the shortage of horses at the time, Ellen’s husband, Henry, and some others decided to form a cavalry corps. Uniforms had to be hastily improvised with the agreement that either a red shirt or hunting coat would suffice. The long sword that Ellen describes helping her husband buckle on before he mounted for the first Sunday parade was probably the heavy sword issued to British cavalry regiments prior to the Napoleonic wars, but which had been largely superseded by the light cavalry sabre. She was aware of the limitations of a colonial cavalry as she confided to her journal, ‘I cannot see what use that can be in thick bush but at any rate it helps to make good fun now’.¹⁹ What the Petre journal reveals is that even with very limited participants and resources, a cavalry corps made up of what she called the ‘nobility’ was valued for more than its military worth. Just as in Britain, a place in the cavalry assured respectability and for those colonists with social aspirations, a horse, uniform and sword were important acquisitions.

¹⁸ Warner, pp.119-122.

¹⁹ Petre MS, pp.48-59.

Authorities recognised the limitations of a largely amateur colonial army and throughout the century various reforms were introduced to provide a regulatory framework for a growing volunteer force that was flexible enough to allow for a degree of independence for the local corps. The fact that each group was responsible for their internal organisation, the admission of members and election of officers made for a highly localised character. Various volunteer corps, during and following the wars, were organised at the local level and their activities were followed and supported by the community they represented. The formation of the Te Awamutu Volunteer Cavalry in 1871 as reported in the *Weekly News* was typical of the manner in which such organisations were formed. Major William Jackson, the recipient of 400 acres of confiscated land near Te Awamutu for his service during the Waikato War, instigated the raising of a corps by firstly corresponding with the Defence Minister, Hon. D. McLean on the need for one to give ‘increased security and confidence to the settlers’. Upon receiving approval, ‘a numerous and respectable meeting of residents interested in volunteering’ was held at the Drillers Hotel in Te Awamutu. Major Jackson was called to the chair and he detailed how the proposed corps would undertake patrols in various outlying localities. The government would pay each man seven shillings a day when on duty and at drill. Over 60 volunteers enrolled at the meeting and then unanimously elected Major Jackson as their commandant. While the election of other officers was postponed until a later date, the name ‘Te Awamutu Volunteer Cavalry’ was adopted as was the decision to make Te Awamutu the corps headquarters. The meeting concluded with Major Jackson’s reading and explaining the Government’s model rules for the guidance of such corps and their adoption was carried.²⁰

During the second half of the century and well after fears of a Māori attack lapsed, volunteer cavalry corps continued in the local community although their role was largely social. Cavalry parades and sporting events were advertised in local papers and attracted large numbers of interested spectators. Public outings of the volunteer cavalry reinforced the social distinction between those with the resources to own and train a suitable horse, and those who did not. The Easter camp of the Canterbury Yeomanry Corps held at Addington was an important social occasion that drew

²⁰ *Weekly News*, 11 Mar 1871, p.11.

wealthy settlers from the city and the rural hinterland. Jessie Rhodes often accompanied her husband, Robert Heaton, from Blue Cliffs, their South Canterbury station when he rode his horse to attend Yeomanry Camp in the 1880s and early 1890s.²¹ Reverend Vicesimus Lush described in his journal how an unnamed volunteer cavalry troop from the Waikato enlivened the Thames Easter celebrations in 1880. He relates that when the horsemen reached Thames after their eighty mile ride, the whole town turned out to welcome them. The cavalrymen, he said, were ‘almost all well-to-do settlers ... mounted on splendid horses’. Following Easter Sunday services, the cavalry remained in town long enough to test their horses and themselves with horseracing and cricket matches. A ball in the evening completed their Thames visit.²²

Sport was a key element of nineteenth century cavalry life in New Zealand, as it was in Britain. As has been mentioned earlier, Imperial troops promoted horseracing as a means of providing an enjoyable means of keeping horses and men fit as well as to ease the boredom of camp life. Gymkhanas, such as the one organised in 1865 by the officers of the 40th and 65th Regiments at Te Awamutu, were also part of military camp life.²³ The gymkhana was a programme of mounted games that had proved so popular amongst British cavalrymen stationed in India that the custom was introduced back home in Britain. Colonial volunteer troops continued the tradition, and such events provided opportunities for lively competition between squads of the troop or between other troops. One such event took place in 1884, when the 60 members of the Waiuku Troop Cavalry Volunteers held their annual tournament to which 17 some members of the Te Awamutu Cavalry Volunteers took up the challenge. Some 700 spectators and participants took advantage of the fine day to watch and compete in games that emphasised speed, control and accuracy on horseback. ‘Head and Ring Practice’ was a game of precision that involved severing an object on a pole and removing a ring with the top of a sword while at a canter.²⁴ Another popular game was called ‘Lloyd Lindsay’, in which each team of four men was required to ride a prescribed distance, jumping hurdles and perhaps a water obstacle on the course. Two

²¹ A.E. Woodhouse, *Blue Cliffs: the Biography of a South Canterbury Sheep Station, 1856-1970*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1982, p.72.

²² Vicesimus Lush, *The Thames Journals of Vicesimus Lush, 1868-82*, Alison Drummond (ed.), Christchurch: Pegasus Press, 1975, p.225.

²³ *Weekly News*, 18 Jun 1864, p.14.

²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 29 Nov 1884, p.3.

men then dismounted and while the other two held their horses, they fired five shots at a target. Another course of obstacles was negotiated before repeating the firing exercise. The Heretaunga Mounted Infantry completed this event in the quickest time to take first place at the large military tournament that took place at the Hutt Racecourse in 1891. Another contest that day that was designed to mimic battleground conditions was the 'Rescue Race' in which competitors galloped out 'under fire' to rescue a dummy before galloping home.²⁵

Skills developed and practised on the sports and parade grounds in peacetime, however, were not the same as the battleground. British and colonial military leaders grew increasingly concerned about the real military worth of the volunteer troops. While the Russian scares of the late 1870s and 1880s resulted in an upsurge of interest in military volunteerism, the defence of New Zealand and possible war made the authorities' concerns more pressing. The equipment acquired by the volunteers during and in the immediate aftermath of the New Zealand Wars was all but obsolete, and there was an acute awareness that there remained fewer and fewer instructors with wartime experience to train the volunteers.²⁶ It was these foreseen inadequacies that resulted in a shift in role from traditional cavalry to one of mounted infantry. In Britain, cavalry traditions were so deeply entrenched that change, at that time, proved impossible in Britain.²⁷ Change, however, was less difficult to implement in New Zealand and by 1897 it was decided that the future role of the colonial mounted troops would, as cited by McGibbon, 'be that of a body of infantry soldiers capable of being transferred rapidly from one position to another, to act as infantry, and not as cavalry'.²⁸

Despite the anxiety of impending conflict, the call to arms had a certain appeal. For New Zealand, proud of its half century of achievements, war would be the ultimate test of its manhood. Social Darwinist attitudes came into play, too. A strong feeling existed that war would have a regenerating effect on the colonial population. Any softening effects of urban living would be quickly erased and the manly qualities and

²⁵ *Evening Post*, 9 Nov 1891, p.2.

²⁶ John Crawford 'Volunteer Force' in *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Military History*, Ian McGibbon (ed.), Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp.568-71.

²⁷ Ellis, p.150.

²⁸ Anon., 'Mounted Rifles' in *New Zealand Military History*, p.337-38.

pioneering skills that built the colony in the first place would be brought to the fore once again.²⁹ If war was deemed good for the colony's men, it was also good for its horses. War was the catalyst that would purge the countryside of its 'weeds' and 'mongrels' and would replace them with strong and courageous warhorses.

Horses and men were recognised as natural partners in war. In an article entitled 'The Horse as a Factor in Civilisation' printed in *The New Zealand Country Journal*, the author described how the warhorse not only inspired men with courage and enthusiasm but also, throughout history, contributed to the cause of freedom. Readers were reminded that the age of knighthood could not have existed without the horse and that although the age of chivalry had passed, the 'exalted ideals which it set up will never pass away' and in the future as in the past 'will aid in building up the purest and noblest type of manhood'.³⁰ In the colonial context, it was easy to see the horse as an attribute of the New Zealand pioneering man. Together, horse and master had explored the land, and created farms and towns out of the wilderness. Hardened, wise and skilled as a result of their colonial experience, the partnership of man and horse would be called upon to defend the Empire's ideals. It was as a kind of modern day knight that the colonial horse and rider rode into war.

The fact that war was also good for the business of horse breeding was not lost on colonial horsemen. The New Zealand agricultural press recognised that there was an international market for horses suitable for military purposes and encouraged its readers to breed horses that would meet the demand. Breeding warhorses was promoted both as a national responsibility and also as a way of making substantial financial gain. The leading article of the 1880 *Farmers' Supplement to the Yeoman*, urged horse breeders to regard their horse stock as having both national and commercial value. Breeders were told that they could contribute to the power of their country by producing horses suitable for cavalry and field artillery purposes. The author acknowledged that active bush-bred mares when crossed with horses of racing

²⁹ Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male – A History*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996, pp.138-9., Ian McGibbon, 'The Origins of New Zealand's South African War Contribution', in *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, the British Empire and the South African War 1899-1902*, John Crawford and Ian McGibbon (eds), Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003, pp.1-11.

³⁰ *New Zealand Country Journal*, 21:1 (1897), pp.168-71.

blood made ideal cavalry horses.³¹ A later article in the *New Zealand Mail* informed breeders that they would be ‘rendering a public service to the Empire by increasing the sources within British dominions of horses for military service’.³² The agricultural press also made its New Zealand readership aware of Australia’s success in supplying the lucrative Indian remount³³ market and encouraged the breeding of suitable horses. There was an assumption that the Australasian colonies, including New Zealand, could breed horses ‘eminently well fitted for military service’. According to the *New Zealand Farmer*, Australasian horses were more suitable to those bred from ‘Home’ in having better shoulders and stronger legs and feet due to the benign climate. ‘Greater liberty during youth, and a stronger dash of Thoroughbred blood than is found in ordinary English or Irish horses’ was also said to favour the Australasian warhorse.³⁴

The apparent enthusiasm with which New Zealand greeted the announcement of war in South Africa went deeper than the militarism of the age. A profound sense of loyalty to Britain existed, along with a willingness to serve her in time of need. Charles Christopher Brown’s poem, ‘The Battle of the Free’ written in the aftermath of the Crimean War expressed the desire of New Zealand along with the other ‘sons’ of Empire to respond to England’s call for help. The offer of New Zealand’s finest horsemen to mount England’s warhorses is expressed in the following verse:

Oh, England, land of horsemen!
Bring thy noblest steeds of war
For thy sons, the gallant riders,
Who are sailing from afar.
They are coming! They are coming!
To bestride the horses of the Island of the Sea;
And to fight in the Battle of the Free.³⁵

³¹ *Farmers’ Supplement to the Yeomen*, 1880, pp.1-2.

³² *New Zealand Mail*, 19 Jul 1900, p.42.

³³ The term, remount, generally refers to all horses in military service.

³⁴ *New Zealand Farmer*, 13:4 (1893), p.118.

³⁵ O.T.J. Alpers (ed.), *The Jubilee Book of Canterbury Rhymes*, Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1900, pp.25-30.

By the end of the century, New Zealand was in a position to send horses as well as horsemen to serve Britain and Empire. Premier Richard Seddon's response on behalf of the colony was to offer a contingent of mounted rifles for service in South Africa. This was the first time that New Zealand soldiers and warhorses could prove their worth on foreign soil, even though it was under the British flag that they fought.

At the same time increasing numbers of New Zealanders were making their living in the growing towns and cities, the population still saw itself as a country people with a high regard for rural skills. Riding and managing horses along with hunting and the ability to survive in rugged country, were practical skills that the colonists needed to 'get on' in the new land and were still utilised on the farms and stations. These were the same skills that the approximately 8,000 members of the volunteer corps practised during their training sessions and camps.³⁶ Although the overall standard of the training of the volunteers varied considerably, it can be assumed, however, that the men of the Mounted Volunteer Corps would at least be competent riders who were used to looking after themselves and their horses. The provision of a saddle horse being a requirement for participation in the mounted troops, most of the members were rural workers or townsmen with a strong interest in horses.³⁷ For a colony with only a very small regular military force, it was the volunteers that the government turned to when recruiting soldiers for South Africa.

The formation and selection of the men sheds further light on New Zealanders' generally high level of horsemanship. In the case of the First Contingent, each of the colony's five district commands was requested to supply one officer and about 50 selected men from the Mounted Corps in its district and to dispatch them immediately to Wellington. Many of the men brought their own horses to the Karori camp, which were then purchased by the government. Those without suitable mounts were provided with one. All of the horsemen selected for the First Contingent reportedly met the required standard of horsemanship.³⁸ The expectation of a high level of horsemanship skills remained in place for the contingents to follow, and in some recruiting areas seemed particularly demanding. By most accounts, the riding test was

³⁶ Richard Stowers, *First New Zealanders to the Boer War, 1899*, Hamilton: Richard Stowers, 1982, p.15.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p.77.

³⁸ Stowers, pp.16-18.

the most difficult element of the selection process. The Wairaroa volunteers who competed for places in the Fourth Contingent, for example, were subjected to a complex riding test that involved riding bareback over rugged terrain and jumping wire fences.³⁹ It was because so many applicants of high quality came forward to volunteer, that the authorities were able to set such a high standard of horsemanship.

Frank Fyfe gives an account of how the volunteers from Masterton and Wairarapa were selected for the Fourth Contingent. Over 100 men put their names forward and, following a preliminary selection in January, riding and shooting tests were held at the Opaki Racecourse with 69 men competing for ten places. The next day the same tests were held at the Maroa Racecourse where 56 men tried out for another ten places. These tests were carried out in public and held in an atmosphere that was both highly competitive and patriotic. At Maroa 600 spectators reportedly attended the trials and as each of the selected names was called out, they were heartedly cheered. At the conclusion, members of the community donated horses to those who needed them.⁴⁰ From this account it is clear that the local volunteer traditions and the organisation of the contingents on a regional basis promoted a strong sense of local pride.

As far as the New Zealand mounted soldiers' performance in South Africa, there is certainly a perception that they accounted well for themselves. The often repeated comment that New Zealand had the best mounted troops was taken out of context from a passage in the *Times History of the War in South Africa*, published in 1905, that 'New Zealanders were by general consent regarded as on average the best mounted troops in South Africa'. In his appraisal of this assertion, John Crawford in *One flag, One Queen, One Tongue*, suggests that as this was a war that was primarily fought by mounted soldiers engaged in much scouting and skirmishing over rough terrain, it was a war that suited the New Zealanders' skills.⁴¹ But it was in the guerrilla phase of the war, marked by Lord Kitchener's appointment as Commander-in-Chief, that New Zealand, along with Australia and Canadian troops, displayed the real value of colonial mounted troops. Despite their fewer numbers, the Boers had

³⁹ John Crawford, 'The Best Mounted Troops in South Africa?', in *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue*, pp.76-99.

⁴⁰ Frank Fyfe, *The Dandy Fourth Mutiny: A Tale of Wairarapa's First Boer Contingent of 1900*, Greytown: Wakelin House, 1993, pp.6-7.

⁴¹ Crawford, 'Best Mounted Troops', pp.73-99.

proven to be an allusive enemy for the British command. Deficiencies of traditional British cavalry warfare were further highlighted by the success of the Boer 'Perde Commando' system that allowed small units to travel quickly on their tough native ponies in order to make strikes on British installations. Unhampered by slow supply trains, their sturdy ponies survived almost wholly on veldt grass, while farms en route provisioned the commandos.⁴² It was in response to this form of irregular guerrilla warfare that Kitchener retaliated with systematic sweeps of the country, destroying crops and animals and rounding up Boer men, women and children in an effort to cut off any support for the commandos. While there were few major engagements, weeks of hard riding were called for with long days in the saddle on limited supplies.⁴³ It was a job that the New Zealand mounted riflemen relished. Even though the term 'Roughrider' officially applied only to the Third and Fourth Contingents, it was a badge of honour that all New Zealand veterans of the Boer War wore with pride.

Like the soldiers, this was the first time that New Zealand horses were put to the test on the world stage, and so unsurprisingly their performance in South Africa was followed with keen interest. There is no doubt that the horses sent with the first two contingents were overall of high quality. As Richard Stowers points out, these were carefully selected from a very large number of horses offered. Most of them arrived in South Africa in good condition and reportedly won the respect of the British cavalry officers almost immediately.⁴⁴ Back in New Zealand, however, there were indications that government authorities appointed to the task of buying horses for the remaining contingents and for remount purposes had real difficulty finding enough sound horses of the right temperament, size and strength. At the 1900 Agricultural Conference held in Wellington it was reported that 70% of the horses offered as remounts in South Africa were rejected on the grounds of 'unsoundness'. Too many colonial horses, the delegates were told, were 'too well bred', especially those that were 'very nearly thoroughbred horses'. What were needed for war in the Transvaal were solid 'cobby' types, capable of carrying plenty of weight, were good climbers and would 'go anywhere at all'.⁴⁵ This description of the ideal military mount

⁴² *New Zealand Mail*, 20 Dec 1900, p.54.

⁴³ Christopher Pugsley, *The Anzac Experience: New Zealand, Australia and Empire in the First World War*, Auckland: Reed Books, 2004, pp.46-9.

⁴⁴ Stowers, pp.68-9.

⁴⁵ *Weekly News*, 13 Jul 1900, p.42.

conforms almost exactly to the journey or general utility horse that proved so valuable during the early colonial years.

Anecdotal comments from some of the troopers suggest that not all horses sent from New Zealand were suitable for mounted services. Frank Perham wrote:

... the new mount allocated to me was an ex-New Zealand racehorse, Byrock by name. It was impossible to get him to settle down to a steady walk and when he was not galloping he was always on his toes, it was a case of jig, jig all the time, very tiring when one has long hours in the saddle.⁴⁶

Yet another racehorse caused a far more serious problem for its rider in a chase after twelve mounted Boer soldiers, following a raid on a farmhouse. The trooper, known as Wookey, on his Thoroughbred mare soon outdistanced his companions and overtaking the Boer party was captured, and killed soon afterwards when trying to make his escape.⁴⁷

It is apparent that the commendation of all the New Zealand horses can be attributed to the performance of those first horses to arrive. By the middle of 1900, glowing reports of the New Zealand horses were appearing in the agricultural and general press. Furthermore, the qualities of the horses that were admired, namely courage, strength, stoicism and endurance were the same desired attributes given to the men. A statement in the *New Zealand Farmer* makes this clear:

Not only men, but our horses also have gained the highest encomiums for fighting efficiency from the officers of knowledge and experience. As compared with the English and other horses they have surprised everyone by the wonderful way in which they have withstood the extraordinary hardships of forced marches and short rations during the rapid movement of British troops over wide areas of country, often waterless. They have proved themselves to possess enduring stamina and sound muscles, and high courage which their riders have displayed in no less degree.⁴⁸

Clearly the opinion of the British authorities mattered highly in the assessment of the New Zealand horses. Favourable comments by British veterinarians or commanding

⁴⁶ Frank Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column: Being Reminiscences of Service in the South African War of 1899-1903*, Timaru: Printers and Publishers, 1959, p.18.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.64.

⁴⁸ *New Zealand Farmer*, 20:6 (1900), p.234.

officers were earnestly reported in New Zealand. Lord Robert's opinion that the colonial horses had the staying power needed for mounted infantry purposes had a lasting effect on attitudes towards the New Zealand warhorse.⁴⁹

The gallant mounted soldier, whether a loyal colonial infantryman or British cavalryman, was essentially an Anglo-Saxon image. Imperial control of colonial military affairs meant that Māori were officially excluded from the South African War. Some did serve such as Henry Te Reiwhati Vercoe, a member of the Tauranga Mounted Rifles and keen polo player, who falsified his age to enlist with the Seventh Contingent. He sailed to South Africa in 1901 with two of his father's best steeplechasers where he distinguished himself by his bravery and horsemanship skill. In one incident, under siege by the enemy, and against the advice of his superior officers, Vercoe rescued a wounded soldier who had been left behind. Pulling his comrade up on his horse, Vercoe galloped back to safety, an undertaking that involved jumping his horse, double mounted, over a parapet.⁵⁰ Despite continued rebuffs from the Colonial Office, Seddon had remained a staunch supporter of Māori involvement throughout the war and in 1902 pressed to have a Māori mounted contingent sent to London for the coronation of King Edward VII. The proposal accepted, the Native Coronation Contingent of 30 men and two officers was dispatched to present a roadside guard, mounted on borrowed English horses, for the coronation procession. A token gesture, perhaps, but the invitation was regarded as a privilege, and one denied to the indigenous people of Canada or Australia.⁵¹ In New Zealand, some of the colonial military authorities continued to thwart Māori soldiery with the result that no further volunteer units were accepted. One Māori volunteer corps that did survive into the 1900s was the highly respected Wairarapa Mounted Rifles.⁵²

In the aftermath of the South African war and apparent success of New Zealand mounted soldiery, the martial spirit remained a vital force. Throughout New Zealand, most A&P shows held classes to judge horses suitable for military purposes. Most of these were 'in hand' classes, where horses were led before the judge to be judged on

⁴⁹ *New Zealand Mail*, 2 May 1901, p. 34.

⁵⁰ Vercoe, Henry Te Reiwhati, 1884-1962, *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 31 July 2003, URL:<http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>, Accessed 20 Sep 2003.

⁵¹ Helen M. Hogan, *Hikurangi ki Homburg: Henare Kohere and Terei Ngatai with the Māori coronation Contingent 1902*, Clerestory Press, 1997, pp.7-8.

⁵² Bradford Haami, 'Maori in the armed forces' in *New Zealand Military History*, p.301-07.

conformation, paces and temperament, but others such as the Whakatane's 1908 A&P Show specified that the horses presented in the Troop Horse Class had to be ridden by a trooper in uniform.⁵³ As jumping competitions became more popular, some associations held competitions specifically for military horses. In 1910, the Clutha and Matau A&P Society advertised a prize for, 'Best troop horse to be ridden over hurdle in ring by trooper in uniform: Man must belong to a mounted rifle regiment and have used horse in camp'.⁵⁴ The obvious pride in the display of the troop horses mustered for the local show was a contradiction of the attitude shown only a few years earlier when the same type of animal was soundly condemned by the colonial press. It seemed as if war had indeed redeemed the reputation of the colony's light horses.

This was also a period when efforts were made to not only encourage the military volunteer service but to improve its training and effectiveness.⁵⁵ That the activities of the various corps continued to maintain the interest of the general public is evident by newspaper features such as the column in the *Weekly News* entitled 'Defence and Volunteers'. Easter camps remained popular but there was increased emphasis on discipline and military preparedness. The 1904 Auckland camp that took place from Good Friday to noon on Easter Sunday involved complex manoeuvres with an 'invading force' and 'defending corps'. Just as in wartime, the mounted rifles worked alongside the various artillery branches, engineers, infantry and ambulance units. Although the Commander of the Auckland Military District, Colonel Richard Davies pointed out some weaknesses in the organisation and 'lack of attention to the saving of horses and men', he conceded that there was a large amount of country to cover with few men and that the work done had been harder than any experienced in South Africa. Another positive feature expressed was that 'the location of the camps was a barrier to their being flooded with lady visitors, who would have only hampered the work when the men were in camp, and might, perhaps, have influenced the camaraderie existing between officers and men'.⁵⁶

⁵³ T.E. Green, *Pride and Dedication: The First Eighty Years 1907-1987, Whakatane Agricultural and Pastoral Association*, Whakatane: Whakatane Historical Society, 1987, p.16.

⁵⁴ *Otago Witness*, 7 Dec 1910, p.9.

⁵⁵ C.J. Clayton, *New Zealand Army*, rev. ed., Wellington: New Zealand Army, 1995, pp.75-6.

⁵⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 Apr 1904, p.26.

Although a strongly masculine, military culture may have dominated the press and official accounts of the war, there is also evidence that a somewhat softer side of warfare was emerging that revealed itself in the attitude towards the warhorse. As many horses accompanied their owners to the battlefields of South Africa, a relationship would have already existed between horse and soldier stretching back sometimes many years. Those soldiers without horses were assigned a particular animal and it remained their responsibility not only to ride it but also to care for its needs until death or injury separated them. These horses were individualised with names and as soldier and horse were almost in constant company, dependent on each other for their safety and welfare, it is hardly surprising that a close relationship, often referred to as a partnership, existed. Potent reminders of a genuine attachment between horse and rider exist in personal reminiscences and keepsakes. The Kauri Museum at Matakoho contains two such memories. A lock of hair from 'Charlie's' mane on loan from M. Dawson is accompanied by an inscription that tells of Charlie taking his rider safely back to camp after an enemy encounter before falling dead. Another tells of the story of Ben Birt and his remarkable horse, Jagger. The two met at Trentham where Ben, a skilled horseman, was breaking in army remounts. Jagger was a beautiful, spirited, black gelding that had eluded all attempts to tame him. As he had reportedly killed one man and crippled another, he was to be destroyed if Ben was not able to master him. After a 'mighty battle', the horse accepted 'defeat' and was soon following Ben without bridle or rope. So intelligent was Jagger that he learned commands readily and would come when Ben whistled. Later this would prove a useful trick when man and horse were shipped to South Africa where Ben became a dispatch rider. At times when Ben was riding dispatch and suspicious of ambush, he would leave his horse undercover and scout ahead on foot, having tucked up the reins so that the horse could come if whistled. Jagger would respond to this call at a fast gallop and Ben credited his horse for getting him out of trouble many times. After the war, Jagger was one of the very few horses returned to New Zealand where he lived the rest of his life on the Birt farm as a stockhorse, 'pet and friend, loyal and reliable until he died'. He is buried on the farm, which had been his home for many years.⁵⁷ New Zealand stories such as these echo those told over the ages of the close bond between the warrior and his warhorse.

⁵⁷ South African War Display, The Kauri Museum, Matakoho, Viewed 30 Jan 2005.

The grief over a fallen horse or one that had to be left behind in South Africa is reflected in this poem by M.C. Keane.

The Blind, Obedient Dead.

Their bones lie glistening on the veldt, their shoes are rusted red,
They are gone where spur and rifle are at rest.
Good dreams to all that legion of the blind, obedient dead!
Good pasture in their islands of the blest!

Knowing nothing of the combat, recking nothing if they won
When the echoes of the last shot died away;
They are dreaming of the far-off bush and creeks, and shade and sun,
And the gallops at the breaking of the day.

Did they wonder at the trumpet-call that urged them to the onset,
And the harder, tenser hand upon the rein,
Than the hand that held them steady for the station roofs at sunset,
Or the girl across a dozen miles of plain?

When the purple dusk grows deeper, and the Four White Stars look down,
And an eastern wind blows oversea from home;
To their white bones, shining silver, from the bush and from the town,
Does a sigh of dear remembrance never come?

When the mob breaks through the timber, do the stockmen never sigh –
Do their hearts in idle pipe-dreams never yearn
For our horses in their long sleep where we sent them out to die,
To an exile past retrieval and return?

The girls who tingled, waiting at the slip-rails, quick to hear
The ring of hoofs at moonrise through the trees –
Will they waken for a moment from their love-sleep, with a tear
For the silent hoofs at rest across the seas?

Their bones are glistening on the veldt, their shoes are rusted red,
They are gone where spur and rifle are at rest.
Good dreams to all that legion of the blind, obedient dead!
Good pasture in their islands of the blest!⁵⁸

⁵⁸ M.C. Keane, 'The Blind, Obedient Dead' in *New Zealand Verse*, W.F. Alexander and A.E. Currie (eds.), London: Walter Scott Publishing, 1906, pp.79-80.

Although on the surface this is a tribute to the warhorses that would never return to New Zealand perhaps, too, the horse could be a metaphor for the soldiers that did not come home. It may be that in this militaristic age, it was easier to express sorrow and remorse for the horses that blindly but obediently followed orders to their death.

Whatever sentiments may have been expressed about the wastage of human or animal life as a result of cavalry action on the modern battleground seemed to be lost on the Imperial military authorities. They also failed to learn from the experience of the South African war that the real advantage of the mounted soldier was his mobility and that the only effective way to counter infantry and artillery fire was to dismount, take cover, and use firepower. Mighty the sword may have been, but it was no match for machine gun fire. It was not just British but virtually all European senior military officers who held firm to their belief that the shock tactic of the massed cavalry charge with sword, sabre or lance was the most effective offensive action. Any failure of the cavalry charge was put down to the lack of courage, determination or some other personal shortcoming on the part of the individual soldiers. To make this point, John Ellis cites Sir Evelyn Wood's comments as he watched a runaway horse in 1897: 'If it was possible to obtain the same amount of determination from riders, as that which inspired the unfortunate horse ... all cavalry charges would succeed in spite of every sort of missile'.⁵⁹ Although having seen firsthand the limited value of the traditional cavalry in South Africa, General (later Field Marshall) Sir Douglas Haig remained a staunch believer in the cavalry charge, instilling in it an almost mystical power as this quote from Ellis reveals: 'It is not the weapon carried but the moral factor of an apparently irresistible force, coming on at highest speed in spite of rifle fire, which affects the nerve and aim of the ... rifleman'.⁶⁰ This statement, made only a few years prior to World War I is particularly significant in light of Haig's position of Commander-in-Chief of British forces.

Cavalry spirit also became woven into the ethos surrounding mounted soldiery in New Zealand, but it had a distinctly colonial flavour. The bold but rather rough and ready style of horsemanship that had served the mounted riflemen so well in South Africa became a source of pride that flourished through the restructuring of the armed

⁵⁹ Ellis, p.152.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, pp.152-3.

services in the post war period. Lieutenant General J.M. Babington, Commandant of the New Zealand Forces from 1902 to 1906, was typical of the British career cavalry officer. Befitting the son of a British cavalry officer, he joined the 16th Lancers as a young man and rose to its command. As a senior officer in the South African War, Babington had the 4th New Zealand Contingent under his command and his high regard for the New Zealand soldiers' horsemanship was well known.⁶¹ Although Babington returned to Britain in September 1906, frustrated in his attempts to improve the training and professionalism of the armed services, his efforts did have the effect of opening the way to some major reforms. The most significant of these was the replacement in 1910 of the Volunteers with a Territorial Force that made military training compulsory for all New Zealand men but stopped short of universal conscription for war. It was another British horseman, Major General Godley, Babington's replacement, who was to implement the changes. The new force was still to be organised on a regional basis under four military districts, Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago. Along with Infantry and Artillery Brigades, each district had a Mounted Rifle Brigade, made up of three Mounted Rifle Regiments. Godley himself had mounted infantry experience, and it was in South Africa where he, like his predecessor, had been impressed by what he saw as the potential of New Zealand mounted soldiers. Godley, assisted by fourteen British officers on loan to New Zealand, was tasked, not only selling the compulsory military training scheme to the public, but also aligning the preparation and training of the New Zealand forces more closely with the British Regular Army.⁶² Yet despite the British expertise, there remained within the mounted regiments a confidence and pride in their colonial, roughriding skills that no Imperial riding master could change. Lieutenant-Colonel C. Guy Powles relates that on the eve of the Great War, all except one of the sergeant majors in the Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment came from the British army. These men found it impossible to teach New Zealand amateur soldiers the correct 'cavalry seat'. Despite their complaints that the New Zealanders would never be riders with their awkward looking 'loose seats', they were forced to admit that the soldiers could at least 'stick on' their horses.⁶³

⁶¹ 'Mounted Rifles', in *New Zealand Military History*, pp. 337-8.

⁶² 'Godley, General Sir Alexander John', in *New Zealand Military History*, pp.201-3, *New Zealand Army*, p.76.

⁶³ Lieut.-Col. C. Guy Powles, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, Auckland: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1922, pp.5,7.

With the call to arms in 1914, the spirit of volunteerism that had served New Zealand for so long remained a driving force. The elite status of the mounted soldier continued to ensure strong competition to join the New Zealand Mounted Rifles. As had happened previously in South Africa, recruits were required to pass horsemanship tests before they were sent overseas.⁶⁴ Not only was the mounted soldier regarded as more skilled than the foot soldier, he was also seen to have a more demanding job. With the added work of care for his horse as well as himself, it was recognised that it took a special soldier to volunteer for mounted duty.⁶⁵

Once again, New Zealanders came forward with offers of horses. Citizens were believed to have donated more than 1,400 horses.⁶⁶ Paeroa is one such horse. In August 1914, the children of Paeroa School with the help of their teacher, Miss Minnie Shaw, raised £26 to purchase a horse for wartime service. The horse renamed Paeroa, was paraded, fully equipped, on the school playground before being presented to Major Stuckey, of the 6th Hauraki Company. Before he left for Egypt Major Stuckey sent a letter to the school:

The Company gave three hearty cheers when they heard of the children's generous efforts. 'Paeroa' I am afraid will have a heavy weight to carry but I will do my best to bring him back in good fettle. I will send back to the school one of his shoes if he is fortunate to tread on enemy soil. We are all going to do our utmost to be the best company in the battalion. I will try from time to time to let you know how 'Paeroa' and the company are getting on.⁶⁷

Major Stuckey and Paeroa served in Egypt and France but neither survived. The promised shoe did arrive and was proudly displayed at the school for many years before being donated to the Paeroa Museum, where it presently resides.

The mounted regiments of the First New Zealand Expeditionary Force were not to fight solely as mounted troops. In May 1915 all four regiments were required to serve as infantry at Gallipoli as part of the New Zealand and Australian Division. The

⁶⁴ Pugsley, pp.126-7.

⁶⁵ Powles, p.8.

⁶⁶ 'Animals', in *New Zealand Military History*, p.18.

⁶⁷ Colin Townsend, 'Paeroa Famous in New Zealand', *New Zealand Then and Then*, Timaru, South Canterbury Multiple Sclerosis Society, 2003, pp.44-5., E.K.M. Mathieson, 'Our Horse Paeroa', *Paeroa School Jubilee 80th Anniversary 1875-1955 Souvenir Magazine*, n.p., 1955, p.29.

rugged terrain of the Gallipoli Peninsula meant that the horses were left behind in Egypt in the care of farriers, transport drivers and reinforcements. It was not until the evacuation of the peninsula that the survivors were reunited with their horses. It is obvious from the accounts of this period that this was a deeply meaningful experience for the men. One commentator noted that after the crowded conditions and horrors of Anzac, the men felt 'able to breath the fresh air, and with the exhilarating exercise of riding fit horses, the men of the "Old Brigade" of Gallipoli soon became their normal selves'.⁶⁸

For some of the New Zealand troopers, the reunion with their horses was short lived. Many men and officers, including all of the Otago Mounted Rifles were transferred to infantry battalions to serve on the Western Front. Some of the New Zealand horses were sent as well but the Imperial remount depots supplied the majority of the some 6,000 horses required by the New Zealand Division in Europe.⁶⁹ Horses were required in large numbers for transport and artillery purposes but there was still a call for some cavalry horses. The mud, the cold, and barbed wire on the Western Front made it an intolerable place for horses, even without the modern weaponry utilised. John Ellis is particularly scathing of the attitudes of the high ranking European officers in upholding the role of the cavalry in these conditions and times. Despite increasing opposition to his views, Sir Douglas Haig throughout the war remained steadfast in his conviction that once artillery and infantry were able to breach a gap in enemy lines, the cavalry could gallop through and finish the rout.⁷⁰ What few opportunities there were to use the cavalry in this way gained nothing and resulted in a huge toll of men and horses. It should have been obvious that armoured vehicles, even in this early stage of development, offered the mobility and protection to make the mounted soldier redundant but so entrenched in the military mind was the power of the warhorse that this realisation dawned very slowly.

John Ellis was of the opinion that a strong reason for the retention of the warhorse after 1918 was the apparent success of the cavalry in the Sinai-Palestine theatre.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Alexander Herbert Wilkie, *Official War History of the Wellington Mounted Rifles Regiment 1914-1919*, Auckland: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1924, p.14.

⁶⁹ 'Animals' in *New Zealand Military History*, p.19.

⁷⁰ Ellis, pp.174-6.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.176.

Lieutenant-General Sir Harry Chauvel, in command of the ANZAC Mounted Division, was also of this view in his statement:

In the early part of the Great War the day of the mounted man appeared to be gone forever, and it remained for the Australian Light horse and New Zealand Mounted Rifles to demonstrate to the world that the horse soldier was as essential in modern warfare as he had ever been in the past.⁷²

New Zealand was an important player here, with the Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury Mounted Rifles forming one of the brigades of the ANZAC Mounted Division. There is no doubt that mounted soldiery played a critical role in the desert campaign, leading to the defeat of the Turkish armies in 1918. But as Ellis points out, to insist that this was a vindication of the cavalry is incorrect. He is doubtful that the victories could have been achieved without the infantry and artillery, and goes as far as to suggest that the infantry alone may have had the same success. Furthermore, he argues, that the Turkish armies were not first-class troops and that by late 1918 they were outnumbered two to one.⁷³ It should be noted that his underestimation of the enemy does not agree with New Zealand or Australian accounts that depict the Turkish armies as formidable foe, well supported by the powerful German war machine. In support of the Ellis argument, however, it does need to be recalled that none of the New Zealand Brigade fought as traditional cavalry. They were essentially infantry who used their horses to move them quickly to the battlefield. There were a few cavalry charges; notable was the charge of the 4th Australian Light Horse Brigade at Beersheba, which was strategically important to the taking of Palestine.⁷⁴ Even this was not conducted as a classic cavalry charge. It did not begin with the traditional knee-to-knee line-up and rather than swords or lances, the soldiers were armed with bayonets fixed to their rifles. The horses began at a canter and spread out over 1,200 yards. With the order to charge, ‘there was a rush, a sound like thunder, as the men dug in their spurs and swept forward at fantastic speed. Horses galloped under shrapnel, over trenches and men’.⁷⁵ Although the success of the ‘devastating’ charge belonged to Australia, Christopher Pugsley reminds us that this was only made

⁷² Powles, p.xv.

⁷³ *ibid.*, pp.176-7.

⁷⁴ ‘Sinai-Palestine’, in *New Zealand Military History*, pp.492-3.

⁷⁵ Jill, Duchess of Hamilton, *First to Damascus: The Australian Light Horse and Lawrence of Arabia*, East Roseville, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 2002, pp.110-11.

possible by the tactical skills of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles in taking Tel el Saba, the key to the Turkish position.⁷⁶

Whatever the significance of the Sinai-Palestine campaign in the wider scope of World War I, Pugsley is firm in his belief that the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade 'was one of the finest fighting bodies that New Zealand ever raised'.⁷⁷ He credits this to the strong leadership of Colonel Edward Walter Clervaux Chaytor, who commanded the New Zealand Rifles in Sinai before taking over the command of the ANZAC Division from Chauvel in April 1917 for the remainder of the Palestine Campaign. Chaytor had to rebuild his regiments and train reinforcements after the crippling effects of Gallipoli. Rigorous training and tight discipline aided in creating a tight-knit body of horsemen as did the regional loyalty experienced by each of the mounted regiments.⁷⁸ The smallest unit that operated in the mounted regiment was a section of four men, which to be effective, whether in battle, on patrol or in camp, needed to work cooperatively.

But Pugsley, along with some first hand observers, also factored the horse into the special relationship that existed among mounted soldiers. As Pugsley noted, 'on operations it was the bond between man and horse that determined the discipline of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade'.⁷⁹ In the harsh environment of the Sinai Desert and the demanding marches, with little water, a soldier's survival depended on his horse. It was not just for the troopers' physical welfare that horses were of importance. L.R.C. MacFarlane claimed that the mounted troops had fewer of what he called 'nerve cases' than other soldiers. The companionship of the horses and the work entailed in caring for them, he felt, benefited the men's emotional well being.⁸⁰ A trooper's horse, according to Nicol, was regarded as his comrade-in-arms and as such was looked after with 'self-sacrificing devotion'.⁸¹ The horses on campaign, like the soldiers that rode them, suffered the same difficult conditions and were also seen to share the same qualities of courage, stamina and stoicism that have been

⁷⁶ Pugsley, pp.139-40.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.147.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, pp.123-8.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.131.

⁸⁰ L.R.C. MacFarlane, *Eighty Years with Horses*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1973, pp.49-50.

⁸¹ C.G. Nicol, *The Story of Two Campaigns: Official War history of the Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment, 1914-1919*, Auckland: Wilson & Horton, 1921, p.242.

bestowed on warriors throughout history.⁸² This gave an added dimension to mounted soldiery and explains, in part, the deep felt commitment to the ‘cavalry spirit’. Of the mounted soldier, Powles states: ‘In addition to the Brotherhood of the Regiment he belongs to the Brotherhood of the Horse, and from this twofold love springs a tribal feeling as strong as that which animated the Highland clans of old’.⁸³

With this in mind, it is no wonder that one of the most enduring stories surrounding the New Zealand horse concerns the disposal of those campaign horses at the end of the war. Hardly an oral or written account fails to mention the grim task of the New Zealand troopers, who felt compelled to shoot their horses rather than let them be sold to the locals who, by the prejudices of the day, were deemed heartless masters. While in the nineteenth century, the horsemen of the Middle East were held in high regard as the desert people who bred and trained the esteemed Arab and Barb horses, the harshness of war banished this perception. Nicol explained: the soldiers ‘chose this heartbreaking course rather than risk their gallant four-footed comrades falling into the hands of cruel owners and ending their days in slavery’.⁸⁴

The contribution of the New Zealand horses to the country’s war effort in the Middle East was recognised by the New Zealand community as well as by the soldiers themselves. The story of Colonel Powles’ horse, Bess,⁸⁵ who was believed to be only one of three horses that returned to New Zealand, illustrates this. Bess was presented by her owner to the Wellington Mounted Rifles and was allocated to the then Captain Powles and remained his mount until the pair returned to New Zealand in 1922. That year ‘Bess led a parade of honour at the Carleton A&P Show, fully decked out in all the Colonel’s ribbons and medals, and was given a thundering ovation by her home district’. When Bess died at the age of 24, Colonel Powles, who was at the time Principal of Flock House Farm Training Institute, buried her on the farm. Bess’s service record is listed on the stone memorial over her grave; ‘Main Body 1914, Egypt

⁸²A. Briscoe Moore, *The Mounted Riflemen in Sinai and Palestine: The Story of New Zealand’s Crusaders*, Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1920, p.44, Nicol, p.242.

⁸³ Powles, p.8.

⁸⁴ Nicol, p.7.

⁸⁵ The *Dominion Post* reported the findings of Kapiti horse trainer, Murray Haitana that Bess was the model for the Pegasus of the Wellington Cenotaph. Haitana commented that ‘They saw fit to add male horse appendages the size of melons, which only goes to show she was a mare with balls’, Kay Blundell, ‘Bess, the Wonder Horse, A Mare with Something Extra’, URL:www.domost.co.nz, Accessed 5 Oct 2005.

1915, Sinai 1916, Palestine 1917-18, France 1918, Germany 1919, England 1920, Died whilst on duty October 1934'.⁸⁶

The South African war experience may have awakened a sense of pride in the colony's horses and their riders but it was as devoted 'sons of Empire' that their achievements were recognised. It was not until the first World War and particularly the Sinai-Palestine Campaign that the battle worthiness of the New Zealand mounted soldier became a significant element of an emerging national identity. The image of the 'roughrider' as an amateur soldier, a natural horseman, whose riding, shooting and other manly skills were honed on the rural backcountry, was a powerful one. A rigorous selection process and thorough training by experienced, professional officers was seen to produce the ideal mounted soldier. This was a new national image, and one that rose above the regional loyalties of the local volunteer corps and the provincial regiments. It was also one bolstered by the inevitable comparisons with other mounted soldiers. The shared experience with the Australian Light Horse Brigades as part of the ANZAC Mounted Division created a mutual respect and also an intense rivalry. But it was out of this successful partnership that a disdain for British mounted soldiery grew. The British Yeomanry Division linked to the ANZAC Mounted Division was seen to have failed to adapt to desert conditions and lacked the speed, drive and skills to be an effective fighting force.⁸⁷

The New Zealand warhorse also stood up well to comparison. Writing in the aftermath of World War I, A. Briscoe Moore made this assessment:

... in the later days of the Campaign in Palestine the New Zealanders took part in the largest cavalry movements seen in the world's history, the New Zealand horses throughout stood up to their work brilliantly, and were considered, by many qualified to express an opinion, to be, perhaps, the most serviceable troop-horses in the world for active service. The mounts possessed by the Australians were, generally speaking, better looking horses, and were held by some to be the best horses, but veterinary returns will show that they did not stand up to hardship as did the New Zealand-bred stock. As regards the English Yeomanry, the New Zealand horses were superior in both appearance and stamina.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Jim Henderson, *Soldier Country*, Wellington: Millwood Press, 1978, pp.27-30.

⁸⁷ Pugsley, pp.33-7, Jock Phillips 'National identity and war', in *New Zealand Military History*, pp.347-50.

⁸⁸ Briscoe Moore, p.45.

New Zealand horses, like the soldiers that rode them, were said to have the physical and mental toughness needed for war. This was due to their breeding; English Thoroughbred blood, crossed with rugged native stock and hardened by rural work. Macfarlane recalled the New Zealand soldiers' contempt for a shipment of remounts 'brought from ... foreign parts'. Probably from Argentina, these horses Macfarlane said, were 'coarse, plain animals of no known pedigree, showing little real blood' and furthermore were found to 'not like the desert water or work'.⁸⁹ Horses from New Zealand, on the other hand, were well received:

A little later horses arrived from new Zealand, plenty of them, and they were badly needed. Good Maoriland mokes. Plenty of thoroughbred blood mixed with cobs and ponies and the usual good farm hack. Breeds that have proved themselves on the home hills and back country.⁹⁰

Given the success of New Zealand's horses in World War I, the country's strong tradition of mounted volunteer units, along with the internationally established prestige of mounted warfare, it is not surprising that moves to mechanise the army came slowly. Although reduced to nine territorial regiments, mounted soldiery still held 'pride of place' in the armed services and despite the dramatic decline in the use of horses by the general public, the army still required some 4,000 horses up to 1941.⁹¹ During the 1930s, the Army maintained a riding school, at the Alexandria Barracks in Wellington, then later at Trentham where regulars and territorial soldiers were taught 'the principles of equitation and horsemastership'. One of the army's last instructors, Captain J.G. Gilberd, recalled training marches and exercises involving horses in the interwar period. In 1935 the 2nd Mounted Rifle Brigade comprising three regiments were in camp near Napier with 1,900 horses.⁹²

Although some horses, mules and donkeys were used by the New Zealand Army for transport purposes, particularly in mountainous and desert terrain, during World War II, it was for home defence that mounted soldiery was called upon to serve. The Home Guard was a voluntary citizens' army, of which 'observation and then initial resistance to any invading force' was its key role. New Zealand's 'long and intricate

⁸⁹ Macfarlane, p.49.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.50.

⁹¹ McGibbon, p.19.

⁹² Captain J.G. Gilberd, 'Boot and Saddle' (1990), pp.22-5, Reference 1998-2545, Army Museum Waiouru, pp.22-5.

coast-line containing many possible landing-places', could be best served by coastal units in position to give reliable reports of any 'unforeseen happenings'.⁹³ With petrol shortages, along with the inaccessibility of some of parts of the coastline to vehicles, patrols on horseback proved valuable. Figure 12 shows the Te Mata Home Guard Rifles, led by R.J. Nicholson using a rolling farm paddock at Ruapuke on the Waikato coast for their compulsory training. The various types and colours of the horses indicate that these are not the matched chargers of the Old World but rather the solid, cross-bred farm hacks that had served the country so well in a variety of roles. By this time, however, the prestige of the mounted soldier had waned, even becoming the subject of ridicule as evidenced in the cartoon, 'Oh What A Charge They Made'. (Figure 13)

The nation could still find horsemen to volunteer their services. While there were proven veterans of the Mounted Rifles, along with younger men from the country who were described as 'horsemen and good shots', an adequate supply of horses proved more difficult. Echoing the sentiment at the end of the previous century, one farmer, bemoaned the country's loss of good hacks; the 'active, weight-carrying, enduring beast' with 'some thoroughbred blood to give him the quality needed'. Significantly, it was the 'backcountry', he suggested, that the government would need to turn to for the warhorses of the twentieth century. One station had already 'begun to do the job', Papuni, the hill country station of the East Coast Native Trust, inland from Wairoa. There were, he had seen, about forty mares 'of fine stamp' running in a semi-feral herd with a Thoroughbred stallion. While the writer was of no doubt that Papuni would produce more than its quota of remounts, he questioned whether the 'ordinary run of stations' would be in a position to provide the strong, durable mounts that had served the nation so ably in the past.⁹⁴ Another newspaper article, published the following year in the *Otago Daily Times* called upon horse owners of Otago and Southland to offer their horses to the Otago Mounted Rifles Regiment. Lieutenant-colonel Ferens stated that the Mounted Rifles required 629 horses, 40 which would be used as packhorses for the Vicker and Hotchkiss guns. While the article appealed to

⁹³ *Serve your Country by Joining the Emergency Reserve Corps*, Wellington: Government Printer, 1941, p.9.

⁹⁴ *Otago Daily Times*, 7 Jun 1939, p.8.



Figure 12: Te Mata Home Guard Mounted Rifles [1939-1945], Photographs relating to the McCracken Family, PA Coll-8577-2

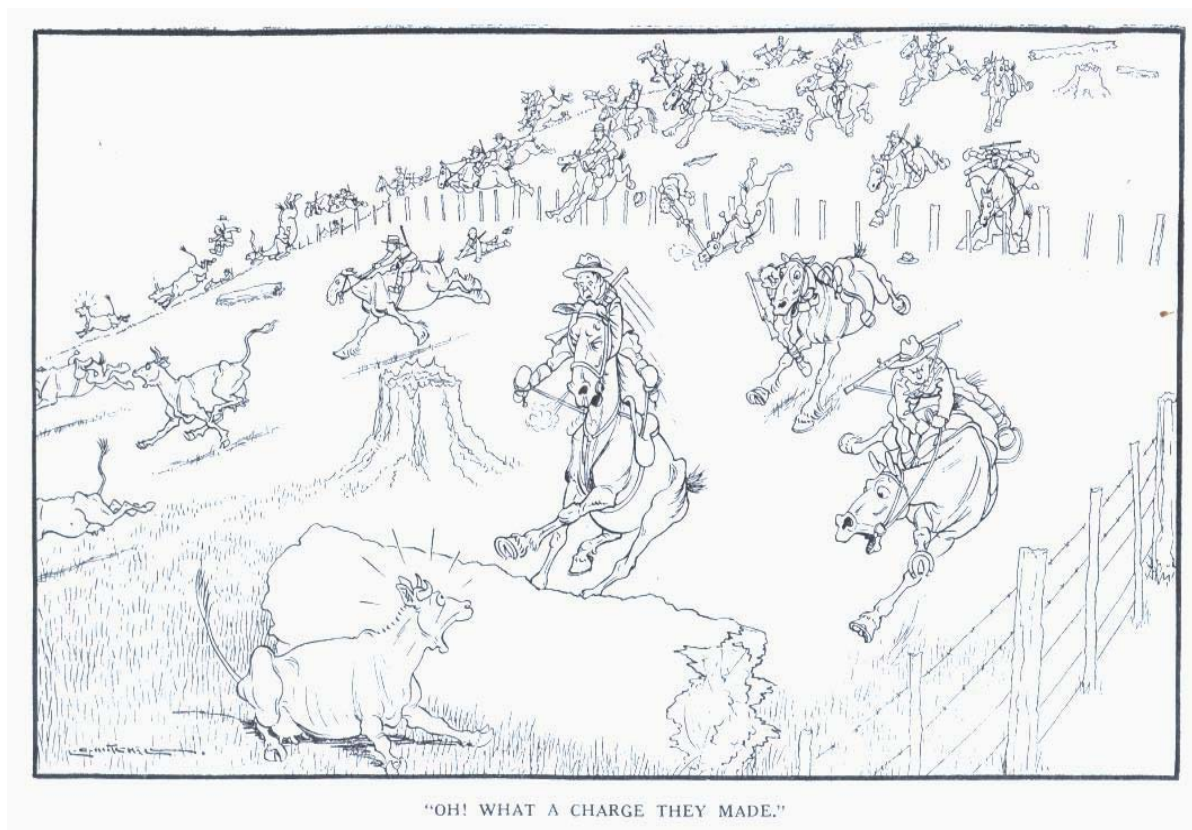


Figure 13: 'Oh! What a Charge They Made', from *The Book of the Guard* (1944)

the patriotic spirit of horse owners, it also carried the warning that if the necessary number of horses were not forthcoming, the 'Government had power to impress all the horses required during a state of war'. As in previous calls to arm, the bond between horse and rider was acknowledged with owners informed of their right to nominate the rider, which the regimental commander would endeavour to oblige.⁹⁵ Despite initial concerns, horses were found and in 1941, the 1st Mounted Rifles Brigade with over 1,000 horses was one of the first units to move into at the newly constructed Waiouru Military Camp to train as Territorials.⁹⁶

The end of the war also marked the end of the New Zealand warhorse. In 1946 the Remount Branch and the New Zealand Veterinary Corps, that had supported mounted soldiery, were abolished. The legacy of the warhorse, however, continued and can be found in contemporary horse sport and recreation. The training in horsemanship, combined with social occasion, that was so much a part of the mounted volunteer tradition, was continued after the war in clubs such as the Hamilton Light Horse Club, established by four members of the Mounted Home Guard. Gymkhanas, drills and mounted games, popular activities of the post-war Pony Clubs, were reworked versions of mounted military practice developed to encourage speed, agility, courage and teamwork. At Horse Sport events today, Rescue, Flag and Sword races are descendants of the activities of the earliest military gymkhanas in this country. During the 1980s and 1990s New Zealand enjoyed a high level of success in the international sport of Three Day Eventing, a sport originally introduced at the 1912 Olympics to test the versatility and skill of cavalry chargers and their officer riders.

As with the bronze equestrian group topping the Wellington Cenotaph, the history of the New Zealand warhorse is a multi-layered one. The earliest representation, but one that extended throughout the history of mounted warfare in New Zealand, saw the warhorse as a symbol of the elite cavalry tradition that was so firmly rooted in European culture. Another reading represents the warhorse as part of the national mythology that celebrates the natural soldier as a direct descendent of the pioneers who colonised the land and its people. The courage, strength and endurance displayed by man and horse alike, were qualities believed to have evolved from their common

⁹⁵ *Otago Daily Times*, 20 Nov 1940, p.5.

⁹⁶ Private F.G. Groom, 'Waiouru Military Camp', Army Museum, Waiouru, p.125.

frontier heritage. Just like the work horse, the story of the warhorse is one of long and hard toil in partnership with its master to create what the Imperial mind believed was better world. And lastly, the warhorse reveals two sides of the New Zealand soldier, one a hardened guerrilla fighter and on the other, a sensitive animal lover who devoted himself to the welfare of his horse and mourned deeply its loss.

7. The Wild Horse

Two representations of the horse dwell in the Western imagination. One is the tame horse; an animal that inhabits an ordered, civilised world, willingly submitting to the dominion of man. The other is the wild horse, the animal as a force of nature; rebellious and un-submitting, the wild horse exists in a world that is elemental, savage and free. The first five chapters of this thesis have focused on the domestic horse, tamed and nurtured to serve its human masters. This chapter looks at the wild horse in New Zealand.¹ Western ideology usually expresses wild and tame as a dichotomy of opposites but in the case of horses, the boundaries are often blurred. Tame horses can flee their restraints to become wild, while wild horses can be captured and ‘broken in’ to domestication. From the early nineteenth century, there has always been an ambivalent attitude towards the wild horse in New Zealand. On one hand, people have delighted in the sight of a band of wild horses, wandering at will and fleeing in the face of danger, seemingly capturing the very essence of wilderness and freedom. For others, the wild horse is a threat to order and civilisation. Not only competing for food and space with domestic animals, wild horses could lure tame horses to freedom. The wild stallion was perceived as a particular risk. As patriarch of his herd, the stallion is prepared to fight, man or beast, to the death in order to protect his harem and to maintain his leadership rights. In recent years, another danger has emerged. With the aid of modern science, research has shown that the few remaining wild horse bands pose serious risk to the ecologically fragile vegetation that grows in the marginal lands on which they graze.

Like their domestic counterparts, wild horses almost always stand in relationship to humankind. In the case of wild horses, skilful and courageous men have hunted, captured, and broken them in for use. Wild horses formed part of the strongly masculine culture of the frontier regions of the New World, with mustangs and brumbies interwoven into the frontier legends of the American West and the

¹ Due to the fact that horses are an introduced species to New Zealand, the term ‘wild horse’ is a misnomer. ‘Feral horse’ is the more appropriate description. I have chosen to use ‘wild horse’ in this chapter due to its common usage and because it expresses the perception that such horses were closely associated with the wilderness.

Australian Outback. Closely associated with them were the iconic frontiersmen who pitted themselves against wild horses in the classic conflict of man versus nature. The wild horse and its protagonist also play a part in the mythologizing of New Zealand's colonial frontier, but as Jock Phillips has pointed out, this country's heroic frontiersman is a more refined individual than the working class cowboy or bushman. New Zealand's frontiersman is portrayed, more likely than not, as a respectable pioneer who worked to eradicate all vestiges of wilderness and savagery to create a civilised British outpost amongst an ordered and prosperous landscape. A gentleman, he may be, but he is not afraid of doing battle. The courage and fortitude of the New Zealand pioneer needed to overcome the dangers and obstacles of the colonial frontier were the same qualities demonstrated by the New Zealand soldier who was prepared to sacrifice all in defence of king and country.²

The long standing debate over the Kaimanawa wild horses reveal the varying responses to the animals that inhabit the central plateau of the North Island. While wild horses continue to exist in small pockets in such places as the Aupouri Peninsula in Northland and the Southern Alps, it is the controversy centred on the Kaimanawa wild horses that has captured public attention since the 1970s. Until about sixty years ago wild horses roamed in their thousands from Pataururu in the north to Karioi in the south, and out towards the Kaingaroa Plains in the east. In the mid 1970s attention was drawn to the fact that wild horse numbers had dwindled due to shooting by hunters for pet food or mere sport. Live capture of horses for sale as saddle mounts and rodeo broncos also reduced the herds. Along with this, the range of the wild horses became increasingly limited by encroaching farmland and forestry.³ In an effort to prevent what was thought to be the eventual extinction of these animals, an effective public lobby resulted in the Kaimanawa wild horses in 1981 being designated a protected species under the Wildlife Act (1953). They were also registered by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations as a 'special herd of genetic value'.⁴ A number of reasons were given at the time for the preservation of these horses but basically they fell into two broad categories; the first

² Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, pp.4-43, 134-216.

³ Vernon Wright, 'Wild Horses', *New Zealand Geographic*, 1 (1989), pp. 52-67.

⁴ Kaimanawa Wild Horse Welfare Trust Inc., 'Research Information', URL:<http://kaimanawa.homestead.com/Research~ns4.html>, Accessed 30 Oct 2003.

being that the Kaimanawa wild horses were genetically unique and therefore of national and international scientific importance. Secondly, it was recognised that the horses were of cultural significance, having aesthetic as well as heritage value with links back to the colonial period. Scientific studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s into the horse population and the ecology of the area shed new light on the situation. Research indicated that no significant genetic differences existed between the Kaimanawa wild horses and standard domestic horses. They were found to be mixed breed horses, with genetic makeup most in common with Thoroughbreds and stationbred hack types. This resulted in the conclusion that there was no scientific evidence for classifying them as a unique breed. It also emerged that the wild horses had an adverse effect on ‘nationally endangered and rare plants’ in the area they inhabited. Furthermore, evidence showed that as horse numbers and densities increased under their protected status, the ecosystems of tussock grasslands, subalpine herbfields, wetland and forest margins already under threat, were expected to further deteriorate.⁵ Dr I. Anderson of Massey University and his colleagues advised the working party, convened by the Department of Conservation in 1994 to make recommendations on the management of the wild horses, suggested that ‘the only reasons for the retention of the Kaimanawa horses in their present environment are for historical, aesthetic or sentimental values’.⁶ While the working party found the scientific evidence compelling in that it was presented as hard data, they found the cultural reasons problematic in their subjectivity.⁷ When their recommendations were published in the Kaimanawa Wild Horses Plan in 1995, science was put clearly ahead of culture and strategies to cull the herds were put in place. Independent pressure groups, however, continued to receive strong public support for the cultural importance of the Kaimanawa wild horses. Marilyn Bright, of the Kaimanawa Consortium, argues that the ‘horses that have become a much-valued symbol of the declining free spirit of New Zealand’. Local iwi were also a voice in the fight to save the wild horses in their claim that the Kaimanawa horses should be protected as

⁵ New Zealand Dept. of Conservation. Wanganui Conservancy, *Kaimanawa Wild Horses Plan*, Wanganui: DOC, Wanganui Conservancy, 1995, pp.13,45,53., DOC, ‘Facts about Kaimanawa Horses’, URL:<http://www.doc.govt.nz/templates/page.aspx?id=33495>, Accessed 28 Oct 2007.

⁶ *Kaimanawa Wild Horses Plan*, p.31.

⁷ *ibid.*, p.30.

taonga.⁸ In the same spirit, Philip Holden in his book, *Riding Country*, expressed his belief that the few remaining bands of wild horses are ‘national treasures and should be treated accordingly’⁹

Both the appeal and fear of the wild horse can be better understood in the context of the Romantic movement that arose in Europe in the late eighteenth century, partly against Enlightenment values, tastes and ideas.¹⁰ In opposing the rationalism of the Enlightenment thinkers, Romanticism promoted the notion of individual sensibility and an emotional response toward nature. As part of this, men and woman of feeling began to articulate a new relationship with their domestic animals as well as animals in their natural state. So long a slave to humankind, the horse began to be regarded with compassion and to be represented as a creature of nobility and sensitivity. A new fascination of nature’s raw spirit meant that the wild horse was an important part of the Romantic discourse. Wild horses could be beautiful but they could also incite terror, and this kind of intense engagement with them made them a potent symbol of nature’s ferocity and power. It was also an image that fitted the New Zealand colonial environment. The European colonists could well imagine themselves battling against a wild and inhospitable land, inhabited by potentially dangerous savages.

The creation of bands of wild horses began almost as soon as horses were introduced to the colony and associated with both Māori and European settler populations. Horses are believed to have ranged on the Aupouri Peninsula in the far north from at least the 1840s. Many of the original horses were acquired by the local Ngāti Kuri people and allowed to live and breed in a semi-feral state. European settlers brought more horses and in the absence of sufficient pasture or fencing, these were sometimes turned out to graze at will. Inevitably, others escaped human control, joining up with other horses to form various herds of wild horses, each led by a dominant stallion. When horses were required for use, selected animals would be caught and prevented from returning to the wild. It needs to be emphasised that, for most of their history, the ancestry of the Aupouri horses were known and ownership acknowledged.

⁸ Sarah Bright, ‘NZ’s Wild Kaimanawa Horses’, URL:<http://www.horsetalk.co.nz/tea/kaiman.shtml>, Accessed 28 Sep 2003..

⁹ Holden, p.134.

¹⁰ Peter Hay, *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought*, Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2002, p.4.

Stallions were deliberately introduced at various times in an effort to improve the offspring in a particular way. For example, in the late nineteenth century, an Arab stallion presented to the people of Te Kao was turned loose to breed high quality saddle horses. Early the next century, an animal with totally different characteristics, a Clydesdale stallion, was introduced to breed horses that were suitable for use on the local farms. As informal horse racing was a popular pastime throughout the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, Thoroughbred stallions were periodically released to develop speed in their offspring. Interest in the wild herds waned as motor vehicles and tractors became more accessible, resulting in increased horse numbers. When the Lands and Survey Department fenced and developed the Crown land suitable for pastoral farming in the 1950s, the horses in these areas became the responsibility of the Department. Wild horses not being compatible with farming development, those grazing on the Lands and Survey property were removed or shot, with some 500 reportedly sent to the Morewa freezing works in the late 1950s. During this period, the horses that inhabited the western coastal sand hills continued to be caught, sold and added to in the traditional manner.¹¹

The existence of wild horses in the Kaimanawa ranges was first recorded in the late 1870s and like the Aupouri horses, the herds were a mixture of horses allowed to roam freely or were escapees. Between 1858 and 1875 Major George Gwavas Carlyon imported Exmoor ponies to Hawkes Bay, which were crossed with local stock to produce what became known as the 'Carlyon Pony'. During the 1870s some of these were released into the ranges. Around the same time another prominent Hawke's Bay landowner, Sir Donald McLean, released on the Kaingaroa Plains a stallion and several mares of his 'Comet' breed, the result of crossing Welsh imported stallions with Carlyon mares.¹² Along with these well bred horses, herd numbers were supplemented by the common practice of letting horses fend for themselves after they ceased to be of use. Mechanisation in the first decades of the twentieth century further added to the number of unwanted horses. Small bands of 'roamers' were commonly seen along country roads attracted by the grass that grew on the verges. Many of these were old horses but there were also some yearlings or two-year-olds, too young to be of any use. Other horses were turned out because they were lame, sick or

¹¹ Richard Hermons, 'Feral Horses in Aupouri Forest', Unpublished Internal Report, Dec 1984, pp.1-9.

¹² W.J. Boyd, 'History of Kaimanawa Horses', Kaimanawa Wild Horse Welfare Trust Inc. n.d.

unreliable.¹³ During and following the Second World War surplus army horses from Waiouru were also added to the mix.

Although the Aupouri and Kaimanawa herds, in the early years at least, were largely the result of the deliberate release of horses and conscious maintenance of the herds, there were other bands of wild horses, comprised mainly of runaways, that had managed to evade recapture. Lack of fencing, particularly on the large pastoral runs, meant that horses when turned out to graze often covered large distances and were difficult to recover. Some were never found at all. Notices of lost or strayed horses frequently appeared in the early newspapers. For example, an advertisement placed in the *Lyttelton Times* in 1851 offered a ‘handsome reward’ for the return of two ‘valuable’ grey horses missing from the Mount Pleasant area.¹⁴

Farm diaries also give an interesting insight into this problem, entries often listing day after day of looking for missing horses. James Murison of Puketoi Station in the Maniototo, describes how on Sunday 15 July 1860 his missing farm horses were finally sighted and two men sent to try to fetch them. A mare, ‘Sarah’ was caught but then lost again. Five days later Murison returned to look for the mare without success and Sarah was not mentioned again.¹⁵ Horses being by nature social animals, they seldom remain long on their own, so if Sarah managed to avoid capture and to survive the rigours of the environment, it is likely that she would have joined up with a wild band. In another Otago farm diary, written by John Hodge of Mount Nicholas Station, entries over a two week period in 1875 revealed the difficulties keeping control of station horses:

March 30 – J.A.H. to ‘Chivey’ can’t be caught and is running all over the country
April 2 – Dance searching for ‘Thorn’ without success. Captured ‘Chivey’
April 3 – J.W.W. found ‘Thorn’ before breakfast
April 7 – Lost ‘Ranger’
April 12 – J.W.W. left for Highlands ... also to recover Ranger¹⁶

¹³ Harvie Morrow, *New Zealand Wild Horses*, Wellington: Millwood Press, 1975, p.33.

¹⁴ *Lyttelton Times*, 4 Oct 1851, p.1.

¹⁵ Murison, James: Diary, Puketoi Station, Hocken Library, MS-0612.

¹⁶ Mount Nicholas Station: Diary, Hocken Library, MS-0672.

These two examples are probably typical of the difficulties in securing domestic horses in the colonial period. The nature of animal husbandry allowed domestic horses to enter a semi-wild state, independent of humans for their food, water, shelter or social contact. It also provided the opportunities for contact with feral stallions and so to become feral themselves. Fences to keep domestic stock in and feral animals out alleviated the issue over time, but particularly on the large pastoral runs, this was a lengthy and gradual process. Fencing was a laborious job at the best of times and the shortage of wood in parts of the colony as well as the high cost of labour made fencing prohibitively expensive. It was not until lightweight pliable wire and iron standards came into use in the 1860s that enclosing the runs proceeded more quickly.¹⁷

The pastoralists and farmers who established their properties in New Zealand came with a set of beliefs that reflected the Romantic spirit of the age. Seeking refuge from the industrialisation of Europe with its decaying cities, many longed for a return to an imagined past, a life of rural idyll, free of the social and political upheavals of the modern world. The 'natural' world that Wordsworth and other English Romantics represented, however, was not of wild, 'untamed' moors and fens, but rather the ordered and productive farmland long established and fostered by succeeding generations.¹⁸ This particularly English Romantic view of what nature should be helped transform the New Zealand landscape into neatly fenced paddocks of English grasses, cultivated to sustain introduced farm animals.¹⁹ It also served to colour the attitude of the early European settlers towards the feral horses in their midst.

Wandering horses, particularly those perceived as ownerless represented a risk to the civilised way of life the colonists were trying to create for themselves. This is made clear in a letter to the *Poverty Bay Standard*:

¹⁷ Burdon, pp.84-5.

¹⁸ Alun Hawkins, 'Rurality and English Identity' in *British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality and Identity*, David Morley and Kevin Robins, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p.147.

¹⁹ Geoff Park, *Ngā Uruora, Ecology & History in a New Zealand Landscape*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1995, pp.13-16., Geoff Park, 'Edward Gibbon Wakefield's Dream, Thomas Shepherd's Eye and New Zealand's Spatial Construction' in *Theatre Country: Essays on Landscape & Whenua*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, pp.34-42.

But still they increase and multiply and still they come, they wander about the face of this part of the earth ceaselessly, they regard not our landmarks neither do they take heed of our fences; they smell green grass from afar, and fall upon it and devour it and care not to whom it belongs. To whom then do these legions of lean kine belong? Have they any responsible human owners? ... steps for the prevention of horses must shortly be taken, we cannot stand their deprivations much longer. I am a great lover of horses as horses simply, but I thoroughly hate the Poverty Bay horse, not particularly as a horse, but as an unwarrantable eater of my grass, and violator of my pastoral peace generally.²⁰

The early establishment of public pounds in the colonial settlements was evidence of the perceived risk that the wandering horse posed to the European vision of a colonial Arcadia. As early as 1848, a facility to impound wandering horses and cattle was established in Auckland on the western side of Queen Street.²¹ John Hall, the poundkeeper of the public pound in Otahuhu placed a notice in the *Southern Cross* in 1860 giving the description of two horses impounded 'for trespass in an enclosed crop of potatoes at Pukaki'. Owners were advised that they could claim their animals within eleven days for damages of 2s. 6d. Any unclaimed horses would be sold according to the 'provisions of the Impounding Act, 1856'.²² The Oamaru pound in 1875 had in its possession a bay horse that had been found 'damaging oats in bags at Kourow Station'.²³

The threat of wandering stock went beyond the potential physical damage to pasture and crops, or even to the pastoral peace of Poverty Bay. A far greater threat in the new colony was the danger of falling back into a more primitive state of being. T.F. Dale in *Riding, Driving and Kindred Sports*, warned his readership of the apparent risks to the colonists when he advised, 'when we get into savage surroundings we are apt to fall back into barbarous, if not unpractical, customs and ways'.²⁴ If horses could so easily return to the wild, surely too, away from the constraints of European society, humankind was also at the risk of revision. The simple logic of this would have been clear to the men and women brought up in the Enlightenment belief in progress.

²⁰ *Poverty Bay Standard*, 26 Oct 1872, p.2.

²¹ Kalaugher, *Gleanings*, p.29.

²² *Southern Cross*, 6 Jan 1860, p.1.

²³ *North Otago Times*, 14 Sep 1875, p.4.

²⁴ T.F. Dale, *Riding, Driving and Kindred Sports*, London: T.F. Unwin, 1899, p.137.

Despite the dangers encountered, a belief did exist in the colonial mind that civilisation could conquer savagery. This deeply held view is born out in the story, 'A Savage Equine Battle'. It was published in *Sketches of Early New Zealand* as one of the tales that the author, calling himself 'Te Manuwiri', related of his youthful years in the colony.²⁵ Although the author's memory was undoubtedly enhanced by the intervening years, it nevertheless gives an insight into the European mind. The story concerned the encounter between two stallions, one a Māori 'wild' stallion, and the other, Aotea, the horse he rode in his duties as a boundary rider. He related the occasion when checking to ensure that none of the station's cattle had strayed onto Māori land, he was accosted by the stallion leading a 'small troop of half wild Māori horses'. The storyteller explained that:

It was at that season of the year when stallions watch their harems with jealous eyes brooking, no interference on their part of others of their own sex, and this, no doubt, was the cause of the following curious but thrilling incident.²⁶

Although attempts were made to escape the wild stallion's clear intentions to fight, to the author's surprise, his hitherto obedient horse, Aotea, stood his ground. Realising that the battle was unavoidable, Te Manuwiri dismounted and freed his horse of his restraints by cutting off the bridle. He drew a telling comparison between the two stallions as they faced off before the clash; his refined, well bred stallion, Aotea versus the heavier and coarser Māori horse:

What a contrast was here to be witnessed between these two stallions as they thus stood watching each other, prior to the desperate life and death struggle that was so soon to take place between them.

Both, with eyes blazing like balls of fire, ears bent back, and open mouths, but trembling all over with excitement and passion.

The one symmetrically formed, with not one ounce of superfluous flesh upon him, and withal, beautiful as a gazelle; whilst the other, huge, ungainly, and gross in the extreme, with not one good point to be seen, but nevertheless very heavy and powerful.²⁷

²⁵ Te Manuwiri, 'A Savage Equine Battle', *Sketches of Early Colonisation and its Phases of Contact with the Maori Race*, Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1907, pp.64-72.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p.65.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.67.

The author's dramatic description of the fight in which the horses flailed at each other with their front feet, tore flesh and wheeled around to kick with devastating precision was heightened by the wilderness setting:

The furious appearance of these two enraged animals had a strange fascination for me, and I felt as if firmly rooted to the spot; nevertheless, a peculiar creepy sensation of dread would occasionally pass over me, which was in no way allayed by the appearance and action of my dog, who evinced abject terror, and howled piteously whilst crouching between my legs.

The noise of the fight, and the screaming of the horses, with the howling of the dog, caused a strange combination of sounds with their echoes amidst the gullies of the surrounding hills, weird in the extreme, in that lonely spot.²⁸

This description has curious parallels with Edmund Burke's discussion of the horse in the Biblical Book of Job, 'whose neck is cloathed with thunder, the glory of whose nostrils is terrible, who swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage'. For Burke, 'the plough, the road, the draft' or any other horse useful to man had nothing of the sublime; the great power and beauty of the horse became sublime only when associated with fear. The sublime is not sought, but 'it comes upon us in a gloomy forest, and in the howling wilderness, in the form of the lion, the tiger, the panther, or rhinoceros'.²⁹ New Zealand had no lions or tigers or ferocious beasts of the sort encountered in some other British colonies, but in the English mind there was still savagery to be faced here. For Te Manuwiri, the wild stallion in the untamed landscape represented Burke's wild beast in the wilderness. The savage wild horse was identified as 'Māori', a reflection of the author's Eurocentric view that native New Zealanders lived in a primitive state before they embraced what was believed to be the benefits of civilisation. As Te Manuwiri advised on the first page of his book, 'Now it must be born in mind that at that time the Māori was in that happy state of transition between savagedom and barbarism, and not, as he now is, a civilised and intellectual man'.³⁰

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.69.

²⁹ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, James T. Boulton (ed), London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987, pp.65-6.

³⁰ Te Manuwiri, p.1.

The victor of the equine battle was the tame horse, Aotea. Lighter in weight but graced with ‘intelligence’ and ‘courage’, Aotea managed at last to fell the ‘wild and savage brute’. Significantly, it was the trappings of civilisation, the metal horseshoes and the saddle that contributed to the domestic horse’s success. Te Manuwiri related how Aotea’s ‘mail-clad’ feet’ counterbalanced the greater weight and force of his opponent’s blow while the saddle attracted the attention of the wild stallion, who by tearing it into shreds saved injury to Aotea. Once he had the wild horse down, Aotea continued to batter his antagonist until his fore feet and legs were covered with the blood of his unfortunate victim.³¹ Sickened by the violence, Te Manuwiri walked away from the scene. But there was one final test for his horse. Enraged by the passion aroused by male desire and violent rivalry, there was risk that Aotea would remain in the wild to take up his earned place as leader of the Māori mares. At first Aotea ignored the familiar whistle but finally he responded to the call, obediently returning to his master and to his place in the ordered world of the colony

This story speaks to the European settler’s fear that too close a contact with Māori was dangerous and could lead to physical and moral degradation. Te Manuwiri admired the way the wild stallion fought with ‘great courage and determination’, much in the same way that the Māori warrior was respected, but in the end all signs of the earlier way of life had to be destroyed to make way for a new order. Latter Te Manuwiri returned to the site of the carnage with a small party of settlers. Just as fire was used by colonial farmers to destroy native bush to make way for pasture, so too was it used here to erase the memory of the past:

It was a ghastly sight to see how the wild horse’s carcass was torn and mangled, a silent witness to the ferocity with which Aotea has fought. We built logs around and upon the body, numbers of which were strewn close around, and having set fire to the heap, we waited until the whole was completely consumed, leaving not a vestige of the wild horse remaining, whilst other traces of the contest were obliterated by the careful use of the bush harrow.³²

Although the wild horse in Te Manuwiri’s story was seen in a negative light, a part of the wilderness that needed to be destroyed, the wild horse could also be represented more positively, as a test of man’s dominion over nature. This is not a new concept.

³¹ *ibid.*, p.71.

³² *ibid.*, p.72.

Political and military leaders have always sought to be represented and immortalised on powerful horses. In equestrian art, the horses that rulers ride are never small and docile. Rather, they are represented as performing the movements of *passage* or *levade*, their tremendous strength and energy controlled by the men who rode them.³³ The horses reinforce the ruler's power, and the horsemanship demonstrated symbolises the rider's right and ability to command lesser men.³⁴ This concept was given further meaning under sway of Romanticism, where not only great leaders, but also the common man saw himself pitted against the power of nature. Man by association with wild horses could become truly heroic. This was to be particularly meaningful in late nineteenth century New Zealand when already the colonial frontier was fast disappearing.

Nostalgia for the passing frontier became part of what Jock Phillips refers to as the 'pioneer legend'. The image of the sturdy pioneer and his unrelenting toil in the wilderness featured strongly in the shaping of a New Zealand male identity.³⁵ As Phillips has explained, the nature and conditions of work in the frontier districts of the nineteenth century created a demographic imbalance in which there existed a greater percentage of young, male itinerant workers as opposed to the more settled parts of the colony.³⁶ It also meant that the successful frontiersman was seen to be physically and mentally strong, an independent, resourceful man, who was able to endure rough living conditions. The memoirs and literature of the second half of the nineteenth century revealed this image and made a clear distinction between the experienced colonist and the 'new chum'. In a series of articles carried by the *Weekly News* in 1864, 'the Old Colonist' offered advice on how the 'new chum' could transform himself into a successful colonist through hard work, determination and the acquisition of practical skills.

³³ *Passage* and *levade* are *haute école* dressage movements requiring strength and skill on the part of both horse and rider. *Passage* consists of a cadenced, high lifting trot with a clear moment of suspension. In the *levade*, the horse raises itself from the ground with the forefeet while the hindquarters deeply bent at the haunches, bear the entire weight of the body.

³⁴ Malcolm Warner, 'Ecce Equus: Stubbs and the Horse of Feeling', *Stubbs & the Horse*, Malcolm Warner and Robin Blake (eds), Fort Worth: Kimbell Art Museum, 2004, p.11.

³⁵ Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, pp.15, 24.

³⁶ *ibid.*, pp.9-19.

Remember that to succeed in the colonies you must become colonised. You will not become this by letting the tide of fortune drive you where it will. Books will not help you. There is no theory in things colonial. Set yourself resolutely to work, and by using your powers of observation and persevering you will soon see ways and means for the accomplishment of your aims opened up to you. Begin by believing that you can and will succeed. Meet hardship with the determination to overcome it, and it will vanish.³⁷

One of the practical skills that the aspiring colonist needed to acquire was the ability to master colonial horses. Particularly in the early years, the scarcity of well-trained horses in the frontier regions meant that the horsemanship skills of new chums were often severely challenged. It was out of this that a tradition of story telling grew involving newcomers and their mishaps with horses. An illustrated story in the *New Zealand Graphic* described how an opportunistic publican got the better of two English gentlemen touring the north on horseback. The publican, realising that the good trade he was enjoying from the visitors would soon be over as they moved on, arranged to have their horses driven off, an old trick apparently with 'up-country hotel-keepers'. Making the most of their new found freedom, the horses led their masters through a series of colonial misadventures including falling into a bog and frightening encounters with wild cattle and pigs.³⁸

David McKee Wright's ballad, 'The New Chum's Ride' was another humorous tale, this time at the expense of a sailor who much to his discomfort was forced to cross a South Island river on horseback.

A bloke with squint eyes held the bridle, I climbed on his back pretty slow,
I was frightened the thing might get started before I was ready to go.
The bloke that was going to take me - the horse he was riding was red –
Sings out, 'Are you ready to go, Jack?' 'You can cast her adrift, mate,' I said.

'All right' But I wasn't too happy, though I had a good grip on the mane;
He was crossing our bows and I shouted, pulling hard on the starboard-side rein;
It wasn't my fault as I know of, but luck was against me that day.
It was port that I wanted to bring him, but he slewed round the opposite way.

³⁷ *Weekly News*, 18 Aug 1864, p.4.

³⁸ *New Zealand Graphic*, 7 Jan 1899, pp.4-5.

There was what you might call a collision though neither was bu'sted outright,
He was jammed to the fence of the paddock, and the red horse was young and
took fright.

But the white one was old, so they told me, he wouldn't get startled, not he;
He mightn't 'a'done, there's no knowing, but the way he went startled me.³⁹

There is an element of the morality tale in some of the new chum stories. When what mattered on the colonial frontier was a man's experience and skills, horses were recognised as great levellers, sure to bring an overly confident new chum into line. The author of 'A New Chums Mistake' recalled his early days as a cadet on a large sheep station. Having tried all the 'quiet old station mokes' and proud of his riding prowess, he asked the head packman for a horse that could buck. With no high spirited horse available, Mick the mule was presented. The author had barely sat in the saddle before being tossed off with one high kick. To make his humiliation complete, the vengeful mule wheeled around to kick him. Like so many of the new chum yarns, the drama was played out before an audience of mocking but knowing 'old hands'.⁴⁰ Those that had learned the lessons and overcome the obstacles of the colonial frontier were important players in the pioneer legend.

The mythologizing of the New Zealand pioneer borrowed from and interacted with the American Wild West legend and the ethos of the Australian outback. These were located in the frontier regions of their countries and centred on heroic male individuals. Cowboys and stockmen, outlaws and bushrangers were essentially romantic images of lone males who lived their lives in the wilderness in constant battle with the elements. The wild horse, particularly the wild stallion, played a dual role in this frontier imagery. The wild stallion was regarded as part of nature to be conquered by the heroic frontiersman but he was seen also as his counterpart, a solitary male and natural leader with the physical and mental ability to survive his harsh environment.

³⁹ David McKee Wright, *Station Ballads and Other Verses*, Dunedin, J.G. Sawell (Wise's), 1897, pp.102-5.

⁴⁰ *New Zealand Graphic*, 28 Sep 1895, p.399.

By the 1890s, the popular imagery of the American Wild West found an eager audience in New Zealand. Novels by James Fenimore Cooper were well known and the acquisition of a cowboy hat or 'Stetson' was a necessary accessory for the fashionable man about town.⁴¹ When the steamer carrying the first Wild West Show to visit New Zealand docked in Auckland in 1890, there were said to be so many cowboy hats spotted in the greeting crowd to provoke the declaration of one wit that there appeared to be more cowboys in Auckland than Texas.⁴² The well-known Australian circus family, the Wirth Brothers, brought the show to New Zealand which included some imported Wild West acts along with their usual circus performance. From America came an exotic troupe of 'Red Indians' along with 'splendidly built, tall handsome' cowboys 'straight from ranches in America' who performed acts such as 'Deadwood Stagecoach fight' and 'Emigrants attacked by Road Agents'. Opening night in Auckland was marred by two incidents; the first was when three stallions performing simultaneously in adjoining rings began to fight and then in the next act, the bucking horses ridden by the Arkansas Kid and Cowboy George bucked so effectively that they kicked their way out of the ring into the audience where they knocked over the guest of honour, the Mayor.⁴³ Such antics, however, seemed only to enhance the Wild West elements of the show and it went on to play for three months in Auckland before travelling to other centres. Although much was made of the colourful western scenes, the *New Zealand Mail* reviewer noted that the attacks on the emigrant wagon, the Deadwood coach and on a bridal party 'were all very similar exhibitions' where the vehicle went around the ring accompanied by howling Indians before they were driven off by the cowboys firing pistols.⁴⁴ For this commentator, at least, it was the feats of horsemanship, particularly the riding of wild, bucking horses that generated the most interest. Wirth's wager of £100 to any person who could produce a wild horse that could throw the Arkansas Kid was met by at least one challenge but although the animal 'bucked in a lively style', the cowboy remained firmly in the saddle as did the money in the showman's pocket.⁴⁵

⁴¹ J.O.C. Phillips, 'Musings in Maoriland – Or Was There a Bulletin School in New Zealand?' *Historical Studies*, 20 (1983), p.528., Hill & Sons, Hat and Cap Manufacturers, Wellington N.Z. [Catalogue Page. Cowboy hat, and Stetsons], 1897, ATL, Eph-C-Costume-1897-05.

⁴² Philip Wirth, *The Life of Philip Wirth: A Lifetime With an Australian Circus*, Coogee, N.S.W.: P. Wirth, 1935, pp.49-50.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.51.

⁴⁴ *New Zealand Mail*, 17 Oct 1890, p.14.

⁴⁵ *New Zealand Mail*, 24 Oct 1890, p.15.

The ability to stick with a wild horse in order to ‘break’ the animal was an essential skill of the frontier horseman. Lacking a large workforce and the time for a more gentle approach, the quickest way to break a horse was to restrain the animal in such a way that a saddle could be thrown on its back, followed by an agile and generally hardened, young male ‘roughrider’. On finding that they could not dislodge their burden, most horses submitted to the rider after a few bucks. Although the term ‘roughrider’ has long been in cavalry usage to refer to someone who broke in horses, it gained a more meaningful significance in the culture of the American Wild West. Buffalo Bill Cody, the famous American showman used the term in 1893 when named his performance ‘Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World’. His vision was to display the horsemanship of the world and so included German, English and American soldiers, Russian cossacks, Argentine gauchos, Mexican vaqueros, Sioux Indians as well as his usual cowboys and cowgirls.⁴⁶ Five years later, the Easterner, turned Western rancher, Theodore Roosevelt, called his regiment of volunteers the ‘Rough Riders’ and led them in the famous charge up San Juan Hill, on foot, their horses having been left behind in Florida.⁴⁷

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, ‘roughrider’ was particularly significant in New Zealand military history as the term used with pride to describe the mounted contingents in the South Africa. Roughriding was also a skill that the New Zealand soldiers were happy to demonstrate, particularly when it involved showing up the Australians. During the war in South Africa, an *Auckland Weekly News* story, involving the handling of fresh American remounts is revealing:

I should like to mention here also an incident that brought the capable horsemanship of our boys rather prominently before members of several of the troops. When some of the Texas horses were taken from the lighters they were mounted by the man in charge. Two of them, ridden by Queenslanders had not been ridden before and soon landed their riders. Two fresh horsemen of the same troop were treated to the same salute. Then two New Zealanders were offered some sport. These men, much to the chagrin of the Australian, refused to be unseated but thoroughly enjoyed the reception they got.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Robert A. Carter, *Buffalo Bill Cody: The Man Behind the Legend*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000, p.361.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.386.

⁴⁸ *Weekly News*, 6 Jul 1900, p.35.

Such a report would have delighted the New Zealand audience who would have seen their 'boys' beating the Australian horsemen at their own game. It is also interesting that the work of mounting these barely handled horses was referred to as 'sport' and that onlookers gathered to watch. The boundary between work and sport has become blurred. While subduing the new horses to initiate the process of turning them into military mounts was regarded as work, the spirit of competition and the entertainment value also made roughriding a sport.

A buck-jumper was an Australian term for a horse that bucked in an effort to rid itself of its rider. Someone who had the ability to dominate a wild buck-jumper by remaining in the saddle was a skill that could bring fame and very occasionally fortune. Horsemanship was celebrated in the literary tradition of the Australian outback and some horsemen became contributors themselves. Adam Lindsay Gordon was acknowledged both as a horseman and a poet, his reputation enhanced by his famous 'Gordon's Leap' of 1860 at Mount Gambier, a remarkable feat that involved jumping a fence, then turning his horse in midair to land at right angle to the fence only metres from the edge of a cliff.⁴⁹ Thirty-six years later, Lance Skuthorpe, a travelling horse breaker who supplemented his income by reciting the poems of Adam Lindsay Gordon and Barcroft Boake repeated Gordon's famous leap on a former steeplechaser named Wallace. When news of the acclaimed stunt spread, Skuthorpe was able to leave the physically punishing and poorly paid life as a bush town horse breaker for a full time entertainer's job with Wirth's Circus. Here a shilling gained entrance to the side-show billed as 'The Heroes of Gordon's Leap' where Wallace and his master could be viewed. Skuthorpe also entertained the crowd by riding buck-jumpers in the lion cage.⁵⁰ So highly regarded was buck-jumping as an important Australian skill that Skuthorpe, regarded as the best buck-jumper of them all, was engaged to give exhibitions in 1901 for the Duke of York on his official visit to open the first Australian parliament.

⁴⁹ A.K. MacDougall (ed.), *The Great Treasury of Australian Folklore: Two Centuries of Tales, Epics, Ballads, Myths & Legends*, 2nd ed., Noble Park, Victoria: Five Mile Press, 2002, p.292.

⁵⁰ Jack Pollard, *The Horse Tamer: The Story of Lance Skuthorpe*, Wollstonecraft, N.S.W., pp.16, 25, 44.

From about the early 1880s the Australian outback horsemanship tradition was represented in the New Zealand popular media through stories, verse and image. Australian contributions such as the painting, 'A Buck-jumper',⁵¹ and the ballad, 'Where Bushman Ride',⁵² were reproduced in New Zealand publications. As Jock Phillips has indicated, the *Bulletin* from Sydney not only found a considerable audience in New Zealand but it also published the work of New Zealand writers and illustrators. Yet despite this clear interest in frontier culture, New Zealand failed to develop its own distinctive cultural tradition. Its pioneer legend, Phillips contends, while borrowing from the Australian and American frontier legends, also remained tied to the values and ideals of the British upper classes. New Zealand's heroic frontiersman was portrayed as a British gentleman, a landowner and natural leader of men whose presence as a single male on the colonial frontier was a passing phase of his life before he settled down as a respectable family man. He was represented as a hard worker, able to 'rough it' as well as any man, but dedicated to upholding British values and ideals on the colonial frontier. It is this enduring image that provides the link between the New Zealand soldier and frontiersman. Both shared the qualities of courage, stoicism and dedication to duty to create a civilised world for themselves and their families.⁵³

Although much was made of the horsemen who contributed to the *Bulletin*, it is important to recognise that the frontier legends of both Australia and the United States were constructions of a mainly urban intelligentsia who sought a symbol of escape from an increasingly urbanised and industrial world. They also saw the need for an idealised individual who represented the manly qualities needed to meet the challenges of the Imperial age. The artists and writers of Sydney and Melbourne found a potent symbol in the horse breaker, stockman or other outback worker. These were men who had shown that they could fight and survive whatever the environment threw against them, whether it was fire, draught, hostile natives or unbroken horses. Similarly those in the American cities of the eastern seaboard were largely responsible for inventing the heroic figure of the cowboy. Theodore Roosevelt, along with writer, Zane Grey and artist, Frederic Remington were New Yorkers who only visited the

⁵¹ *New Zealand Graphic*, 4 Mar 1899, p.262.

⁵² *New Zealand Farmer*, 19:8 (1899) p.307.

⁵³ Phillips, 'Musings in Maoriland', pp.520.

rural West, the geographical location of their mythmaking. Like the Australian stockman, the cowboy was a mythic character who was prepared to battle savage men and animals in the wilderness of the western plains and ranges to make way for civilisation.

The romantic notion of the frontier horseman as central to the mythmaking had its roots in an earlier time. Nineteenth century Romantic writers such as Sir Walter Scott and artists such as those associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood renewed the image of the valiant medieval knight as a shining example of manhood. The knightly code of chivalry with its ideals of masculinity and gentlemanly conduct was a standard that could be clung to during the social and economic upheavals of modern Britain. It was a vision that not only justified colonial expansion but also could be readily transferred from the Old World to the New. In *Horse and Rider in Australian Legend*, Nanette Mantle reveals how the ‘core qualities’ of the culture and mythology of chivalry have been adapted to mould the image of the Australian horseman. While once the medieval knight served God and his sovereign, his new world equivalent honoured his duty to State and Empire.⁵⁴ By ennobling the frontier horseman with a higher cause and endowing him with the knightly qualities of courage and honour, the creators of the frontier legends crafted a heroic male figure as a rallying point for national and Imperial sentiment.

Skilful horsemanship was a key attribute of the medieval knight as well as the nineteenth century English gentleman and the colonial frontiersman. Hunting and competition were the means by which both horse and rider could test their skills and maintain their battle readiness. The twentieth century narratives of wild horse hunting in New Zealand capture something of the British sporting tradition. In *New Zealand Wild Horses*, Harvie Morrow looked back with nostalgia to his early years spent hunting wild horses between 1916 and 1930:

⁵⁴ Mantle, pp.90-2.

I have roamed far and wide in pursuit of all kinds of game, including the mighty tiger but for sheer exhilaration, sheer thrill of movement, I know nothing to compare with the thrill of riding a gallant horse in pursuit of an equally gallant wild horse – both horse and rider attuned to the chase – the wild one straining every nerve to preserve his freedom. Man has ever gloried in the chase. Little odds the danger, achievement the supreme reward. I may not have been conscious of the crowning satisfaction that horse hunting and capture gave me at the time but I am very conscious of it now. There was no bloodshed, no taking of life (unless a horse was maimed which was seldom). Your quarry became your great companion after capture.⁵⁵

In a description reminiscent of English foxhunting, Morrow enthuses on the age-old thrill of the chase. The male companionship offered by the sport, riding a trusted horse alongside like-minded friends, had clear appeal. He revelled in ‘the good mates, the willing mounts, the thrills and spills and above all the lasting memories of a sport unknown to modern youth’.⁵⁶

With its inherent risks, wild horse hunting was portrayed as an activity undertaken by courageous young men or youths. Another wild horse hunter, George Chauklin, related his memories to Lester Masters:

I was young then. A wild horse hunter and breaker. I was born and bred among horses and could ride almost before I could walk. In those times, back in 1924 when I first went to the Runaunga place on the edge of the Rangitaiki plains, wild horses were plentiful in the area. I spent a lot of my time capturing, breaking them in, and taking them to distant markets.⁵⁷

Along with the English hunting tradition, much of the spirit and language of New Zealand wild horse running was gleaned from the popular culture of the American and Australian frontier. Harvie Morrow described his prey as ‘the wild and wily brumby’, the Australian name for its wild horses. But Morrow also attributed much of the inspiration and knowledge of wild horses from his ‘diet of Wild West stuff through the old silent films shown in the nearest hall at Tirau’.⁵⁸ From this source, he and his friends learned to fashion lassoes out of rope and to practice throwing loops in preparation for their first wild horse hunt in the winter of 1916. Free-running horses,

⁵⁵ Harvie Morrow, *New Zealand Wild Horses*, Wellington: Millwood Press, 1975, pp.16-7.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.6.

⁵⁷ Lester Masters, *Back Country Tales*, Hastings: Hart Printing House, 1959, p.184.

⁵⁸ Morrow, pp.4-5.

they determined, could be 'lassoed on the run cowboy style' or roped as the horses were driven into boggy ground or into specially built traps. Alternatively, number eight gauge wire could be fashioned into snares or for the very adventurous, Morrow advised that it was possible to 'range yourself alongside and throw yourself from your mount onto the back of a running horse'.⁵⁹ As if the pursuit and capture of wild horses was not dangerous enough, Morrow evoked the atmosphere of Wild West lawlessness in his descriptions of 'horse-rustling' and his wariness of rival horse hunting groups, the 'Barnett Clan' and the 'Waotu Gang'.⁶⁰

Sport and youthful adventure, aside, there were financial gains to be made for those with the courage and ability to catch wild horses. For Harvie Morrow, who hunted the lower Waotu district in the Waikato before it was flooded by the completion of the Arapuni Dam in 1930, wild horses once broken in could command good prices. He sold one colt in the sale ring at Te Aroha for £20, which was then considered a top price.⁶¹ George Chauklin broke in the horses he caught in the central North Island and took them to be sold in Hawke's Bay and the Waikato. On one occasion with only two other riders to help him, he took a mob of 270 horses to Hamilton.⁶² Persisting well into the twentieth century, the trade in wild horses was a distinctly new world enterprise that required an attitude and skills developed and maintained in the frontier regions of the country.

A market existed for wild horses due to the general feeling that once broken in and tamed, the wild horse was transformed into a useful domestic animal. An article in the *New Zealand Country Journal* in 1885 on American wild horses stated that 'wild horses when captured and tamed are superior to any horse of the same size'. Not only were they regarded as versatile, they were also said to be 'entirely trustworthy'.⁶³ This sentiment was echoed in later descriptions of once wild horses. George Chauklin remembered the wild horses he handled as being 'hardy and sure-footed and made

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp.1-3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp.24, 26, 28.

⁶¹ Morrow, pp.28-9.

⁶² Masters, pp.184-5.

⁶³ *New Zealand Country Journal*, 9:3 (1885), pp.214-15.

excellent shepherd's mounts on rough country'.⁶⁴ Morrow described a wild mare that a friend trained:

He had no trouble breaking her in and she became a valued pony. She was one of those that you would get now and then that would do anything. She chased many a wild one into a snare and was extra good when pig hunting, always sure-footed and strangely gentle. She was also to achieve fame of another kind. Like many young men of his era, Rab was high-spirited and something of a dare-devil. To collect on a bet he once rode the mare up the steps and into a crowded hotel bar to front up at the bar.⁶⁵

Apart from heralding the qualities of the tamed mare, this passage also points to the tolerance, even admiration of the youthful high spirits of the horse's owner. Just as with boys, wild horses were expected to show some spirit. Morrow 'believed that a grown horse that would not buck or show some spirit was not worth spending time on' and was released to return to the wild.⁶⁶ The Australian horse tamer, D. McGillivray, compared the training of colts to that of boys. Used to a life of freedom, 'moving about with mates to caress him', the colt needed to be taught with patience and understanding. McGillivray insisted that like 'a boy learning foreign languages, swearing comes first'; so too, bad behaviour is expected from a colt before he settles down to learn.⁶⁷ The *Bulletin* of the 1890s promoted the idea that larrikinism was a natural instinct in young males and was part of the character of the self-reliant frontiersman.⁶⁸ But as Jock Phillips has argued, New Zealand lacked Australia's 'radical republican anti-British tradition'.⁶⁹ New Zealand's successful pioneer male was represented as a wellborn individual with conservative beliefs. A 'new chum' may have had a touch of larrikinism but it was extinguished by his transformation into a wise and respectable 'old chum'. It is in this light that the passage of the wild horse into a worthy servant needs to be seen.

Despite increasing mechanisation in the period following World War I, horses were still needed on the remote hill and high country stations of both islands and it was here

⁶⁴ Masters, p.184.

⁶⁵ Morrow, p.25.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁶⁷ D. McGillivray, *Australian Horses from Paddock to Park: a Treatise on the Scientific Handling, Breaking, Educating and the General Handling of Horses*, Sydney: William Books, 1902, p.31.

⁶⁸ Jan Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood: A History*, St Leonards, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 1997, pp.142-3.

⁶⁹ Phillips, 'Musings in Maoriland', p.525.

that the skills needed to handle wild horses were retained. Travers Watt, who worked as a young man on an East coast station between the wars, recalled that around thirty horses were broken in each year as station hacks. He explained that good hacks did not last long in steep country and the demanding nature of their work meant that they could not be worked two days in a row, so there was a continual demand for fresh mounts. To fulfil this need and also to provide some station entertainment, horses on the 'range' were run in on 'free' Sundays. Among the mares and young, unbroken horses were a few so-called 'outlaws', horses that had resisted previous attempts to break them in by proving to be persistent buckers.⁷⁰ The 'outlaws' were what Watts and the other horsemen singled out to test themselves against before an audience of fellow workers. Sometimes these informal gatherings were extended to 'make a day of it' by encouraging those from neighbouring stations to participate in the fun. On one occasion, Watts remembered Saunders, the station owner, having heard of a horse at Waitahia Station that had thrown every person who tried to ride it, hosted a buck-jump show that included the horse, Waitahia Jack, versus a newly arrived 'Aussie Hand', a 'dinkum good horse rider with a Mexican saddle and all'.⁷¹

These amateur roughriders sometimes had the opportunity to test their skills at privately owned buck-jumping shows. The Australian aborigine, Queensland Harry who settled in New Zealand, toured the Agricultural and Pastoral shows for many years with his string of bucking horses. Many New Zealand horsemen recalled Harry's exceptional ability as a roughrider.⁷²

I remember Queensland Harry from the days of long ago,
Riding round the country with his buck-jumping show,
And a rough old string of horses that no one else could ride,
An old, creaking, covered wagon with his name on the side.

Ragged, rough and rugged,
Bony, lean and tall!
Buck-jumping Queensland Harry,
Champion of them all!

⁷⁰ Travers Watt, *Wild Horses and Me*, Tauranga: T.Watt, 1990, pp.87-8.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, pp.95-6.

⁷² John Foley, *Queensland Harry*, Waimate: J. Foley, 2005., Peter Newton, *Five Hundred Horses*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1978, p.5.

Born among the blue gums in the never-never land,
He took to riding horses about the time he could stand.
And he was droving cattle when he was just a child.
On an old half-broken brumby – and he was just as wild!⁷³

As well as giving exhibition rides for the paying public, Queensland Harry offered prizes to those who managed to ride his ‘outlaw horses’. On one occasion at the Taihape A&P Show, Harry offered £50 to anyone who could stay on his horse, Rebellion, for one minute. Bert Laurenson accepted the challenge but with only seconds remaining in his ride, the showman pulled him off with the long flank rope. The crowd was incensed and Harry was forced to pay up. Another prize offered was the attractive sounding ‘Cascade Engraving Prize’. When a successful rider claimed his prize, he was presented with two bottles of Cascade beer.⁷⁴

In 1948 another Australian, Lance Skuthorpe Junior, brought his ‘Wild West Buck-Jump Show’ to New Zealand. Although an accomplished roughrider, the days of legendary horsemen were drawing to a close, and young Lance never achieved the fame of his famous father. The show that Skuthorpe introduced to New Zealand was reminiscent of those first brought by the Wirth brothers in the 1890s. Combining traditional circus, with buck-jumpers, it was these horses that attracted young New Zealand horsemen. Harry’s horses, Aristocrat and Baxter’s Bay were remembered as testing the best of riders.⁷⁵ Flushed with his success of riding one of Skuthorpe’s buck-jumpers at Whakatane, Travers Watt followed the circus to Opotiki to have another go but before he could reach the offered horse, he was intercepted, given two pounds, and warned to never come back.⁷⁶

By the middle of the twentieth century, the colour and trickery of the charismatic showmen was giving way to the more structured and regulated rodeo. Rodeo had its beginnings in the western American ‘roundup’, a massive gathering up and sorting out of cattle by ownership, which was necessitated by the nature of open range farming. It became the practice for cowboys and ranchers, once a day’s work was done, to

⁷³ Joe Charles, *Black Billy Tea: New Zealand Ballads*, Christchurch: Whitcoulls, 1981, pp.10-11.

⁷⁴ *Taihape and District Agricultural and Pastoral Association(Inc.): Jubilee Show, Catalogue of Exhibits; Saturday 31 January 1987*, Taihape: Taihape and District A. & P. Assoc., p 81.

⁷⁵ Peter Newton, *Five Hundred Horses*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1978, pp.117-8.

⁷⁶ Watts, pp.204-6.

compete against each other in roping and riding matches. These contests in time became known as 'rodeo' after the Spanish, *rodear*, for encircle or roundup. Rodeo acts were included in the privately operated Wild West shows that showcased the special skills of the cowboys. In the closing years of the nineteenth century, western cities and towns began to put on public events of rodeo and it developed as both a popular entertainment as well as a sport.⁷⁷

The Australian roughriders used the model of the American rodeo to transform their traditional buck-jumping contests into a spectator sport. Establishing a uniform set of rules and practices and a controlling body to administer them was not an easy undertaking but by 1945 professional rodeo was well established in Australia with the formation of the Australian Rough Riders Association. From its earliest years, the Association acknowledged that the Australian public paid to see an exhibition of cowboy contests and so it remained a stipulation that contestants had to look the part by wearing American Western style dress, including a suitable hat.⁷⁸

Rodeo, as entertainment and sport is firmly rooted in the frontier. For Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence, an American anthropologist, rodeo is a sport that ritualises the process of taming the wild. Rodeo contestants seek to be the conqueror, the one to ride the unrideable, yet at the same time want to retain the wildness of the animal so that the battle can be played out again and again. The 'bronco' is never defeated and never tamed as the eight-second buzzer abruptly stops the contest. The scoring of the ride acknowledges the quality of the horse's 'wildness', just as the aggressiveness of the cowboy's spurring is also marked. The essence of the sport, according to Lawrence is a 'preordained and structured counterbalance between the forces of man and animal, tame and wild, dominance and resistance'.⁷⁹

In New Zealand, rodeo began to be organised by some agricultural and sports organisations in the 1950s. The Meeanee Young Farmers' Sports Club held a rodeo in 1951 with a programme that offered buck-jumping, steer riding, calf riding, bull

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence, *An Anthropologist Looks at the Wild and Tame*, Knoxville: The University of Texas Press, 1982, pp.77-81.

⁷⁸ Peter N. Poole, *Rodeo in Australia*, Adelaide: Rigby, 1977, pp.2,7, 9.

⁷⁹ Atwood Lawrence, pp.137-9.

dogging, bare back riding and horse riding.⁸⁰ Rodeos were organised during the 1955/1956 season by the A&P of Taumarunui, Dannevirke, Waimarino, Wairarapa and Auckland. During this period, dedicated rodeo clubs in Wairoa, Egmont-Wanganui, Central Hawkes Bay and Waimarino also hosted rodeos.⁸¹ Although organised rodeo, in its earliest stages, appeared to be a North Island sport, at least one South Island competitor, Ransom Bruce, from the Lees Valley, competed successfully in Australian rodeos in the 1950s.⁸²

Regardless of whether he became a rodeo star or merely enjoyed a few minutes of fame on a local buck-jumper, the horseman who could master a wild horse gained a heightened sense of power and masculinity. Not only did he triumph over nature but the skills and courage he needed to achieve his mounted state elevated him physically and metaphorically above other men. Rising from the ranks of the common man, the roughrider could be identified with history's great mounted warriors and leaders. Like those who rode before him, the roughrider knew that victory could be fleeting, and was only maintained by his aggressive attitude towards all comers, whether man or beast. It is this spirit that makes rodeo or buck-jumping contests very much an individual activity, that of the lone male, making his own way, by his own ability.⁸³

The superiority of the triumphant horseman can also be identified with the dominating presence of the wild stallion. The literature on wild horses, often focuses on the few wily individuals that manage to retain their freedom against all odds. Inevitably these are stallions, and they are almost always represented as powerful, handsome animals that have the courage, speed and strength to resist capture. Lester Masters romanticises George Chauklin's description of a stallion in the story, 'The Great Wild Stallion of the Taupo Plains'.

⁸⁰ 'Meeanee Young Farms' Sports Club (Inc.) Rodeo to be held at Papakura Domain, via Napier-Hastings', (1951) ATL Eph-D-CABOT-Rodeo-1951-01.

⁸¹ *Talley-Ho*, 53 (1955), p.7.

⁸² Newton, p.129.

⁸³ Poole, p.7.

The band sped up the valley,
With flying tails and manes,
And at their head, proud Silver,
The monarch of the plains.⁸⁴

Grey in colour, the stallion's superiority is acknowledged by the name 'Silver' and his recognition as the 'monarch of the plains'. Like the earlier story, 'A Savage Equine Battle', this narrative is set against a romantic wilderness backdrop:

The purple of the evening was beginning to invade the recesses of the valley, while up at the head, a silvery ribbon of mist, as though to veil what lay beyond, screened from view, the rugged, native forest gowned, Urewera country. On, with their lord and master at their head went the galloping band, to vanish into the ribbon of mist that screened the wild sanctuary that lay beyond.⁸⁵

This time, however, the story has been given a specific location, a valley leading to the Urewera country beyond. No Māori presence is suggested and the stallion's protagonists are named and their credentials as backcountry horsemen stated. As well as George Chauklin, another hunter was Jack Wedd, described as a manager of 'big, rough holdings in the area' and 'something of a student of nature' who in his pursuit of wild horses in his spare time 'gained a wealth of knowledge of their ways and habits'. Similarly, Jim Ellery 'knew almost all there was to know about horses' due to his youthful days as 'one of the crack stagecoach drivers on the Patea and Taupo roads'.⁸⁶ Even Chauklin's mount Squatter, was given an impressive colonial pedigree. By name alone, he was identified with the squatters who established the country's large pastoral runs. Squatter, who previously no wild horse had outrun, 'was by a trotting sire called Greenrack, out of a Thoroughbred mare by Firearms, a son of Carbine, the famous Melbourne Cup winner'.⁸⁷ Yet despite such formidable opposition and increasingly complex means to catch him, the wild stallion remained free. Such were the reports of the stallion's great feats of courage, speed and jumping ability that he became 'almost a legendary horse'. As Silver soared over a seemingly impossibly wide gulch 'for anything other than a winged horse', the narrator stated his

⁸⁴ Masters, p.184.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p.185.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.190.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.186.

opinion that ‘a horse gallant enough to tackle that deserves his freedom’.⁸⁸ The story ends with Silver and his band ‘galloping once more to freedom’.⁸⁹ Unlike the downfall of the Māori stallion, this patriarch remained undefeated and free to roam at will.

The wild stallion of the Taupo plains represented the contradiction that existed in the attitude towards the frontiersmen of the past. On the one hand, there was the drive to conquer and tame the stallion, just as the men of the colonial period had been civilised to become respectable family men of the twentieth century. But on the other hand, the hunters admired and identified with the freedom and untamed spirit of the wild stallion. Perhaps they saw something of themselves in the wild stallion and a recognition that the attitudes and skills they held in making their living in the last remaining wild areas of the country would soon be obsolete. Those that struggled to keep the rugged ethos of frontier horsemanship alive in the twentieth century were comparatively few in number and located largely in rugged parts of Northland, the East Coast and volcanic plains of the central North Island as well as the South Island high country. New Zealand as a whole has not embraced frontier horsemanship and made it part of a national folklore as has the United States and Australia. In this country there are no contemporary equivalents to the flourishing culture and traditions of the American Wild West or the Australian outback. Few songs, stories or art exist to celebrate the horses and horsemen of the frontier past.

A remnant of frontier equestrianism remains in the impassioned plea of those who wish to see the retention of the Kaimanawa wild horses. Some see the wild horse as a precious resource that should be protected for their historical and aesthetical values while others regard the wild horses as pests that threaten valuable agricultural, commercial and environmental resources.⁹⁰ The mixed feelings that surround New Zealand’s wild horses today and in the past, reflect a rich history of ideas about human society and environment. Western Romanticism and its associations with wilderness, Imperial ambition and nostalgia for a passing age, have contributed to shaping New

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, pp.189-90.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.191.

⁹⁰ *Kaimanawa Wild Horses Plan*, p.30.

Zealander's attitudes towards the wild horses in their midst. The wild horse has a part to play in the New Zealand pioneer legend by highlighting the values and ideals of the masculine culture of the frontier. It is, however, the wild horse's essential wildness that prevents it being embraced by all New Zealanders as a fitting symbol of their nation.

8. The Pony

For the most part, the previous chapters have emphasised the working horse along with its adult (generally male) master. This chapter deviates from this to focus on children and their ponies from the early colonial period through to the mid twentieth century.¹ Like the horse, the pony could be regarded as work animal but more frequently it was represented as a childhood companion and playmate. Although the stories repeated here are told from the perspective of adults looking back with nostalgia to their childhood ponies, nevertheless, they do allow an insight into the past lives of New Zealand girls and boys. They are an indicator that the pony had a role in shaping children's lives during the period of inquiry from the early colonial years through to the 1960s. Girls as well as boys were associated with ponies and this provided a point of entry for females to become fully involved in the horse world.

This chapter will explore three aspects of the child/pony experience. It will look firstly at the role of the pony in the creation of the image of the wild colonial child. It will be seen that the use of a pony or horse provided children with increased mobility and allowed them the freedom to explore the world around them, free of adult constraint. The second aspect to be discussed is the school pony, an image that features strongly in the New Zealand collective memory. The school pony can be seen as a transition between the freedom of the colonial child and the more adult controlled world of the twentieth century child. Home and school were spaces that were dominated by parents and teachers but the journey to school on horseback belonged to children. Lastly, the position of the New Zealand Pony Club (NZPCA) will be examined. The Pony Club was indicative of other adult controlled youth organisations of the time in that it combined pleasurable recreation with teaching children such virtues as good citizenship, patriotism and teamwork. Like many of the nineteenth century horse traditions, the Pony Club was imported directly from England and served to strengthen links between Great Britain and New Zealand. Although New Zealand had become a prosperous and independent nation, proud of its

¹ This chapter uses the word 'pony' in a general sense to mean a small horse. This was its original meaning but by the twentieth century the pony came to be regarded as a separate species with a distinctive character, conformation and size of under 14.2 hands (147.3) centimetres.

colonial past, many New Zealanders still felt a deep respect for British institutions and traditions. The Pony Club movement, as it developed in New Zealand, aligned itself closely with its parent organisation, while retaining the colonial characteristics of egalitarianism and resourcefulness along with a strong work ethic.

James Belich in *Paradise Reforged* presents the hypothetical model of the 'wild child' by suggesting that the average Pākehā child 'was more prone to wild childhood' than either his or her nineteenth century British cousin or twentieth century New Zealand descendant. While he admits that New Zealand colonial children had responsibilities towards the running of the home or farm, he also feels that probability and evidence would suggest that they also enjoyed a considerable amount of unsupervised play and socialisation.² The Auckland Museum appears to endorse this model by calling their permanent exhibition on children 'Wild Child'. As its accompanying literature explains, the exhibits are grouped into three areas, 'the twin citadels of control that were The Home and The Schoolhouse – and the Wild Space in Between'.³

Given the reasonable accessibility of horses in the colony, as has been discussed earlier in this thesis, it is not surprising that horses and ponies featured strongly in the lives of many pioneer children. The colonial environment meant that there was plenty of space to roam and explore, away from the gaze and social conventions of their busy parents. Hannah White, the daughter of a timber merchant on the Hokianga Harbour near the Mangungu Mission Station has left a record of her childhood in the 1830s. She described how 'everything was rough at first' but her family gradually became comfortably established with cattle, poultry and horses. The six White children were tutored by an English governess and freed from household chores by Māori servants which left plenty of leisure time. Hannah's reminiscences tell of a carefree childhood of lively, unsupervised play where horses played a key role. She relates that 'we had horses of our own, and used to go out riding, making hurdles of piled up brushwood. We used to have great fun going along leaping and galloping'. Her description of childhood recreation reveals no distinction between the genders and Hannah remembers with pride how, on her horse Meg, she would take on all challengers to

² James Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, pp.356-67.

³ Auckland Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira, 'Wildchild', <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/print.asp?t=296&>, Accessed 7 Dec 2007.

race. When the missionary's son, Richard Hobbs, boasted that his new pony, June, was faster than Meg an impromptu match race proved him wrong. In another contest Hannah remembers, she also beat the missionary, Mr Warren on his new horse.⁴ Such athletic boldness and open fraternisation with boys and men would have been considered highly unseemly for a daughter of a respectable middle class family in England at the time.

Although no mention was made of Hannah's saddle or dress, her equestrian adventures would tend to suggest that riding in the traditional side-saddle would have been a serious impediment. Photographic references reveal that Pākehā women who rode did not begin to ride astride until the first decade of the new century and even then it tended to be the young girls who were the first to lead the way. A photograph, taken around 1905, in the M. Taylor Collection of the Alexander Turnbull Library of the four Exley sisters on horseback taken on their family farm at Manaia is revealing. While the three eldest sisters are traditionally mounted on side-saddles, the youngest rides her pony astride.(Figure 14) While it could be said that youngsters would not have had as much concern for appearance as would their older sisters, perhaps a stronger reason for their lead is that they would not yet have had the strength and technique required for the side-saddle. British authors of horsemanship manuals such as T.F. Dale and Mrs Power Donoghue, while solidly in favour of the side-saddle, felt that girls should learn to ride not earlier than age sixteen⁵. The colonial conditions that called for the ability to ride at an early age, in all likelihood accelerated the transformation in New Zealand from side-saddle to cross-saddle.

⁴ E.P. Martin, 'Grandma Martin's Story' MS Mangungu Mission House, Horeke.

⁵ T.F. Dale, *Riding, Driving and Kindred Sports*, London: T.F. Unwin, 1899, p.39., Nannie Power O'Donoghue, *Ladies on Horseback: Learning, Park-Riding, and Hunting with Hints Upon Costume, and Numerous Anecdotes*, London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1881, pp.5-6.



Figure 14, St Claire, 'The Exley sisters on horseback, probably taken on the family farm at Manaia, daughters of Mary Ann and Thomas Robert Exley on horseback' [1900-1910],
M Taylor Collection, ATL, Wellington N.Z.

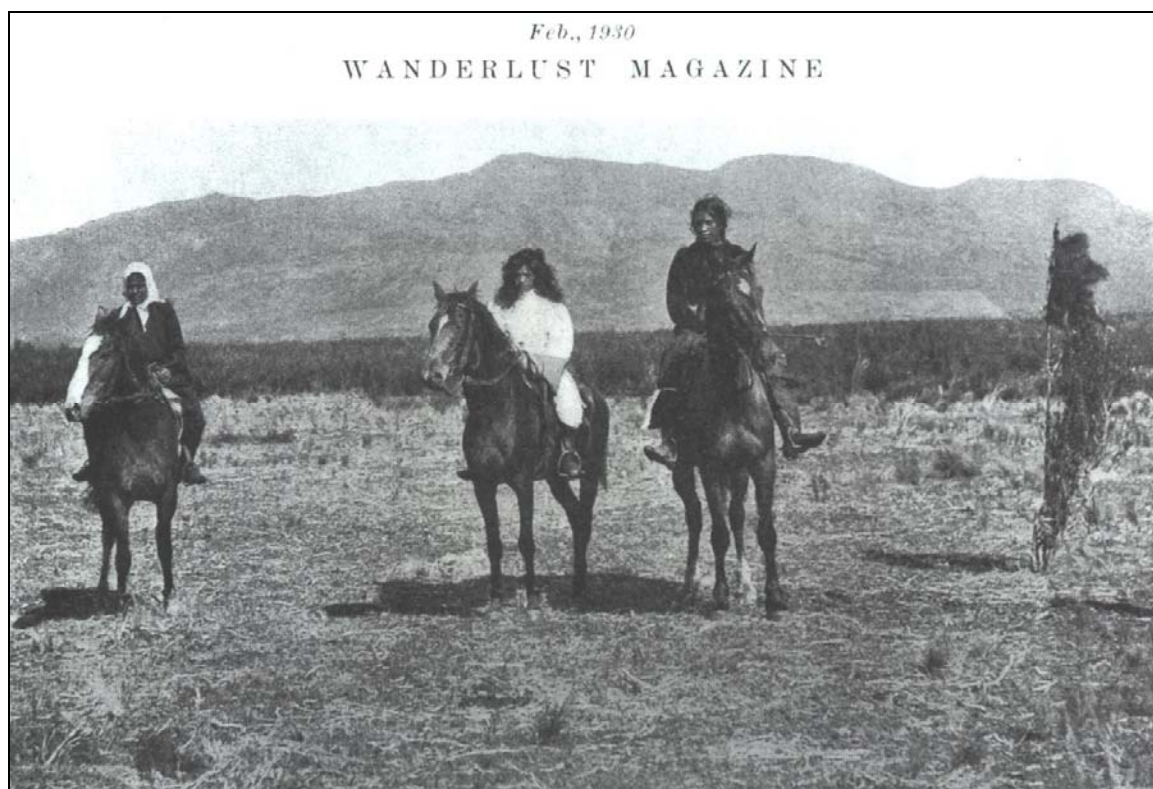


Figure 15, Mrs Malcolm Ross, 'A Field of Three in the Wahine's Race', Making New Zealand Collection, ATL, Wellington N.Z.

Rollo Arnold in *Settler Kaponga*. noted that the ‘easy access’ to riding horses meant that most Kaponga women learned to ride as children, spending much time on horseback during their school years. This meant that they would not only have become skilful riders but they would also have gained confidence in looking after themselves and their horses. Arnold quotes from an item that was reprinted in the *Hawera Star* in 1914 written by a young Englishwomen who had spent several months in New Zealand. Miss Shaw wrote with obvious enthusiasm for the freedom that was enjoyed by her colonial counterparts and found the novelty of looking after her own mount ‘much more fun’. Instead of the rigorous grooming carried out by English stable hands, she related how she joined her colonial girlfriends when they rode their muddy horses down to the river and, after removing saddles and their own clothes, they entered the water for a refreshing swim. Afterwards they warmed themselves and their horses with a brisk gallop. She described long days of pleasure riding in which they experienced ‘many adventures’. While her companions dressed casually in blouses, divided skirts and slouch hats, she described her dress as ‘Hyde Park all over’ with the exception of a silk handkerchief which was ‘swathed gypsy fashion’ around her head.⁶

It is possible that Pākehā girls were influenced by their Māori cohorts in riding style and attitude. Particularly in the rural areas, the sight of Māori girls and women riding astride would not have been unusual. Mrs Malcolm Ross photographed and described a ‘wahines’ race’ that featured in a 1890s Waikato race meeting. (Figure 15) She claimed that Māori women were ‘pioneers of their sex in riding astride’ and that as ‘side-saddles were unknown in these parts’; girls simply tied their gowns to their ankles to ride. There is no mistaking the writer’s admiration for the courage and skill of the race participants. She writes that, despite the fact that the horse ridden by the ‘little lass in pink and white muslin’ was uncontrollable before the start of the race, and that anxious relatives begged her not to compete, the determined jockey carried on with her race. The winner was, ‘a bewitching damsel with yellow handkerchief tied over her hair who rode a la Tod Sloan’, a reference to the American jockey who

⁶ Rollo Arnold, *Settler Kaponga, 1881-1914 A Frontier Fragment of the Western World*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1997, pp.310-311.

revolutionised race track riding with the distinctive crouching seat almost over the horse's neck.⁷

In an age where horses were so much a part of every day life, it was considered advantageous to begin children's introduction to the animals at a young age. Ben Rutherford, who described his progress as 'apprentice rider' on his family's Canterbury sheep station, made the point that baby carriages were unsuitable in the rural environment. It was far easier, he said for his parents to tie him on top of a Shetland pony to lead about. He describes the miniature saddle placed on Taffy, with basket work about a foot high around both sides and the back. He was put in this and made secure by a strap done up across the front. When he was older, he rode Taffy with a felt pad and leather bucket stirrups. It was harder to stay on this saddle than in his baby one and he remembers the time when he was about four when the pony took off under the branch of a tree, knocking Ben off backwards and resulting in a broken arm. After he had outgrown Taffy came Dingo, 'a beautiful yellow-dun saddle pony'. On this mount and with his horsemanship skills developing, Ben was able to accompany his father on long rides on their 18,000 acre MacDonald Downs Station.⁸

As Ben Rutherford found, being able to ride gave children entry into the adult world and it also gave them a sense of independence and self-reliance they might not otherwise have enjoyed. A trusted horse or pony was considered capable of looking after the children in their care. Such a horse was the White family's Rover. Although Rover sometimes tested adult riders by bucking them off, he always took care of children. Hannah tells of the time when her brother Jim was riding Rover, out late and a long way from home, he lost his way in the darkness. With trust in his horse, Jim laid the reins down and with the command; 'Go home, Rover' was carried safely home.⁹

The school pony played an important role in the life of country children from the early colonial period until well into the twentieth century. With the passing of the 1877 Education Act, primary education became compulsory throughout the colony but it

⁷ Mrs Malcolm Ross, 'A "Maori Ascot" Thirty-Five Years Ago in the Waikato', *Wanderlust Magazine*, 1:2 (1930), pp.15-26.

⁸ Rutherford, p.73.

⁹ Martin MS.

was difficult to enforce and the widely scattered colonial population meant that not all children had a school that was close enough to attend. Horses and ponies made the journey easier but not all children would have had access to them. Although horses became less expensive to buy in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, they still had to be fed, with even a pony requiring at least an acre of pasture for their maintenance.¹⁰ Understandingly, not every farmer was in a position to keep horses that were not used for productive farm or commercial work. Thelma Taylor began her school years in 1910 at the age of seven with a long walk, although she recalled the kindness of the Cossill family who sometimes gave her a lift on their horses.¹¹ In many cases, families could spare only one horse for school transport and these were required to carry two, three, or more children. Jane Wordsworth was fortunate in having a horse from the age of five to ride the four miles to school but as her younger siblings reached school age she had to share her mount. Ethel initially sat behind Jane's saddle on an old sack until someone came up with the idea of a two person pad with stirrups. The local saddler constructed the pad for the girls and then added an extension when younger brother, Len, joined them.¹² Mary Brosnahan would have envied the Wordsworth family's stirrups. Along with her neighbour, Jean, cousin, Barbara and sister, Essie, she made her way to school on Toby. She complained that because she was the youngest, she always had to be the last one on and ended up on the horse's rump, the most vulnerable position. When Essie kicked Toby hard, he would go 'flat out' causing Mary to be the first to fall off.¹³

In many cases the school pony was not a pony at all but a horse, too old, too unsound or generally unsuitable for other work. Often, the animals used as school ponies were retired hunters, shepherd's hacks, cart horses or even draught horses. Although children were certainly aware of the qualities of a finely bred animal, it was the quiet, dependable horses and ponies that were treasured and remembered with affection. Nancy Hardy remembered being given a 'pretty little creamy animal that was called Nugget' but she never rode him because he would bolt. In contrast, there was her brother Jim's horse, Barney:

¹⁰ Elsa Flint and Graham Meadows, *Horses, Ponies and Donkeys*, Auckland: Reed Books, 1998., pp.12-13.

¹¹ Thelma Taylor, 'Going to Tangiteroria School' in *Tangiteroria School Centenary 1886-1986*, Matthew Singleton (ed.), Tangiteroria: Book Committee, 1986, p.13.

¹² Jane Wordsworth, *Unwillingly to School*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1976, p.48.

¹³ Mary Brosnahan, 'Horses in my Blood', Compiled by Jenny Brown, Heulwen Stud, p.7.

Dear old Barney. Just an old black Maori horse with a white star on his forehead. He had a lovely gentle nature and never tried to knock us off coming through gates. He was Jim's horse and didn't Jim love him. Barney took Jim and me to school for several years without mishap. Jim said pure-bred horses shouldn't have hair under their fetlocks so he cut it off and even blackened his hoofs in summer to make him a 'pure-bred'¹⁴

It is a testament to the genuine affection for their animals that the names, characteristics and quiriness of some of the school ponies of the past could be recalled after many years. George Stevenson in 'Tales from a Grandfather' recalled Old Donald, who once carried four young brothers. After the eldest went off to boarding school, Donald developed a 'new rule' that he would only carry three riders. When Thomas returned for the holidays and all four tried to get on the old horse, Donald would put his head down depositing the front rider on the ground. No one ever got hurt, claimed Stevenson; it was just Donald's way of communicating that three was the limit.¹⁵

As tracks became roads that improved over time, vehicles were sometimes purchased so that the school pony or horse could be put in the shafts and driven to school. Thelma Taylor describes how up to eight Cossill children drove themselves in a double buggy, while the three members of the Hall family and two Taylors shared a trotting sulky.¹⁶ Some well off families had the use of a more specialised vehicle called the governess cart which had been popularised by Queen Victoria who drove her children on outings. It was considered safe for children in that it was low to the ground and entered from the back, keeping children well away from the horse's hooves. The seats ran along each side so that the passengers would be facing each other which made driving more awkward but as the cart was normally pulled by a pony, controlling the animal was not as difficult had it been a stronger horse.¹⁷ John Bird remembers driving Paddy in a governess cart to his Canterbury school and how on cold mornings his mother would place a copper container of hot water in the middle for the children to warm their feet.¹⁸ The Brosnahan's pony, Diamond, was a

¹⁴ Nancy Winifred Hardy, 'The Story of My Early Life' Hokianga Historical Society Inc. C 263/03, pp.7-8.

¹⁵ George Stevenson, 'Tales from a Grandfather', *Horse and Pony*, 1:9 (1960). P.9.

¹⁶ Taylor, p.13.

¹⁷ Vera Hawke and Amy Scott, *Horsedrawn Vehicles of New Zealand*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1980, p.17.

¹⁸ John Bird, Fielding, Personal Communication.

bit lively in harness so it was the ‘big boys of the schools job to hold her’ while the children climbed into their governess cart.¹⁹

Since the horse or pony was the means by which so many country children and sometimes teachers reached their schools, a horse paddock, preferably with a few trees for shelter along with a water trough, needed to be provided. Once unsaddled or unharnessed, with the tack stowed in the saddle shed, the animals would graze until afternoon when it was time for the return journey home. Out of view from the school room, childhood mischief sometimes prevailed in the horse paddock. One teacher at Arapohue School in Northland, Miss Gertie Ellison, was frustrated when her horse managed to escape almost every afternoon from the horse paddock. One of her pupils, Mark Williams, just as regularly offered to catch the horse and was given a lolly for his efforts. According to school lore, the teacher never discovered the prank that was played on her.²⁰ Had she done so, the old school folk belief may have been tested; ‘If Teacher gives you three of the best, stretch a hair from your horse’s tail across your palm – it will cut his strap in half!’²¹

The school room may have been the teacher’s domain but the journey to and from school became the children’s world. The stories that feature this aspect of country school life evoke a spirit of childhood adventure and independence. Thelma Taylor vividly remembered the races she participated on her way to and from school. It was only a summer pursuit; in the winter with mud up to the horse’s hocks, the journey was undertaken in a much slower manner. Racing continued after the children graduated to buggies and Thelma recalled one afternoon when the Cossill boys harnessed their two horses and were off at a cracking pace down the school hill. The Taylors and Halls were hard on their heels when Hecky tripped and ‘turned turtle’, cast on his back on the road. The younger children ‘flew over his head’ and while Dorrie and Cliff were able to scramble out, Thelma was pinned under the sulky. Someone ran to fetch the teacher, Mr Mullins, who lifted the sulky off Thelma’s leg before unhitching Hecky. Upon discovering no harm done to horse or children, they

¹⁹ Brosnahan, p.8.

²⁰ Nigel Langston, *Arapohue School 1876-1961, 85th Anniversary Souvenir*, Arapohue: Arapohue School, 1961, p.12.

²¹ Power and McClelland, p.25.

harnessed up again and resumed their homeward journey at a more sedate pace.²² For those without horses, there was sometimes the opportunity to pick up a mount on the way. Jane Wordsworth wrote how ‘any pensioned – off horse on the road was a prey to the country child, and often two or three got on and rode it’.²³ With no bridle to control these impromptu mounts, it is doubtful whether they made it to their destination but the antics would have added to the fun of the journey. Taking risks with horses was an accepted part of colonial childhood culture and generally seen in a positive light by adults. The two sons of H. Bullock-Webster, Master of the Pakuranga Hunt, had only a quarter of a mile journey to school but they were allowed to ride their father’s young hunters and racehorses despite the fact that they were often bucked off before they reached the school gate. The boys grew competent on their spirited young mounts and confident enough to jump the horses back and forth over the solid four and a half foot school fence, to the delight and encouragement of the other children. Although this dangerous undertaking resulted in a complaint from the schoolmaster, it is clear that the boys’ father was proud of his ‘chips of the old block’.²⁴

Throughout the colonial period and during the first decades of the twentieth century there was very little by way of formal instruction in horsemanship and especially in the country areas, children were self-taught. School ponies were seen to assist in the process with one cartoon in a 1960 *Horse and Pony* magazine acknowledging that ‘the old school ponies were our best riding teachers but the school buses have put most of them off the road’.²⁵ Others in the community were self-conscious of this ‘do it yourself’ attitude. For them Britain, and particularly England, remained the place where the standards of good horsemanship were maintained. Those who travelled ‘home’ brought back with them ‘the latest instructional methods from Britain’.²⁶ The opinions of visiting horseman from the old country mattered as much as they had always done. One such visitor was quoted as stating that while New Zealand could claim ‘some excellent riders’, many were ‘indifferent performers and a great many

²² Taylor, p.13.

²³ Wordsworth, p. 48.

²⁴ H. Bullock – Webster, *From the Hudson’s Bay Company to New Zealand*, Auckland : Whitcombe & Tombs, 1938, pp.207, 222.

²⁵ *Horse and Pony*, 1: 12 (1969), p.30.

²⁶ Ann Newman, D.Ogilvie (ed.), *The First Twenty-One Years, New Zealand Pony clubs Association, 1946-1967*, Palmerston North: New Zealand Pony Clubs Association, 1968, p.45.

more (had) no style at all.’ This sorry state, he believed, was due to the usual method of learning to ride in New Zealand by teaching oneself or ‘getting a friend to pass on all his bad habits with the instruction’. Furthermore, he warned that the standard was likely to deteriorate further as the number of competent riding instructors, trained in the British cavalry tradition, were becoming fewer. These, he urged, needed to be replaced with properly schooled riders and the logical time to commence instruction was in childhood.²⁷

A New Zealander who shared these feelings was Dorothy Campbell, a rural mother from Heretaunga in the Hawke’s Bay. She sought to remedy the situation by ‘offering children the opportunity of receiving instruction, of a higher class, and on more orthodox lines, than many of them (could) obtain individually’.²⁸ As she brought up her children during the Second World War, she was conscious that petrol rationing meant that holidays away and outings were lost to children and they were forced to find their own local amusements. Expressing the sentiments of the day, she felt that children left to their own devices would likely get into trouble and so their energy needed to be controlled and channelled into worthwhile activities. Through English publications, she was aware of the development of the English Pony Club and was sure that the organisation had relevance in New Zealand. There were still plenty of horses around in the country areas with some brought back into service during the war years for trips to town or harnessed up to the buggy or farm cart. To gauge interest in the idea of a club run on the same lines as the English one, as well as to raise funds for Woodford House School’s war project, ‘Honey for the Navy’, Mrs Campbell with a small band of volunteers held a children’s gymkhana in 1944. The some two hundred children that turned up for the day of mounted competition sparked the interest needed to found the Heretaunga Pony Club.²⁹

The recognition that children’s natural spirit of adventure could be harnessed was part of the ethos of the New Zealand Pony Club. Although the organisation did not begin in New Zealand until the end of the Second World War, it needs to be seen in the context of the youth movements that developed in Britain in the late nineteenth and

²⁷ *Talley- Ho*, 5 (1948), pp.12-13.

²⁸ Newman, p.38.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.16-17.

early twentieth centuries in response to a number of social issues and concerns. Reflecting a widely held anxiety over Britain's state of war readiness due to the perceived moral and physical degeneration of the kingdom's male youth, William Smith started the Boys' Brigade in Glasgow in 1883. Largely a middle class movement, its appeal lay in combining Presbyterian evangelical Christianity with military order and discipline. Wearing uniforms and carrying dummy rifles, boys were trained in the drills of the volunteer troops. Combined with outings and outdoor camps, it had popular appeal for boys and flourished along with similar church or military sponsored organisations. But it was not until the introduction of Lieutenant-General Robert Baden-Powell's Boy Scout organisation in 1908 that the full impact of the youth movement was to be felt. With their emphasis on patriotism to God, Country and Empire, these organisations shared what can be seen as a conservative agenda although they also incorporated newer, more modern ideas on education and health. The importance of play in childhood development and the awareness that a pleasing environment could have a positive effect on children's learning were taken up by progressive educators. In particular, the idea was promoted that activity in the outdoors, whether vigorous physical exercises or by the quiet observation of 'the school of nature' was good for the minds and bodies of boys. Harking back to eighteenth and early nineteenth century Romanticism, it was felt that nature, like the child, was unspoiled until corrupted by civilisation.³⁰ The Boy Scout movement, like the Boy's Brigade before it, provided the means by which boys could return to nature and learn how to coexist in the outdoors. Camping was also something that soldiers did and as Robert MacDonald has argued in his study of the Boy Scouts, at the heart of Scouting was a 'tension between adventure and discipline' and between 'escapism and moral lesson'.³¹ It proved a popular mixture and during the year of its

³⁰ Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement 1890-1918*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993, pp. 21-3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

founding the organisation spread to Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Developing on similar lines, the sister organisations, the Girl Guides, reached New Zealand in 1923.

The English Pony Club when it was established in 1929 shared many of the ideals and methods of the earlier youth organisations. Its objectives were 'to promote the highest ideals of sportsmanship, citizenship and loyalty to create strength of character and self-discipline.'³² What made the Pony Club different from other youth organisations was that it included girls as well as boys in its programme. It was also firmly located in the English countryside. With its emphasis on the child/pony relationship it sought to give instruction to young people in riding and horsemanship as well as to provide opportunities for them to enjoy their ponies in a range of equestrian activities.

Recreational riding clubs in New Zealand were not unknown up to this time. Informal local organisations such as the Nelson Riding Club and the Otago Light Horse and Pony Society organised mounted picnics and treks for children as well as adults. The Heretaunga Pony Club was unique in that it was established solely for children and youths under the age of twenty-one. It also sought and was granted status as an affiliated branch of the Horse and Pony Club of England. In aligning itself with the English movement, the Heretaunga club accepted the lofty ideals of the English club that emphasised character building and made instruction a key focus.

Dorothy Campbell had a vision for a national Pony Club organisation that extended well beyond the Hawke's Bay. An important part of this was the attempt to standardise the way children were taught to ride. At the time this was seen as a highly contentious issue. Laraine Sole, author of the history of the Wanganui Pony Club has captured the emotion that surrounded the undertaking:

³² NZPC, 'About the Pony Club', <http://www.pcuk.org./output/about/index.html>, Accessed 29 Sep 2006.

One of the toughest jobs in the early days was now in front of Dorothy – to try and get uniform instruction for the children. Only those who were there can imagine what it was like. You have a group of people – mainly men – many of them of mature years, and all with a lifetime of practical experience with horses. Each seems to have a slightly different way of doing things, and all are vehemently convinced that their particular way is the only correct one! Another Battle of Hastings was being fought in 1944 in Hawkes’s Bay.³³

A programme of graduated learning was drawn up with certificates awarded at each level to those who passed examinations in practical riding and theory. An instruction book, using the English Pony Club manual as a guide, was first published in 1946. Although written to suit New Zealand conditions, Dorothy Campbell’s correspondence with the parent body gives clear indication that the New Zealand Pony Club aspired to English methods and standards. In communication with Pony Club headquarters in London over an examination course undertaken by ten riders for the A Certificate, she expressed the hope that ‘the exam was as stiff as yours.’³⁴

The success of the Heretaunga Pony Club and the growth of other clubs throughout the district resulted in the formation of a New Zealand Pony Clubs’ Association in 1846. Once again, approval needed to be sought from England. Although the New Zealand organisation officially remained a ‘branch’ of the English club, it gained permission to establish a number of ‘clubs’ throughout the country, each with its own ‘branches’. Branches were considered necessary so that children on ponies did not have too far to travel to events and also that numbers could be kept small enough to allow for individual attention. An almost all male committee was appointed to head the new organisation, although Mrs Campbell, as Treasurer, remained the dominant spokesperson. When dissension in the ranks arose, particularly over the centralised structure of the club that prevented the branches having control over their finances, she was quick to remind the critics that New Zealand was a small part of a wider Pony Club organisation. Further more, they should feel gratitude to those at London headquarters who ‘took a lot of trouble over our teething problems; no query seemed to be a bother to them, and they were willing and prepared to help in every possible way.’ Pony Club parents, she chided, were required to set a good example for it was unlikely that children would acquire the high ideals of the movement if the adults, by

³³ Laraine Sole, *Fifty Years of Riding Memories: A History of the Wanganui Pony Club 1946-1996*, Wanganui: Wanganui Pony Club, 2003, p.16.

³⁴ Newman, p.26.

indulging in ‘petty bickering’, lost sight of the main aims of the organisation. When Dorothy Campbell stressed the importance of team spirit and ‘playing the game’, it is clear from her written articles that she was referring to, not just the children themselves, but to the wider community. As the first club to become an official member of the Pony Club Ltd. outside Britain, ‘apart from a small branch in China organised and run for service children’,³⁵ Campbell and her supporters felt that New Zealand had a particular responsibility to uphold the standards and principles of the parent body.

From its inception, the English Pony Club was closely associated with hunt clubs, with branches often taking on the name of their local hunt. New Zealand clubs and branches were named for the town or area they represented rather than hunt clubs but nevertheless, they did see themselves as closely related to hunting. Children were often taught the etiquette and traditions of the hunt by the local Master and some clubs ran special Pony Club hunts either following the hounds or in the form of mock hunts. Significantly, the official magazine of the Pony Club, launched in 1947, was named, *Talley-Ho; the New Zealand Horse-lovers’ Magazine*. By the time of the New Zealand Pony Club’s twenty-first anniversary in 1968, the author of the book to mark the event claimed that ‘ninety percent of Pony Club members love hunting and the Pony Club is the cradle (or incubator) for hunting these days’.³⁶

But beneath the English veneer, the New Zealand Pony Club sought to establish its own character. One of these was a genuine desire to share with all New Zealand youth the joys of riding and caring for ponies. It was stressed that children did not need to own a pony to join the organisation. Various branches and clubs had differing ways of dealing with a shortage of mounts. Four unbroken ponies were donated at one time to the Hawera Pony Club. Members were able to watch and learn from their breaking-in and once the animals were considered safe for beginners, they were loaned to children without their own ponies.³⁷ The North Taranaki club reported the loan of two Shetland ponies for use of unmounted town members.³⁸ At the Wanganui Pony Club’s 1954 camp, one of the its supporters made available a number

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 26,39,112.

³⁶ Ibid., p.108.

³⁷ Ibid., p.16.

³⁸ *Talley-Ho*, 1 (1947), p.15.

of horses and ponies to allow a greater number of children to participate.³⁹ In other cases children were encouraged to share their animals. One young member of the Dunedin District Club wrote that ‘much horse swapping took place’ at a rally of flat events, jumping and games, ‘so that members who did not own a horse or pony could also take part’.⁴⁰

The egalitarian spirit remained a feature of the Pony Club movement in New Zealand and features in the histories of the various clubs. Members of the Bay of Islands Pony Club recalled that it was reasonably easy in the early days to borrow a horse to take to a pony club outing. They also remembered that ‘a visit to the local pound could result in the purchase of a quiet all-purpose moke for 5s.’ These were often ‘badly in need of a good feed’ but with care and attention, they could become ideal mounts. It was with obvious pride that the story is related of one of Northland’s best ponies, Miss Prim, was captured as a wild filly by Māori in the gum fields and in time was transformed into a champion show pony.⁴¹ The Reefton Pony Club is also proud of its humble beginnings and the enthusiasm of its first young riders who turned out on a varied assortment of horses:

Some had hacks from the scrub, some retired thoroughbreds and ex-pacers, others presented themselves on half draughts and ex-mine horses to mix with the minority who had rounded up the odd pony. Bridles held together with binder twine, rope for reins and sacks for saddles were common sight.⁴²

It was also emphasised that expensive ‘gear’ and clothing were not necessary at all.⁴³ Although each club developed its own distinguishing uniform, it took the form of a particular colour of tie, jersey and saddle cloth. Even if a family could afford to buy English riding clothes, they were difficult to obtain. Improvisation and resourcefulness were both needed and celebrated. Alison Stokes recalled attending Wanganui Pony Club’s first rally in 1946 on a large quarter draught mare that had been purchased for six pounds. Since the club’s colours had been decided as blue, she was sent along in a blue pleated skirt and jumper on a sheepskin her mother had dyed

³⁹ Sole, p.38.

⁴⁰ Betty Carson, *Boots and Bridles: 50 Years of New Zealand Pony Club*, Otane, Hawke’s Bay: NZPCA, p.68.

⁴¹ Newman, p.147.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.197-8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.36.

blue to go over a split sack. Laid lengthwise across the horse's back, it had holes cut on each side for her feet to enable her to rise to the trot.⁴⁴ Saddle cloths were made from all kinds of material such as readily available flour bags. Some mothers added individuality by embroidering monograms or binding the edges with blanket stitch.⁴⁵ At the Cambridge Pony Club, mothers made riding breeches and knitted the club's black jerseys. One ambitious parent made paper-maché riding caps to outfit children for its club teams⁴⁶, offering no protection whatsoever but giving the team a uniform appearance.

As far as the children themselves, those that overcame obstacles to pursue their interest in ponies were seen to most embody the spirit of the New Zealand Pony Club movement. An eleven year old boy who rode eighteen miles bareback in the pouring rain to and from a course in Murchison, delighted with his one pound prize for the most improved rider, was held up as an inspiring example. Almost more commendable in the early years, however, were the city children, who it was recognised, often had to overcome a shortage of grazing, lack of places to ride, and reputedly unhelpful parents. One instructor was quoted as saying that 'city children really do have to work for their ponies; often parents do little to help, some are even against the Pony Club'. Earning money by way of paper rounds or others means to support a pony, that cut into homework or riding time, was seen to demonstrate commitment and self-sacrifice. It was also acknowledged that it was harder to find a 'good buy' in a pony in town, partly because of the demand but also because a 'town parent does not know as much about a horse as his country cousin'.⁴⁷ To top it all off, complaints were often made by organisers of competitions that city ponies were often unfit.⁴⁸

Pony Club activities by way of camps and long distance treks further emphasised the notion that outdoor activity in the countryside was healthy for New Zealand's youths as well as their ponies. There were also seen as a way of keeping alive the pioneer spirit. During the summer vacation in 1951 the South Canterbury Pony Club

⁴⁴ Sole, p.20.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁴⁶ Newman, pp.136-7.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-9,107.

⁴⁸ *Horse and Pony*, 7:1 (1965), pp.26-7.

undertook a 126 mile journey from Timaru, through Craigmore, Mona Vale, Albury, Ashwick Flat via Burk's Pass, Raincliff and back to Timaru. Along the way they were joined by members of the Fairlie, Geraldine and Albury branches. Children of various ages from the age of five upwards took part.⁴⁹ Joyce Evans remembers long days trekking on the Banks Peninsula in the early 1960s where the night's accommodation was usually woolsheds or shearers' quarters. Disorientated by fog on tussock tops, battling wind, rain and hail or halted by rising creeks were all accepted as part of the adventure with the belief that 'it made everyone self-reliant and made for a happy family feeling'.⁵⁰ In January 1959 thirteen members of the Waimarino Pony Club that included four adults set out on a ten day trek in 1959 along the Taihape-Napier Road, the site of the historic Inland Patea packhorse track. At Black Hill Station they experienced farming life by helping to muster and yard sheep for dipping. The group sighted wild horses and one of the men managed to catch a wild filly which the children named Trek '59.⁵¹ The following year they were to visit the even more remote Ngamatea Station, travelling a distance, they estimated to be 300 miles.⁵²

The language and descriptions of some of the early camps and treks are reminiscent of an army on the move. The logistics involved in supplying the 1949 'cavalcade' to Raglan of 174 riders from the Morrinsville and Matamata Clubs is suggested by the organiser's report:

Five tons of chaff were shipped from the South Island to Raglan at a cost of £110; a 60lb hogget and 10lb of ham were consumed at one meal, and each day, breakfast, morning and afternoon teas, lunch and dinner were provided by a group consisting of about 30 adults who travelled by car, and three lorries which carried four marquees, 31 tents and other baggage, including cooking gear.⁵³

In perhaps a light hearted way, the 'principal officers' of Te Araha Light Horse and Pony Club camp in 1951 were Mr R. Duncan as 'Colonel', Mr R. Munro, 'Sergeant Major', Mr R. Mackay, 'Major' and Mrs H. Walker with the non military designation, 'Camp Mother'. Dorothy Campbell's instructions, however, were meant to be taken

⁴⁹ *Talley-Ho*, 14 (1951), p.2.

⁵⁰ Carson, p.86.

⁵¹ *Horse and Pony*, 1:2 (1959), p.18.

⁵² Newman, p.185.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp.129-30.

seriously when she advised that children at camp should be organised into ‘squads’ with a ‘captain’ and a ‘lieutenant’ to ‘do the unpleasant things as well as the pleasant’.⁵⁴

Military order and discipline was a mark of early Pony Club activities. Dorothy Campbell gave specific instructions to District Commissioners and Secretaries on the programmes they should run on club rally days. Her suggested timetable indicates the emphasis on horsemanship and instruction:

10:45 Lecture, and demonstration if necessary
11.15 Riding Instruction
12.15 Water and put away ponies
12.30 Lunch
1.30 Saddle up; Inspection of gear and ponies
2.30 or earlier jumping and games
3.30 Tea and dismiss⁵⁵

Strict discipline was considered necessary for safety reasons as it was pointed out that ‘wild riding’ and ‘undisciplined jumping’ caused accidents. It also had moral implications as Campbell insisted that ‘there is more to the Pony Club than instruction in horsemanship and horsemastership and that if strict rules of discipline and good manners are adhered to, the characters of members will benefit thereby.’⁵⁶

Like the earlier youth movements, drills, competitions and games were included in the programme as enjoyable activities where children could learn the values of team spirit and sportsmanship. Mounted games were a popular Pony Club activity, reminiscent of those played by mounted soldiers to sharpen skills and keep men and their horses fit for battle. Wrestling while mounted bareback was a traditional military camp pastime which became a Pony Club game, restricted to men and boys. Both girls and boys participated in the Victoria Cross race in which the rider had to gallop and jump over a line of hay bales, pick up a ‘body’ from the far end and race back over the jump with the ‘rescued person’. It was reputed that in England, the bales of hay were set alight but that never happened in New Zealand.⁵⁷ Another game deemed suitable for

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.76.

⁵⁵ *Talley-Ho*, 2 (1948), pp. 16-7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.16-7.

⁵⁷ *Sole*, pp.62-3.

the Pony Clubbers of the 1950s was the Cigarette Race, where each rider was given a cigarette and two matches at the starting line. Riding to the opposite line, around one hundred yards away, riders had to dismount, light the cigarette, remount and race back to the starting point. Anyone who failed to arrive back with a cigarette not lit or burning well was disqualified. Participants were advised; 'light it well and puff hard on the return ride'.⁵⁸

Also in keeping with military traditions was the parade on horseback. Various kinds of mounted parades and drills are mentioned in Pony Club records. When the combined Morrinsville, Cambridge and Whatawhata journeyed to the Bay of Plenty in 1949, they stopped outside Whakatane to spruce themselves up before the orderly parade into the town 'where the deputy mayor and other prominent citizens gave (them) a friendly welcome'.⁵⁹ The Royal visit of 1953 allowed a number of clubs the opportunity to provide a mounted escort for Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh. The Marlborough and Putaruru Club histories record the long hours of practise that went into the grand occasion.⁶⁰ Wanganui Pony Club's Mr Thompson, who had joined the Queen Alexandra Mounted Rifles in the 1930s, made drill manoeuvres to music a feature of the annual camps. Judith Crawley's account of preparations for 'Visitor's Day' at their 1954 camp indicates the care taken in the presentation of horses and riders:

Extra care was taken over grooming the horses and when they went on parade at ten o'clock their coats shone like satin and most of them had their tails plaited. We were to present a march-past for the public, so Mr Thompson drilled us in this all morning. We lined up in one long line and on the order formed fours, eights and sixteens as we walked around the paddock. This looked very smart and we hoped it would go off equally well in the afternoon.⁶¹

The musical ride of the North Wairarapa Pony Club under the direction of Mrs Edna Watson was conducted with such precision that they were asked to give a display at the 1965 Horse of the Year Show. The twelve red-shirted riders on grey ponies also

⁵⁸ *Talley Ho*, 6 (1955), p.14.

⁵⁹ Newman, p.84.

⁶⁰ Newman, p.143. Carson, p.96.

⁶¹ Sole, p.41.

acted as a guard of honour to the Governor-General and Lady Fergusson when they toured the Show.⁶²

Despite the martial atmosphere, one English commentator noted that 'New Zealand had the same problem as other riding countries - far more girls than boys in Pony Club'.⁶³ From its formative years the New Zealand Pony Club attracted high numbers of girls and women into its ranks. In 1969, more than 100 of the 124 junior members of the Dunedin District Pony Club were girls.⁶⁴ While all of the presidents of the NZPCA from 1947 through to 1981 were male, women took up other administrative and teaching responsibilities. Suzanne Bason, an English horsewoman, arrived in New Zealand in 1953 and became involved in the Pony Club as district commissioner for Hurunui until she went back to England to further her qualifications. Returning as a British Horse Society Instructor (BHSI), she became the New Zealand Pony Club's first full-time instructor in 1956. Later she was joined by two other English horsewomen, Elaine Knox and Suzanne Dickens, both holders of the BHSI qualification, who immigrated to New Zealand to become national instructors. The first New Zealand woman to achieve this rank was Janey Cresswell (later Fisher) who joined the Pony Club as a young, inexperienced rider in 1947. During the 1960s she made two trips to England to develop her equestrian skills and in 1967 became the first New Zealand woman to qualify for the prestigious BHSI certificate. On her return to New Zealand as a national instructor, she toured the Pony Clubs, training volunteer instructors as well as organising children's courses, camps and examinations.⁶⁵ While British equestrian experience and qualifications remained the benchmark during this period girls were, nevertheless, presented with strong role models to follow. The high degree of female involvement provided the platform for capable young women to launch careers into the previously male domain of equestrian sport and recreation.

The economic and social stability of the country no doubt contributed to the popularity and success of the Pony Club movement in New Zealand during the 1950s

⁶² Newman, p.119, *Horse and Pony*, 7: 1 (1965), p.9.

⁶³ Carson, p.29.

⁶⁴ 'Growing Popularity of Pony Clubs', *Evening Star*, 19 Jul 1969, Dunedin City Library Newspaper Files.

⁶⁵ Carson, pp.10-31.

and 60s. After twenty-one years of operation, the Pony Club could boast a membership of 14,473 of whom 10,577 members were under the age of seventeen.⁶⁶ The cost of Club memberships was kept low and there was a general feeling that it was possible for any child to join. Ponies could still be obtained reasonably cheaply in the sixties and there were plenty of second hand bridles and saddles available. Many a child began riding on one of the ex-army saddles that flooded the market. Even in the cities, traffic was not yet considered a serious enough concern to prevent children from riding to Pony Club events.⁶⁷ The post war 'baby boom' that led to an increased emphasis on children and the nuclear family created an environment that encouraged parent volunteers to come forward to assist in the running the clubs and their activities. Club histories of this period highlight the participation and contribution of whole families to the local pony club such as the three generations of the Thompson family who were actively involved in the Brunswick branch of the Wanganui Pony Club.⁶⁸ Community service was a value that was instilled in the movement and clubs recorded fundraising events undertaken to assist local churches, schools and homes for the disabled. Southland Pony Club made ponies available for the Blind Institute's annual Christmas party while the Central Hawke's Bay Pony Club supplied instructors and ponies so that a branch could be formed at the Pukeora Home for the Disabled in 1966. It was acknowledged that the children who brought along their 'foolproof' ponies on alternate Sundays for use in the programme were 'truly fulfilling the aims of the Pony Club' by 'helping those less fortunate than themselves'.⁶⁹

Despite their success, the NZPCA Clubs of the 1960s were faced with the challenge of the modern age while still holding on to their traditional goals. The countryside surrounding the cities was fast disappearing and inexpensive grazing was harder to find. While gymkhanas with their games remained popular, more specialised competition in jumping, dressage and horse trials gained importance. These sports required more trained and expensive mounts as well as a higher level of instruction. The appointment of the British trained professional instructors helped raise the standard of horsemanship throughout the country. It is clear from Kevin Thompson

⁶⁶ *Evening Star*, 19 Jul 1969, Dunedin City Library Newspaper Files.

⁶⁷ Sole, pp.22, 52.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.163.

⁶⁹ Newman, pp.55-6.

that the last of the ‘back-country boys’ were converted to the English school of riding during this period:

Yes Sir! It wasn’t long before these scrub bashing colonial country riders were subject to many an enthusiastic instructor pushing their English-orientated style of riding, be it from *The Manual* or experience gained from a successful O.E.A. quick week-long course could change anything! Sitting up like Jacky – hurting in spots you never dreamed would ever hurt – skin off, amongst other places, the insides of your legs, *Feet back! Sit deep in your saddle! Shoulders back! Don’t kick him – push him!* Ask Liz Towgood! No more lounging on the cheeks of their bum for these back-country boys. Yes I did enjoy my early days of Pony Club and slowly accepted this new way of riding – not that it ever did me any good!⁷⁰

At the New Zealand Pony Club Conference in 1965, the president, Mr C.E.W. Levin acknowledged that the organisation was stronger than ever before with a growing number of members and new clubs, but he also issued a note of caution. Like many others of his generation, he worried that competition was being overly emphasised, with club resources focussed on few children rather than the wider membership. He reminded the delegates not to lose sight of the primary purpose of the Pony Club which was ‘to teach a child and a pony to get on together, to like each other, to understand each other’. It was through this very simple means that children could ‘understand the true meaning of loyalty, citizenship, and in particular sportsmanship’. A few years later when the history of the first twenty-one years of the Pony Club was being compiled, the indomitable Dorothy Campbell continued to argue that ‘through the love of a child for its pony’ valuable life lessons could be learned in self-sacrifice and self-discipline. Like the school pony before, various clubs paid tribute to the ponies and horses that made these ideals possible. Jimmy of Morrinsville was fondly remembered for bringing up four families of pony club children. Similarly, Nancy, a diminutive chocolate coloured pony, played ‘a major part in teaching small riders and giving them confidence’ for many years at the Stratford Pony Club.⁷¹

By the end of the 1960s, the Pony Club mount had all but replaced the school pony except in some of the most isolated areas of rural New Zealand. Both are creatures of their time. The school pony, like its colonial predecessor helped shape the lives of

⁷⁰ Sole, p.53.

⁷¹ Newman., pp.35-6, 152-3, 164.

pioneering rural children who often spent many hours away from adult supervision. The Pony Club mount exists in a more ordered world; one which recognised children's need for fun and adventure but kept within safe bounds and under the control of adults. Bringing order and discipline into the lives of children, the Pony Club could be said to represent a taming of the wild colonial child. It also stood to emphasise to its members that when it came to horsemanship, British remained the best. From its inception the NZPCA established close ties with its parent body and continued to aspire to British standards through its graduated learning programmes and British trained national instructors. Yet despite this, throughout the New Zealand Pony club movement, there remained an earnest desire to retain elements of the colonial experience. The egalitarianism that allowed access to horses and ponies to all sectors of the population was adopted as a guiding principle. The frontier spirit was also clung to in the undertaking of long and demanding treks into remote parts of the country like their pioneer forbears. But while the reins of the work horse and warhorse of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were held firmly by men, it was girls who emerged as confident and skilled horsemen to stamp their presence on equestrian activities of the second half of the twentieth century. Ponies greatly assisted in this process.

9. The Māori Horse

When Lonely Planet published its 2006 guidebook to New Zealand it chose for its cover a photograph of a surfer cantering along a Gisborne beach, his surfboard clutched under his arm (Figure 16). The relaxed, confident rider is Māori and his piebald mount is typical of the Ngāti ponies of Poverty Bay. To the editors of this highly popular international publication, Māori and their horses represent an aspect of New Zealand culture that they assume would be of interest to their readership. The question needs to be considered, however, whether contemporary New Zealand identifies itself so closely with Māori horses and horsemanship? While there is enough evidence to show that Māori have long been associated with horses in this country, their reputation as horsemen and women has been mixed. What little mention there has been of Māori owned horses and their management in the agricultural, sporting and popular press has often been derogatory. More often than not, colonial commentators shunned the animals for their small size and uncertain bloodlines and criticised their masters for perceived inadequate horsemanship. Yet throughout the historical record, there are also glimpses into a thriving Māori horse culture, in which native New Zealanders altered and adapted British horses and practices to suit their own particular needs. It is the contention of this chapter that the Māori horse is a distinct type of animal, closely identified with various parts of the New Zealand rural landscape. It is part of a unique horse tradition that has developed over time and continues to evolve to suit the changing needs of the Māori and wider New Zealand community.

No mention of the existence of such an animal referred to as Māori horse or pony exists in any of the histories of the New Zealand horse, yet despite this, its presence continues to be acknowledged amongst New Zealand horse enthusiasts. Part of the explanation for this is that the Māori horse is similar to the station hack, bred on hill country for use on the cattle and sheep runs. Both animals are sturdy, mixed blood saddle horses, known for their dependability and sure footedness on difficult terrain. The Māori horse or Bush pony, as it is sometimes referred to, is regarded as smaller in size and is often bred and raised in a semi-wild state up remote river valleys.

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New Zealand

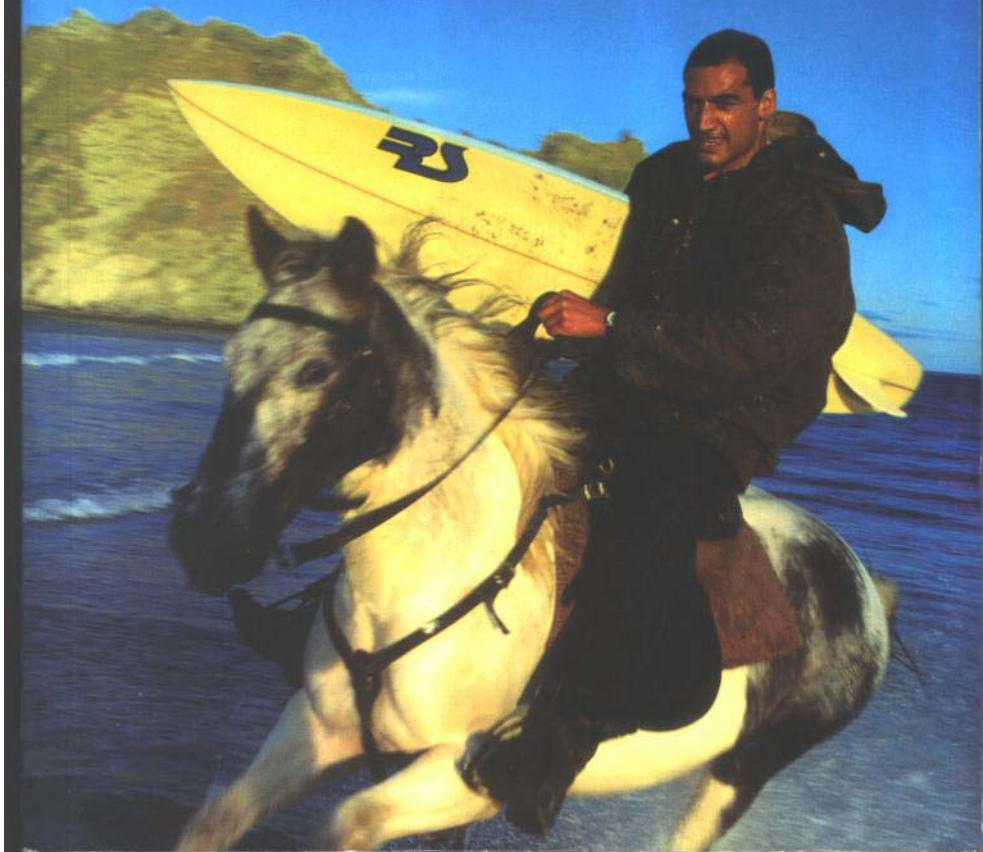


Figure 16: Paul Kennedy, 'Surfer Riding his Horse' *Lonely Planet New Zealand* 2006.

Māori horses come in a wide range of colours; a preference for piebalds and skewbalds, is also widely recognised. Although perhaps not formally recorded or registered as many European horses, the bloodlines of Māori horses can be said to be amongst the oldest in this country, going back to some of the earliest imports.

As has been established in Chapter 2, Māori quickly appreciated the value of horses and began to acquire them soon after they were introduced to the colony. While horses gifted by religious and secular leaders featured in the building up of their horse stocks, Māori also gained horses by other means. There are a number of references to trading horses for land or other commodities they produced. Moetara Motu Tongaporutu, leader of Ngati Korokoro at Hokianga introduced his people to horses in the early 1830s when he traded 600 acres of land with Henry Oakes for a mare and foal.¹ The exchange of horses for land has also been noted by John Williams Harris in securing land for himself in the Poverty Bay area.² Ellen Petre outlined the transaction between her husband and Hutt Valley Māori, trading flax for one of Petre's imported mares.³ Māori groups actively engaged in the cash economy of food production and shipping in the early colonial period would have been well placed to purchase horses, even at a time when the prices for them were comparatively high. The high numbers of horses in the Bay of Plenty area can be attributed to the success of Maketu and Whakatane Māori owned vessels involved in coastal trade in the 1840s and 50s.

Less reputable acquisition of horses also appears. After the burning of Kororareka in 1845, Hone Heke was said to have returned to Kaikohe with a number of horses taken from the settlers.⁴ Northland stories relate that the so called coloured horses that became sought after throughout the North Island were said to have originated from ponies stolen by Ngāti Kuri from an American ship.⁵

¹ Angela Ballara & John Klaricich & Henare Arekatera Tate, 'Moetara Motu Tongaporutu ? – 1838', *DNZB*, updated 7 April 2006, URL: [URL:http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/](http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/), Accessed 4 Jan 2007.

² Joseph Angus Mackay, *Historic Poverty Bay and the East Coast, N.I., N.Z.*, Gisborne: J.G. Mackay, 1949, p.101.

³ Petre MS, p.5.

⁴ Rewa Glen, 'Webster and Heke' *Northland Magazine*, 11 (1960), pp.13-14.

⁵ Viv Gregory, Florence Keene Collection, Volume 25G, p.6. The term 'coloured' horse refers to horses of broken colour such as piebalds that have patches of white and black and skewbalds that have patches of white and any colour other than black.

Whatever the source of the original animals, there is no doubt that horses were sought after by Māori tribes with access to them and their numbers rose substantially in the early colonial period. A lack of statistical data means that it is difficult to determine how many horses were in Māori ownership but anecdotal references indicate that horse numbers were not only high but reasonably well distributed throughout the North Island, at least. William Colenso reported that the first horse in the Hawke's Bay did not arrive until 1847 and yet a mere four years later, he estimated that there were over fifty horses in the district.⁶ Also in 1851, Donald McLean, visiting the Poverty Bay area in his capacity as Lands Purchase Commissioner, was struck by the impression of the pleasant pastoral scene that greeted him as he descended at sunset from the 'barren hills' into Turanga Bay where 'the natives were returning from reaping their field, some leading horses and others driving cattle and pet pigs before them'.⁷ Curiously, McLean's 1851 records of the livestock in Māori hands did not distinguish between species, reporting that the natives on the north side of the Waipaoa owned twenty-eight 'cattle and horses' and those at Makaraka and Turanganui twenty-five.⁸ Later in the decade, Attorney-General William Swainson estimated that there were over 8,000 people of the Mataatua and Tuwharetoa tribes of the Bay of Plenty, Rotorua and Taupo districts in 1857 and between them they owned nearly 2,000 horses.⁹ An idea of South Island horse numbers is even more difficult, but it would appear that in Otago, Māori were less well served. According to the *Otago Witness*, 167 of the total 1,410 horses were in Māori possession in 1857. The numbers of Māori owned horses here may well be underestimated as in 1859, George Rutherford recorded that although horses were 'very dear in Canterbury', ones of varying quality could be purchased from Māori for £50 to £60.¹⁰

Pākehā responses to the increasing numbers of Māori owned horses varied. William Colenso felt that horses were a disruption to traditional Māori lifestyles and resulted in less tilled ground, less fish caught and more indifference to the welfare of others. While he claimed that those men, who could afford a horse, rode everywhere, their wives were forced to walk, carrying their own belongings as well as those of their

⁶ A.H. Reed, *The Story of Hawke's Bay*, Wellington: A.H. & A. W. Reed, 1958, pp.84-5.

⁷ Mackay, p.177.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.182-3.

⁹ Petrie, p.231.

¹⁰ Rutherford, p.15.

mounted husbands. He complained that ‘Sunday peace’ was continually violated by the shouting and chasing after of horses on the loose.¹¹ Bishop Selwyn equated Māori horse acquisition with frivolous spending and idleness, angry that some squandered their earnings or the price of their lands on ‘useless horses or cast-off dress coats’.¹² Generally, however, when horses were associated purely with agricultural activity, they were seen in a positive light. European travellers expressed admiration for the bustling agricultural settlement at Rangiaowhia in the Waikato where, in 1853, William Swainson counted sixty-five horses engaged in various aspects of wheat production.¹³ As Hazel Petrie contends, Rangiaowhia and John Morgan’s mission station at nearby Otāwhao became missionary and colonial government showpieces that demonstrated to their British backers, not only the success of Māori food production, but also the civilised state of the native population. The picture of pastoral prosperity created by homesteads, haystacks, ploughs, and carts drawn by steady farm horses that gave such settlements the appearance of an ‘English village’ was important also in attracting potential immigrants to the colony.¹⁴

The participation of Māori in the newly formed Pākehā organised agricultural exhibitions was also a feature of this period. Prizes awarded for individual achievement in the growing of produce and livestock were seen as a means of promoting agricultural improvement and of inculcating Western attitudes towards work and free enterprise. While the Auckland and New Ulster Agricultural and Horticultural Society issued no award in 1850 for a native horse, they did recognise one individual’s achievements with a prize of two sovereigns as ‘the best and most trustworthy native servant’. Among Inoka’s many listed skills were that he was an ‘excellent groom’ and could ‘drive both cart and plough well’. In commending Inoka and his employer, Percival Berrey for teaching him such skills, the committee’s report stressed the importance of Māori gaining knowledge of ploughing and managing

¹¹ Reed, p.85.

¹² G.A. Selwyn, *New Zealand*,

URL:http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz/document/New_Zealand_%5BG.A._Selwyn%2C_18..., Accessed 23 Jan 2007.

¹³ William Swainson, *Auckland, The Capital of New Zealand*, pp.42-3.

URL:http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz/document/auckland%2C_the_Capital_of_New_Zeala..., Accessed 8 Feb 2007.

¹⁴ Petrie, pp.218-21.

horses in becoming useful farm labour.¹⁵ Only four years later, the successor to this organisation, the Auckland Agricultural and Pastoral Association, recognised that Māori saw themselves not just as employees skilled in horse management but as horse breeders in their own right when the president, William Buckland, suggested that the government station 'well-bred' stallions at 'certain places throughout the country' available to Māori breeders 'to prevent careless breeding of inferior horses'.¹⁶

It also fell to the government sponsored *Te Karere Maori-Maori Messenger* to urge the acquisition of heavy weight cart and plough horses and to discourage the breeding of smaller, light weight saddle horses. The practicality of the farm horse over the saddle hack was expressed in the paper in 1858:

There is one thing we wish to say: it would be much more to your advantage to purchase large horses for the cart or plough instead of the rats you are at present so fond of, for what use are they except for the pleasure of those who scamper about the country on horseback.¹⁷

Many of these so called 'rats' were in fact high quality Thoroughbred or coach horses of the type desired by the colonists for racing or to pull a gig at a smart trot. Departing from the practice of gifting farm horses and wagons, Governor Grey presented Te Rauparaha with a gig and a horse.¹⁸ Although no records exist, there are a number of references to Māori purchases of valuable imported horses. Lieutenant Abel Dottin Best noted that Māori jockeys rode horses newly arrived from Valparaiso in Auckland's first official race meeting in 1842.¹⁹ Racing historian, G.K.Prebble, indicated that by the time the soldiers of the garrison at Wanganui organised a race meeting in 1848, local Māori had in their ownership a number of very good horses, many of which had been brought from New South Wales and were 'undoubtedly thoroughbreds'. Such was the expense of such animals that according to Prebble, it

¹⁵ Auckland and New Ulster Agricultural and Horticultural Society, *Report of the Auckland and New Ulster Agricultural and Horticultural Society for the Year 1850*, Auckland: Williamson and Wilson, 1851, pp.6-8, 10-11.

¹⁶ Kalaugher, *Historical Chronicles*, 1925, p.43.

¹⁷ *The Maori Messenger Te Karere Maori*, 5:24 (1858), p.6, URL:<http://www.nzdl.org/cgi-bin/library?gg=cgiarggg&e=q-00000-00---Oniuepepa--00-0...>, Accessed 15 Jan 2007.

¹⁸ Lady Martin, *Our Maoris*, p.54,

URL:http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz/document/Our_Maoris_%5BLady_Martin%2C_1881...., Accessed 8 Feb 2007.

¹⁹ Best, 1966, p.331

was the custom for a number of Māori to pool their resources to purchase or trade for a mare while the even more costly Thoroughbred stallion might be owned by an entire hapū.²⁰ It was the belief of another twentieth century commentator, Rod McDonald, that some of ‘the best blood imported into New Zealand’ found their way into the hands of the Otaki Māori who collectively bred ‘some splendid gallopers’.²¹

Racing horses appeared to be a feature of Māori life from the time when they first acquired horses. While missionary and official sources were keen to portray the incorporation of horses in introduced farming practices, they were unsurprisingly less enthusiastic about publicising Māori horseracing. There is some traditional knowledge, however, that suggests that Māori raced their horses before being involved in Pākehā organised events. The late Viv Gregory related that horses were presented by Samuel Marsden to two important Northland chiefs, Honi Keepa of Kapa Wairua and Nopere Panakareao of Taunoke. Keepa’s horse was a small roan stallion, which would have been a strong versatile horse that, although not very fast had the stamina to gallop long distances. Nopera’s gelding was very tall, suggesting that it had quite a bit of Thoroughbred blood. According to Gregory, one local story suggests that Keepa’s victory in a match race between the two horses was one of the reasons for the murder of Keepa by Nopera.²²

The inclusion of Māori owned and ridden racehorses from the early 1840s in military or settler organised races were often included as novelty events. While Lieutenant Best and the *New Zealand Herald and Auckland Gazette* both detailed the events of Auckland’s first race meeting, significantly neither recorded the results of the Māori race, regarding it as providing some light entertainment at the end of a serious day’s racing.²³ This attitude seemed to prevail throughout the period when Māori races were included in Pākehā organised races. They were treated as casual affairs, accepting entries on the day and were advertised as ‘catch weights’, unlike the more important races which required prior entry and a handicapper to assign weights. If the

²⁰ G.K. Prebble, *Horses, Courses and Men: Early New Zealand Racing*, Tauranga: Ashford-Kent Ltd, 1972, pp.13-14.

²¹ Rod A. McDonald and Ewart O’Donnell, *Te Hekenga; Early Days in Horowhenua*, Palmerston North: G.H. Bennett & Co., 1979, p.77.

²² Viv Gregory, Florence Keene Collection, Volume 25G, p.6.

²³ Best, p.331., Mackie, pp.1-5.

prize money for a Māori race was advertised, it was generally the lowest purse of the day. As an example, at the Otahuhu races in 1855, the highest prize money was £60 for the winner of the Farmer's Purse, followed by the Maiden Plate for £40, the Ladies Purse worth £30 and the Hack Race £15. The lowest prize of the day was for the 'Maorie' Race of only £10.²⁴ At the Taranaki anniversary races of the same year no prize had been set for the Ngamotu Stakes for horses, 'the property of and ridden by Aboriginal Natives', and it fell to the visiting acting governor to donate the purse of £5. Despite Colonel Wynard's generosity, it remained the lowest stake of the day.²⁵ This situation did not change in time and the poorest prizes at both the 1862 Napier races and the 1877 Ohinemutu races were for their Māori races.²⁶ It is clear that although Māori participation in these race meetings was accepted, even encouraged with the inclusion of races exclusively for them, they were not regarded very highly among the European population.

By at least the late 1850s, however, Māori in some areas were organising their own race meetings and inviting settler attendance. Paul Monin suggests that a Hauraki Māori race meeting held in 1856 at Kauaeranga was probably the first to which local Pākehā were invited.²⁷ Like the European organised races of the time, Māori races were planned at the local level for the benefit of the community as well as visitors. Rod McDonald has left a valuable record of how such races were organised and run in the Horowhenua area in the 1870s. He described how a meeting was convened for those interested in planning the races. Stewards were elected at this time and a few of them were given the task of canvassing the district for subscriptions towards the stake money. According to McDonald, such was the support in the almost exclusively Māori community that everyone contributed, the usual amount being five shillings but a pound was the expected donation from each steward for the privilege of holding such a respected position.²⁸

²⁴ *Southern Cross*, 6 Feb 1855, p.2.

²⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 4 Apr 1855, p.2.

²⁶ *Hawkes Bay Herald*, 15 Feb 1862, p.4., *Bay of Plenty Times*, 7 Feb, 1877, p.2.

²⁷ Paul Monin, *This is My Place; Hauraki Contested, 1769-1875*, Wellington: Bridget Williams, 2001, pp.155-6.

²⁸ McDonald and O'Donnell, p.83.

McDonald's vivid memory of an Otaki race meeting, held annually on New Years Day, is one of intense excitement, tribal rivalry and gracious hospitality extended to Māori and Pākehā alike. The day before the meeting, men, women and children began to congregate at the appointed race course. Whole hāpus would arrive, some following proudly behind their racehorse. From early morning on the day of the races 'hundreds' made their way along the beach from Foxton and Rangitikei in the north and from as far south as Porirua and Wellington. McDonald described the lively stream of race-goers:

...sedate teams of bullocks, the lumbering dray piled high with its laughing, chattering human freight; rangitiras in cords and top-boots, riding blood-horses; and crowds, mobs of the other orders, riding every kind of animal from broken-down screws to thoroughbreds, and all carefree, happy and excited.²⁹

Much of the excitement of race day, McDonald explained, was due to the fact that the different tribes, Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Ruakawa and Muaupoko all ran horses that 'insured a degree of interest that can hardly be imagined'. 'Old tribal jealousies flared up, and a victory was more than the winning of a race - it was a tribal triumph.'³⁰ Once the starter's flag dropped, sending the racehorses on their way, mounted spectators galloped alongside them as best they could, shouting for their favourite. McDonald recalled hundreds of hard-riding men, women and children that followed each race in this way. The noise, dust and sheer numbers of excited people and horses created an intensely charged atmosphere:

One horse has won, and mad with excitement, the tribe to which it belongs dash out on to the course. Massing in front of their champion they dance a haka of triumph. Victory is theirs! They have conquered! Kamete! Kamate! Ka aora, ka aora! Tene te tangata puhuruhuru! No champion from a stricken field was ever received with greater enthusiasm.³¹

Local as well as tribal pride was demonstrated. McDonald recalled that victories of his own horses were greeted by the 'haka of triumph' on three different occasions,

²⁹ Ibid., p.79.

³⁰ Ibid., p.81.

³¹ Ibid., p. 81.

twice at Foxton and once at Levin. Clearly moved, he accepted the recognition as ‘a sincere expression of congratulation’.³²

A number of Pākehā references to Māori race meetings highlight the generous hospitality of the hosts. For McDonald, the shared feasts of pork, potatoes, and fish, served ‘steaming hot from the earthen umu’ provided fond memories of the occasion.³³ Leon Smith, an amateur jockey, who wrote about a turn of the century meeting in the King country, was impressed by the elaborate luncheon all race-goers were invited to attend. He described a long table covered by a white table cloth, laden with tempting delicacies. What caught his eye in particular, were the plates piled high with cooked crayfish, brought by coastal Māori to share with their inland friends and relatives.³⁴ Mrs Malcolm Ross was also taken by the hospitality offered to her group of friends as they camped on the banks of the Waikato River. Responding to a written invitation to attend the local New Year’s race meeting, they watched the races and then following the sport and a meal, danced with their hosts in the moonlight to the music of an accordion. Thirty-five years later, she wrote that she had attended many races since but none had been ‘so filled with interest and charm’ as the 1890s Māori race meeting in the Waikato.³⁵

By the second half of the nineteenth century, it was clear that horses were an accepted part of Māori life and had become interwoven into traditional cultural practices. In 1880, the *Weekly News* featured an article about the large Pukepoto wedding feast of Leopold Busby, a chief of the Arawa tribe and Miss Hardiman of Hokianga. It described the long procession of guests and provisions that filled the road between Kaitaia and Pukepoto, a distance of about three miles. Waggon full of vegetables, loaves of bread, flour and trussed pigs were interspersed with horsemen bearing flags. Impressed by the ‘line of equestrians (that) extended as far as the eye could see beneath a cloud of dust’, the appearance reminded the reporter of ‘the Israelites, or the

³² Ibid., p.81.

³³ Ibid., p.79.

³⁴ Leon L. Smith, ‘A Maori Race Meeting in the King Country’, in *First Past the Post: an Anthology of New Zealand Racing Stories*, Brian Phillips (ed.,) Auckland: Random House, pp. 189-194.

³⁵ Mrs Malcolm Ross, pp.15-26.

army on the march'.³⁶ Another late nineteenth century Northland procession that involved horses was the tangi of Tomati Pahi Whakatara. Evelyn Belcher recalled the cortege that was led by four men on horseback, riding two abreast with poles across from horse to horse and the coffin resting on them. The mourners followed two by two, the men riding first and the women walking behind them. Clearly taken by the dignity of the occasion, Belcher remembered, its very silent passing, the unshod horses and the bare feet of the women that raised 'a little cloud of soft dust as they travelled slowly along the unsealed half of the road on their three mile journey' to the chief's final resting place at Aratapu.³⁷ There is also some evidence to suggest that the death of some horses warranted commemoration. Miriam Macgregor Redwood in *Proud Silk* described a 'short tangi' over the Renata Kawepo's horse, Tawera, who fell and broke his neck at the water jump at the 1879 Hawke's Bay Jockey Club Steeplechase. Following the tangi the Māori in attendance were reported to have disappeared from the grounds.³⁸

Māori used the practice of gifting horses as a means of securing and maintaining relationships. Various narratives surround the gift horses that often had an extraordinary impact on their new communities. Around 1842, a poihoakau or skewbald horse was said to have been given to Iwikau, the brother of Te Heuheu of Tuwharetoa. The circumstances of this gift horse, possibly named Taika, involved it being ridden on a several month journey to Taupo where, according to the Northland people, the stallion became an ancestor of the wild horses around Taupo and Tokaanu.³⁹ Although the details vary, this was possibly the horse sighted and claimed by the travelling artist, G.F. Angas, to be the sole horse in the Taupo region in 1844. Angas related that this horse belonged to Tamiti Wāka, son of Te Heuheu, and presented to him on his visit to the Hokianga rangatira, Te Wāka Nēnē. Rather than making the whole journey overland, the animal had purportedly been shipped to Tauranga in a small vessel with the remainder of its journey conducted on foot 'with considerable difficulty'. Angas recorded that such was the excitement created by such

³⁶ 'Great Native Marriage' from the *Weekly News*, 21 February 1880, p.11, Hokianga Historical Society Inc.

³⁷ 'I Remember – Evelyn Belcher', *Northland Magazine*, No. 11, (1960), p.33.

³⁸ Miriam Macgregor Redwood, *Proud Silk: A New Zealand Racing History*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, p.143.

³⁹ Florence Keene Collection, Volume 25G, p.6.

an extraordinary animal, that the image of the animal ridden by his master was rendered in charcoal on ‘nearly every flat board within the settlement’.⁴⁰ The horse William Colenso recorded as the first horse in the Hawke’s Bay was sighted by him during his arduous journey to Taupo in February 1847, when his party encountered a horse being led from Rotorua and destined for a chief near Waitangi.⁴¹

The ownership of horses was associated with chiefly mana. Paul Monin in *This is My Place* asserts that as guns came to symbolise European power, the chiefs that were able to gain possession of them also acquired mana and conversely to lose it by failing to secure firearms.⁴² Horses can be seen in much the same context. Early realisation of the animals as a valuable resource meant that those in position of power sought to increase their mana through their acquisition. Those that had the courage and ability to ride the horses probably found their authority and power further enhanced. According to Monin, Māori land sellers in Hauraki, the Hawke’s Bay and elsewhere in New Zealand ‘became identifiable as the chiefs who rode horses’.⁴³ While the chiefly ownership of horses could be construed as a move towards individual wealth accumulation and a departure from traditional practices of communal economies, it can also be said that the tribe as a whole gained from their leader’s ability to provide and sustain such an important asset.

Later in the century when horses had become more accessible, they continued to be used as presents and gestures of goodwill. Margaret Orbell has documented a letter and accompanying waiata sung by Parāone Taupiri on the occasion of the visit in 1875 of some of his Ngāti Raukawa people to Ngāti Tūwharetoa in the Taupo region. While seventy of his tribesmen were mounted, Parāone and his wife were forced to make the long journey from the North on foot because their horses had recently died. On the journey he composed a lament that spoke of his grief for the loss and appealing to the Ngāti Tūwharetoa who were rich in horses that roamed their high tussock lands. The form and language of the waiata, Orbell explains, was ‘similar to that which in the past had been employed by singers seeking military assistance in avenging a

⁴⁰G.F. Angas, *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand*, V. II, 2nd ed., London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1847, p.112.

⁴¹ Reed, pp. 84-5.

⁴² Monin, p.70.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.155-6.

defeat in battle'. Parāone sang directly to his departed horses, tracing the journey that their spirits would have taken, before addressing the six leading rangatira and seeking their help. The rangatira responded to the plea by presenting Parāone and his people with six horses, one from each leader and the seventh from Tongariro, the mountain.⁴⁴

Horses could also be used as compensation to address wrongs. An article in the *Southern Cross* in 1852 related a tragedy at Hokianga that arose when Papakakura refused Repa the demand of a horse as settlement for 'having taken improper liberties with one of his wives'. This was, according to the newspaper, 'according to native usage' and the failure to produce a horse resulted in the deaths of both Repa and Papakakura and three of their kin.⁴⁵ Hazel Petrie describes an incident in the Bay of Plenty in 1849 in which a horse was expected as utu for adultery. In this case a Te Arawa rangatira, Tohi Te Ururangi, acting as mediator sought to obtain a horse from a Ngāti Moko man as compensation for taking the wife of another man. Upon asking on three separate days for the horse, as according to the custom, and it not being forthcoming, Tohi authorised Ngāti Moko's ship, the *Harata* to be seized. Eventually, however, the horse was paid over and the ship returned.⁴⁶ An occasion when a horse paid for the death of its rider was reported by Paora Tokoahu of Ngatiterangiitain *Te Waka Maori* in 1875. When the body of his wife was found, having fallen from her horse, Rawhira Te Ara-moana and his friends returned with the horse to the scene of the tragedy and killed it on the spot.⁴⁷

In recent years a number of historians have revealed the importance of Māori enterprise, particularly during the early colonial period. Beyond the use of horses in agriculture, they played a part in other aspects of the Māori economy. Familiarity with the tracks and well acquainted with long journeys meant that from the time Europeans ventured inland, there had been ready market for Māori guides. When James Buller detailed the progress of the colony in his 1880 book, he related that 'the natives themselves travel on horseback, and it is no uncommon thing to meet a

⁴⁴ Margaret Orbell, 'Parāone's Horses: A Letter from Hōhepa Tamamutu, 1875'

URL:<http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-Whi021Kota-tl-gl-tl.html>, Accessed 26 Jul 2006..

⁴⁵ 'Fatal Native Conflict at Hokianga' *Southern Cross* 6 Feb 1852, Hokianga Historical Society.

⁴⁶ Petrie, p.211.

⁴⁷ *Te Waka Maori O Niu Tirani*, 11:8 (1875), p.89, URL:<http://www.nzdl.org/cgi-bin/niupepalibrary?e=q-Oniuepepa-00-0-014-Document-text---...>, Accessed 10 Oct 2003.

cavalcade of from ten to fifty of them, with their trappings, all mounted'. He noted that an English traveller requiring a native guide had to hire 'both him and his steed; and that, too, at a good price'.⁴⁸ The use of mounted Māori guides continued into the twentieth century in out of the way country where bridle tracks still prevailed. One well documented trip was the journey undertaken in 1904 via Lake Waikaremoana and the Huiarau Ranges by Lord Ranfurly and his vice-regal party to attend a meeting at Ruatoki of the representatives of all the Māori Councils.

As well as guiding these remote tracks, it was very often Māori who carried mail on horseback in the initial years of the mail service. As Hazel Petrie has indicated, the carriage of mail was one of the first services to be established following the setting up of colonial government and it remained almost entirely in Māori hands until the wars of the 1860s when it was largely taken over by Pākehā contractors.⁴⁹ In his publication on the Great South Road, Maurice Lennard outlined the monthly mail route to Napier and Taranaki in 1860. Māori carried mail from Drury to the Waikato on horses and then by canoe to Te Rore. From here the Napier bag was carried by horse via Te Awamutu and Taupo. The Taranaki mail continued by canoe to Te Kuiti, then on horse to Tetoro, where it continued by canoe down the Mokau River to the coast and on horses again via Whitecliffs and Waitara.⁵⁰ While the remote Poverty Bay area lagged behind more densely populated areas, the pattern remained much the same. According to the local historian Joseph Mackay, Māori carried the mail on horseback between Gisborne and Wairoa in the 1860s and 1870s, before giving way to Pākehā carriers who used mules as well as packhorses. Once the roads became sufficiently formed, the Royal Mail coach service took over as it had in other regions.⁵¹

Such use of horses in any kind of agricultural or commercial enterprise required not only sufficient numbers of suitable horses but also a reasonable level of horsemanship knowledge. At first, when Māori were introduced to horses, their ability to look after them was questioned. William Yate related that although the labour at the Waimate

⁴⁸ James Buller, *New Zealand: Past and Present*, Christchurch: Kiwi Publishers, 1997, p.82.

⁴⁹ Petrie, p.9.

⁵⁰ Lennard, p.27.

⁵¹ Mackay, p.333.

mission station was wholly supplied by natives, the horses were initially placed under the care of a European, ‘the New Zealanders (being) wholly unaccustomed to these noble animals’. Only after Māori servants were deemed ‘capable, though clumsily’ were horses entrusted to their care.⁵² By the time that the Māori language newspapers were established in the late 1850s, however, their columns and advertisements give an indication of a lively exchange not only in horses, riding apparel, saddlery and other related equipment, but also in advice and instruction in various aspects of horsemanship. An Advertisement offering lessons in horsebreaking from Te Kamerona (Robert Cameron) with accompanying testimonials to his skill appeared in *Te Karere O Pokere* in 1858.⁵³ In a later edition of the same paper, a letter to the editor from Kereopa Wharepōuri reported the success of his training from Te Kamerona and indicated that he was now in the position to break in horses for £3.⁵⁴ Although perhaps more motivated by the desire to educate Māori in Pākehā ways than in response to Māori needs, nevertheless, *Te Karere Maori–Maori Messenger* in 1859 translated in into the Māori language parts of the pamphlet of American horse tamer, John Rarey, who less than two years previously had introduced his new system of horsemanship to Europe.⁵⁵

It was obvious, however, that some Māori horsemen thought deeply about the nature of horses and were able to develop effective horsemanship practices which suited their own resources and environments. Alfred Saunders, an early settler and Superintendent of Nelson published in 1886 a horsemanship manual called, *Our Horses* in which he included a remarkable description of a unique method of breaking in a colt carried out by an unspecified Māori village in the Nelson area. Saunders had been impressed with a particularly docile draught horse named Grace Darling that he had hired from local Māori. On making inquiries about the training of this horse, he was told that they used no stable, yards, whips or breaking tackle of any kind on their horses and that they were willing to demonstrate how Grace Darling had been broken

⁵² William Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, pp.196-7, URL:[http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz/document/An Account Of New Zealand %5BWill...](http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz/document/An_Account_Of_New_Zealand_%5BWill...), Accessed 16 Jan 2007.

⁵³ Abstract *Te Karere O Poneke*, 1:55 (1858), URL:<http://www.nzdl.org/cgi-bin/library?e=d-00000-0---Oniuepepa>, Accessed 24 Nov 2006.

⁵⁴ Abstract *Te Karere O Poneke*, 1:55 (1858), URL:http://www.nzdl.org/cgi-bin/library?gg=cgiarggg_&e=q-00000-0---Oniuepepa, Accessed 24 Nov 2006.

⁵⁵ *The Maori Messenger Te Karere Maori*, 6:2 (1859), pp.1-5, URL:http://www.nzdl.org/cgi-bin/library?gg=cgiarggg_&e=d-00000-0---Oniuepepa, Accessed 24 Nov 2006.

in. The procedure began when the chief gave orders to the women to dress some flax and to plait two very large thick, strong mats. The next morning a herd of about fifty horses was driven into an adjoining paddock. From this group two horses were separated, an old quiet horse that was easily caught and a wild, young unhandled colt. The rest of the herd were turned out of the paddock and driven across the river to the north side where they were left to graze. At the same time, a boy mounted the old horse and rode him inside the paddock at nearly the same pace, followed by the nervous colt. The old horse was let out a gateway and was ridden to a spot near the river opposite to where the herd had stopped. The boy got off the old horse and led it to where a woman was holding the mats at a strip of bulrush swamp. The woman laid down a mat in front of the horse who having done this many times before, stepped on to the mat, then on to the other placed in front of the first and so on as the mats were alternately placed in front of him until he reached firm ground. Deceived by the old horse's successful crossing of the swamp and wanting to join the herd on the other side of the river, the colt took the same path. Almost immediately, his legs sank into the swamp and he was not able to progress any further. At this point, men, women and children took turns sitting on his back, handling his head and ears, and even as stated by Saunders, babies were put on the horse so that 'little naked feet danced on him from head to tail'. When the colt no longer showed any fear of human contact, two men put to work digging a passage through the mud for the colt to get out, while others fetched brushwood to make his progress easier. While this was being done, the chief put a long piece of flax in the colt's mouth and tied it loosely around the lower jaw. Another piece was put over his head and tied to the mouthpiece so as to form a complete bridle. As the colt made his way to firmer ground, the old horse was brought up with a naked boy on him and the by now subdued colt followed him into a quiet, deep pool of the river for a much needed wash. After further gentle handling, both horses were released to rejoin the herd. Saunders claimed that he had never seen a wild horse broken in so thoroughly in such a short time and without a scratch or single whip mark. He also saw that the way the colt was immobilised in the mud was safer to horse and human than Rarey's method with no flailing legs, ropes to burn flesh or hard ground for the horse to batter his head against.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Saunders, *Our Best Horses*, pp.142-46.

The technique used by this group of Māori, is known today as ‘flooding’ and is recognised as an effective way of habituating horses to frightening stimuli by exposing the animal to large doses of the stimulus, preferably while immobilised.⁵⁷ So although the Māori utilised a method, which embodied some elements of humane, modern horsemanship, it was also unique in involving the whole village. Men, women and even young children, under the directions of the chief, were involved in the process of breaking in a single colt. It also showed a deep understanding of the highly social nature of the horse, that the young animal would be calmed by the close proximity of the older horse and the grazing herd well within sight. It is difficult to know how widespread this method was known or practiced by either Pākehā or Māori. Saunder’s book may not have been widely read; there are currently no catalogued copies of *Our Horses* in New Zealand public collections. Someone who clearly did read it was the Earl of Onslow, a former Governor General of New Zealand. In a chapter on colonial horses he wrote for a book on riding edited in 1891 by the Duke of Beaufort for the prestigious Badminton Library series, Onslow reproduced, almost in full, Saunder’s lengthy description of the Māori horsebreaking he had witnessed.⁵⁸

The Earl of Onslow, Alfred Saunders and others of the nineteenth century educated elite were inspired by the Romantic notion to see the something of the ‘noble savage’ in the Māori horseman. This was not something unique to New Zealand but rather a universal spirit that regarded indigenous people who lived closely with nature as having a special bond with the animals in their midst. In Western literature it was the Arabs, breeders of the beautiful horses of the desert that were heralded for their perceived natural ability with horses. The ‘Old Colonist’ who wrote his guide for New Zealand farmers in 1863, in pleading his case for kindness to creatures, used the Arab horseman as an example.

⁵⁷ Andrew McLean, *The Truth About Horses: A Guide to Understanding and Training Your Horse*, Comberwell, Victoria: Viking, 2003, pp.39-40.

⁵⁸ Robert Weir, *Riding: Badminton Library*, London: Longmans, Green, 1891, pp.201-4.

The Arab makes his horse a domestic companion, he sleeps in the same tent with his family, children repose upon his neck, and hug and kiss him without the least danger; he steps amongst their sleeping forms by night without ever injuring them; when his master mounts him he manifests the greatest pleasure, and if by any chance he should fall off he instantly stands still till he is again mounted. He has even been known to pick up his wounded master by the teeth, and convey him to a place of safety. Unquestionably, the beautiful traits of character have been developed in the animal by a proper course of treatment.⁵⁹

A variation on this is the belief that some native groups showed an innate ability as riders. A widely held view was that South and North American Indians of the plains took naturally to the horses introduced by the Europeans. An article on Uruguayan horses that appeared in the *Country Journal* claimed that the descendants of early Spanish settlers and their Indian wives always preferred the 'semi-savage life of the interior of the country to the more civilised one of the town' and that they were 'born riders', earning their living as cattle-drovers or shepherds on horseback.⁶⁰ This stereotypical attitude was commonly extended to Māori. In recalling his life in the 1860s on Longwoods Station in Otago, J. Pattison claimed that 'on horseback the young Māori was at home and soon began to equal, if not excel, his pākehā comrades.'⁶¹ Rod McDonald also acknowledged the Māori, who supplied the labour on his family's early Horowhenua run, as natural riders and fearless stockmen. He recalled that in the 1870s, Māori stockmen proved adept at hunting down the semi-wild cattle that roamed the run. He indicated that this dangerous occupation appealed to 'even the sons of chiefs' as the display of their skill was 'a matter of the deepest personal pride'.⁶² Significantly, the admiration of Māori courage and skill on horseback was generally expressed in the context of the more rugged bush or back country regions.

Like their owners and riders, Māori horses were often appreciated for their ability to cope with remote and demanding conditions. Generally referred to as Māori ponies, for their small but sturdy size, such mixed breed animals bred in a semi-wild state are much more likely to prove adept at swimming rivers and coping with steep or difficult footing than those raised on the safety of farmland. The esteem in which Māori

⁵⁹ 'Old Colonist', p.54.

⁶⁰ *Country Journal*, 17:3 (May 1893), pp.124-5.

⁶¹ Herries Beattie, *Early Runholding in Otago*, Dunedin: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers, 1947, p.54.

⁶² McDonald and O'Donnell, p.73.

ponies were held by twentieth century travellers in remote areas of the country is evidenced by accounts of their journeys. Malcolm Ross recorded and photographed Lord Ranfurly's vice-regal party that made the difficult journey from Waikaremoana to Ruatoki in 1904. Full of praise for the hardy mounts that took the vice-regal party safely over the treacherous Huia-Rau trail, Ross recounted:

All day our horses had proved their mettle in a most surprising manner. By this time also, we found that they possessed individualities as diverse as our own. The Governor rode a wonderful grey pony, that never made a mistake, and willingly and uncomplainingly took the rough with the smooth. Lord Ranfurly subsequently declared that this pony could go anywhere that a goat could go, and I verily believe he could.⁶³

At Ruatahuna, fresh horses that were more in keeping with the Thoroughbred type that the distinguished gentlemen would have been used to were offered. The Governor insisted on sticking to his dependable pony and James Carroll 'also refused to be parted from his faithful Socrates'. 'These two', recalled Ross, 'were wise of their generation, for the other members of the party soon found that the change from the horse of the Maori to the horse of the Pakeha was not one for the better'.⁶⁴ A later Urewera traveller who combined pig hunting with bird study in the early 1920s was pleased to have a Māori horse under him to make the numerous and dangerous river crossings needed to transverse such terrain. He explained that 'the Maories have a better chance of safe crossing than do the Pakehas, as most of their horses are born and bred near the river, and are excellent swimmers'.⁶⁵

With the growth of urbanisation and the diminishing wilderness, the Māori horseman and his dependable steed could be seen as a relic associated with the passing of the frontier. By the early years of the twentieth century, the image of the mounted Māori acquired an exotic or picturesque quality that was coloured by the popular imagery of the American Wild West. As Amerindians performed in Wild West Shows and mounted their ponies to take their place in civic parades, so too did Māori horsemen.

⁶³ Malcolm Ross, 'Lord Ranfurly on his Maori Pony', Alexander Turnbull Library Photographic Archive, PA1-q-634-21.

⁶⁴ Malcolm Ross, 'Through Tuhoe Land', URL:<http://ead.natlib.govt.nz/ranfurly/images/Tuhoe22.jpg>, Accessed 2 Jan 2007.

⁶⁵ R. Hans Haeusler, 'A Trip to Maungapohatu Over Forty Years Ago', *Historical Review*, XI:2, (1963), pp.72-9.

South African visitors to a turn of the century A&P show at Masterton were impressed by its Grand Parade in which fifty ‘well mounted Maories’ led the march of prize winning horses and ponies to the accompaniment of the band.⁶⁶ The Grand Harvest Festival and Floral Fete held in Christchurch in 1903, advertised, along with its traditional horticultural displays, an exhibition of roughriding and horse taming by ‘Kaffir and Maori Braves’.⁶⁷ The association between the American and New Zealand frontier extended beyond popular entertainment and is also evident in literature and art well into the twentieth century. Trevor Lloyd’s print entitled ‘Te Ko on the Warpath’ reveals the dramatic silhouette of a mounted warrior, emerging from a bush framed clearing (Figure 17). The clearly delineated bush leaves the viewer in no doubt of the New Zealand setting but the image of the warrior is confusing. With three eagle-like feathers standing erect from his head and the wielded weapon bearing no resemblance to anything in the New Zealand arsenal, the figure is more akin to the native American plainsman than the Māori of the colonial wars. James Cowan was also struck by what he saw as a close similarity between frontier life and the conflict between the peoples of North America and those of New Zealand. Some of his language is clearly borrowed from the literature of the Wild West, describing for example Māori, ‘swaggering through the settlements with double-barrel gun and tomahawk, ready to fight to the death’. But also in the spirit of Romanticism, Cowan recognised aspects of Māori warrior culture that he likened to the ‘chivalrous tournaments’ of the medieval age. As the knights of old, riding out to defend their ideals, he saw Māori determination to retain their land as a noble cause and heralded ‘their savage chivalry’ in its protection.⁶⁸ For Cowan, the deep attachment of Māori to the land was a quality that filtered through to other rural New Zealanders:

Yet the passionate affection with which the Maori clung to his tribal lands is a quality which undeniably tinges the mind and outlook of the farm-bred, country-loving white New Zealander to-day. The native-born has unconsciously assimilated something of the peculiar patriotism that belongs to the soil; the *genius loci* of the old frontiers has not entirely vanished from the hills and streams.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ MacDonald (ed.), *Agriculture Within the Empire*, p.98.

⁶⁷ *Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Journal*, 5:1 (1903), p.9.

⁶⁸ Cowan, V. I, pp. 1-4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.3.



Figure 17, Trevor Lloyd, 'Te Ko on the Warpath' Auckland Art Gallery, 1973/7/103.

This sense of connection to the frontier landscape can be identified in the horse traditions in some of more remote rural areas of the country today. A strong horse culture exists in the Ngāti Parou territory of the East Coast of the North Island. Here the animals, sometimes referred to as Ngāti (or Nati) Horses or Coastie Ponies, are bred, raised and trained on traditional lines. The term, pony, is often used to describe the smallish size but can also be intended as demeaning. Recalling that European culture has traditionally respected large horses; whether the so called ‘high horses’ of the Medieval knight, the powerful agricultural or wagon horses and even extending to the weight carrying hunters and stately coach horses, size mattered. Control over the Coastie Ponies that roam the remote river valleys may appear uncertain to the outside eye, but individual ownership of each animal is recognised. Breeding is also not a haphazard affair. New blood is introduced periodically by way of a new stallion and horses with physical or temperament problems are rigorously culled. An auctioneer at one of the East Coast horse sales might jokingly describe a horse, ‘by bush out of scrub’, but a closer scrutiny of the catalogue indicates that the sire and dam are generally known and local knowledge is likely able to provide a longer pedigree.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, as Gisborne horse trainer, Darin Brown, explained in a *Gisborne Herald* article, the fact that the horses that are ‘born free and bred on some of the toughest terrain this country has to offer’ and sometimes untouched until age eight or nine, makes East Coast horsemanship unique. In most places in the world, horses are handled from the time they are foals.⁷¹

Māori horse handling methods are sometimes criticised as being overly harsh but such stereotyping fails to consider that humane and effective horsemanship is recognised and highly regarded in many communities. Animals trained by such horsemen as Starr Rutene of Te Karaka in Poverty Bay are sought after by Māori as well as Pākehā for their safety and suitability for children’s ponies.⁷² Darin Brown dismisses new age ‘horse whisperer’ theories, claiming that ‘patience, time and compromise’ remain the key to developing safe and serviceable saddle horses. Unlike some traditional and

⁷⁰ Ngahiwi Station Horse Sale , Attended 1 April 2004, Sale Catalogue, URL:http://www.wiganhorses.net.nz/Ngahiwi_Station_2004_Horse_Sale/ind..., Accessed 27 Mar 2004.

⁷¹ Marianne Spence, ‘Fame of Nati Horses an East Coast Legacy’, http://www.gisborneherald.co.nz/archives/September2k3/news/news_26-09-2k3.htm, Accessed 13 Nov 2003.

⁷² Jen Meban, Te Hau Station, Whatatutu, Personal Communication.

contemporary horse management practices, for Brown the 'issue was not one of control but of mutual trust'. He believes that in his environment 'you have to stay one step ahead of them but there are moments when you have to rely on them to save you or get you through so you can't always be in control – you have to create a partnership'. Brown begins the training of a horse for a client, by gaining the animal's trust through thoughtful handling and riding. When he determines the horse is quiet enough, his partner Sonia rides the animal to the stage where his thirteen year old nephew, Cody, can take over. This is to ensure that the horse can relate to any rider before going back to its owner. A time consuming method, it is reminiscent of the communal method of breaking in horses that Alfred Saunders wrote about many years earlier. Brown acknowledges the lineage of his horsemanship knowledge; methods were that were learned from his father, Rua Brown, who had acquired them from his trainer, Gordon Goodley. Such knowledge, Brown regards as a 'legacy' that comes with the responsibility to pass on the skills to the succeeding generation. Darin Brown acknowledges that the horsemen of the East Coast can be misrepresented; 'people call them cowboys but that is not the case, they are horsemen'.⁷³

Brown may not like the designation, 'cowboy', with its implied rugged masculine qualities associated with the frontier traditions of the American West, but there is no doubt that the sport and traditions of rodeo has attracted a high degree of Māori participation since its inception in New Zealand. A photograph of the steer riding prize winners at Taumarunui at one of the country's earliest events shows W. Wipaki, J. James and R. Hawira.⁷⁴ Today, the Church family is undeniably New Zealand's leading rodeo family with various members currently holding five out of the top ten places in the All Round Standings.⁷⁵ Patriarch, Mervyn Church, (Ngāti Tuwhareotoa, Te Ati Haunui a Pāpārangi, Ngāti Maniapoto) is recognised nationally with an Order of Merit for his services to rodeo in New Zealand and has been inducted into the Māori Sports Hall of Fame. His achievements have also been recognised

⁷³ Marianne Spence, 'Fame of Nati Horses an East Coast Legacy',
URL:http://www.gisborneherald.co.nz/archives/September2k3/news/news_26-09-2k3.htm, Accessed 13 Nov 2003.

⁷⁴ 'Prize Winners in the Novice Steer-Riding at the Taumarunui Rodeo', *Talley-Ho*, 46 (1955). p.5.

⁷⁵ New Zealand Rodeo Cowboys Association, 'Open standings',
URL:<http://www.roeonz.co.nz/Standings/Openstandings.htm>, Accessed 14 Jan 2008.

internationally and his portrait hangs in the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Colorado.⁷⁶ The Māori Television Service followed the fortunes of the Church family and four other families on the rodeo circuit in the production of its 2006 and 2007 reality series, *Rodeo Kaupoai*.⁷⁷

Of all the equestrian pursuits practiced in contemporary New Zealand, rodeo draws the most male participants. With the exception of barrel racing in which is traditionally classified as a female event, the rest of the 'timed events' as well as all the 'rough stock' contests are exclusive to men. Rodeo is also recognised as a hard and dangerous sport, not for the faint hearted. As Daryl Church states, 'You can't be a sissy in rodeo. So you've got broken ribs? So what? You've got 10 seconds to stay on the horse and that's not long to put up with the pain. Get on and do it.'⁷⁸ It is possible that this macho attitude applies to other equestrian endeavours and offers insight into Glenda Northey's 2003 research on equestrian related injuries. She noted that among Māori, approximately two thirds (67%) of equestrian injuries were sustained by men. This differed from the New Zealand Pakeha/European/Other ethnic group in which females (73%) were most at risk. In the age group 60 years and over, all Māori injuries were males. Northey also found that injuries to Māori were highest in the regions of Bay of Plenty (30%), East Coast (21%) and Northland (17%). Although these are recognised as rural areas where horse use can be work related along with sport and recreation, there has been no further work on ascertaining causation or relating injury to horse numbers or occupational use.⁷⁹

It would be incorrect to imply that all Māori horse traditions involve the rougher and higher risk pursuits. A fellow member of the Māori Sports Hall of Fame to Mervyn Church and also a recipient of the ONZM for his services to the equine industry is Eric Ropiha, the highly respected owner/trainer of race horses. Ropiha is also renowned nationally and internationally, both as a rider and a trainer of elite

⁷⁶ *Rotorua Daily Post*, 13 Dec 2005, <http://www.dailypost.co.nz/local/sport/storydisplay.cfm?storyID=36646347thesection...>, 30 Jan 2007.

⁷⁷ 'Reality Rodeo Show is a Bucking Good Ride!' Press Release Maori Television Service, 12 Jul 2006, URL:<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/CU0607/S00107.htm>, Accessed 30 Jan 2007. The second Rodeo Kaupoai series screened during the 2007 winter/autumn.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Glenda Northey, 'Equestrian Injuries in New Zealand, 1993-2001; Knowledge and Experience', *The New Zealand Medical Journal*, 116:1182 (2003), URL:<http://www.nxma.org.nz/journal/116-1182/601/>, Accessed 6 Nov 2005.

equestrian riders including those practitioners of the highly disciplined and classical art of dressage. Nor would it be correct to assume that it is only Māori that participate in the equestrian activities that are deeply rooted in the rural landscape. Local people, regardless of race or ethnicity, continue to come together to participate in horse based recreational activities. 'Horse Sports' remain popular in areas where horses still play an important role in the working and cultural life of community. Such events in Northland, the East Coast and the Bay of Plenty are reminiscent of locally organised activities of the pioneering past. They are often used as a form of school or local fund raising but are also recognised as a means of instilling a sense of community. Competitions include bending races where the rider guides his or her mount around a series of stakes and potato races that require the rider to spear a potato, one at a time then to dash back to deposit it into a drum before returning for another. Such contests require speed, precision and a willing mount and are similar to the military games played by cavalry and volunteer mounted units of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One of the features of contemporary Horse Sports, however, is their inclusive nature that encourages participation regardless of the age or skill of the rider or the type of horse or pony. At McGarry's North West Challenge Horse Event at Umawera in the Hokianga, where a Kindy Barrel Race is held for the under fives, tiny youngsters are mounted and led at a plodding walk around the three barrels by siblings little older than themselves. Later, in the same race for adults the show announcer and spectators demonstrate their patience and support for a Pacific Island newcomer in the area willing 'to give it a go' yet clearly lacking the skills to muster more than a gentle trot on his borrowed mount.⁸⁰ Starr Rutene emphasises the importance of participation as well as respect for one's horses and fellow competitors during the twelve week summer Horse Sport series he helps organise in the Gisborne area each summer.⁸¹

Horse Sport events and the degree of outside involvement vary according to the physical and cultural environment. McGarry's Endurance Race is a gruelling contest for skilled riders and their horses up and down a steep hillside, involving crossing a rock strewn stream and picking a way through a bog. A wild, 'anything goes' game of Mongolian Polo using a freshly shot goat completes the day's equine events before

⁸⁰ McGarry's North West Challenge Horse Event, Umawera, Attended 29 Jan 2005.

⁸¹ Starr Rutene, Te Karaka, Personal Communication, John Mossman, Personal Communication.

spectators and competitors sit down to a hangi. Te Teko's annual Brumby Races, organised by the Eastern Bay of Plenty Hunt Club is a widely advertised event that offers a range of races on the local race track. Held on the first Sunday in November, in a parody of the Melbourne Cup's first Tuesday, it draws a large crowd of spectators. While novelty races for Morgan horses, Clydesdales, pintos, donkeys and miniatures pulling sulkies, may feature highly in the advertising, hotly contested pony and hack races offering significant prize money remain the draw card for the local, mainly young Māori horsemen and women. For these competitions, mandatory helmets are the only concession to traditional jockey dress, and as many participants ride to the racecourse without one, helmets are placed by the entrance to the track for participants to don before heading for the start line.⁸²

Māori organised equestrian events, as with all cultural activities evolve to suit the changing needs and interests of the community. Traditional contests from the past can be seen to sit comfortably with new events or ones borrowed or altered from other traditions. In 2006 when Ngāti Parou celebrated their tenth annual Inter Marae Sports Festival, popularly known as the 'Pa Wars', at Ruatoria, three equestrian events were added to the mix of regular events of chess, euchre, touch rugby, swimming, tennis, karaoke and trivial pursuits. The reporter from the *Franklin County News* found the potato race 'a mesmerising mix of equine power and human skill' made all the more impressive by the fact that some competitors rode bareback but was also impressed by the measured control of the dressage tests conducted alongside.⁸³

Innovation and continuity are features of a broader range of contemporary Māori equestrian activities. The association with tribal land and the horses that roamed it are being used to promote a distinctive form of horse trekking to appeal to the tourist market. Promoted as one of the top ten activities in Auckland and Northland by the *The Māori Travel Guide*, Pakiri Beach Horse Rides offers visitors the opportunity to ride with the Haddon family, descendents of the ancient Ngāti Wai chief Te kiri, on the trails of their ancestors.⁸⁴ Another company, Aotea Horsetreks, invites riders to

⁸² Brumby Race Day, Te Teko, Attended 9 Nov 2003.

⁸³ *Franklin County News*, 12 Jan 2006, p.15.

⁸⁴ Paul Whitfield, *to the Tail of the Fish/Auckland and Northland, New Zealand: The Māori Travel Guide*, Wellington: Tai Tokerau Māori & Cultural Tourism, 2005, pp.7, 45-6., 'Pakiri Beach Horse Rides', URL:<https://www.horseride-nz.co.nz/horses01.html>, Accessed 6 Feb 2007.

‘saddle up with the tangata whenua’ of the Aotea and Kawhia Harbours, with guides who are the ‘horse experienced Tūāpiki whanau’ of Tainui descent.⁸⁵ The advertising literature also makes much of the unique characteristics and management of the horses. The Pakiri Beach trekking horses are portrayed as mainly crossbred station horses, sourced from the Far North or the East Coast and specially selected for their work:

All our horses are chosen for their kind temperaments and their unflappable attitudes. They are forward going and relaxed and we keep them kind by rotating their work schedules and treating them well. Those used on the long multi day rides are chosen for their courage, fitness and dependability in all and unexpected situations.⁸⁶

The capability of the horses is also attributed to the animals living in a natural state. As the promotional literature proclaims, the Pakiri ‘horses live in a herd and have their own hierarchy and politics which we all respect. They live out all year in grassy paddocks.’⁸⁷ Te Urewera Adventures horses are born and bred in the area, ‘reliable and sure-footed’ to cope with their trekking country, described as ‘wild, untamed mountain terrain’ with ‘vast tracts of virgin bush’. The Ruatahuna company’s website includes a testimonial by American Western actor and rider, James Drury, who claimed to have never ridden any horses like the Urewera horses and proclaimed them, ‘the best in the world’.⁸⁸

These contemporary examples of the use of Māori horses are evidence of a strong tradition of Māori horsemanship that continues to evolve to suit the needs of its people. It stands on a firm foundation of relationships with horses that was established early in the colonisation process. Much has been written of the gifting of horses by the colonisers but these accounts tend to underestimate the meaningful way in which Māori deliberately altered and shaped both the animals as well as equine customs to become part of their own cultural practice. There are, however, signs that this is changing. Māori Pony is no longer a term of derision as it once was.

⁸⁵ ‘Horsetrek New Zealand with Horsetreks New Zealand’, URL:<http://www.kingcountry.co.nz/aotea.php>, Accessed 23 Dec 2006.

⁸⁶ URL:<http://www.horseride-nz.co.nz/horses01.html>, Accessed 6 Feb 2007.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ ‘Te Urewera Adventures of New Zealand’, URL:<http://www.teureweraadventure.co.nz/>, Accessed 19 Sep 2006.

There seems to be a growing appreciation for the rugged, reliable horses that have been associated with this country for a long time and sought after for a wide variety of equestrian pursuits. Just as the Māori Pony can be identified as distinctly New Zealand, so too, can the traditions that have developed around them be recognised as having a character, spirit and history of their own. In one of his recent 'Horse Show' programmes, well known New Zealand equestrian personality Marcus Wild, expressed his admiration for the skilful riding, good sportsmanship along with and the fun and hospitality he experienced at an East Coast Horse Sports event.⁸⁹ Such enthusiasm for Māori horses and horsemanship cannot help but be bolstered by international recognition. Lonely Planet's representation of a Māori horseman on the cover of their New Zealand guidebook is a clear indication that Māori horsemanship is regarded, at least by some, as a special and unique feature of this country.

⁸⁹ Wild Productions, 'The Horse Show', Sky Sport, Nov 2007.

10. The Case of the Missing New Zealander

Today a bewildering variety of horse breeds and types are represented in New Zealand stallion parades and on its show grounds and other sporting venues. Some names like the Thoroughbred, Shetland Pony or Clydesdale have a comforting familiarity but others such as the Selle Francais and Homozygous Tobiano are a reminder that despite New Zealand's allegiance to its British traditions, its people have always been open to other cultural influences. There is, however, one horse that is never seen. The New Zealander, the animal that British rider and author, T.F. Dale, identified at the beginning of the twentieth century as distinct from other colonial horses simply no longer exists if indeed it ever did. The rosy future Dale predicted for the animal he identified as still in development failed to materialise.¹ Duncan Holden, editor of *The New Zealand Horseman*, published in 1967, expressed surprise that his country had 'not yet developed a New Zealand breed of horse'.² Forty years later, New Zealand appears to be no closer to having a nationally recognised breed of its own. Two distinctive horses, the Kaimanawa and the Māori Horse, have been identified. While both are unique to this country, neither can be said to claim national status. This chapter will address the question; why New Zealand has not followed the lead of other New World countries such as Canada and Australia in their designation of national horses?

Although New Zealand may not have a national horse, it continues to recognise the role that horses have played throughout its history. Some of these horses and the traditions they represent are commemorated in this country's heritage. Since the early colonial period New Zealand equestrian interests have largely been served by British horses with their associated practices and it is to these that New Zealand continues to cling. Horse heritage in this country has two major strands, both of which evoke a nostalgic memory of the rural past. One of these involves the ideology and horses of the British pastoral ideal. Imported British horses such as the Scottish Clydesdale and the English Thoroughbred continue to be appreciated for their proud bloodlines as

¹ Dale, 'Colonial Horses', pp.239-41.

² Holden, *New Zealand Horseman*, p.9.

well as for their contribution in forging a vigorous British colony in the South Pacific. Intertwined with this, however, is the creation of horses adapted to the unique conditions of the colonial frontier. These are the horses that are now identified with particular regions such as the Gisborne Stationbred or the more localised St James and other horses that are associated with the particular station on which they were bred. While both of these strands had their beginnings in the rural past, they have not been immune to change. It is evident that the horse, and the values it encapsulates, can be shaped to conform to contemporary needs. The horse remains a symbol of the rural ideal but its meaning has been extended to include corporate or individual as well as social and material success. New Zealand may not have call for a national horse on which to hang its stories but horses continue to have an important cultural role in this country.

Like other western countries, nostalgia for the horses that shaped the country began around the middle of the twentieth century at a time when the days of the working horse were fast fading. Unlike Britain, Australia and Canada, however, no theme parks or spectacular displays of national horsemanship were developed to loudly proclaim the role of the horse in this country. Horse heritage in this country is generally low key and centred on local and private recognition. As historian Gavin McLean indicates, government interest in heritage preservation in New Zealand is for the most part land based, focussing on historic buildings and places, archaeological sites and more recently wahi tapu sites.³ It falls to individual horse heritage enthusiasts and modest rural town museums to help keep alive the horse traditions of the past. While some artwork, literature and verse have been created to recognise the horse, they are largely absent from the public eye. What national celebration that does exist has been shaped and generated by commercial interests. Following the lead of overseas marketing campaigns, companies like Dominion Breweries and the National Bank have used horses to sell their products on a New Zealand wide basis. Also incorporating a monetary value is the recognition of well rewarded equine sporting heroes. Horses such as Carbine and Phar Lap along with Cardigan Bay and Charisma are toasted and remembered along with human athletic celebrities.

³ Gavin McLean, ‘“It’s History, Jim, But Not As We Know It”: Historians and the New Zealand Heritage Industry’, in *Going Public: The Changing Face of New Zealand History*, Bronwyn Dalley & Jock Phillips, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2001, pp.158-74.

As has been discussed earlier, the horse was part of the rural Arcadian vision that shaped the countryside and the minds of its early colonial cultivators. Miles Fairburn has argued that despite shifts in the political and social climate, the Arcadian premise remained intact well into the twentieth century. The elegant country house, small family farm and suburban state house were varying responses to the pastoral dream that was shared by many New Zealanders. He also argues that because the ideology derived from British Arcadian perceptions, it was largely devoid of national self-consciousness and identity.⁴ This Arcadian vision still prevails and is evidenced in horse events at A&P shows with their sidesaddle, park hack and carriage classes that evoke the horses and traditions of eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain. While horse breeding is not the economic activity it once was on the farms and stations of rural New Zealand, its popularity continues on racing and sport horse studs as well as lifestyle blocks on the city fringes. Horse ownership and participation in equestrian pursuits remain the aspiration of many New Zealanders.

The desire to retain both the bloodlines of the foundation horses and yet improve on them with fresh importations remained a driving force that continued well beyond the colonial period. Although most of the breeds of British heavy and light horses were introduced here, the small size of the market meant that it was only two of these that were to grow in numbers and status along with the nation's progress. The English Thoroughbred, with its sporting connections, became the key influence on the light horse population, while the Clydesdale became the heavy horse of choice. Both of these breeds continued to be bred in their pure form as well as used to impart their characteristics to mixed breed offspring. The importance of the Thoroughbred and the Clydesdale to the horses of New Zealand is recognised in contemporary heritage.

Still guaranteed to pull in the crowds at A&P and other displays of horsemanship and rural skills, beautifully turned out Clydesdales demonstrate their power to pull wagons, sledges and ploughs. At outings such as these, much is made of the contribution this heavy draught horse breed has made to farming in New Zealand. Although the Clydesdale on the farm has long given way to the tractor and truck, the horse remains a symbol of the pioneering work ethic. Lacking the government and

⁴ Miles Fairburn, 'The Rural Myth and the New Urban Frontier', *NZJH*, 9:1, (1975) pp.3-21.

commercial support currently found in Britain, it falls to a few heavy horse enthusiasts to preserve both the Clydesdale breed in this country as well as the skills needed to work them. One such horseman, Ian McMillan, gave a demonstration of ‘old-fashioned’ ploughing with his six horse Clydesdale team at the 50th Mobil Silver Plough Championships in 2005 near Oamaru,⁵ Canterbury’s Erewhon station breed from thirty-eight Clydesdale broodmares on their 35,000 hectare property at the top of the Rangitata Gorge. Owners Colin and Christine Drummond raise Clydesdales and crossbred horses with the constitution and willingness to work. As they explain, ‘we don’t breed anything that can’t work’.⁶ Similarly, although Nick and Jill van der Sande operate Pirongia Clydesdales as a tourist venture offering carriage rides, a museum of horse artefacts and farmstay, they emphasise that their horses remain as working animals and are used for farm duties such as harrowing and carting. Lessons in handling and driving Clydesdales horses in harness are also offered on their property.⁷ It is significant that although the draught horse was widely used in the cities and other forms of commercial activity, notably forestry and mining, it is as a farm horse that the Clydesdale has become emblematic.

Preserving the Clydesdale in New Zealand as a breed began in 1911 with the establishment of the Clydesdale Horse Society of the Dominion of New Zealand. Among its objectives was ‘to maintain unimpaired the purity of the breed of horses known as Clydesdale horses’.⁸ This was a major deviation from the practice of the Canterbury Agricultural & Pastoral Association’s *New Zealand Stud Book of Draught Horses* that categorised horses for the type of work they did rather than strictly by breed. While the importance of the Clydesdale to New Zealand was highlighted, the Otago breeders felt the need to form a separate organisation with its own stud book to protect and promote the bloodlines of the Scottish Clydesdale. The history of the breed in New Zealand was formulated with the publication of the first volume of the *Clydesdale Stud Book* in 1914. All but ignoring the earlier Clydesdale acquisitions from Australia into various regions of New Zealand, the *Stud Book* established the

⁵ Diane Bishop, ‘Ploughing Back the Years’, *Straight Furrow*, 10 May 2005, pp.1,6B.

⁶ ‘Erewhon Clydesdales go under the Hammer’, *Ashburton Guardian*, 7 Mar 2007, URL:www.ashburtonguardian.co.nz/index.asp?articleid=8627, Accessed 7 Mar 2007.

⁷ Katherine Mason, ‘Riding Through the Last Frontier’, *New Zealand Heritage*, 87 (2002), pp.46-7., Vanessa Neems, ‘A Driving Force’, *Coast & Country*, 54 (2005), pp.1,10.

⁸ Clydesdale Horse Society of the Dominion of New Zealand, *Clydesdale Stud Book*, V.1, Hawera: The Society, 1914, p.xxxv-li.

history of the Clydesdale as beginning in 1860 with the importation of Clydesdales by leading Otago landowners directly from Scotland. Readers of the *Stud Book* were left in no doubt that the Clydesdale would thrive in this southern land, safe in the hands of the descendants of Scottish farmers. It was pointed out that the ‘climatic conditions’ of Otago ‘were very similar to those of the Valley of the Clyde in Scotland’ where the breed originated as a heavy agricultural horse. Two areas were noted as being particularly good for the breeding and development of the Clydesdale; the fertile plains of the Taieri and the ‘limestone downlands’ of the Oamaru district, where the ‘pioneers succeeded in building up some of the greatest studs that were to be found in the Southern Hemisphere’. As well as creating a written history for the Clydesdale in New Zealand, the *Stud Book* also provided a site to romanticise the feats of the pioneer farmers. It was the author’s view that the early farmers took greater care of their plough teams than the present generation. Great pride was taken in well matched and harnessed teams with their ‘old Scotch collar and harness’. The pioneers tied up the tails of their horses and plaited mains in accordance with Scottish tradition. Like their masters, the early horses from Scotland were venerated such as ‘that grand old mare Nancy’ imported by W. H. Valpy of Forbury and ‘that famous old sire Napoleon’ that John Nimmo purchased for his Wardlands Farm, West Taieri.⁹

Statistics for the numbers of horses used for draught purposes as distinct from other horses began to be collected in 1899. As Table 3 shows draught horses, in contrast to the total horse population, increased to 1924 before they began to decline. Significantly, in the years leading up to the Second World War, horses used for pulling light artillery were included along with spring cart horses which would have been a lighter weight animal than the heavyweight Clydesdales. So entrenched was the notion of the warhorse that their redundancy would have been unforeseen until well after WWII. The statistics do not differentiate between horses used for farm or commercial transport, nor do they give any indication of whether the horses were actually ‘in work’. Some may have been in retirement or ‘turned out’ as faithful retainers once superseded by machine. Draught horse numbers remained steady during the war years as petrol restrictions made it an attractive proposition for farmers to bring their horses back into work for draught purposes. Of the opinion that many

⁹ Ibid., pp.xxxv-xxxvii.

horses had grown ‘big and soft’ with little work, the Department of Agriculture urged farmers to remove from their horses ‘all soft, flabby fat’ and bring them back into use with exercise and work to gradually build their animals ‘up into a fit and muscular condition suitable for the type of work required’.¹⁰ This was to be a short lived phenomenon and draught horse numbers continued to fall. While light horse numbers decreased to a much lesser extent due to their use in sport and recreation, the decline in work horses meant that no annual information on horse numbers was collected after 1960.¹¹

Table 3: Horse Population 1899 - 1960

Year	Total (1)	DRAUGHT HORSE TYPE (2)					OTHER	
		Draught	Spring cart or light artillery	Spring cart	Draught & spring cart	TOTAL	Light horses (3)	Mules, asses & Unspecified
1899	168,300	90,349				90,349	167,766	534
1900	169,090	93,300				93,300	168,631	459
1905	196,073	118,697				118,697	195,625	448
1906	201,476	125,490				125,490	201,047	429
1918	218,363	159,687				159,687	194,452	23,911
1924	123,031	132,662	57,504			190,166	123,031	
1928	111,257	130,222	53,735			183,957	111,257	
1935	98,454	125,553	48,979			174,532	98,454	
1940	87,761	122,245		48,561		170,806	87,761	
1941	85,433	121,411		46,208		167,619	85,433	
1942	85,957	118,054		44,586		162,640	85,957	
1947	84,960	86,694		34,921		121,615	84,960	
1948	89,668	81,871		32,346		114,217	89,668	
1949	90,671	74,004		31,380		105,384	90,671	
1950	96,783	71,811		26,252		98,063	96,783	
1951	95,530	65,901		22,541		88,442	95,530	
1952	96,188	57,434		20,300		77,734	96,188	
1957	96,846				32,463	32,463	96,846	
1958	94,503				28,758	28,758	94,503	
1959	94,488				28,469	28,469	94,488	
1960	104,995							

Notes:

1. Total agrees with census figures
2. Draught horses refers to a horse that is used for drawing a vehicle. It is usually associated with heavy breeds.
3. Light horses comprises the following:
Thoroughbred, Hunter & hackney, Carriage & trotting, Light ordinary, Harness & stable, Ponies, Trotting, Hacks & light working, Hack or harness
4. Data has been extracted from The New Zealand Official Year Book, 1899 - 1960

¹⁰ ‘The Horse Returns: He will Repay being Well Looked After’, *New Zealand Journal of Agriculture*, 64:2 (1942), pp.119-121, pp.119-121.

¹¹ *The Official Year Book 1965*, p.443.

But as the day of the working horse was drawing to a close, efforts were made to preserve its memory. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century artists sought not only to record but also to immortalise what they saw as a dying age. From the second half of the 1920s Dunedin photographer, George Chance, produced picturesque images of the rural landscape on calendars and prints. As photography historian, David Eggleton, has indicated, Chance's images evoke a pastoral idyll of a distant past that extends beyond New Zealand to a 'peaceful, agrarian and comforting' memory of pre-industrial England. Working horses are part of this imagery and like the other pictorial elements they are devoid of detail; enveloped in soft light and mellow tones, they give the appearance of well worn age.¹² 'Labourers of the Field' (Figure 18) and 'The Resting Team' (Figure 19) both have as their subject a pair of Clydesdales harnessed in the first to plough and the latter a scythe. They also share a narrative quality that emphasises the quiet dignity of labour, a theme that enjoyed wide popularity as the country became more urbanised. The white face of one horse and the broad blazes of two others, along with the heavy feathering of the legs, leave the viewer in no doubt that it is the Clydesdale breed that the artist has singled out in this testament to the working farm horse. Another effort to preserve the memory of the working Clydesdale resulted in the giant white silhouette of a horse created in the hillside above the Canterbury town of Waimate. Reminiscent in scale and colour, but not in form, of the ancient chalk horses carved into the rolling landscape of southern England, in 1968 N. H. Hayman with the help of his wife, Betty, completed their concrete slab horse. Overlooking the patchwork of tidy fields, largely formed through the endeavours of the pioneer farmer and his draught horses, their white horse is a fitting tribute. Significantly, the Hayman's based their design on a photograph of Hiawatha, well known Scottish champion Clydesdale stallion.¹³

¹² David Eggleton, *Into the Light: A History of New Zealand Photography*, Nelson: Craig Potton Publishing, 2006, p.49.

¹³ Colin Townsend, *New Zealand Then and Now*, Timaru, South Canterbury Multiple Sclerosis Society, 2003, pp.68-71., Andrew F. Fraser, *The Native Horses of Scotland: Scottish Breeds of Horses and their Folk*, Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1987, p.107.



Figure 18: George Chance 'Labourers of the Field' (1925).



Figure 19: George Chance, 'The Resting Team' (1932).

By the second half of the twentieth century the Clydesdale acquired a new role. No longer needed to provide the draught power on the nation's farms, it became recognised for its heritage value. While the first generations saw it as a link with their Scottish forebears, succeeding generations saw it as a connection with the early colonial settlers who first broke in the land. Melissa Kennedy has shown how the Clydesdale's identity with the pioneering past was used by Dominion Breweries in their marketing campaign that ran from 1986 to 1999 involving a team of the Clydesdales hitched to a wagon of mock beer kegs. Named the DB Draught Clydesdales, the team promoted the brand through a range of media advertisements and toured the country, appearing at A&P shows and other community events. More than an impressive visual display, the team represented a wider set of cultural values that the company wished to portray. According to the promotional material, the team stood for 'the culture and tradition of DB Draught, reflecting the qualities of honesty, dignity and strength inherent in the heritage of the brand and the proud spirit of the Clydesdale.' As Kennedy has argued, the supposed admirable traits of the animals have been used to construct an identity for the company that represents 'a continuity of old-fashioned values and links with New Zealand's pioneering heritage'. For the company, the presentation as a team also has meaning. The perfectly matched team pulling together in common purpose is a powerful metaphor for the notion of a collective pioneering heritage.¹⁴

While the heritage and popular appeal of the Clydesdale breed is used to market beer, the Thoroughbred fulfils a similar purpose for the National Bank of New Zealand. The Thoroughbred as the elite among horses is a fitting symbol for a financial institution of long standing in this country. Calling itself 'the Thoroughbred among banks' and reinforcing this with the use of a black Thoroughbred stallion in its television and print media advertising, the National Bank promotes itself as ahead of all its competitors. The black Thoroughbred also highlights the relationship of the National Bank of New Zealand to its English predecessors. As the bank's promotional material relates, its distinctive black horse logo had its beginnings in London in 1677 when it was adopted by Humphrey Stockes, a goldsmith and banker.

¹⁴ Melissa Kennedy, 'Marketing Our Heritage: Dynamics of Commercial Enterprise and Nostalgia by DB Breweries Ltd in the DB Draught Clydesdales', *Deep South*, 3:3 (1997), URL:<http://www.otago.ac.nz/DeepSouth/vol3no3/db.html>, Accessed 4 Sep 2004.

Upon Lloyds Bank acquisition of the site in 1884, the black horse was became its symbol and then used by the National Bank when the New Zealand company was acquired by Lloyds. Although part of ANZ National Bank Limited since 2003, the bank continues to emphasise its English heritage through the licensing from Lloyds of the black horse and green shield trade marks.¹⁵

As far as actual horseflesh, the written history of the Thoroughbred in New Zealand emphasised the close connection to its English birthplace. Just as the chroniclers of the Clydesdale preferred to highlight the importations directly from Scotland, the same attitude prevailed with the Thoroughbred. The first volume of the *New Zealand Stud Book* which listed pedigrees as well as recorded the history of the breed in this country made clear the desire ‘to trace without flaw’ New Zealand Thoroughbred horses to those listed the *General Stud Book* of England. It was acknowledged that the Australian colonies had imported Thoroughbred horses from England for some fifty years but noted that these were mainly stallions with few importations of purebred mares. Furthermore, it claimed, that the Australians not only paid little attention to maintaining pedigrees but their practice of letting horses ‘run and breed at will’ meant that it was difficult to keep correct breeding records.¹⁶ Some of these horses became the founding stock of New Zealand and were admitted to the *New Zealand Stud Book* ‘with imperfect pedigrees’ on the basis that their performance on the colonial turf revealed that they were ‘well entitled to the rank of Thoroughbred’. For the compilers of the Stud Book, however, the more recent importations of identifiable purebred stallions as well as mares directly from England made for better practice. Colonial breeders who invested in ‘really good parent stock’ and who ‘devoted proper attention to their offspring’ were assured that their Thoroughbreds would rank alongside the greatest in Britain especially given the advantage of New Zealand’s more favourable climate.¹⁷

New Zealander’s belief that their temperate climate and lush pastures provided the ideal environment for breeding and developing Thoroughbred horses was a notion that

¹⁵ ‘National Bank: History’, URL:<http://www.nationalbank.co.nz/about/history.asp>, Accessed 22 May 2007.

¹⁶ *New Zealand Stud Book*, V. 1, p.xx., Peter Willet, *The Classic Racehorse*, London: Stanley Paul, 1981, p.197.

¹⁷ *New Zealand Stud Book*, pp.xi-xx.

extended well beyond the colonial period and was endorsed by international commentators. At the beginning of the twentieth century T. F. Dale declared that ‘no province of the Empire had a fairer prospect of becoming the leading horse mart of the world than New Zealand’.¹⁸ Although toned down somewhat, Peter Willet in his 1981 book, *The Classic Racehorse*, agreed that the environmental conditions of some regions of New Zealand were particularly conducive to producing Thoroughbred racehorses. He identified Auckland, Waikato, Hawke’s Bay, Wanganui, as well as the Manawatu and Canterbury plains as having sufficient rainfall, year around sunshine and high mineral bearing soils. The mild temperatures meant that horses could be reared under natural conditions; the foals safely able to run with their dams out in the open, day and night until weaning. This open-air regime allowed young racehorses to grow up healthy and hardy and had the added bonus of saving money in manpower and stable facilities. Willet saw New Zealand as the Southern Hemisphere’s equivalent to the role of Ireland in the Northern Hemisphere. With both countries having moderate climates and largely pastoral economies, he identified them as suppliers of Thoroughbreds to richer and more populous neighbouring nations.¹⁹ Today, New Zealanders continue to embrace the idea that theirs is an ideal climate to breed and raise Thoroughbreds. Perhaps fittingly for current climate concerns, Waikato racehorse owner Nelson Schick, contends that New Zealand’s cooler climate means that foals are always moving around, racing, fighting and competing with each other. Their increased activity means that they develop the strength, fitness and attitude to contest races more quickly than Australian foals which stand around with their dams in the searing summer heat.²⁰

The idea that their nation could become some kind of Thoroughbred nursery was an idea particularly attractive to New Zealanders. Thoroughbreds were the elite of the horse world with the best of them capable of making of earning their owners fame and fortune on racecourses or breeding barns. Thoroughbred blood was also sought to give speed and elegance to mixed breed saddle or coach horses. It was recognised that good founding stock, a favourable climate and soils needed to be combined with knowledge as well as hard work to produce horses of the highest quality. Early in the

¹⁸ Dale, ‘Colonial Horses’, p.241.

¹⁹ Willet, pp.186-7.

²⁰ *Weekend Herald*, 4-5 Nov 2000, p.A19.

20th century, Dale cited the ‘enterprise of the people’ of New Zealand who ‘would work together (to) achieve success’²¹ The world no longer requires horses for draught, transport or war but the sporting horse holds its own. New Zealand continues to see itself as breeding Thoroughbreds capable of winning accolades on the international stage. Under the banner ‘New Zealand – Birthplace of Legends’, New Zealand Thoroughbred Marketing advertised at the beginning of the new millennium:

It doesn’t happen by accident. You don’t breed and rear undisputed champion after champion by accident. Carbine (NZ), Phar Lap (NZ), Tulloch (NZ) and Might and Power (NZ) have won the world over because of New Zealand’s ideal nurturing environment, superior horsemanship and proven bloodlines. If you want to tap into the source of tomorrow’s champions, talk to us today at New Zealand Thoroughbred Marketing.²²

Although aimed at a wider market, it was Australia that was and remains the proving ground of these and other equine sporting heroes. Carbine was the first and arguably the greatest New Zealand bred Thoroughbred, not only for his phenomenal successes from 1888 to 1891 on the Australian turf but because of his legacy as a sire in England at the property of the Duke of Portland. He is said to be the ‘lynch pin of the sire dynasties of Nearco and Hyperion’, the outstanding stallions of the twentieth century’.²³ Carbine’s great great grandson, Phar Lap, was the acclaimed New Zealand bred gelding who took Australia by storm during the Depression years of the early 1930s and shocked the nation by dying suddenly in California following his sensational victory at Agua Caliente. More recently Sunline, a direct descendant of Phar Lap’s sister, has joined the champions of the past in the racing industry’s newly established Hall of Fame at Auckland’s Ellerslie’s racecourse. Unlike Carbine and Phar Lap, Sunline has remained in New Zealand ownership and as a racing journalist has stated, ‘even the Australians regard her as the best mare they’ve seen’.²⁴

Human lineage is also said to be a feature in New Zealand’s success on the Australian turf. One of Australasia’s leading Thoroughbred breeders, Sir Patrick Hogan of Cambridge Stud, claims that his ‘passion for Thoroughbreds is a legacy passed down

²¹ Dale, ‘Colonial Horses’, p.241.

²² *New Zealand Bloodhorse*, Jan 2000, p.65.

²³ *New Zealand Herald*, 4 Mar 2006, p.D9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.D9.

by (his) Irish father. His family is proud to be descendants of ‘Gallopig Hogan’, the 17th century rebel who was renowned as one of Ireland’s finest horsemen.²⁵ Another New Zealand horseman, Snow Lupton, the owner and trainer of Kiwi, winner of the 1983 Melbourne Cup, is said to owe his racing credentials to being a member of a strong horse oriented family. According to racing journalist, Peter Hilton, the Lupton ‘horse heritage’ was established by Snow’s grandfather, Isaac Lupton, who received a grant of confiscated land near Wanganui for his service in the New Zealand Wars.²⁶

Kiwi’s victory against the best of Australian horses was all the more potent because of the horse’s humble background. Having a ‘good eye’ for a horse, Lupton purchased Kiwi for a paltry one thousand dollars and trained the horse himself by interspersing track work with rounding up sheep and cattle on the family farm. The portrayal of the rise to fame from lowly beginnings was an attractive one to the New Zealand public and flummoxing the Australians with their ‘dark horses’ was part of the sport. In *November Gold: New Zealand’s Quest for the Melbourne Cup*, author Max Lambert, quotes an Australian racing commentator:

For them it is all take and no give. Apparently devoid of shame or even British Empire loyalist sentiments, they come to our shores, but briefly, each year in springtime. They bring with them horses of uncommon plainness and curious breeding who tend to reside in their homeland upon dairy farms and kiwifruit plantations.²⁷

The suggestion that an ordinary working farmer could breed a horse capable of capturing the most prestigious prize in Australasia was an idea eagerly embraced by New Zealanders. It had an egalitarian quality to it that was attractive, but even more significantly it was part of the Arcadian dream that held the promise of riches for those with the foresight, work ethic and skills to tap into the land’s bountiful resources. Winning Thoroughbreds were both the means and proof that success had been achieved. In his article, ‘From Rags to Riches’ in *New Zealand Memories*, Ken Smith tells the story of how his family members found ‘fame and fortune’ through their racehorses. Pat, Bill and Bob Smith were the sons of Scottish and Irish

²⁵ Dianne Haworth, *Give a Man a Horse: The Remarkable Story of Sir Patrick Hogan*, Auckland; Harpers Collins, 2007, p.14, back cover,

²⁶ Tony Hilton, *Kiwi*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2004, pp. 17-21.

²⁷ Max Lambert, *November Gold: New Zealand’s Quest for the Melbourne Cup*, Auckland: Moa Publications, 1986, p.ii.

immigrant parents who began the hard work of felling the bush in 1894 to create a farm near Mangaweka as part of the government's Land Settlement Scheme. Continuing the work of their parents, the Smith brothers developed a large herd of dairy cattle and by 1927 were in a position to buy an inexpensive Thoroughbred broodmare. The mare was too ill to feed her third and final foal, named Wotan, so he was foster fed by the farm's draught mare. From this unlikely beginning, Wotan grew to be the surprise winner of the 1936 Melbourne Cup. Reportedly a 100 – 1 bet, he came from the back of the field 'over the last half mile to mow down the opposition in record time'. According to family legend, the jubilant brothers carried home their winnings in a sugar bag and the Melbourne Cup in a soapbox.²⁸ The 'rags to riches' theme to the story can be applied to both horse and masters and is one that resonates through many other narratives surrounding the Thoroughbred racing in New Zealand. A more recent example involves Trevor McKee who earned acclaim as the part-owner and trainer of the champion mare, Sunline. In his book, *From Phar Lap to Sunline*, Alf Kneebone describes how 'through hard work and outstanding skills in horsemanship McKee has gone from rags to riches'.²⁹

The Arcadian dream is very much alive today in New Zealand racing circles. The annual Thoroughbred yearling sales at Karaka reveal both individual as well as national success in monetary terms. With the hope of attracting international attention and buyers, it has become the measure of the health of the bloodstock industry in New Zealand. Gone are the intoxicating days of the mid 1980s when a Zabbeel-Diamond Lover colt sold for a record price of \$3.6 million but the extensive press and television coverage of the prices paid is an indication of the level of widespread interest in the event. Stories of small breeders who have realised large prices for their yearlings are particularly popular. A *Listener* article tells of 'hobby breeder' Garry Witters, who received \$1.5 million in 2000 for his colt by Zabeel out of a broodmare he bought for only \$5,000.³⁰ The Karaka sales can also serve as a means of recognising the wealth and status of those who buy the pricey yearlings. When Sir Patrick strode across the ring to warmly shake the hand of the man who had just made the winning bid of two

²⁸ Ken Smith, 'From Rags to Riches', *New Zealand Memories*, 27 (2001), pp.38-43.

²⁹ Alf Kneebone, *From Phar Lap to Sunline: My Life in Racing*, Cambridge: Patella Publishers, 2002, p.43.

³⁰ Phillip Quay, 'Kingdom for a Horse: The Race for Record Prices at the Karaka Sales', *New Zealand Listener* 19 Feb 2000, pp.22-4.

million dollars for the Zabeel-Sunline colt, it was clear that the recipient of the handshake had been welcomed into the circle of elite horseracing. The new owner was Don Ha, a former North Vietnamese refugee, who began his life in New Zealand working in his family's bakery before establishing a chain of bakeries and branching out and making his fortune in real estate.³¹

Fortune aside, the myth persists that Thoroughbred ownership is within the means of every New Zealander. Michael Martin, breeder of Sunline and chief executive of the Thoroughbred Breeders Association explained to a *Herald* reporter that unlike overseas where Thoroughbred breeding is a 'pretty elitist game ... once you get south of the Bombay Hills, everybody's got a horse in the back paddock.'³² Racing syndicates are promoted as a way in which the average person can own a share of a racehorse. The 'Pepsi Syndicate' featured as 'the new face of racing' when their horse, Upsetthym won the \$350,000 Lion Red Auckland Cup in 2004. Paralleling the marketing of Lion Red as the preferred beer of the average New Zealander, racehorse ownership is similarly portrayed as accessible to ordinary New Zealanders. As Pepsi member, Lyn Birchall from Matamata explained, 'I used to go out with the girls and play crib, and Graham would play outdoor bowls, but this is something we can enjoy together. We're only middle-class workers and the bank owns our house, but the horse costs us only \$130 a month.'³³

Horseracing, whether harness or galloping, is portrayed as wholesome summer holiday fun that is currently 'experiencing a spirited revival'. A recent racing industry press release claims that people are returning to 'community racetracks' to experience 'a picnic styled carnival day for families'.³⁴ Racing clubs draw upon nostalgia in promoting their meetings as community events that draw together locals as well as visitors as they have always done. The Kumara Racing Club with its modest but serviceable facilities and high level of community support is often held up as epitomising the old time values of the settler past. As president, Tony Connors relates, 'we are one of the few racing clubs in New Zealand where the majority of the

³¹ Suzanne McFadden, 'In the Money', *Canvas – Weekend Herald*, 14 Jul 2007, pp.8-11.

³² *Weekend Herald*, 4-5 Nov 2000, p.A19.

³³ *Sunday Star – Times*, 4 Jan 2004, p.B10.

³⁴ Destination Summer Racing, URL:<http://www.theraces.co.nz/races/news/17.html>, Accessed 31 Dec 2007.

committee are not pure racing people, just hard-working community types who have the Coast at heart'. Realising the potential tourist value of their 'down-to earth' ethos, the club played host in 2004 to twelve members of the prestigious Melbourne Racing Club in a heritage tourism initiative funded by the West Coast Development Trust.³⁵ New Zealand's horseracing traditions are often compared favourably with other contemporary pursuits. In arguing the case for government tax concessions to the racing industry, a *Sunday Star-Times* editorial spoke of racing as having 'a traditional place in the healthy, outdoors culture'.

A day at the races has always meant time out in the open, with grass, brightly dressed jockeys and those beautiful animals that have had such a close relationship with humans for thousands of years. Clean, in a word. Totally alien to the seedy, darkened casinos packed with roulette and blackjack tables, and the poker machine parlours lurking at the back of the pub, populated by dull-eyed addicts wordlessly pressing plastic buttons.³⁶

While racing interests promote their sport as serving national and local community interests, it is the individual effort of horse or human that most typifies the Thoroughbred industry. The inaugural New Zealand Bloodstock Racing Hall of Fame in 2006 introduced fourteen inductees. Sir Patrick Hogan as the sole breeder was joined by Sir George Clifford, George Gatony Stead as owners, Richard John Mason, D.J. O'Sullivan as trainers and four jockeys; W.J. Broughton, Bill Skelton, Bob Skelton and Lance O'Sullivan. Five horses, Carbine, Gloaming, Phar Lap, Kindergarten and Sunline, stand alongside them.³⁷ Well before the racing industry's recognition, however, these horses and others have been both officially and popularly celebrated in other ways. Carbine's hide returned to Auckland following his death to be used to cover to cover the chair of Chairman of the Auckland Racing Club and to make tobacco pouches for the members of the committee. The Duke of Portland also had an inkstand made out of three of the horse's hooves for his friend, Lord Galway, on his appointment in New Zealand as Governor-General, a memento later gifted to the nation.³⁸ Dennis Glover's poem, 'Phar Lap', relates how the horse's heart was sent to Canberra, the hide to Melbourne and the skeleton to Wellington. Although

³⁵ *Christchurch Press*, 9 Jan 2004, p.A4.

³⁶ *Sunday Star – Times*, 26 June 2005, p.C10.

³⁷ New Zealand Bloodstock Racing Hall of Fame,

URL:<http://www.thoroughbrednet.co.nz/racinghalloffame/>, Accessed 3 Apr 2007.

³⁸ Grania Poliness, *Carbine*, Waterloo, N.S.W.: Waterloo Press, pp.98-9.

such relics are no longer fashionable, Phar Lap's glass encased skeleton is prominently displayed at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and visitors may purchase a souvenir postcard showing the bones of the 'legendary New Zealand racehorse'. Phar Lap Grove in Trentham, Phar Lap Drive in Albany and Carbine Road in Mt Wellington also commemorate their namesakes. While Carbine and Phar Lap's biographers have been Australian, the lives of Sunline and Kiwi have been recorded by New Zealanders and the feats of other Thoroughbreds who have made an impact here or abroad are featured in the many memoirs and histories of New Zealand racing.³⁹

Although having a central role in horseracing, the Thoroughbred features strongly in the mixed breed saddle horses found on the farms and stations of rural New Zealand. The names of few of them are widely known but one stands out in recent memory. This is Charisma, the part Thoroughbred gelding, who brought sporting fame to New Zealand by winning two gold medals in eventing as Mark Todd's mount at the Los Angeles and Seoul Olympics. Following other New Zealand success stories, Todd's narrative of the horse stresses Charisma's humble rural beginnings. Born on Wairarapa's Mamaku station, the young horse's talents were developed by his new owner by doing routine farm work such as mustering and the lambing beat on a Canterbury property. There Charisma learnt to cross rivers, carry sheep, jump fences and travel steep country and became a successful Pony Club mount in local competitions. Short of a horse on return from eventing experience in England, Mark Todd was asked if he would like to take on Charisma. His first impressions were hardly favourable, describing the horse as a 'very fat, hairy little creature' that showed no promise of being a suitable competition horse for the lanky and experienced rider.⁴⁰ As other New Zealand success stories have shown, appearances can be deceiving, and recognising Charisma's innate talent and toughness Todd developed the horse into another of New Zealand's internationally recognised sporting heroes.

Charisma as a stationbred horse is exceptional in being recognised at the national level like winning racehorses. The stationbred or station hack has a long history in New Zealand as a mixed breed saddle horse that is still used in parts of the country for

³⁹ Fiona McKee, *Sunline: Heart of a Champion*, Auckland; Penguin Books, 2005.

⁴⁰ Mark Todd, *Charisma*, London: Kenilworth Press, 1989, pp.6-19.

mustering stock and accessing parts of farmland unsuitable for motorised transport. In other areas, the horse may no longer be used for farm work but its memory lingers and it is recognised as important to the rural heritage of that land. The legendary hardiness and athleticism of the stationbred also remains and makes it in demand for pony club, showjumping, dressage, trekking and other recreational use. If any horse could claim to be the descendant of the nineteenth century 'New Zealander' it would be the stationbred but because it is neither a breed nor a consistent 'type' it cannot claim national status. It has instead developed regional and in some cases, local characteristics. The differing geography, land use and isolation of New Zealand's rural areas explain some of the variations but cultural differences have to be taken into account as well. The strong individualism that characterised the frontiersman is a trait carried through by many of the owners of the large stations and remote farms of rural New Zealand and is reflected in the horses they breed.

One of the most recognised of such horses is the Gisborne Stationbred, bred on the hill country of the Poverty Bay region. Highly regarded as a hardy animal with the temperament to cope with anything, nevertheless, it does not conform to a specific standard or type. Traditionally, each station bred horses for their own use, taking in consideration the particular terrain as well as the individual preferences of the owner. Fast walking horses that could stand long days under the saddle were bred on very large and isolated stations such as Ihungia. At Waipoa, it was considered important to not undermine the distinctive roan colour that is characteristic of the horses that have been bred by successive generations of the Clark family.⁴¹ Some of the Poverty Bay stations have stayed in the ownership or management of the same family for many generations and this has undoubtedly strengthened the will to maintain their horse heritage. On fifth generation owned Te Hau Station, near Whatatutu, horses are still essential for stock work but the sale of some other properties to offshore interests as well as the shift from pastoral use to forestry and other farming diversification means that the East Coast horse traditions are seen as under threat.⁴²

Conserving the distinctive East Coast bloodlines is important to Bruce Holden on Ngahiwi Station, near Gisborne where he breeds and raises horses according to

⁴¹ Philip Holden, *Station Country: Omnibus Edition*, Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 2001, p.143.

⁴² Jen and Chris Meban, Personal Communication.

traditional practices. Although buyers at his annual sale of youngstock on his property are increasingly seeking a mount for the show ring or other recreational use rather than as a station hack, they are attracted to the hardiness and intelligence of the Gisborne bred horses. Holden's motto is 'survival of the fittest' and he contends that when horses are run as a large herd on steep country, they not only become physically strong but require intelligence to survive. The success of the Ngahiwi horses today can also be attributed to Holden's foundation stallion, Panikau who carried the blood of two legendary imported stallions; Kingston from Kentucky and Maestoso, a Lipizzaner from Austria.⁴³ Well known by horsemen and women of the East Coast is the story of Peter Murphy's world wide search for the perfect horse for local use. Murphy who lived at Manutuke, eight miles south of Gisborne, needed a horse with 'swift journey paces and stamina' to travel between the several hill stations that he owned. He purchased Kingston in 1902, a five gaited American saddle horse bred to cover a lot of ground with a distinctive running walk, a rhythmic pace that allowed the rider to sit comfortably for lengthy periods in the saddle. Another characteristic of the breed was high walled hooves that made shoeing unnecessary, a decided advantage in remote areas. Ten years later a further quest took Murphy to the Spanish Riding School in Vienna where with some difficulty he was able to acquire from Emperor Ferdinand's famous stud a stallion of the rare and protected Lipizzaner breed.⁴⁴ Although no formal stud book exists for the Kingston-Maestoso offspring, owners of Gisborne stationbreds continue to take pride in claiming or speculating on their horses' ancestry of such exotic and high quality bloodlines.

Seeking continuity with the ways of the past also features strongly in the South Island high country during a period of extensive change. As Michèle Dominy has pointed out in *Calling the Station Home*, in the last thirty years or so the station has become more akin to a high production farm with more intensive stock management, greater subdivision of land and greater use of topdressing.⁴⁵ Combined with more recent and controversial developments under Tenure Review Act, that has allowed some lease holders to freehold large tracts of land in return for giving up their grazing rights on

⁴³ Ngatiwi Station Horse Sale Catalogue 2004,
URL:http://www.wiganhorses.net.nz/Ngahiwi_Station_2004_Horse_Sale/ind..., Accessed 27 Mar 2004., Annie Studholme, 'Survival of the Fittest', *New Zealand Horse & Pony*, 571 (2006), pp.53-6.

⁴⁴ Pamela Redmayne, 'Poverty Bay Horses', *New Zealand Horse & Pony*, 3:8 Dec 1961, pp.2,4, 8-9.

⁴⁵ Dominy, p.262.

the higher parts of their land, the traditional landscapes and lifestyles of the high country are at risk. Since the late nineteenth century a rich literature has been created, chronicling experiences of the high country and this has continued to the present day in a range of media. The high country continues to be represented as a pastoral idyll where traditional values such as a strong work ethic and close-knit family and community are preserved. This portrayal is evidenced in television programmes such as the long running 'Country Calendar' and modern print material. Peter Stewart, editor of the *New Zealand Listener* wrote in the introduction to the 1983 *Stockman Country* that 'even urban New Zealanders still fondly believe that it is on the land and particularly on the high country runs, that the "real" New Zealand can be found'.⁴⁶

What *Stockman Country* and others of the genre idealise is the image of the stockman as a legacy of the frontier. Fiercely independent yet loyal to his mates, the stockman is represented as a man of few words, hardworking and self reliant. An essential attribute is his saddle horse; both as workmate and as evidence of his stockmanship skill. The popular appeal of the mounted stockman has been captured by the successful Speights 'Southern Man' campaign. Developed to sell beer, the highly masculine image of the rugged backblocks stockman is portrayed as more closely connected with his horse and male companions than any women. When artist and writer Sam Mahon was commissioned by Speights to create a life size bronze sculpture of its Southern Man, he wanted the rider and horse 'to melt into each other' to give the impression of 'one organism'.(Figure 20) To achieve this, Mahon's original conception was to have the saddle, saddle cloth and rider's coat flow into the horse without clear delineation. Commercial interests, however, had a strong hand in the final representation. In his narrative of the making of his work, *The Year of the Horse*, Mahon relates how, bowing to pressure from the brewery management, he added saddlebags in order to prominently display the Speights logo at viewers' eye level.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Foster and Wright, p.7.

⁴⁷ Sam Mahon, *The Year of the Horse*, Dunedin: Lonacre Press, 2002, pp.59, 63.

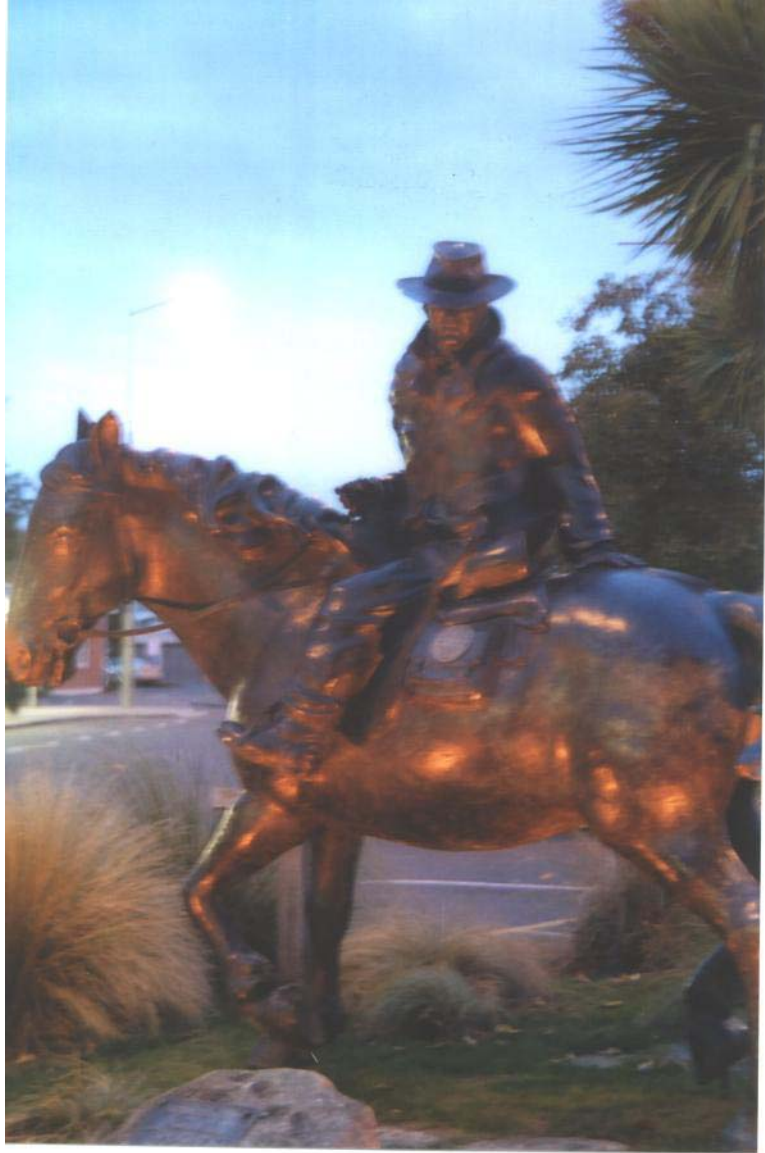


Figure 20: Sam Mahon, 'Southern Man', Dunedin.

Mahon was clear that he did not want to create a horse in the European tradition, 'on its hind legs with sword and sweat and swollen veins'. He desired instead for his horse to be firmly planted on the ground; 'I wanted a St. James'.⁴⁸ The name St. James conjures up an image of a powerfully built saddle horse bred to cope with the rigours of climate and terrain of its namesake North Canterbury station. Since the 1920s the 'predominantly dark brown, low-set nuggety horses' gained a reputation for themselves and were sought by purchasers throughout the country for pack and saddle horse use. Like the other stationbreds, the type of horse evolved to suit the demands of the station owner and its clientele. In 1927 'a Clydesdale man', John Stevenson, took over ownership of St. James and brought in Clydesdale stallions to develop a bigger sort of horse. More recently, responding to the needs of the pleasure horse market, the current owners use Thoroughbred sires to breed lighter, more athletic horses required by sport horse enthusiasts. The St. James biannual horse sale continues to attract horse buyers seeking a horse with high country credentials that has been adapted to contemporary needs. Vincent St. James, the current New Zealand dressage champion, owes his name and ability, in part, to his dam bred on the rugged St. James country.⁴⁹

While the frontier traditions of Australia and Canada have been eagerly embraced in the construction of their national horses, New Zealand's dogged allegiance to British authority within the conservative horse world means that the conditions have not been created to make a national horse tenable. The Māori and the Kaimanawa Horse both belong to the New Zealand frontier tradition but neither encapsulate the required national values, beliefs and aspirations. The Kaimanawa may be nationally recognised through recent campaigns to save them from extinction but the horses are located in a geographically defined area of the North Island's central plateau. While feral horses exist in other small pockets of both islands, they are generally referred to by their location; there is no widely encompassing name for them such as 'brumby' in Australia or 'mustang' in the United States. Furthermore, the county's opposing pull between the 'wild' of the frontier and the 'tame' represented by the Imperialising mission has meant a varying response to such horses. Currently, the Māori Horse is

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.35.

⁴⁹ Studholme, 'Survival of the Fittest', p.55, 'The Famous St. James Horse', <http://www.hurunui.co.nz/stationhorses.shtml>, Accessed 18 Apr 2007.

prevalent in only in a few rural North Island areas, with only a small percentage of the Māori population involved in its breeding and upkeep. The notion of a Māori Horse evokes diverse opinions on its quality, value or even the validity of the existence of such an animal. Engrained ideas of elite British, particularly English, horse traditions make it difficult to imagine that the Māori Horse would be universally adopted as have been the haka, the koru or other Māori cultural practices have been.

The New Zealander cannot be said to be lost or forgotten for it never did exist in the New Zealand mind. The foundation laid during the colonial period that transplanted British horses and traditions to the colony has remained fundamental to the equestrian culture of this country. Yet the desired British pedigree did not deter a strong sense of national pride in the horses bred and raised on New Zealand soil. The Arcadian premise in which New Zealand's bountiful environment provided the means of success for those of physical ability and strength of character was widened to include equine as well as human endeavours. The horse heritage movement that swept other western nations in the post war period has had an impact here, but rather than create a horse that embodies national strengths and values, New Zealand prefers a more restrained tribute to the horses that have proved their worth in the rural heartland of the country. It is these horses that can be seen to represent the perceived frontier qualities of a strong work ethic, self-reliance, sporting prowess, and Imperial loyalty.

Conclusion

In 1886 a review of Alfred Saunder's, *Our Horses; or The Best Muscles Controlled by the Best Brains* appeared in the *Evening Post*. The reviewer, while praising the book for its 'real literary merit' and for the 'valuable information' it contained, seemed almost more impressed for what it revealed about the author. Noting the author's unpopularity as a politician, someone known throughout his career as a 'hard' man who showed 'little sympathy for his fellows', the reviewer was struck by how the former Nelson superintendent through his writing about horses, showed himself full of 'sympathy and kindly feeling' towards the 'equine friends' he so clearly loved. Concluding that beneath his gruff exterior, the author must have a 'kindly and humane heart', the reviewer proposed a 'new respect for Mr. Saunders as a man.'¹ The reviewer's revelation has relevance to what I have sought to do here. Just as the Saunder's book showed the essential humanity of the man who wrote it, similarly, how we represent our horses provides knowledge of ourselves as individuals, as members of communities and collectively as a nation. While this thesis presents a social and cultural history of the New Zealand horse, it recognises that the human is an essential element of its history.

Although the stories and dialogue centred on New Zealand horses may offer understanding of their chroniclers, they do not provide definitive answers. Horses hold contradictions. They are a creature of nature but also of culture; a carefully cultivated product of civilisation or an untameable part of the wilderness. They can be shaped by a wide range of ideologies. Rational Enlightenment thought, mystical and sentimental Romanticism along with social and capitalist ambition have all featured in the making of New Zealand horses. Horses can mean different things to different people. They can be regarded as a servant or companion, in work or play, as well as a commercial commodity or status symbol. Horses can also be seen to represent New Zealand's diverse local and regional communities. The Otago high country, the arable Canterbury plains, North Island's bleak central plateau and rugged Urewera ranges are

¹ *Evening Post*, 15 Feb 1886, p.3.

just a few of the localities where histories have been intertwined with horses. New Zealand horse traditions are never static but continue to shift to meet the needs of the day. This thesis is a history, but it also includes the present for it is here that we can recognise elements carried through from the past that serve to broaden our understanding of ourselves. The explorer's journey horse, the settler's river horse, the sturdy pack horse, the soldier's mount and the school pony may be gone but their spirit lives on in backcountry horse trekking and community horse sport events. Some of the horse traditions survive and flourish in the New Zealand Thoroughbred, the Standardbred, the Stationbred, the Kaimanawa Wild Horse and the Māori Pony.

In examining the representation of horses in New Zealand, a number of issues have been raised. Firstly, the horse had an important role to play in British Imperialism in the creation of a civilised British outpost in the South Pacific. I have argued that the horse itself became an agent of colonisation by altering the landscape and playing a crucial part in the relationship between Māori and Pākehā. In the establishment of a prosperous colony and country, a number of values grew to be embraced as part of the national character and these can be seen in the relationship between New Zealanders and their horses. A strong work ethic along with an ethos of self-help and practicality marked the successful horseman or woman. British equestrian sports were taken up with enthusiasm but were adapted to suit their new environment. In these we detect an egalitarian quality and resourcefulness, combined with a fierce competitive spirit, all of which remain features of New Zealand horseracing and other equestrian sports today. Manliness, with its sense of loyalty and bravery, accompanied the mounted soldier and his horse as they served under the British and New Zealand flags in South Africa, the Middle East and Europe. In times of peace, it was the values and attitudes nurtured in the rural heartland that were to help define ourselves as New Zealanders and here the horse holds a firm place. Admiration for the courage, determination and self-reliance of the pioneers support a conservatism that remains an element of the horse world today. Although the horse has long been associated with men, colonial conditions which in some remote areas extended well into the twentieth century meant that women as well as children have been able to gain access to horses adding a further dimension to the human-horse relationship. Also well grounded in the frontier past was a strong sense of community pride and independence. Locally organised A&P Shows, beach races and gymkhanas continue to draw participants and spectators

together, reinforcing community ties in the manner established early in the colonial period. Regional differences are highlighted by their varying equestrian activities. In the few remaining backblock areas, shepherds and drovers still ride out on horses, and sports such as polo, horse sports and rodeo remain regionally located. The long and enduring history of the horse in the community offers a further challenge to Miles Fairburn's notions of frontier atomisation. The horse provided the main connective vehicle both in terms of actual physical movement from place to place but also as the focus of much social/ communal activity.

While the characteristics and values of the colonial frontier are evident in the human-horse relationships as they developed in New Zealand, there are other factors that come into play. A tangible tension exists between the desire to embrace the unique features forged in the colonial past and the dogged determination to retain deeply engrained British horse traditions. Show rings and equestrian events look much the same as they did when they were first introduced. Gleaming hacks ridden by riders in bowler hats, waistcoats and tailored jackets would not look out of place trotting down Hyde Park's bridle paths two centuries ago. Hours are spent polishing boots and tack as well as grooming and plaiting horses, dutifully following customs began when every horse owner employed servants to do such work. Horse collars, elaborate leather harnesses and lovingly restored carriages and carts are brought out on show days and civic occasions, keeping alive Old World horsemanship practices. Mounted hunting with dogs is now banned in its English homeland but the sport continues throughout this country with scarcely a word of opposition. Every autumn farmers welcome sometimes a hundred hunters at a time onto their land to renew the thrill of the chase and the hunt ball remains the social highlight of the winter in many rural communities.

But it is not just to Britain to which New Zealand has looked. Australia took the leading role in stocking our lands with horses suited for rugged colonial conditions. It was also to Australia that New Zealand turned to borrow and adapt some of its stories of the bush and the outback. New Zealand's pioneer legend may have varied but the essential elements of the resolute frontiersman, courageously facing and surmounting all obstacles in his way owed much to the mythology of the Australian outback. The role of the New Zealand mounted soldier is inexplicably bound up with that of his

Australian counterpart and undoubtedly contributed to the fierce competition that exists between the two nations. While this combative spirit shows itself in every shared sporting code, nowhere is this more evident than each November in the race for the Melbourne Cup.

The American factor also is an important element in the development of New Zealand's equestrian traditions. One of the earliest was the American Standardbred, bred specifically for trotting and pacing and brought from the United States in the early 1870s. The importation and breeding of this horse helped make harness racing a major sport in this country. The American horse tamers, appearing in print as well as in person, during the early colonial period had a strong influence on how horse management skills were to develop here. Very important, too, were the legends associated with the American Wild West. Making their first impression here during the late nineteenth century, the Wild West has left a lasting legacy and is still seen in the popularity of rodeo in some parts of rural New Zealand. My finding about the importance of both Australian and American influences raises questions of an overwhelming British recolonisation as put forward by James Belich.

No story of the New Zealand horse is complete without the recognition of Māori horses and horsemanship. I have argued here that Māori acquired horses very early in the colonial process and by incorporating the animal into existing practices, developed a vigorous horse culture that shares many features with their Pākehā countrymen. The distinctive horses of the Māori and the management of them were praised by some nineteenth century commentators although these voices were largely silenced by the concerns and events of the twentieth century. Tourism and a resurgence of interest in our indigenous culture, bring with them a renewed respect and appreciation for Māori horsemanship. The notion of a distinctive Māori horse or horses is still not widespread but there are detectable signs that this is changing.

I began this project by looking at issues surrounding how we see ourselves as New Zealanders but ended up finding more. The human-horse relationship as it developed and is continuing to evolve offers a fresh and telling perspective on issues surrounding race, gender and class. While the limitation of space prevented me from exploring these in more depth, it would appear that the history of horses in New Zealand

provides a fruitful point of inquiry. The ever expanding international literature and multidisciplinary approach towards the human-animal connection suggests that this is an area of scholarly research to which New Zealand historians could make a meaningful contribution.

My search did not find a New Zealand national horse nor can I see one on the near horizon. What I did find, however, were a number of distinctive and richly layered horse traditions, many of which continue to thrive in the present day. We are proud of our British horse heritage but we also quietly celebrate those aspects that are uniquely ours. The absence of a single iconic horse in no way diminishes the importance of horses to New Zealand's way of life. Horses and the stories we tell about them still have a firm place in this country. They dwell in memory, but can also be found on farms, city outskirts, beaches and in the bush. New Zealanders continue to support horseracing, hunting, attend A&P shows, breed horses and participate in various horse based activities, all of which reflect a long and shared history between horse and human.

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