

*We acknowledge the traditional custodians of Hunters Hill
and show respect to Elders past and present.*



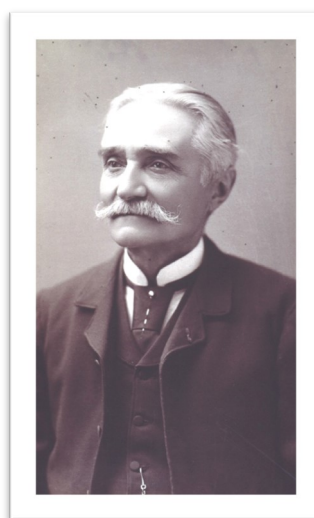
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“Bunk”

“History is more or less bunk”
HENRY FORD, Chicago Tribune, 1916

Jules Joubert does some horse trading

A rolling stone gathers no moss. I am afraid I have proved the truth of the old adage. A fortnight in Sydney proved quite as much as I could stand. I always had a great desire to see Torres Straits and the islands on the northern side of it. There happened to be in Port Jackson a small French barque—*Le Juste*, from Havre—the captain being the owner of the vessel. I made an offer to him of a charter by the month for six months, giving him a share of the venture, my route being Torres Straits, New Guinea, Borneo, the Malay Archipelago, Mauritius, Bourbon, Madagascar, and back to Sydney. On the 28th of June [1854], everything being ready, we started northwards—bound for the Strait Settlements. Fine



weather and smooth water brought us in eleven days to the Great Barrier Reef, which we passed safely, anchoring at night off Bird’s Island.

Captain Strickland, as commodore, entertained us gloriously on board the *Scotia* to commemorate our safe passage through the Barrier and bid us farewell—our course being north for the coast of New Guinea at day-break next morning.

Anchoring close to Kiwai Island, we were at once boarded by scores of natives, and did a fair amount of trading for curios, shells, and arms, but nothing of any commercial value.

After a couple of days wasted at this anchorage, we steered west, coasting New Guinea as closely as the skipper deemed it prudent to do, and dropping anchor every afternoon when the sun prevented our look-out man from seeing the colour of the water ahead of the ship. So far our trip, though a most enjoyable one, was rather unprofitable. I therefore made up my mind that we should make a direct course for Timor.

We purchased here some tons of bees-wax, some very fair coffee, maize, and a large quantity of lime, which proved a very good investment for Mauritius.

My intention, however, being to take a cargo of ponies, we took an interpreter (or broker) on board and sailed for Roti, Sandalwood, and the other small islands of the group, to trade for ponies—Koe pang having already been pretty well skinned of anything good in that line. Even in the other islands I found it very hard to pick up more than eighty of average size, quality, or colour—the piebald or skewbald being in any quantity, but black, bays, chestnuts, and more particularly greys, were very scarce. The latter are the most valued, either to buy or sell. It took us three weeks to make up our number, but the days were enjoyably spent in hunting with the natives after the herd and buying as we went along. Horse-dealing, whether in Europe or the Malay islands is synonymous with roguery and deceit. Every morning as soon as we landed, we were besieged by natives who had ponies for sale. Knowing our aversion for piebalds, they never offered anything but blacks, bays, or chestnuts; but, unfortunately, few if any of those offered could stand the first scrubbing with hot water and soap—the dye would not stand the test. As to filing teeth and burning age-marks, I’ll back a Malay against the best and most accomplished horse-dealer in Yorkshire.

Our cargo averaged £4 a-head. They were all good, healthy young ponies, some of them rather cranky-tempered, but all well

(Continued on page 2)

Diary Dates 2021

Due to the COVID pandemic the museum, including the Kelly’s Bush Exhibition, will be closed until further notice

Mid-Winter Lunch scheduled for Thursday 29 July postponed to a date to be advised

Visit to Manly Quarantine Station scheduled for Wednesday 4 August postponed to a date to be advised

AGM Scheduled for Thursday 26 August postponed to a date to be advised

(Continued from page 1)

up to the mark. Having returned to Koepang to land our broker, and after a most affectionate greeting from all our friends, we made sail for Port Louis [*Mauritius*]. We spent six weeks in Port Louis, did remarkably well with our cargo, bought a cargo of sugar, and once more steered for old Australia. But alas! not with smooth weather and fair winds. The poor old barque, so buoyant and brisk when in yachting trim, smooth water, and under every inch of canvas spread to the trade winds—became a tub when filled with sugar to the very deck-level, in heavy seas, S.W. gales, and close-reefed topsails. Shall I ever forget the fifty-four days cooped up in my cabin, water rushing from stem to stern day and night, not a stitch of dry clothing to change! What a welcome sight the Sydney Heads were, and how glad I was to set foot once more on *terra firma*. **This is an excerpt from *Shavings & Scrapes from Many Parts*, a memoir by Jules Joubert.**

Picture: Jules Joubert in 1894.

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The Timor pony — see Jules Joubert does some horse trading

Reading Banjo's famous poem *The Man from Snowy River*, few spare a thought for the line "*..a touch of Timor pony..*"

What was it about this relatively unknown but influential breed in Australian history?

The Timor Pony has been in Australia in numbers since the early 1800's, with the first stallion being imported to Sydney in 1803. They played a crucial role in early Australian horse breeding, but sadly - just like the Waler - this breed has been largely forgotten.

The Timor first appeared around 1292 AD. Its roots stem from the Asiatic wild horse, which the Chinese crossed with cavalry horses descended from the Eurasian wild horse that Khublai Khan took on the conquest of the Indonesian islands. The remnants scattered through the islands were the ancestors of the Timor pony. Living among the hills and gullies of central Timor, the pony developed hardiness and proven stamina.

Timors were introduced into Australia en masse from 1820, and trading ships continued to satisfy demand throughout the 19th century. Where thoroughbred horses could not withstand the tropical conditions and diseases of the Northern Territory, the hardy little Timor not only endured; it flourished. They landed on the Coburg Peninsula, north-east of Darwin. Many were shipped into Australia as pack animals for the explorers, graziers and gold miners. They eventually spread throughout all the colonies and were highly valued as tough working ponies.

Today, outside the regional centres of Timor, the villagers use it as a pack and riding animal. Australian and Dutch commandos used the ponies on Timor Island in WW2. Without the Timor pony, many wounded soldiers could not have been recovered to fight again. ***The Whaler Horse Owners and Breeders Association Australia***

Premier's colourful life

One of the most colourful characters to have lived in Hunters Hill was Sir George Richard Dibbs (1834-1904).

He was the third son of Captain John and Sophie Elizabeth Dibbs. Captain Dibbs was master of ships serving the Pacific outposts of the London Missionary Society. During the year of his son's birth, Captain Dibbs "disappeared", leaving his wife to bring up the family on her own.

After schooling in Sydney, Dibbs worked for various mercantile companies before a spell overseas, particularly as a trader in Valparaiso, Chile. By the early 1870s, he was back in Sydney. From then on, he immersed himself in politics, championing commercial interests.

Dibbs was in and out of the NSW Legislative Assembly, representing West Sydney (1874-77), St Leonards (1882-85), Murrumbidgee (1885-94) and Tamworth (1894-95). He served as premier on three occasions – for two months in 1885, for one month in 1899 and for over two years from 1891-94. While premier in 1892, he visited England. During the visit, he accepted a knighthood from Queen Victoria even though he was a republican. His response to critics of his award was that he "could not say no to a lady". While one media report described Dibbs as being "big in heart and frame", another newspaper, less flatteringly, said he possessed "an impetuous temperament and imperious manner, British stubbornness, a rich manhood and a robust if undisciplined intellect." In 1880, amid his political career, Dibbs was the subject of a major court case. He was accused of having slandered another member of the Legisla-

tive Assembly, saying that the politician had committed adultery with the wife of Dibbs' brother. When the politician obtained judgement of 2000 pounds against him, Dibbs refused to pay and was imprisoned at Darlinghurst debtors' jail for a year.

During his incarceration, Dibbs was reported to have a suite of rooms, his own manservant and a woodworking shop, complete with lathe, in which he fashioned gifts for visitors. Women friends were said to have decorated his cell with flowers. He described his prison as a "cheery, pleasant retreat, where one can do martyrdom for principle's sake with every comfort". His political popularity was restored after his release in 1881 because the electorate perceived him as being the virtuous underdog in the affair.

After retiring from public life, Sir George was appointed managing trustee of the Savings Bank of NSW. He also took on the role of captain of the National Guard. He was instrumental in getting a memorial erected to Boer War casualty Corporal Walter Laishley Spier at All Saints Anglican Church, Hunters Hill in 1901. In 1903, he opened a new section of Hunters Hill Town Hall.

Dibbs lived at *Passy* in Hunters Hill from 1897. He died from heart disease at his home on 5 August 1904, aged 69 years. He left a widow, nine daughters, two sons and 19 grandchildren. He was buried at St Thomas's cemetery, North Sydney. ***Chris Schofield***