

The Exile: William James Tomkinson

By Ken Dyer

Exile: 1. Prolonged separation from one's country or home or 2. Expulsion or banishment from one's native land.

HOUNDED from his native land by high handed, secretive, officious and dictatorial trotting authorities, Bill Tomkinson found peace and sadly, at the peak of success, ultimate tragedy in his new home far from Australian shores.

Born William James Tomkinson in 1888 at Warrnambool in south western Victoria, he was the eighth of eleven children raised by Charles and Sarah Tomkinson. His father Charles Tomkinson was born in 1843 in Staffordshire, U.K., and came to Victoria as a boy in the 1850's wave of gold migration. He died 1927 at age 84. His mother Sarah born at Warrnambool in 1856 was the daughter of Matthew Robinson and Mary Van Ety.

Situated on the picturesque shipwreck coast of Victoria the Warrnambool region in 1845 was described as covered with dense forest and tangled undergrowth. The first sale of town blocks occurred in 1847 and in the same year a start was made in clearing the coastal forests. The Warrnambool area had rich deep fertile soil of volcanic origin in which the local farmers of mainly Irish and UK stock grew huge crops of vegetables and herds of fat cattle and from the very earliest days began to bring in blooded horses. In 1852 it was said "farmers rode to town on fine horses".

Later on in the same decade during the gold rushes to the north of Warrnambool the roads north were clogged with wagons loaded with wheat, potatoes and vegetables mingling with herds of fat cattle all headed towards good prices at the rich diggings at Bendigo and Ballarat.

In 1850 the population of Warrnambool was 342 but it had grown to 2211 by 1861. In 1854 the Warrnambool Show Society called for entries of the best blood stallions and mares. In 1859 the Show Society conducted its first annual stallion parade and the famous thoroughbred stallion Panic was exhibited there in 1868- whilst jumping and trotting were introduced in 1887.

Travel to Melbourne was by road north to Ararat to join up with the main roads to Melbourne, otherwise the only other method of transport to Melbourne was by a sea journey by ship along a rough dangerous coastline not named the shipwreck coast without good reason.

The period 1860-1875 saw pests infest the farming regions and there was a move towards more mixed farming with an increasing emphasis on livestock. The opening of cheap land in the Wimmera district in north western Victoria saw many farmers overland to that region to cultivate wheat and sheep on vastly larger blocks and on drier land.

In this environment the Tomkinson family worked hard to make a living in agriculture and livestock. In such a large family it was difficult for the young Bill Tomkinson to become an individual in an overcrowded family home which was subject to financial constraints, however, as a young boy he developed horse handling and riding abilities in a local racing and livery stable and as well he was a naturally talented athlete. As he grew into a taller and heavier youth he

became a star young footballer in the rough and ready football leagues of that time in the Warrnambool region.

By 1906 at age eighteen and seeking a degree of independence he amicably broke away from his family and made his way to Rochester in the north of Victoria ostensibly to play football. He quickly gained a position with the local livery and letting stable owned by DJ Barnes at the Commercial Hotel that advertised "horse and buggies for hire at all hours-civil and competent drivers available if required. Cabs will meet trains".

It is surmised that the young Tomkinson initially was well known in Rochester as a cab driver for early in his football career at Rochester he was frequently referred to as "Cabby" Tomkinson in the local newspaper the "Rochester Express".

Playing for Rochester Rovers in the local area football association Tomkinson was a valued member of a team that usually won all its matches. Later the Rovers made a big step upwards by joining a larger league-the Goulburn Valley League.

Tomkinson became a vocal member at Rochester Rovers meetings becoming involved in the organization firstly of the Rovers and then the local league becoming its Secretary at one stage. At a formative age therefore Tomkinson was learning to negotiate, organize club business, and to stand up for himself and his club in the larger forums of the local league and affiliates meetings.

Becoming de facto manager of the livery stable at age twenty he took on the breaking in of young horses including a few young trotters and also managed to dabble in buying and selling sheep. In his care the livery stable became well known for its clean and tidy appearance and his horses, harness, and sulkies exceptionally well maintained which became subsequently a feature of his management wherever Tomkinson went.

Even at this stage Tomkinson at age twenty two must have entertained some ideas of entering the trotting industry in a bigger way for he was listed in the Victorian Trotting and Racing Association (VT & RA) records as being granted a trainers and drivers licence for the 1911-12 season.

At the end of 1912 the livery stable advertised that it was now motorized for long and short trips from Rochester and could effect repairs to all types of motor vehicles. In addition it was advertised that the motor garage had taken on the agency for the Central Insurance Co.

A year later on 16/12/1913 it was advertised that the proprietor of the livery stable/motor garage was now WJ Tomkinson ie "Motors and horses and vehicles for hire-horses thoroughly broken in to saddle and harness. Agent for Michelin motor tyres. Agent for Central Insurance Co., for fire and livestock. Motor cars for hire at ordinary garage rates. WJ Tomkinson, Prop".

Turning twenty five years of age in 1913 was a big year for Tomkinson. In addition to purchasing the livery/garage business he

married Mary Elizabeth Campbell at Warrnambool and was on the verge of starting some of his locally owned trotting horses at registered meetings. In late December he started the mare Flora at Marong and on 21/1/14 Flora ran 3rd at Rochester in a trotting event at a meeting of the local Jockey Club.

On 3rd June, 1914, Tomkinson travelled to Melbourne with the mare Gwennie owned by local Rochester identity George Davies. Gwennie had a bit of a reputation around Rochester and was known locally as "the Elmore mare". Gwennie won easily at the Richmond metropolitan track after being given the run of the race but well back in the field was the afterwards star pacer Eminent winner of a Melbourne Thousand in the hands of Jack Kennerley. This was Tomkinson's first win and many eyes were now on him including the Hunter family at Elmore who realized for the first time that Tomkinson was more than a breaker of their young stock.

During the period 1912-14, Tomkinson had begun to break in and educate at Rochester several pacers and trotters for the Hunter family who were then located on a mammoth Elmore property called "Burnewang Park". Robert Hunter the elder and son Alexander (already located at "Northwood Park" Seymour) had noted the efficient manner in which the Rochester livery/garage had been conducted by Tomkinson and noted also his ability to break in and get young trotters and pacers to an advanced stage. He was particularly adept at shoeing and gaiting trotters. Tomkinson started to accumulate the Hunter's young horses and gradually their other more experienced horses trained elsewhere previously came into the Tomkinson stable.

The racing seasons for the period 1914-1920 record that Tomkinson trained and drove the following winners at Richmond and in country areas - most were owned by the Hunter family members but which for various reasons explained later, raced either in the name of WJ Tomkinson or the Hunter families friends or relatives:- Whitty Alto, Kathleen Tr, Bess Alto Tr, Duke Whips, Silver Thread, Honest Kate, Siam Tr, Harry Alto, Princess Whips, Zolock O, Happy Voyage, Comedian, Sprightly, Good Oil and William Whips.

During this time Tomkinson moved his stables to Melbourne where he set up home and some stables at Northcote, and later in the suburb of Richmond, whilst his prime racehorses were stabled for a period of five years at the Richmond Racetrack. He also purchased some land in Bundoora called the Kentucky Stud Farm. This land is now part of the RMIT University at Bundoora but the whole huge tract of land was originally owned by James B Zander a well known trotting owner and studmaster at the turn of the century who imported many stallions and mares from North America including Mauritius USA.

Finding he had in reality moved his business, family and sporting interests to the Melbourne area, Tomkinson scaled down his Rochester business and social interests over a period of time. By 1920 the Tomkinson family had three children - May (b1916), James (b1918) and Queenie (b1920) - the first two being born in Rochester.

The Hunter family was one of the elite and well established families of Melbourne with grazing properties and mansions in the country areas. The family was held in high esteem in social, political and racing circles in Victoria and therefore it seems a target for the officials of John Wren. John Wren was a self made magnate in the true sense of the word and he was also a hard hands on business man.. He was the proprietor of the Richmond, Fitzroy and Ascot pony and trotting racetracks and other racetracks in Queensland and Western Australia. Wren had set up these racetracks in answer to the Melbourne establishment that had ostracized Wren from social and thoroughbred racing circles and even though the establishment finally relaxed its ostracism it shut him out of its social and political circles.

In this latter regard Wren set about creating his own political and religious influences but Wren's ambivalence towards people of the Hunter social class was well known not only to the

Hunter family but also to Wren's racing officials and stipendiary stewards who saw it as their duty to their employer to make life hard for those associated with the Hunter family and other well known personages. In another decade this antipathy would lead to Alexander Hunter leaving the trotting industry until 1947 when he returned in triumph as Chairman of the newly constituted Trotting Control Board established by the State Government of the day and which replaced Wren's strangehold on the VT & RA control of Ascot and the administration of trotting.

In the meantime it seemed the only safe way for the Hunter family to race their horses was to nominally lease their horses to others for racing in the Metropolitan area. This was well known and strangely on the surface this strategy seemed to work as the Hunter horses and their trainer driver WJ Tomkinson were left alone-at least for a time.

In January 1917, Tomkinson had his first tilt at interstate racing by taking the Hunter owned Harry Alto and Duke Whips to race at Sydney's Victoria Park. Harry Alto already an established performer ran two second placings from 195 yds and 210yds whilst Duke Whips also ran a second placing. Although

beaten Tomkinson must have liked the Sydney scene where there was plenty of regular racing with two metropolitan courses because from the date of this trip he started a long term plan to move to Sydney, however, Alexander Hunter liked to see his horses racing in Victoria and it took some time to convince him it was the wise and practicable thing to do with the team he then had.

Tomkinson then did not fully appreciate the difference between racing his horses over a short period of time on a visit to Sydney, and living and racing a team of horses there permanently where his activities would come under a longer and closer scrutiny. And if he thought his horses were escaping from the Wren influence then he was eventually to find he was sadly mistaken.

Tomkinson did not fully appreciate either, the growing powerful connection and interchange between John Wren and Sir Joynton Smith a powerful business man in Sydney and owner of Victoria Park



Bill Tomkinson

Racecourse and his racing officials. Among the Victoria Park officials were the brothers James (Jim) Jnr and William (Bill) Donohoe. Jim Donohoe became the dictatorial Chairman of Stewards at Victoria Park whilst Bill Donohoe became the Secretary of the same racecourse in 1923.

The Donohoe's were a well known sporting family in Sydney. The patriarch of the family was James Joseph Donohoe born in Cavan, Ireland. Initially settling in South Australia he moved on to Melbourne and thence to Sydney where he became the father of five boys - John (1888), James Jnr (1891), William (Bill) (1894), Francis (Frank) (1898) and Charles (1902). James the elder was a horse trainer in Sydney of both thoroughbreds and trotters and was a frequent visitor to Melbourne. He became known to Joynton Smith and on completion of the building of Victoria Park Racecourse was appointed Manager. The eldest son John became a horse trainer and trained for John Wren in Sydney winning for him the Chelmsford Stakes with Garlin. John for his brother Frank pulled off a spectacular coup with Prelate when that horse won four races in a row culminating in Prelate winning the 1952 Doncaster Handicap. Frank Donohoe a solicitor and legal advisor to John Wren in Sydney became a Director of both Stadiums Ltd (owned by John Wren) and Smith's Newspapers Ltd (owned by Joynton Smith) while Frank and Bill Donohoe finally became trustees of Joynton Smith's will.

Bill Donohoe as a young man worked for Joynton Smith in his hotel businesses and was later a clerk at Victoria Park until becoming its Manager in 1923.

There does not appear to be a business connection between Wren and Smith but obviously they were well known to each other. However, the Donohoe's had a connection to Wren inasmuch Stadiums Ltd was under the full control of Wren from 1914 and Frank Donohoe became a Director of the same Company and of course as shown there were other connections.

John Wren's connection to Jim Donohoe was well founded and it is recorded in at least three publications that Jim Donohoe once acted (1916) as agent for John Wren in an attempt to purchase a future Melbourne Cup winner Poitrel as a yearling. A previous connection between John Wren and Jim Donohoe is not so well known if at all occurred in 1914 when the Australian Trotting Record (30/4/1914) noted "J Donohoe Junior who has been associated with racing for many years in Sydney has been appointed a Stipendiary Steward to the Ascot, Fitzroy and Richmond Racing Clubs in Melbourne and takes up his duties on May 1st". Jim Donohoe in 1914 was just 23 years of age and obviously was being groomed for bigger positions back in Sydney. In his short span in Melbourne he came under the supervision of John Wren's most trusted lieutenant Peter Kierce the Chairman of Stipendiary Stewards and onetime Vice President of the Melbourne Trotting Club.

This appointment was made by John Wren but did not last longer than 18 months as Jim Donohoe was back in Sydney by Easter 1916 as evidenced by Donohoe's attempt on behalf of Wren to purchase Poitrel at the Sydney Easter yearling sales. Nevertheless the two instances prove a connection and it is not probable that Jim Donohoe as a young inexperienced Stipendiary Steward at Melbourne racecourses in 1914 and 1915 and part of 1916 encountered Bill Tomkinson then training and driving at those same racecourses. Even though Wren and his officials did not have any control of trotting or pony racing at Victoria Park in NSW undoubtedly there was an underlying influence and a connection that possibly could have been used if needs be. Jim Donohoe on his return to Sydney became a Stipendiary Steward at Victoria Park and later on the death of Harry Skuthorpe the Chairman of Stewards.

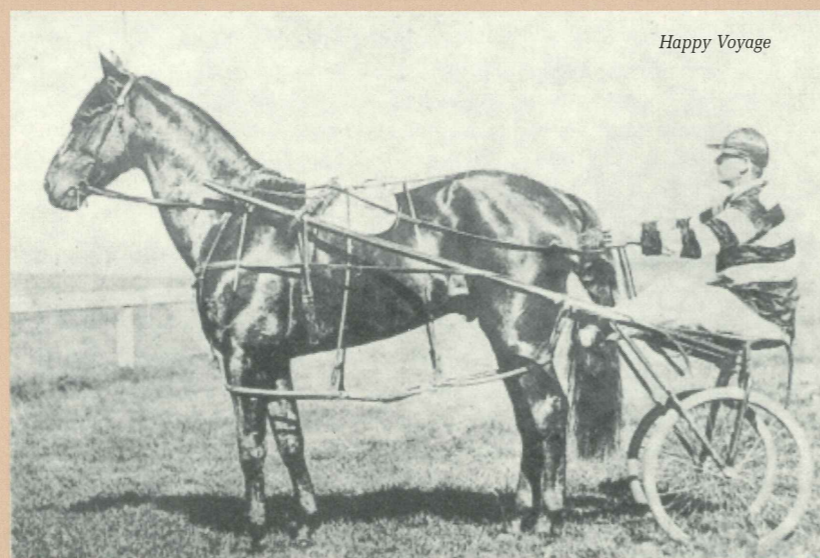
It is often wondered whether Tomkinson got the word to move on from Melbourne as his training and winning driving record there came to a halt in June 1919 and although he drove a few winners in country areas he never again drove on the Wren owned racecourses after this date. In the strange melting pot that was Victorian trotting in those days the VT & RA controlled racing, suspensions and disqualifications, registration, and licensing throughout Victoria but did not appoint Stipendiary Stewards at country tracks and this allowed many owners and trainers not in favor on the Wren owned city tracks to race in the country.

In 1919 Tomkinson employed CF (Claude) Dunlevey who became his loyal foreman for the next 15 years and who inherited Tomkinson's powerful stable on Tomkinson's death in 1934 in New Zealand. In the same year of 1919 Tomkinson was known to be discussing a trip to New Zealand with Happy Voyage and others in his strong team, however, a recurring ophthalmic condition forced him into hospital and the trip was abandoned but not entirely forgotten. Over the years both in Australia and New Zealand Tomkinson was to suffer regular bouts of severe eye problems requiring him to seek treatment for long periods of time. The exact nature of the condition is not known but it may have been linked to other now unknown medical problems.

In the New Year of 1920, Tomkinson made his move to Sydney taking with him his Victorian owned pacers and trotters including Happy Voyage, Harry Alto, Belmont Chimes, Duke Whippets, Haricot, Charity Bells, George Alpha, Huonedo, Briar Rose, Escort (Recreation), and Honest Kate, Within a short period of time his team won many races to make him a near leading driver in only the remaining six months of the season.

In the new season of 1920/21 Bill Tomkinson, still the owner of the Kentucky Stud Farm at Bundoora, had previously given a commitment to Alexander Hunter to stand Admiral Wood and Harry Alto at the farm. Tomkinson gave all his racing team a short spell and at the end of three months returned to Sydney after giving instructions for the transferring of the Kentucky Stud Farm. Tomkinson for the time being still retained his family home at Richmond.

Initially, Tomkinson leased stables from JH Ellis at Mascot and later Neil McKenna's thoroughbred stables before in early 1922 purchasing JW Cook's (a Randwick trainer) thoroughbred complex. Called "The Maze" in Harris Street, Mascot, the property comprised boxes, sand and spelling yards, and a cottage to which his family moved from Richmond, Victoria. Selling the Richmond property he severed his last remaining property link with Victoria, and although his future visits to Victoria were few and far between he still retained his friendships particularly with Bill Balloch with whom he stayed on visits from Sydney and from New Zealand. In 1930 Balloch became embroiled



Happy Voyage

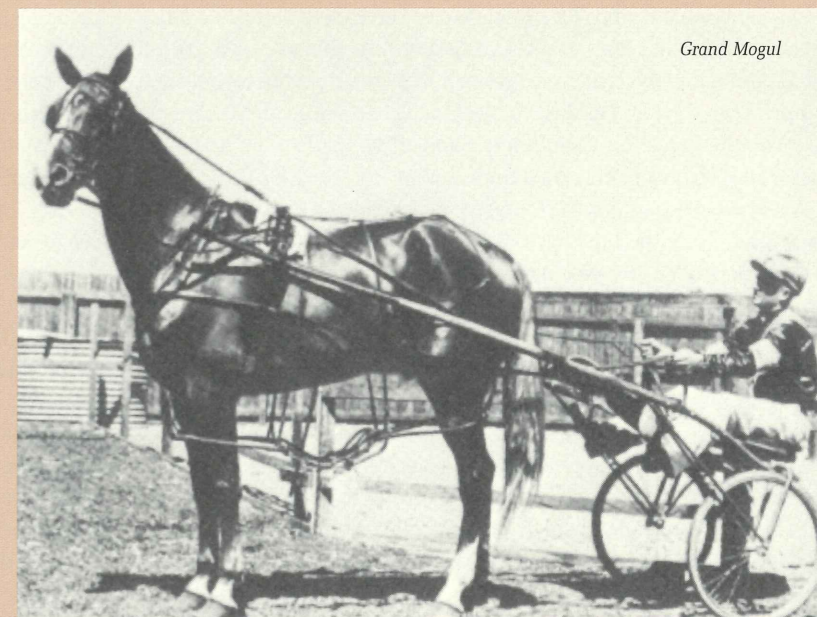
with Wren's Stipendiary Stewards and was scandalously disqualified whereupon Balloch sold his not inconsiderable stable of horses (including future champion Logan Derby) and did not return to trotting until, like Alexander Hunter, the Trotting Control Board was formed in 1947. In a reversal of roles under the new hierarchy Balloch was appointed as one of the Stipendiary Stewards.

In the year 1921 Tomkinson had won with all his Victorian owned team in Sydney at Epping and Victoria Park and turning over his stable and retaining only a few he found that his new team in mid year 1921 was even more powerful. His team at his Mascot now included Happy Voyage, Realm, Medway, Escort, Alto Chimes, King's Bowman, Kean John - leaving one stall vacant unknowing then it was eventually to be filled by another pacer perhaps even greater than all the others with the possible exception of Happy Voyage.

At the beginning of 1922 his team was supplemented with further winners Joan of Arc, and Cochet and to trump his already enviable team Joseph Corby gave him the illustrious Globe Derby to train and drive. At the beginning of the 1921/22 season Globe Derby was eleven years of age and thought by his owner Joseph Corby of Cootamundra to be reaching the end of his career. Early in the season Globe Derby had three starts for one win, one place and one unplaced run all from difficult handicap marks. Globe Derby was then put aside until Corby decided what to do with the stallion Corby eventually deciding to give Globe Derby one more chance this time with the leading trainer Bill Tomkinson with a start in mind in the Sydney Thousand in April.

At this time Happy Voyage was the slightly better racehorse and would have to give Globe Derby a substantial start. Alexander Hunter thought that Happy Voyage was the better horse to race in the Sydney Thousand and to serve at his Stud Farm in Victoria. On behalf of Hunter, Tomkinson offered the Happy Voyage owners 3,000 pounds a record price at that time but the owners turned the offer down. Hunter then looked at Globe Derby and offered 1000 pounds through Tomkinson and which was accepted by Corby. The difference in offers indicates the opinion at the time of the relative merits of both horses but at all events Globe Derby came to be owned by Alexander Hunter and he would have a starter in the forthcoming Sydney Thousand in which he might recuperate his purchase price.

In hindsight, forces move in mysterious ways for Globe Derby was only slightly inferior if at all to Happy Voyage as a racehorse and as a sire he eventually proved a far better progenitor paving the way for the



Grand Mogul

establishment of a sire line of immense stature in Australia and New Zealand.

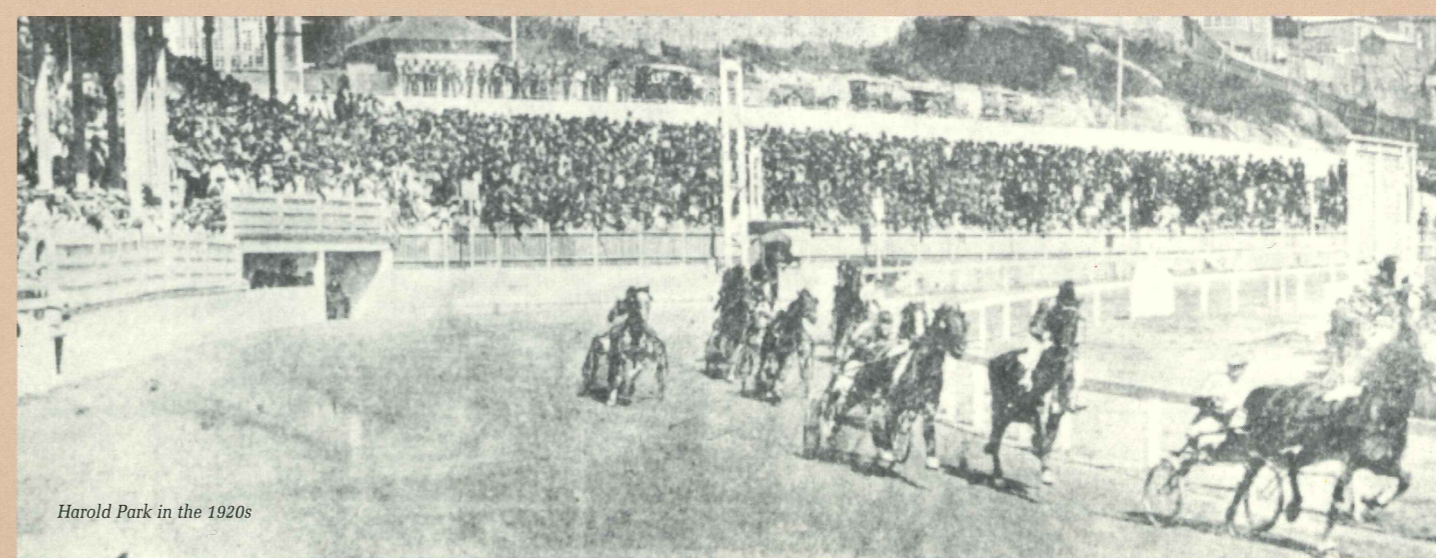
Tomkinson drove Globe Derby to his first win for the new owner at Victoria Park on 8th April, 1922 over a mile in 2.09 3/4. This was followed by a time trial at the Royal Easter Show over a mile in 2.09.2 on the tiny 2 1/2 furlong circumference track.

The stage was now set unknowingly to Tomkinson for the greatest crisis in his career that led over the next twelve years to exile, fame and success, and tragedy.

Tomkinson's two year career around the Epping and Victoria Park racetracks with his powerful stable of horses ushered him into exalted company and he was compared favorably to Peter Riddle, Jack Kennerley, and Gus Millsom - greats of a past era. His winners in Sydney from April 1920 to April 1922 numbered thirty three and compares more than favorably with other leading trainers of the day - his best horses being Happy Voyage, Globe Derby, Realm, Charity Bells, Duke Whippets, Haricot, Cochet, Escort etc. A newcomer to his stable was Snow Shoe (late Osterlee) a half brother to Cochet a winning mare already in his stable. Snow Shoe had previous wins with another trainer but was not reckoned to be in the same class as Tomkinson's other horses.

THE 1922 SYDNEY THOUSAND 20/4/22

For the Sydney Thousand over 12 furlongs Tomkinson had nominated Happy Voyage who was handicapped off 130 yards, Globe



Harold Park in the 1920s

Derby (90 yards) Realm (80 yards), Escort (50 yards), and Snow Shoe (30 yards). The day started auspiciously for Tomkinson with Cochet and Realm winning earlier races, then at 1.30pm Tomkinson scratched Happy Voyage, Realm, and Escort leaving Globe Derby off 90 yards to be driven by Tomkinson and Snow Shoe off 30 yards to be driven by CF(Claude) Dunlevey his stable foreman.

Journalist and author Max Agnew described the race in his book "Australian Harness Horse" as follows: "A Big Betting Plunge. Despite being placed on the backmark of 90 yards for the 1922 Sydney Thousand, the public rallied strongly for this well known pacer (Globe Derby) and it seemed, for a few moments, that the stallion might even start favourite. But this situation changed dramatically when a solid betting plunge was launched on Snow Shoe a stablemate of Globe Derby driven by Tomkinson's foreman, Jack (sic) Dunlevey. So strong was the support for Snow Shoe that at barrier rise, this horse was the 6/4 favourite. Dunlevey had his pacer positioned nicely at the bell, right behind the leaders and ready to pounce. Unfortunately for the backers of Globe Derby he appeared to get caught up in a traffic jam well back in the field.

But the best laid plans, even of the most expert horsemen, can come unstuck. As Dunlevey was easing his horse out approaching the home turn to make its move interference took place. In the scrimmage that followed the hobbles on the favourite broke and Snow Shoe immediately began to flounder. From his position back in the field the ever alert Tomkinson had seen this sickening drama unfold and knew immediately that the plunge was out of business. Without hesitation he switched Globe Derby to the outside and gave the horse its head. Rounding the hometurn Tomkinson was facing an impossible task as scratchmarker Lou Doolan had opened up a big break for Sid Ball having avoided trouble that had put the favourite out of contention. Globe Derby thundered down the outside in the home straight in a manner that only a champion could manage passing horse after horse. At the post the only rival in front of him was Lou Doolan.

Stewards were not impressed with either the betting on that Sydney Thousand nor the early driving tactics of Tomkinson. The backlash of these events led to Tomkinson handing Globe Derby back to Alex Hunter the trainer and Dunlevey taking most remaining members of their stable to New Zealand to open stables there".

Strangely there was no public report ever issued by the Stipendiary Stewards nor was there ever any comment by Alexander Hunter. However, it should be noted that it was stated before the Sydney Thousand that Alex Hunter would be taking Globe Derby to Victoria to take part in exhibition races at Shows and later to Brisbane Show and to be trained by Bert Rae in his subsequent campaigns. Alex Hunter was never in charge of Globe Derby before the Sydney Thousand as Corby had given Globe Derby directly to Bill Tomkinson to train for Corby. Tomkinson knew before the Sydney Thousand that the stallion would be leaving his stables after the race come what may.

Tomkinson himself was also strangely reticent after the race and it was not until July that he made any reference to circumstances that occurred after the race. Tomkinson never made any public statements regarding his handling of Globe Derby nor did he publicly indicate what was said in the Stewards room immediately after the race. In the meantime Tomkinson announced that he was transferring his team to New Zealand.

The Australian Trotting Record representative was present at a farewell dinner given to Bill Tomkinson by the Owners, Breeders and Trainers Association of NSW on 13th July and took notes of the Presentation made to Tomkinson worded as follows "On the eve of your departure for New Zealand we the council of the Association are impelled to express our regret at losing you from our midst and to record our appreciation of your splendid services to the Association. We your colleagues of the council know from intimate

association the grand work you have done and have nothing but admiration for the whole-hearted way in which you gave your time energy and experience to the furtherance and improvement of the interests of breeders, owners and trainers who will recall your name as one of the most foremost workers for the general advancement of the sport."

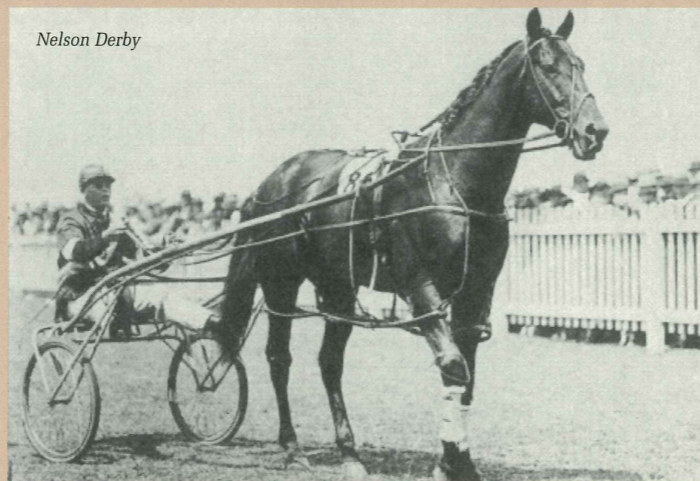
"Mr Tomkinson in responding to the toast of his health said that when he came to Sydney he found an Owners Association already formed which he joined. He considered the Controlling Body should have regular conferences with the Owners Association as there were matters that should be discussed together. Members should stick to their Association. A man could not have solid friends without having enemies. Being a unionist he always came forward in matters of victimization and stood by the Association. He found now that it was advisable to move on. Consequently he had to leave NSW. He liked Sydney very much and would like to live there for the rest of his life but he practically had to leave as it was almost impossible to go on existing there. He was sorry to leave his many old pals with whom he had been so closely associated. He only left them because he had to". (Abridged)

There are several aspects of this storyline that require examination. Firstly, on the 22nd March 1922 a month prior to the running of the Sydney Thousand the Australian Trotting Record announced that WJ Tomkinson and JJ Kennerley within a couple of months NZ will number them amongst their fraternity and WJ Tomkinson intends to transfer the whole of his team to NZ. Medway and Alto Chimes have been sent to Auckland and will be followed by other stablemates after Easter". This indicates that Tomkinson had already decided prior to the Sydney Thousand that he "was proposing transferring his horses to NZ." (Abridged)

Secondly, this earlier indication of a proposed move to NZ must be matched with Tomkinson's response at his farewell on 13th July when he said "it was advisable to move on" etc. Was Tomkinson already in trouble with the Stipendiary Stewards over some incident prior to the Sydney Thousand? Had he already received some warning over his stables racing and betting activities? Was the Globe Derby incident the last straw?

Thirdly, as mentioned earlier there were no official announcements from Victoria Park officials over the running of the Sydney Thousand not even concerning the interference that occurred to Snow Shoe so in their absence we are left only with journalists comments and statements from Bill Tomkinson.

There was a reluctance on the part of journalists to mention the names of the Stipendiary Stewards in charge at that time at Victoria Park. Stipendiary Stewards were all powerful and on today's standards there was a lack of proper procedure in the calling of evidence and witnesses. Many drivers and owners found themselves on the receiving end of heavy disqualifications within 30 minutes of the race



Nelson Derby

being run. Very seldom would an Appeals Board override Stewards decisions.

The Stipendiary Stewards in charge at Victoria Park were Harry Skuthorpe and James (Jim) Donohoe who oversaw both trotting and pony racing. This Jim Donohoe is the same person that acted as agent for John Wren a few years earlier. Could he have had any influence on the issuing of the secret expulsion of Bill Tomkinson?

As in the manner of these things there is no written or direct reference to this matter anywhere and we must examine whether Jim Donohoe in particular was in any way capable of acting with malice or would act under direction from above? Fortunately, there is another reference to the star chamber methods said to be used by the Stewards at Victoria Park but we must fast track to the 1950's in another place to ascertain his culpability.

After the demise of Victoria Park during WW2 the same James (Jim) Donohoe was employed by the Australian Jockey Club as its Chairman of Stewards at Randwick. Kevin Perkins in his book "TJ the Midas Man"-a biography of leading NSW trainer Tommy Smith, states that "Donohoe was not considered corrupt". And indeed there were never any allegations of corruptness concerning the whole Donohoe family. However, the biography does indicate Jim Donohoe was thought to be autocratic and dictatorial furthermore Tommy Smith alleges star chamber methods whereby among other issues Smith was cautioned by Donohoe to keep all Stewards room discussions to himself. Smith did not comply and a deep schism developed between Donohoe and Smith. This was the start of Smith's campaign for open stewards inquiries. On a charge of having in his care a horse detected with a drug in its system Smith was given a long disqualification by Donohoe that was later overturned on appeal.

However, prior to the conclusion of the Smith stewards inquiry Perkins goes on to say "Tommy Smith received a friendly tip from an unexpected source - the AJC Secretary Tom Nicholson - you'd better watch yourself "Donohoe told me I'm going to put this Tommy Smith out because he's a real villain", and furthermore Perkins says "that was the star chamber - the decision was made without hearing the evidence".

So it is clear that Donohoe was capable of premeditated decisions and quite obviously it is a reasonable assumption to make that Skuthorpe and Donohoe were also capable of telling a person he was not wanted as was indicated by Tomkinson some many years earlier.

Another matter concerns the NSW Trotting Club that raced at Epping and at which Tomkinson regularly raced his horses. The Club was acknowledged as the Controlling Body of Trotting in NSW and surely the Victoria Park officials should have consulted their colleagues, however, this never happened so far as we know. Perhaps the Club was powerless to control the management at Victoria Park.

The Tomkinson case was a morass of conflicting views and contrary statements relevant to those times. Perhaps there is a simple answer. Tomkinson knowing he was in trouble and liable to disqualification over his driving tactics and knowing that the Stewards would be reluctant to take action on Alexander Hunter, decided, as he was already known to be departing for New Zealand, to undertake to the Stewards that he would not nominate his horses or drive prior to his departure.

Even so, if we are now unclear as to the real reasons for Tomkinson's departure it was certainly very clear to Tomkinson that he must leave Australia for NZ to which he was already partial as aforesaid and so the dye was cast. For some reason Tomkinson never considered going back to Victoria. At all events Tomkinson set about selling all his businesses in Victoria and NSW including his newly acquired premises at Harris Street, Mascot. Tomkinson's "The Maze" stables and cottage were purchased by Sidney M Ball the trainer/driver of Lou Doolan that won the 1922 Sydney Thousand from Globe Derby. Sid Ball was already a

well known talented young trainer/driver based at the Kembla Grange Racecourse south of Wollongong and with the prizemoney won by Lou Doolan and a large amount of betting money won quietly at very long odds he was able to establish himself close to Victoria Park Racecourse leading to a very successful career in trotting.

Sid Ball reminiscing with the author in 1949 said that he had planned to win the Sydney Thousand some six months in advance and he contrived to keep Lou Doolan in low grades of handicap racing and just fast enough to win inside the qualification time to be eligible for the race from the scratch mark. Being isolated at Kembla Grange Racecourse he was able to keep the mares vast improvement to himself. In the race Ball was not worried about the favourite Snow Shoe as for some now unknown reason which he did not disclose he knew the mare could beat the gelding-he was more worried about Globe Derby whom he thought would come at him strongly in the long home straight. He did not know that the Tomkinson stable had preferred Snow Shoe until after the race. Nicely placed early Ball was nevertheless on the lookout for Snow Shoe to make his move and actually saw Dunlevey pull out to make his run. He also saw the bad interference/scrimage that caused Snow Shoe to break its hobbles and furthermore believed the interference was deliberate. At all events seeing the scrimage was disorganizing the field Ball saw his opportunity and went much earlier than planned to open up a big break on the field. A furlong out from the finish he heard the crowd roar and knew instinctively that Globe Derby was making his run around the field and was catching up with Lou Doolan he actually heard Globe Derby coming up to his wheel just near the post and he was in front a few yards after the post.

Jack (WJ) O'Shea said much later that he had just settled in Sydney and was there that day to see the Sydney Thousand. He said that he had never seen a horse accelerate so quickly and come so fast at the end of a race as that afternoon. He believed many years later that the speed exhibited by Globe Derby was the first time two minute speed was seen in Australia. He only recognized the speed, when he was training Lawn Derby Australia's first two minute horse, that what he had seen that far off day was the same speed.

EXILED

Painfully putting these matters behind him Tomkinson set to the task of making the move to New Zealand but it was not until 15th July, 1922, that Tomkinson was able to ship his team to Wellington, NZ via the SS Ulimaroa then on to Christchurch where initially he stabled at the premises of T Ollivier nearby to Addington Raceway.

The formidable team that was taken to NZ included Happy Voyage P.2:09, Realm P.4:31-2m, Snow Shoe P.2:15.4, Escort P.3:27-12f & 4:35-2m, Bismurate P.3:27-12f, Centreway P.3:27 12f, Cochet P.2:16, Weaver P.2:24, Pearlie Chimes-a maiden pacer, and the trotters Wimmera King Tr.4:54-2m, and Kean John Tr.4:56-2m. These times seem slow today but were considered reasonably good in 1922.

Tomkinson's staff travelling to Christchurch with the horses included his foreman Claude (FC) Dunlevey, C Pursell and Edward Risk. Mrs Mary Tomkinson and their three children travelled to NZ on September 7th, 1922.

In between the Sydney Thousand in April and their shipment to Christchurch in mid July, Tomkinson had worked hard on maintaining a fit team ready for racing at the Winter meeting at Addington in August. The hard training paid off for the Tomkinson team won five races plus placings over two days beginning the 1922/23 season in sensational fashion. Winning 18 races for the season Tomkinson quickly established his credentials his winners included Snow Shoe (3), Realm (2), Happy Voyage (3), Pearlie Chimes (2), La Fayette (1), Worthy Bingen Tr (2), Peter Swift (1), Harry Audubon (1). Invited to

time trial Happy Voyage twice recorded 2.04.2 initially at Auckland and then at New Brighton creating a new Australasian record.

Among the ordinary trotting folk and the public at large in both Australia and New Zealand there appears to have been a genuine sympathy for Bill Tomkinson in his painful and complicated predicament. We have already read an account of the sad farewell tendered by the Trotting Owners Trainers and Breeders Association in Sydney and now on his arrival in Christchurch and at the other end of the spectrum he was welcomed to New Zealand at the end of August 1922 at the annual reunion of the Canterbury Trotting Owners and Breeders Association.

The President of the Association Mr JW Trist was Chairman of the meeting but the leading speaker was Mr HC Nicoll a prominent breeder and studmaster. Importantly he was also President of the NZ Trotting Association then the Controlling Body in NZ. Mr Nicoll in the years to come became the co-President with JP Stratton of the first Inter Dominion Trotting Council in 1935 and he said "Mr Tomkinson's arrival with a team was a compliment to the management of trotting in NZ and it would not have eventuated had it not been for the reputation NZ had earned for sane and honest governance" a pointed reference to the clumsy control of trotting in Australia.

Tomkinson was to eventually train and drive from 1/8/22 to the end of June 1934 and during this time he was to drive 238 winners and to train nearly 250 winners. He trained 66 individual winning pacers and 13 individual trotting winners.

His best winners included: Pacers - Indianapolis (12 wins), Logan Park (9), Bell Harold (8), Pageant (8), Nelson Derby (6), Free Advice (6), Tempest (5), Snow Shoe Aust (5), Wrecker (5), Chenwood (5), Wilma Dillon (4), Modern Girl (4), Glideaway Aust (4), Pearlie Chimes Aust (4), Concliff Aust (4), Happy Voyage Aust (4), Hinkler (4), Holly Boy (4). Trotters - Bidy Parrish (9), Elzear (9), Surprise Journey Aust (9), Napland (6), Happy Rosa (5), Young Blake (5), Worthy Bingen (4). These are not total wins by the horses mentioned and include only those wins whilst in Tomkinson's care.

His best race wins were: Pacers: NELSON DERBY-Auckland Cup, SHADOWLAND-NZ Derby, Manuwatu Cup, CONCLIFF AUST-Waikato Cup-Dunedin Cup, FREE ADVICE-NZ Cup 1st Division, MOUNTAIN DELL-National Cup, TEMPEST-Great Northern Derby, Methven Cup, INDIANAPOLIS-Great Northern Derby-Auckland Cup. LOGAN PARK-NZ Cup 2nd Division, GLIDE AWAY AUST-Otahuhu Cup. Trotters: NAPLAND-Dominion Hcp, SURPRISE JOURNEY-Rowe Cup.

Australian bred winners trained by Bill Tomkinson in New Zealand include Snow Shoe, Realm, Weaver, Happy Voyage, Pearlie Chimes, Kean John Tr. Minton Derby, Maggie Pronto, Concliff, Pageant, Glide Away, Western Voyage Tr, Home Voyage Tr, John Mauritius Tr. Surprise Journey Tr. Sir Voyage Tr. Golden Pedro.

Bill Tomkinson was New Zealand's leading driver in 1924/25 (24 1/2 wins) and in 1928/29 (33 wins) and leading trainer 1924/25 (22 1/2 wins), 1927/28 (26 wins) and 1928/29 (36 wins).

In 1924 Bill Tomkinson had the good fortune to meet George J Barton another expatriate Victorian living in Dunedin in the deep south of the South Island of New Zealand. Barton was a wholesale butcher and had made a fortune in buying and selling fat lambs and meat.

Almost the first horse bought by Barton for Tomkinson was the trotter Napland who won six races for him followed by other trotters Bidy Parrish (9 wins), Elzear (9 wins), Surprise Journey (9 wins) who between them managed to consolidate Tomkinson's outstanding record with trotters. Pacers owned by Barton and trained by Tomkinson included such standouts as Indianapolis, Nelson Derby, Tempest, Concliff, Horsepower, Free Advice, Mountain Dell, Cloudy Range and many others. Another great horse for Barton was the future Inter Dominion winner Grand Mogul. Tomkinson was to put the early touches of greatness on Grand Mogul but never lived to see the fulfillment of his early work.

Barton overall was the leading NZ owner ten times during the period 1928-38, however, he also owned thoroughbreds some of whom were broken in by Tomkinson just before he died. One of his best thoroughbreds was All Veil in partnership with Victorian Bill Balloch whom Barton had met through Bill Tomkinson. All Veil won for the partnership the 1941 Newmarket Handicap at Flemington whilst another thoroughbred owned by George Barton was the good handicapper Ark Royal which figured in the triple dead heat with Pandi Sun and Fighting Force in the 1953 Hotham Handicap. George Barton died in his eighties in 1963.

Bill Tomkinson was blessed with the training and driving of champion horses. In Australia he had Happy Voyage (and also in NZ), Globe Derby, and Realm. In New Zealand Indianapolis was by far his best horse followed by Logan Park and Nelson Derby. Surprise Journey, Elzear, Bidy Parrish and Napland were the best trotters of their era.

Indianapolis P.2.00.2 was purchased by George Barton from Arthur Nicoll (son of HC Nicoll) as an early three year old after a trial and recommendation by Tomkinson who exclaimed after the trial "this is the greatest pacer ever foaled". Tomkinson did not live beyond the four year old career of Indianapolis to which time the stallion had already won 12 races and so did not see the full blossoming of that stallion who eventually won 27 races lifetime including three New Zealand Cups.

In his last season Bill Tomkinson drove 16 winners of his stables 21 winners. Due to his long standing eye problems he was forced to rest and some of his horses were driven by EC McDermott and J Fraser Jr. During his illness his loyal foreman Claude Dunlevey took over the running of the stable that in the light of what was to happen was a blessing in disguise.

During his time in Christchurch Bill Tomkinson had purchased the Ollivier property that he called Derby Lodge just on the edge of Addington Racecourse. The Lodge was perfect in its management and its cleanliness was a byword among the locals and the many Australian visitors to his establishment. In June 1934 the Australian owner trainer driver Les Martin was campaigning Walla Walla through New Zealand and was stabled at Derby Lodge whilst another Australian pacer Auburn Lad only a little inferior to Walla Walla was also there.

The "New Zealand Referee" gives the best tribute as to what happens next. "There was widespread regret throughout NZ when it became known that William J Tomkinson the well known trainer of Christchurch had succumbed to complications which set in after the accident he met with some weeks ago.

The accident which had such a fatal sequel was one of the simplest happenings that could befall anyone. Tomkinson had loaded his horses

Indianapolis and Compass on a motor float together with the Australians Walla Walla and Auburn Lad and he left his stables immediately by car to attend to the work of his gallopers at Riccarton. Noticing that the float had pulled up outside his home Tomkinson returned to have a final word with Mr Martin, Walla Walla's owner, and while there he wished to satisfy himself that the boring strap on Compass's sulky had not been forgotten. To reach the top of the float he stood on an empty petrol drum that canted out under his weight and Tomkinson fell striking the pit of his stomach on the outer rim of the drum. An internal ulcer formed and the complications from this ultimately cause his death.

A poignant fact about his death is that a short before the accident that was not thought to be serious at the time, Tomkinson had expressed the greatest hope of his future health that he had regained after years of painful eye trouble.

In the training of a pacer or trotter that had been put through the rudimentary stages Tomkinson was acknowledged to have had no peer. As a younger man he was a driving ace and many a time he drove solely with his hands to win uncannily by the narrowest of margins. He was known to study the peculiarities of each of his charges with meticulous care and the results speak for themselves.

In 1922 he came to NZ with a team comprising Realm, Happy Voyage, Pearlie Chimes, Snow Shoe, Escort, Weaver, Wimmera King and Kean John and the Metropolitan August meeting he scored a notable run of successes. He thus early established himself as a capable trainer and reinsman and just how well he maintained that reputation is shown by the fact that in the last ten years he has trained winners of over 40,000 Pounds for his chief patron GJ Barton.

While he won most of the principal events on the trotting calendar the NZ Cup eluded him. He won Divisions of this race with Logan Park and Free Advice but was beaten in the finals.

Tomkinson was in every respect a true sportsman and a citizen of the highest standing. He was the perfect host as thousands of New Zealanders who visited his stables could testify. Nothing was ever a

trouble to him and his generous nature and warm-heartedness made him one of the truly likable personalities of the sport of horse racing. His knowledge and experience was always available to assist his contemporaries and many a young trainer or reinsman has benefited from the kindly interest that the master of "Derby Lodge" took in the career of almost everyone breaking into the sport. His loss to trotting was a real one for he could sincerely be called an ornament.

As a final mark of respect a crowd of more than 2,000 attended the funeral which for the Halswell cemetery. Wreaths were sent from all parts of NZ and from many parts of Australia. Mr Tomkinson's racing colours the well known black and white stripes, gold sash and cap and crossed whips were draped on the casket.

The popularity of Mr Tomkinson was thus clearly demonstrated and possibly his was the biggest funeral ever seen in Christchurch. The chief mourners were Mrs Tomkinson, James Tomkinson, Mrs. J McLeod, Sister Simon, and Mr G Rosenbaum. Pall bearers were Messrs TG Fox, GR Hunter, JA Richardson, GJ Barton, EC McDermott, and JJ Kennerley." (Abridged)

EPILOGUE

James Tomkinson continued his father's interest in horses by becoming a New Zealand thoroughbred trainer whilst his daughter May became well known as an aviatrix having gained her pilot's licence at 18 years of age.

Bill Tomkinson's stable of horses passed into the hands of Claude Dunlevey who in the new season of 1934/35 became the Leading Trainer of New Zealand an accomplishment that would have surely gone to Bill Tomkinson had he survived his accident. Indianapolis went on to become one of New Zealand great pacers. Another pacer Grand Mogul three year old when first being prepared by Tomkinson in the year of his death won 16 races in NZ before being sold to a Western Australian owner for the 1936 Inter Dominion Championship which he won. In all Grand Mogul won 28 races.

HRI



Indianapolis after Derby



Indianapolis later in his career