

Further Back Than Walla Walla

By Ken Dyer

Last month Harness Racing International launched their Oz Bred Hall of Fame Posters on the final evening of the 2002/3 Gramel Series at Globe Derby Park. One pacing horse name above all, however, remains as one that most participants will rally to even today seventy years after the stallion last raced. The romanticism of Walla Walla's history began in his racing days and his legend so transcends time that the stallion is not ever likely to be forgotten even though details of his racing career may be clouded in the mists of time. No other Australian Standardbred has ever had an appellation that in a few simple words evokes the hopelessness of the position and which at the same time perceives that the horse will come through at the end.

This is the story too of Walla Walla's breeder, owner, trainer/driver - Les Martin - who was catapulted to fame from a small town country storekeeper and musician to national recognition of a type that had never before been attained by any Australian Standardbred owner and his horse.

LESLIE Stewart (Les) Martin was born on November 2nd 1887 and at 15 years of age in 1902 he started as a junior sales trainee, delivery boy and general assistant with Marcus Clarke in Goulburn. As the years went by the young Les Martin absorbed the discipline of running a business and after a few years there came a desire to establish his own business.

All the Martin family members which consisted of five sons and three daughters were musicians, with the young Les taught the violin and later also learned to play the cornet and trombone.

His father, an engine driver in the New South Wales railways, ensured there were nightly family practices and in those socially stifled days in Goulburn, the Martin family achieved considerable renown and respect for their musical prowess.

Two of the boys won the Australian Cornet Championship in separate years, while the three girls were trained as vocalists and all played piano.

Charlie Martin, the patriarch of the Martin Family, met his future wife Jemimah Flood at Harden in the early 1880's. Three decades later, Les Martin was to meet up with Patrick (Paddy) Flood) at Barraba where Flood drove some of Les Martin's Standardbreds around the Barraba, Tamworth and Quirindi area. Flood later drove several of the same horses at the 1921 Brisbane Thousand meeting at Kedron Park.

Developing into a dance band, the sons and daughters of Charlie Martin formed "Martins Band" which became very popular around the Goulburn district. At one such dance Les met Mary Eileen Ruby McKenny and married her in 1912. Shortly after Les and Ruby started their own small business in Goulburn which they conducted for three years before moving north to Barraba.

How the young Les Martin became interested in trotters is not now known nor has it come down in family folklore, however, it was in the days when the horse was king with motor transport only just making a modest impact when he purchased his first trotters.

Les Martin's first purchase was the black mare Nellie (foaled in 1902), by Viking from a mare by the imported pony Dockin. Bred by JG Markham of Maitland, Nellie belied her common name and breeding that was undistinguished even when most trotters and pacers of those days were only likely to be half bred or three quarter bred at most.

Showing blinding speed on the track for trainer Frank Batt, the 3YO filly had her first start at Epping (now Harold Park) in March 1905 for a six length win at odds of even money over nine furlongs.

In subsequent races the filly paid dearly for her win and was giving starts of four to five seconds in Flying Handicap class to experienced performers and was already handicapped out of her future racing. Despite this her six starts in her first season gave her one win and four placings.

In her 4YO career Nellie again had six starts for a win and three placings, but was now giving 11 to 13 seconds start to her competitors. Not raced at all as a 5YO, Nellie was sold down south to E. Boreham of Ginginderra in the Goulburn district and managed to win twice more (as a 6YO) before being given a long spell.

Resuming as a 10YO for one start only in January 1912 when already in foal to Woodnut, Nellie ran second at Goulburn when trained and driven by R Byrnes.

Byrnes was in fact the trainer/driver of Woodnut and the leading trainer in the Goulburn district. Nellie foaled a filly in 1912, missed a year, and was then served by another of Byrne's horses in training, this time Burlington Chief.

Nellie in foal and with her yearling filly now found herself in the ownership of E Roberts of Bungendore, also located in the Goulburn district. It is at this point late in 1913 that the just married Les Martin, then 26 years of age, purchased the package of the mare in foal and her yearling filly. He also purchased the aged pacer Kia Ora which ran third for him as an owner/trainer at Goulburn on March 19th 1914, driven by his wife's brother. Nellie now became known as Martin's Nellie for breeding purposes to distinguish the mare from others of the same common name.

In December 1914, during the early days of World War 1, the three-year-old Woodnut-Nellie filly now known as Coralie had her first starts at Goulburn and the first drives also for Les Martin, alas without success.

In March 1915, Coralie had another unplaced start at Goulburn, but by then Les and Ruby Martin had decided to start out on their own in new surroundings and moved from Goulburn to Barraba, in northern New South Wales where they soon connected with his mother's family, the Floods.

Purchasing a menswear business Les soon became a leading light in the township, firstly as Master of the Band and eventually, the Mayor.

Haven taken his trotters with him, Martin set up racing stables initially with Coralie, the Burlington Chief - Nellie colt (now named Viking Chief), a locally purchased mare Rene Direct plus he trained Robin and Young Honest Huon for two local owners.

During 1916 Les Martin was a member of the Committee of the Barraba Trotting Club and drove Robin to two wins, Young Honest Huon (2), Coralie (2), Rene Direct (1) around the racetracks of Barraba and Tamworth.

In 1917 a fire destroyed six shops in the main street of Barraba including Le Martin's own business leaving him with very little. The people of Barraba rallied around and presented him with a new violin and helped him rebuild the business.

By this time Les and Ruby had a family of three, two boys Stanley (Snowy), Charles Geoffrey and a girl Norah and it was also the year that Coralie was retired from the racetrack and was sent to stud, dropping her first foal in 1918.

Whilst their finances had suffered grievously from the fire, his Standardbred business started to prosper and largely revitalised the family's financial viability. In 1917, 1918 and 1919 he had continued success with his team and other progeny of Nellie were now starting to win, these including Black Soldier whilst another local purchase Belgian Betty won for him at Armidale in 1919.

Apart from his racing stables, Les Martin was slowly building a formidable broodmare band of daughters and granddaughters of old Nellie and knew that he had to access better credentialled stallions outside the Barraba and Tamworth district.

Having his first fling at winning a "Thousand" pounder, Martin took Viking Chief to compete in the 1921 Brisbane Thousand at Kedron Park, together with Black Soldier and Winsome Gold (a maiden) to compete in lesser events.

Starting from 50 yards behind and driven by Patrick Flood, Viking Chief won a heat of the Brisbane Thousand and then ran second to Robert Simpson's Don Durfee in the Final. On this trip Viking Chief won also at Goodna, whilst other members of his team, Black Soldier and Winsome Gold, won at Kedron Park and Cooparoo respectively.

The Brisbane trip marked the end of Les Martin's sojourn in the northern regions of New South Wales for on returning to Barraba he sold up his property and business and returned to Goulburn.

During the period up to 1921 Les Martin had become actively engaged in buying up broodmares from the northern regions, mares such as Lady Berris, Lady Barbara, Rene Direct, Winsome Gold, Lady Oaks, Jewell Direct and Miss Direct.

Also purchased during this period and located on the Playfair Farm at North Richmond, were the mares Princess Winona and Swallows Nest. A colt by Ribbonwood from the imported USA mare Winona was also purchased from Mr. Playfair, named Volant and became Martin's first publicly advertised stallion in 1922.

Les Martin was accorded a public farewell in Barraba on his departure and was also presented with a silver trombone to mark his time in Barraba.

Returning to Goulburn, Les Martin purchased a property in Dalton, some few miles distant near the Lachlan River and a general store where he sold groceries, drapery, station supplies and advertised tailor made suits as a speciality.

Dalton in the 1920's was a tiny town in a wealthy rural district with the area bounded by Gunning, Yass. Dalton boasts the reputation of the best wool grazing district in the world. The Dalton graziers became very prosperous and along with them Les and Ruby Martin over time finished up with a property comprising several thousand fertile acres.

The whole region around Dalton in the period 1920-1925 was thriving, not only were the wool cheques large, but the hills around Dalton were full of gold and in the 1930's had a tent city at one stage comprising many thousands of people. Les Martin's business quickly expanded and captured most of the available market servicing sheep stations in the region as well as the tent city while it lasted.

In 1924 fire struck the Martin household for the second time - his store and adjoining house burnt to the ground - Les Martin and his family just escaping the flames. As he watched the flames Les glanced down at his hands only to discover that he had picked up his violin and trombone - the only items saved from the fire.

Renting a house and disused garage in the tiny town was no problem for the Martins and eventually the family business regained its momentum. The rebuilding was done with the assistance of Les' brother Frederick who was a major player in the building industry.

Bricks were expensive to transport to Dalton so Les set up his own brick kilns and after the home and business were finished the brick kilns became a commercial enterprise.

The new general store was very large for such a tiny town as Dalton, which although numbering only about 100 permanent residents, had many thousands in the immediate area on sheep stations.

Walla Walla at Addington



Les did not neglect his breeding operation through all this and his embryo stud farm and associated properties were east and west of Dalton had already been named Walla Walla Stud Farm in 1922. His training tracks were situated on seventy acres of creek flats right on the edge of the Dalton township.

The new Martin home in the township, however, was called "Walla Doone", and it was a huge home with large rooms for entertaining and dancing.

Several years later Walla Doone was surrounded by stables, a harness room, quarters for stable hands, and a large feed loft, the complex built on a corner becoming known as Martins Corner.

By 1921 when he took up residence in Dalton, Martin was already potentially a large scale breeder of trotters with the mares he brought with him from Barraba, plus Nellie and her daughters and granddaughters numbering fifteen in total. The problem was that he had no established stallion and while he had great hopes for Volant, he was still to be proven.

Over the next few years Martin was to send his mares to a wide variety of sires at other stud farms and the extent of his breeding programme can be gleaned from the following excerpt in 1922 from the Australian Trotting Record (issue November 29th):-

"Stud News from Walla Walla - Following are some of the mares mated to Volant (full brother to General Ribbonwood and Major Ribbonwood), owned by Mr. L.S. Martin, Walla Walla Stud Farm, Dalton, NSW - Nellie, dam of Viking Chief, Black Soldier etc; Coralie by Woodnut from Nellie; Nellonto by Don Pronto from Nellie; Jewell Direct, half sister to Don Durfee; Winsome Gold, full sister to Brun; Miss Barbara, half sister to Royal media. Folaings reported from the same stud are: - Nellie, black colt to Sparkling Jewell; Purple Ribbons (by Ribbonwood from Pirate filly), bay filly to Globe Derby; Princess Winona (full sister to Winn Alto, Lilia Alto, Winifred and half sister to General Ribbonwood and Major Ribbonwood), bay colt to Globe Derby.

In the following years, mares were sent to Lulu Boy and Adonis, and increasingly where it was practicable he used his own sire Volant. Sparkling Jewell, a pacer he had seen in Queensland on his 1921 trip

was located for a season on the South Coast of New South Wales and some of his mares were sent there for service.

Although Les Martin subsequently purchased other broodmares, his stud was basically now complete and in the years to come, as we shall see, most of the famous horses bred by him were bred from the original stock and their descendants. Of course, underpinning his broodmare band were the descendants of his original mare, Nellie.

In August 1925 Princess Winona died. Martin had purchased the mare in 1921 and had immediately sent her off to Globe Derby producing a bay colt the following year.

This colt had developed magnificently and in hindsight it is now easy to establish why he called the colt after the name of the stud farm which he had previously called Walla Walla - or did he name the colt after the township of Walla Walla?

When the colt was foaled in 1922, the stud farm was already called Walla Walla Stud Farm and perhaps Les sought to reinforce his views by also naming the colt after the township of Walla Walla.

The taking of the name Walla Walla for his stud farm is attributed to Les Martin's high regard for the Germanic extraction residents of the township of Walla Walla, east of Holbrook (original name Germantown), in southern New South Wales. During the World War I, the German residents of Walla Walla had been interned and had suffered severe privations as a result.

Les Martin, grandson of the original, in an article contained in a book about the beginnings of the Walla Walla township stated:-

"Les Martin became aware of the name Walla Walla from newspaper reports about some of the town's citizens. The Great War of 1914-1918, fought against the might of the German empire, eventually gave rise to a wave of anti German feelings against those communities in Australia which were German descended.

They had maintained the German culture, mainly due to the German language being the favoured tongue and this was particularly evident in the Lutheran communities where they mostly chose to worship services in German and still used the language widely between themselves.

Many Lutheran schools also used German in the classroom and because of this, these communities were branded as unpatriotic and not wholeheartedly behind the war effort.

Many Pastors of the Lutheran Churches and the German descended civic leaders of these communities were placed under investigation by the Federal Government under the War Precautions Act.

If any person was considered "dangerous", he was removed from his community and interned until the war was over. Official documents of the time show that these men were often committed without any hard evidence at all, simply a subjective decision made on hearsay. For some, their first knowledge of what was happening was the arrival of the police on their doorstep to arrest them.

Walla Walla, being the largest Lutheran community in New South Wales, was not to escape the net. Church services were still conducted in the German language at the time, although the school had been run by the NSW Department of Education since 1885 and English was its official language.

Early in 1918, several of the leading German descended citizens of Walla Walla were arrested and taken to the Holsworthy Internment Camp near Sydney. Most of them were to remain there until the end of 1918 when they were "released on parole".

Around 1920 an attempt was made by these men to have their names cleared with the action going all the way to Federal Parliament and as such, attracted much media comment. Whilst the men did not receive any official pardon or apology, the injustices of the case received widespread attention.

Les Martin read the media commentary on the men from Walla Walla and it made an impression on him. So much so, that when it came to name his new foal in 1922, he chose Walla Walla, saying he named it after the town of Walla Walla which had earned media attention from the years of World War One."

The origin of the name Walla Walla is obscure. Walla Walla brand of high class leather was already a patented name in the 1890's in Australia, while a town called Walla Walla still exists in the southern part of Washington State, close to its border with Oregon.

The American town of Walla Walla and the nearby Walla Walla River were named after the Wallawalla tribe of native Americans in that region.

Walla or Wallah was also colloquially used in India in the days of the Raj to depict a person employed to do a particular thing. The double use of the name meant a superior person good at his job.

Establishing himself in business in Dalton and resuming his life in the Goulburn district occupied much of Les Martin's time, yet Les continued his musical career establishing his own band. For over

twenty years the band played everywhere between Goulburn and Albury and was well known throughout the south west region of NSW.

Nellie continued to show her prowess as a foundation broodmare when her 1918 granddaughter Tarula (by Medlow Bath) was leased to Sydney trainer BJ Keys winning numerous races in the country as well as Victoria Park and Epping. She eventually returned to Les at the end of her career with a 2:17 1/4 mark.

In 1925 Les Martin allowed Walla Walla, a then three-year-old, to serve three of his own mares, resulting in two foals the following year, but the racetrack debut of Walla Walla was till some 30 months away.

In the meantime Martin returned to the racetrack with Avidious and Volant, the latter winning at Goulburn on 3rd January, 1927. Volant was later sold to Western Australia and died there in 1933.

Also on the training track at this time and very close to racing was the exciting stallion that Les Martin had named after his stud farm.

Walla Walla made his winning debut at Gunning in February 1928 when five years old and followed this win with a trip to the Royal Easter Show in Sydney in April for three wins. One of these wins in 2:15.5 was noted by one of the journalists of the day and a brilliant career was forecast for the novice pacer.

The 2nd of July 1928 heralded the first metropolitan victory for Walla Walla. But instead of taking the five-year-old on the short trip to Sydney, Martin took the two stallions (Walla Walla and Volant) to race at Richmond, Victoria, where Walla Walla won unhoppled in the slow rate of 2:32 3/4 - many seconds outside his Sydney Show record of 2:15.5.

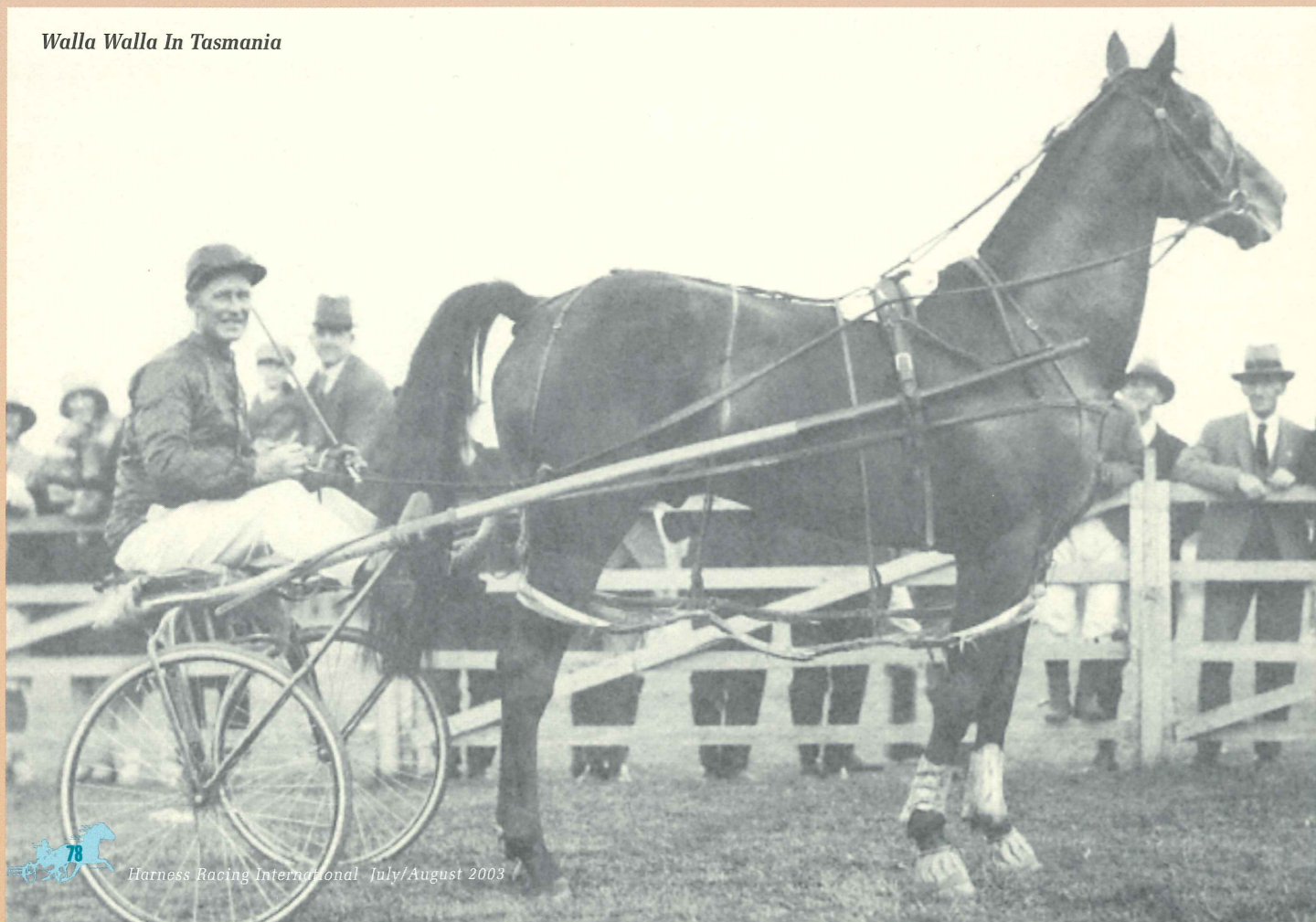
This win put Walla Walla and Les Martin on a trail that led to fame and fortune and eventually to New Zealand for victory over the best pacers downunder. The other aspect of the win was that Walla Walla raced unhoppled, a feature of his racing that resulted in some criticism when Les Martin switched from unhoppled to hopped performances and vice versa over the years to come.

Another win at Richmond followed on 16th July and then Walla Walla was entered at Epping, NSW, on 20th August, but after being sent out at even money he was involved in a scrimmage and fell. In this race Walla Walla raced unhoppled and without a headcheck and Les Martin was severely castigated for this lack of gear by the journalists of the day.

Making amends at his next appearance, Walla Walla (with a headcheck) won over two miles in 4:45.4, but was then unplaced in a heat of the Epping Thousand won by Talisman.

Not raced again until New Years Day 1929, Walla Walla won the first of his Goulburn Gold Cups from the scratch mark and later the same day, Walla Walla was second from a 288 yard handicap to Mahogany over two miles.

Walla Walla In Tasmania



Crowd at 1939 Tasmanian Easter Cup



After his win on New Years Day nothing much was heard of Walla Walla until the 3rd April when Les Martin and the stallion turned up in Launceston, Tasmania for the Thousand Pound Launceston Cup.

This was a strange turn of events for Sydney trotting followers were expecting the stallion to start in the Sydney Thousand, also being raced during Easter 1929. Whatever the reason for bypassing Sydney, Les Martin and Walla Walla were successful in both the heat and final of the Launceston Thousand, but were unplaced in the two mile Easter Plate raced two days later.

Returning to Dalton, Martin put Walla Walla aside for a short time and raced some of his other performers, winning with Jimmy Volant and selling Ribonis and Volant plus others and advertised Walla Walla for his first public stud season in 1929 at a fee of 20 guineas.

However, before commencing his 1929 stud duties, Walla Walla was whisked off by Martin to Brisbane in an attempt to win the Brisbane Thousand, a race that had eluded Les with Viking Chief in 1921.

With his speed and performances preceding him, Walla Walla started from 72 yards in a heat and final at Kedron Park, but still had no trouble in winning both races.

After the stud season of 1929, Walla Walla came to hand quickly for a second to Black Betel in the 1930 Goulburn Gold Cup and a win at Gunning a month later.

Taken again to Launceston in April 1930 for the Easter Carnival, Walla Walla from 60 yards behind went down to Diana Wood in his heat and to The Admiral in the final of the Thousand Pound even, known as the Easter Cup.

After this trip Walla Walla was not seen again on the racetrack until the 7th October when from 24 yards, Walla Walla steamed home for victories in the heat and final of the Harold Park Thousand meeting, beating for the first time, the up and coming Victorian speedster Auburn Lad. In winning the final Walla Walla paced an Australian record of 3:17 for 12 furlongs.

Soon after this victory Walla Walla was again in the stud barn for 1930 and was not spotted again until February 13 and even then Les restricted his star's racing to time trial exhibitions at Gunning (23/2/1931) and at the Sydney Easter Show in April when Walla Walla recorded 2:07, beating Minton Derby's record of 2:08.4.

Shortly after the time trial at the Royal Easter Show, Walla Walla ran third from 204 yards at Victoria Park and after this event a journalist coined the phrase "further back than Walla Walla" a term that still reverberates today.

To the end of the 1930/31 season when Walla Walla was nine years of age, the stallion had started in 27 races for 15 wins and four placings from extreme back marks up to 216 yards behind.

His wins included the 1930 Harold Park Thousand and the 1929 Launceston and Brisbane Thousands. Walla Walla was the holder of the Australian twelve furlong record and it was reckoned by his supporters that he could beat his best mile (2:07) by several seconds, which would have placed him in the forefront of all the pacers in Australia and possibly New Zealand as well.

In the early Spring of 1931, Walla Walla was again on the racetrack prior to commencing his stud duties, but this time a new element was introduced to the career of Walla Walla.

Taken to Melbourne, Walla Walla won at his second start equalling the track record of 2:12 1/4 and beating the rising star New Derby in the process. For the first time the driving of Walla Walla had been entrusted by Les Martin to another driver, this being the young WJ (Bill) MvKay, who also won on Walla Walla at the Melbourne Show.

Walla Walla was returned to Dalton for the 1931 stud season where Les Martin had a busy schedule that consisted of running his general store, travelling with his band and training and racing Walla Walla. And that was not all for now the first of Walla Walla's foals were now being broken in and showing great promise.

Walla Walla's first foals had come along in 1926 and by the season of 1931/32 there were already a few Walla Walla's showing promise on the racetracks.

Les Martin's Tarula, a mare that had been returned to him to be bred to Walla Walla, was the dam of had one of the first progeny, a 1928 colt called Wallawill. Gelding as a yearling Wallawill was broken in as a pacer but like his sire he could trot along a little before changing over to a pace.

Nominating early for the 1932 Melbourne and Sydney Derby, Les Martin found that whilst there were a hundred or so pacers nominated, there were only a relative few trotters. As the prizemoney was the same for each of the Trotting and Pacing Division, Les Martin took a gamble and Wallawill was nominated as a trotter, a decision he never regretted.

On 21st March 1932, Les Martin took his fledgling trotter Wallawill and his sire Walla Walla in an attempt to win a double at Melbourne's main circuit, Richmond.

Wallawill easily won the 500 pounds Melbourne Trotters Derby, but Martin had to be content with a second with Walla Walla from 60 yards to Fulham Pronto in the Flying Handicap. Returning to Sydney, Les Martin and Wallawill easily accounted for the field in the Sydney Trotters Derby.

Walla Walla now entered a period in which he was not raced much and when he did he was likely as not to be handicapped at anything from 180 to 204 yards behind. Les Martin found the Country and Show circuit and time trial exhibitions to be as fruitful as racing from hard marks at registered city meetings.

At the 1932 Sydney Show Walla Walla exhibited in 2:06.8 over a mile and at a 2:08.2 rate over nine furlongs, then in January 1933 he won a double at the Goulburn Gold Cup meeting from 96 yards behind.

On 10th April 1933, Walla Walla won from 180 yards behind at Harold Park and followed with 2:06 and 2:09 miles at the Easter Show, following that with two wins at Victoria Park (NSW) from 96 yards and 108 yards.

After his last win at Victoria Park on 1st May, the Committee of the New South Wales Trotting Club invited Les Martin to race Walla Walla in a time trial at Harold Park on 15th May, 1933.

On the day Walla Walla and Les Martin astounded the trotting world in Australia and New Zealand by recording 2:02.4 - an Australasian mile record - his fractions being 29.8, 31.2, 30.0 and 31.4.

As Harold Park was only a half mile track it was reckoned that Walla Walla could improve his record by several seconds on the far larger circumference track at Victoria Park.

However, this was not to be as the weather had now turned to winter and after several postponed meetings Walla Walla went an exhibition 1:02 3/4 for a half mile "on a sloppy wet grass track". A week later he exhibited at the same track in 2:05 on "wet cinders".

After four more starts for two wins at Harold Park and Victoria Park from long handicaps, Walla Walla was put aside until January 1934 when he won his third Goulburn Cup, this time from 132 yards behind.

After several more performances Les Martin accepted an invitation from the New Zealand Metropolitan Trotting Club to race Walla Walla in a series of match races against New Zealand's best pacers which included the champions Harold Logan, Red Shadow, Indianapolis and Roi L'Or.

Les Martin expressed some doubts as to the wisdom of transporting Walla Walla by ship in the latter part of a racing season and in addition to that Walla Walla was now rising 12 years of age. Nevertheless Les Martin was a true sportsman and decided to give it a go.

On the 31st March 1934, Walla Walla, driven by Bill McKay won the first match of the International Series at Addington by sensationally holding off Harold Logan in 2:04.2. However in subsequent races at Addington, Dunedin, Oamaru and Wellington, Walla Walla was well beaten by Harold Logan.

In each race it could be seen that Walla Walla's form was deteriorating and it was said afterwards that Les Martin only started the horse to keep faith with the sponsors of the series.

On his return to Goulburn, Walla Walla was transferred to JD (Jack) Watts stable and was nominated by him for the 1934 Centenary Thousand at Victoria Park, but on receiving a handicap of 168 yards, Walla Walla was subsequently scratched.

For Jack Watts Walla Walla had an unplaced start at 20/1 from 120 yards, then won over a mile in Australian race record time of 2:06 from 84 yards behind in a Flying Handicap at Harold Park.

Taken to Melbourne by Watts in company with Wirra Walla and Minton Ribbons, Walla Walla won the Will Whitburne Free For All and then at Ascot (Vic.) on 13th November, 1934 won what turned out to be his last ever race. The race was the Australasian Free For All Championship of 500 pounds in which the best pacers in Australia competed.

Jack Watts, many years thereafter claimed that Walla Walla was the best pacer that he had ever driven. High praise indeed, for Watts was in later years drove Captain Sandy, Ribands, Sibelia and Caduceus at various times and they were all regarded as champions of their times.

The dawn of 1935 marked the beginning of a new direction for Les Martin. For the previous seven years, Walla Walla had escalated Les Martin from a country storekeeper to a prominent harness racing personality, taking him to Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria and New Zealand in a quest to prove the champion status of Walla Walla.

Walla Walla's lifetime statistics were 52 starts for 22 wins and 11 placings and in addition to those figures are his performances in Shows where he won 12 races from 14 starts. Overall Walla Walla was time trialled on ten occasions.

However, life went on and the progeny of Walla Walla were showing such promise that they demanded his immediate attention.

On 28th January 1935 Les Martin won the Goulburn Sapling Satkes for trotters with Red Walla and then won the 1935 Victoria Trotters Derby with the embryo champion Wallagalong.

Wallagalong was foaled in 1931 by Walla Walla from one of Les Martin's own mares (Narragalong) which traced back to Electricity (Burling B - Darrerea by Ajax*), a mare bred by one of Goulburn's pioneer breeders, Lucian Faithful.

That same year JP (John) Stratton, President of the Western Australian Trotting Association, contacted Les Martin and extracted a promise from him that Walla Walla would be in Perth in the latter part of that year on the guarantee of 200 pounds if the horse failed to win a race.

Stratton wanted Walla Walla for an Australasian Championship and when Martin contacted the W.A.T.A. and advised that his champion was lame, the W.A.T.A., in conjunction with the NZ Trotting Association, agreed to postpone the Championship from October to February 1936 in the hope that Walla Walla would come good.

In a letter to the Australian Trotting Record on 10th January 1936, Les Martin wrote, "You will be sorry to learn that Walla Walla has again gone lame. He was working particularly well, and still retained his old speed, but this morning at the end of the workout he limped badly, and I feel sure he will not stand another preparation.

Generally my boys gear up and strip the horses as I work them, but as I was the first to put a set of hobbles on Walla Walla, I took unto

myself the privilege of taking the last set off him."

Most colonially bred stallions retiring from the racetrack to stud duties almost immediately find apathy on the part of breeders who as a group have for time immemorial prefer the perceived exoticness of the imported horse.

In the period from 1920 many owners tried to counteract apathy by combining racing and stud duties so that by the time the stallion eventually retired, hopefully there would some of his produce on the racetrack.

The quarter of a century to 1945 also encompassed the Great Depression and World War Two, both events whittling away at the breeding industry base to its lowest ebb.

Many stallions were victims in that era and were too old both in age and breeding by the late 1940's to take advantage of the great breeding boom caused by the advent of night trotting in all States.

Walla Walla was one such champion whose true worth in his time is still not recognised for what his stud deeds were - a triumph against apathy.

His bloodlines are now regarded as "old", however, his input into the maternal bloodlines of the period just after World War Two made the road much easier for the new outcross bloodlines emerging from New Zealand and North America.

Despite a real lack of opportunity the produce of Walla Walla achieved much fame in their times which encompassed some of the worst periods of time for harness racing.

Space does not permit a comprehensive run through of all of Walla Walla's foals from his first two in 1925 to his last foal in 1949, appropriately named Walla's Last. A chart accompanying this article does provide an indicator to his classic winners and subsequent influence of his sons and daughters.

The first public stud season of Walla Walla was in 1929 when he was advertised to stand for 20 guineas and this was after Walla Walla had raced his first full racing season winning nine races including the Thousand Pound Launceston Cup.

The service fee was reduced to 10 guineas in 1933, and that fee remained until 1947 when he was withdrawn from public service.

Strangely, the preponderance of Walla Walla's classic winners were trotters with sixteen individual colts and fillies winning twenty classics, of which fifteen were trotters. For many years Walla Walla sired the winners of more classic races than any

other sire in Australia.

Overall, Walla Walla sired progeny totalling 389 named horses of whom 144 were winners - an average of 37% which even today would be regarded as excellent.

The greatest beneficiary of Walla Walla besides Les Martin was probably leading trainer/driver Jack Watts. In addition to driving Walla Walla for Les Martin at the tail of his racing career, Jack Watts arguably had the best of his progeny that contributed significantly to the success of Watts.

Purchasing Wallawill and Walaven for himself, Watts also trained and drive Radiant Walla and Wirra Walla plus several other Walla Walla produce.

These four horses were champions of their respective times and not only gave Walla Walla a momentous place in history but also placed Jack Watts in the van of the trainers/drivers of those days.

Further Back Than Walla Walla

The crowd is hushed
the moment tense
the punters lean into the fence
and all is still
they stand in line
just waiting for a starting sign.

They're Off! ...a cloud
excitement fills the crowd
a sudden rhythmic patter as they pass
what's that? ...way back?
way back along the track?
no horse could win from there, what utter farce.

It's true...it's Walla!
a pound will get you a dollar
he'll take the field again with greatest ease
he'll tail'em and trail'em
and in a dash he'll nail'em
and prance with head proudly just to tease.

The gap, so small
now hardly there at all
and Walla Walla closes for the kill
he takes the lot at pace so scorching hot
the field remaining almost standing still.

He's gone, at rest
he lived to do his best
and one by one he brought his records down
but yet his name
immortalised in fame
will ever live in Walla Walla Town.

(Written by Les Martin, grandson of the original breeder, owner of Walla Walla)

Walla Walla in 1945 was then 23 years of age and now beyond being a commercial sire and his son Air Ace was also stud by Martin with moderate success. What was needed was an outcross sire and Les Martin did not have one.

Martin came across the unraced and untried stallion Peerless Peter (Wrack*-Carlita the Great) standing not too far away at Temora. Unable to purchase the stallion from Syl Bray, Martin did the next best thing and sent six of his best Walla Walla mares to Peerless Peter in 1947 with the best of the subsequent produce being the brilliant juvenile and aged performer Avondale 2:09.6.

Peerless Peter later proved to be a top class metropolitan racehorse and high quality sire of 103 winners including the brilliant Cup Class winning mare Wickawack and the classic winning Wilbur's Hope.

Les Martin would have been proud to know the selection of Peerless Peter for his mares was in advance of others realising his potential.

Les Martin was also years ahead of his time in farm management and identification procedures. All horses on the Walla Walla Stud Farm were branded with the Martin brand on the near shoulder and a unique number over the year of foaling on the off shoulder.

This system enabled many a puzzled purchaser in the years ahead to come to satisfactorily identify some of the Walla Walla Stud Farm produce.

One such case being the identification of Mary Walla, a full sister to Radiant Walla, that was found in an auction sale ring and said simply to be by Walla Walla and no other breeding known.

Les Martin died suddenly at Dalton on 23rd May, 1948, survived by his wife Ruby and his grown up family and the following year on 19th January the Dispersal sale of Walla Walla Stud Farm took place.

Thirty five lots were declared for unreserved sale and of the eighteen head sold for racing purposes, thirteen eventually won including the metropolitan winners Centre Fire and Whatswhat.

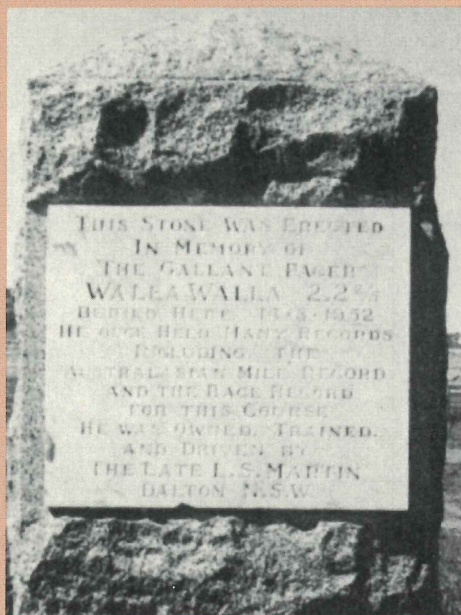
The seventeen broodmares sold included Berris Walla with her Peerless Peter colt foal at foot (later called Avondale 2:09.6). Tattle was also sold and went on to produce the 1959 A.G. Hunter Cup winner Pay Load, whilst Flurry produced Heroic Action 2:05.8, winner of the 1959 W.A. Pacing Cup.

After the death of Les Martin, Walla Walla was kept in a yard next to "Walla Doone", where the famous stallion was on view to tourists to the small town of Dalton. He was just a horse perhaps, but to the tiny town he was a hero who had come home to while away his declining years.

Walla Walla lingered on to March 1952 when he died, rising 30 years of age. Buried near the winning post at Goulburn Racecourse, the scene of some of his more memorable triumphs.

The inscription on Walla Walla's gravestone reads:

"This stone was erected in the memory of the gallant pacer Walla Walla 2:02.4. Buried on 14th March 1952. He once held many records including the Australasian record and the race record for the course. He was owned, trained and driven by the late L.S. Martin, Dalton, N.S.W."



MAJOR DESCENDANTS OF WALLA WALLA

1928 CASTLE BOY 2:16.5 - Harold Park winner
1928 WALLAWILL 1932 Victoria Trotters Derby
 1932 NSW Trotters Derby
1929 WALLA LU 2:15.2 - Sydney winner
1930 WIRRA WALLA Sydney Jubilee Cup & sire of: Wirrason, sire of: Apmat 2:00.6 Jean Wirra, dam of Scotirra (NSW Spring Cup)
1931 TOWRANG WALLA Sire of: Johnny Towrang (NSW Trotters Derby)
 Sired dam of:- Redwin - Inter Dominion heat
1931 WALLAGALONG 1935 Vic. Trotters Derby & sire
1932 RED WALLA 1935 Goulburn Trotters Sapling
1932 BENEDICT Successful sire
1932 BRIGHT WALLA 2:15.7 & successful sire
1932 OUR WALLA 2:16.2 - sire of 28W & dam of:- Atherton Lad - Hambletonian Trot Cup
 Dam of:-
1932 WALIDIOUS Royal Shadow - WA Pacing Cup
1933 WALORAH 1936 Goulburn Trotters Sapling
1934 BEN WALLA 1938 Vic. Trotters Derby & sire
1934 RADIANT WALLA 1938 Snowtown Pacers Derby
 1938 Victoria Pacers Derby
 1938 N.S.W. Pacers Derby
 Sire of 39 winners & dam of:- Lumpy Dean, Vanity Van (NSW Trot Cups)
1934 BRUCE WALLA Tasmanian Easter Cup & sired dam of:- Master Alan - NZ New Brighton Cup
 Markalan (NZ Trotting Stakes)
1934 ROYAL WALLA 1938 S.A. Pacers Derby & sire
1935 WALAVEN 2:13 - 16 wins
1936 WALLAROOBIE 1939 Goulburn Trotters Sapling
 1940 Warragul Trotters Derby
1936 SPARKLING WALLA 2:09.6 (10fur) & sire
1936 KING WALLA 2:12.6 - Sire & sired dam of:- Great Cheer - NSW Sapling, NSW Youthful

1936 LILA'S WALLA 2:10.7 - Sire of:- Kratsa Dan - WA Christmas Hcp
1936 GLEN WALLA 2:20.3 & successful sire
1936 MONT WALLA Trot winner & successful sire
1936 WALLA DOLLAR 2:21.6 - successful sire
1937 WALOTUS 1940 Sydney Trotters Sapling
1937 AIR ACE Sire of 12 winners incl.:- Mariloo, dam of Koala Lawn (Tas C'ship)
1937 ALICE WALLA 1940 Goulburn Trotters Sapling
 1941 Vic. Trotters Derby & dam of:- Edith Maria - NSW Trotters Derby
 Dam of:- BOLIVAR BILL - SA Labour Day Cup
1937 GAY HERO 2:15.3, sire & sired dam of:- The Hermit 2:07
1937 SHANDON RIBBONS Winner & successful sire
1938 WINSTON WALLA 1941 Goulburn Trotters Sapling
 1942 N.S.W. Trotters Derby
1938 SILVER WALLA 2:09.6 & successful sire
1938 AUTO WALLA 2:17.4 & sire of winner
1939 OFFENDER 1942 Sydney Trot Sapling & sire
1939 WALLA COLE 1942 Goulburn Trotters Sapling
1939 WALLAROI HP, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth wins
1939 BERRIS WALLA Dam of:- AVONDALE - Inter Dominion Consolation
 Dam of:- Ribbands TT1:58.7 - first sub 2:00 mile
 Dam of:- Fireball - Vic Sires Produce
 Diabolo Don - 2 Inter Dominion hts
1939 LOCK HEEL Sire and sired dam of:- Lucky Decision 2:08.4
 Successful sire
1939 LUCY'S WALLA Successful sire
1939 MACHINE WALLA 2:14.6 - successful sire
1939 WALLIE TINGLE Successful sire
1940 WALLA PRINCESS Harold Park winner
1940 BLACK CRYSTAL 2:13.4 - Melbourne winner

1940 LETONA Tr:2:17.4 - Harold Park winner
1940 WALLASON 2:12 - Harold Park winner
1940 WALLA'S CHANCE 2:14.4 - successful sire
1940 WALLA'S PICK 2:15.3 - successful sire
1940 WESTERN WALLA Danbury Park Cup & sired dam of:- Hutwill - Mcnamara Trotters Cup
 Successful sire
1940 RAVENSWORTH Successful sire
1940 LYNNE WALLA Dam of:- Interview - Inter Dominion Consolation
1940 LADY WARWICK Dam of:- Pacific Beauty - Warragul Cup
1941 ON GUARD 1945 N.S.W. Trotters Derby
1941 WALLA WILBUR 2:19.2 - Sire & sired dam of:- Copper Dust 2:05.9
1941 RELONTO Dam of:- First Kiss - Inter Dominion heat
1941 FLURRY Dam of:- Heroic Action - WA Pacing Cup
1942 TATTLE Dam of:- Pay Load - A.G. Hunter Cup
 Fourth dam of:- Gammalite - two Inter Dominions
1942 WALGOOLAN 2:13.2 - sired dam of:- John Leslie - MIA Breeders Plate
 Sired granddam of:- Opera House - Aust. mile SS record
1943 BACHELOR GIRL Dam of:- Haughty Girl - Victoria Oaks
1944 WALLA CHARM 1947 N.S.W. Pacers Sapling & sire
1944 MISS DALTON 2:11 - HP & Perth winner & dam of:- Dalspeed - WA Christmas Hcp
1945 CENTRE FIRE 2:12.2 - HP winner & sire of:- Halo Boy 2:05.8
1946 ARALWOOD 2:13.6 - sire of:- Louaral 2:10
1946 TONY WALLA 1949 Goulburn Pacers Sapling & sire
1947 GALLANT WALLA 2:15 & successful sire