



By Max Agnew

## Broodmares are not created equal

**There are special broodmares capable of producing multiple 'black type' performers, and then a further generation on are capable of doing okay. But the trend then usually follows for the diluted blood of later females losing much of what had been special with that original member of the family.**

Imagine the odds against a broodmare establishing such a potent maternal family that can still churn out 'black type' performers more than sixty years later. One such maternal family is still flying the flag high producing classic winners all these years on.

Question: How would you like to breed another Lennytheshark or a filly like Frith? Perhaps you would be delighted breeding your first Australian Pacing Gold success, or a Derby winner? It's still being done for the few who climbed aboard the Ranji Maid gravy train. Read on and discover how.

Basil Ashford, one of the first presidents of the Victorian Standardbred Breeders Association, almost 35 years ago urged me to write a story about a breeder unknown to many whom Basil said was more deserving of recognition than just about any of the big success stories to have become household names breeding pacers in this country.

"Not only did this breeder get it right," he had said; "but when selling his females to others, they too usually became long-term success stories capable of producing outstanding pacers.

"And I believe," added Basil, "the bloodlines of Max Allen can go on leaving classic winners." How right he would be.

But who was Max Allen!

All I knew of the man then was he had come from around Leeton; his son Don had been recruited by Collingwood in 1955 and later back on the farm son and father won big races in New South Wales and Victoria with pacers often driven for the family by Neville or George Gath.

Neville today recalls with pleasure how some mares bred by this man have done for the pacing gait what the remarkable Maori Miss has been doing for the trotting gait.

Basil was not around to remind me again about writing this story.

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Only a few weeks after that initial suggestion, he developed a tumour on his brain and died within the month at the early age of just 48. Victorian harness racing had lost one of its most respected leaders and I had lost one of my closest friends.

Not a wealthy man by any imagination, Ashford had been behind the importing of four stallions from the US, including Black Gamecock and Keystone Pebble, both handy without setting the breeding world on fire.

This breeding enthusiast, along with the likes of John Campbell, will long be remembered for having established *Track Bred*, along with other achievements by both.

Basil had made it his business to know most of the successful Australian breeders personally and was adamant Max Allen had most certainly slipped through the cracks with members of the media who concentrated on striving to select winners rather than travel into the bush seeking stories.

What no one had bothered to mention to me back then was how Max was a brother-in-law of the legendary George Gath. When son Don was at Collingwood in the mid-fifties, he had spent much of his days working as a stable hand for Uncle George at his Melbourne stables.

The relationship had come about when both George and Max Allen in the early 1930's had married daughters of Sydney trotting trainer Jack Hillier.

On a book launching tour of the Riverina some years on, I did make an attempt to catch up with Don Allen, calling into his business near Leeton only to find he would be away for days. 'So much for the story about his father Max,' I thought at the time.

Four years ago when researching another book, I was interviewing leading breeder Kevin Newbound after Australia's leviathan owner-breeder Mick Lombardo had told me it had been Kevin who had been a tower of strength to him with advice on breeding and about selling yearlings. This was after Mick had first moved into harness racing after making his fortune from fishing boats and oil exploration.

When asking Kevin if there had ever been anyone who had assisted him and brother and partner Leo with advice or what horses to use when they first went into commercial breeding in the fifties; without hesitation he named Max Allen.

At last, someone was able to enlighten me on more about this breeder from the past who seemed to have been full of historical importance for our pacing gait.



Pictured: Max and Nina Allen pictured on their wedding day.

## The story of Max Allen

A product of the Southern Riverina, Max Allen was a farmer mixing rice growing with grazing sheep, all the time developing his passion for harness racing.

The high soil fertility and abundance of water had made the floodplains of the Riverina one of the most productive farming regions in Australia with the first commercial rice crops grown there in 1924 at Leeton and Yanco.

Leeton has also long been a centre for harness racing.

Back at the end of the Great Depression, Allen raced pacers all over. One such trip enabled him to meet Nina Hillier in Sydney. After later tying the knot, back in the Riverina the couple set about what many farmers did in this era – they had a large family, with Nina delivering four sons and nine daughters.

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Two of the boys – Don and Neville – would later drive the family’s horses at the Melbourne Showgrounds and Harold Park, and at all points in between.

If you thought the Leeton district was a long way from racing your horses in Sydney (550 miles north-east) or Melbourne (450 miles south), then how about racing at Adelaide’s small track of Wayville in a period when you travelled south from Leeton to Melbourne to put your horses on board a ship at Port Melbourne, then meeting the boat on its arrival in Adelaide.

There was one such trip via Melbourne in 1937 where the Allen’s have chuckled about for years. During the several weeks racing under lights at Wayville, Nina was rushed to an Adelaide maternity hospital where she presented Max with their son Don. Not many enthusiasts can claim to have been born at an Inter Dominion Championship.

Even before the Second World War, when their crops were large, the Allen’s often waited until the harvesting was completed before concentrating on racing their best pacers in Sydney and Melbourne.

When the night trotting boom followed the opening of the Melbourne Showgrounds in 1947, two years before Sydney’s Harold Park, Max Allen was quick to realise how a farmer with ample acreage and a few broodmares had a head start over newcomers taking up breeding horses to fulfil the eager demand then for young pacers.

This was years before yearling sales were introduced. Potential buyers back then usually sought the odd advert for the sale of a pacer or broodmare in the *Australian Trotting Record*, or waited months for the day when the next mixed sale of standardbreds might be held.

At such a sale at Melbourne’s Ascot Vale in the 1940’s, Allen was there keen to purchase further broodmares for his farm. Why he should include Ranji Maid that day is not clear as this mare had been a non-winner on the track, sometimes a no-no for some breeders.

Bred in Tasmania in 1937, she was by Wilveranj from the NSW mare Casirus. Whatever the reason for Allen

taking a liking to her, back on the farm Ranji Maid set about becoming one of the finest taproot mares of all-time in Australian pacing.

Max was back again at the next mixed sale, this time hoping to secure a likely colt or stallion he could use over his growing number of mares. That day he took with him brother-in-law George Gath, whose stables then were nearby at Kensington.

A number of horses went under the hammer without a bid from Allen. Then, into the sales ring came a three-year-old colt that made George sit up and take notice. Max also was quick to agree it looked good. He was able to purchase Kimberlene for not too much of an outlay.

By Gamble from the Jack Potts mare Marlene, Kimberlene had been bred in 1946 by Cec Donald.

When night trotting came to the Melbourne Showgrounds, many of the stables they had out the back could be rented to visiting trainers, with numerous locals also having permanent boxes there, including such major names then as Bill McKay and his brother Jack, along with Dal Fitzpatrick.

On a trip to Melbourne for the 1950 Inter Dominion, the Allen family as usual stabled at the Showgrounds with numerous other visiting trainers. The then 13-year-old Don Allen recalls how on more than one occasion during the carnival he got to ride the Kiwi gelding Captain Sandy there. This fine pacer went on to win the championship off 24 yards, driven by Sydney’s Jack Watts.

Meanwhile, back home on their farm, Kimberlene was making a good fist of siring some handy progeny when bred to the Allen mares. Among its 38 individual winners would be their 1959 NSW Oaks winner Hot Spell; and Leslie Kim, winner of the NSW and Victorian Sapling Stakes.

One could say Kimberlene was a fine bread-and-butter sire, though in hindsight, perhaps the quality of some of those Allen broodmares were such they could have still come up with smart pacers if bred to the local butcher’s horse.

Ranji Maid would produce six winners from her eight foals. It was several of her daughters that later would fly the flag establishing a remarkable and productive maternal family which is still going strongly. Among her daughters was Bundaranj, winner of a Terang Cup.

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When Ack Lord, then president of the Victorian Metropolitan & Country Trotting Association (M&CTA) came looking for a likely broodmare, Allen sold Bundaranj to him. In 1954 she produced the outstanding Dusty Miller – the same year Bendigo

opened its new track and named it Lord's Raceway after Ack Lord.

Years after this horse became a stand-out at five Inter Dominion Carnivals, Dusty Miller would become one of the first pacers to be inducted into the esteemed Hall Of Fame at Tabcorp Park, Melton.

Another daughter of Ranji Maid was Nutritious, once owned by Temora's J. Nader.

A man of the same name years earlier was an owner of the great Globe Derby also from Temora. A coincidence, or was this Nader a son of that earlier owner?

Nutritious left Park Royale (Inter Dominion Consolation) and the dam of a Victorian star pacer – Dean's Special, twice winner of the Italian Cup, a Bendigo Cup; the Shepparton Gold Cup, and a heat of the Australian Pacing Championship.

While Ranji Maid went on establishing her remarkable influence of Australian breeding through her daughters, Allen secured a sire of importance to stand alongside Kimberlene. This was Gay Reveler, a two-year-old colt when imported to New Zealand by adventurer Noel Simpson in 1951. Simpson was then not the big name in breeding he would become later.

Noel was greatly disappointed with the poor response from Kiwi breeders to Gay Reveler (His Majesty from the Truax mare Calumet Emissary) It stood just the one season at his Yendarra Farm. He was more than happy to transfer the young sire across to the Riverina where Allen was keen to introduce US blood into his broodmares.

Gay Reveler would spend four years standing in the Leeton district when Kevin and Leo Newbound were on the lookout for a likely sire to stand at the family property in north-east Victoria at Chiltern. It is history how this stallion, after doing very well for Max Allen, then proceeded to help launch Forest Lodge Stud into the big time on the way to Gay Reveler siring a total of 233 individual winners.

In 1955 Collingwood recruited the dashing 18-year-old rover Don Allen to turn out with the Magpies. Phonse Kyne was then coach with Lou Richards in his last days as captain. It was well before players earned a handy salary with Don's weekly payment a little less than two pounds (\$4) a week.

With football training then of a Tuesday and a Thursday evening, Don gained useful employment working during the day as a stable hand for his Uncle George. Among the other stable hands was an eager and young Ron Peace, in his case learning the business of training and setting a horse up for a punt. He had a great teacher for this in the wily George Gath, for some seasons the No 1 reinsman in Australia winning driving premierships in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide.

As with other young recruits to Melbourne clubs, Don began with the Collingwood Seconds, and despite showing he was senior material, at the urging of his father he would return to the farm to help out with training and driving some of their pacers, along with brother Neville Allen. When it came to the classics, it was often George or Neville Gath that was called up for duty.

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Don continued showing his class on the football field playing for the local club. He was then one of the few in country football who kicked well with both feet.

In 1959 when Max Allen won the NSW Oaks with Hot Spell, this filly was driven for him that night by his nephew Neville Gath.

Though not in the best of health, this remarkable enthusiast would keep up his breeding program then owning more than 30 broodmares.

It was in 1962 Max would meet his maker, going to his grave never knowing how the bloodlines he had



Pictured: Two big names get together at a yearling sales a few seasons back. At right is Kevin Newbound, breeder of Lennytheshark, with David Aiken, now the trainer of this glamour pacer of 2014.

introduced would have this maternal family go on producing so many 'black type' performers.

## “ In the following months it became obvious the enthusiasm Max Allen had for breeding had left behind a legacy of too many horses for Don to supervise ”

In the following months it became obvious the enthusiasm Max Allen had for breeding had left behind a legacy of too many horses for Don to supervise, as on the passing of his father, many of the mares had foals at foot with the majority in foal again. A clearance sale seemed necessary for the farm to become workable again.

Word travels fast on the bush telegraph, and within days of Don and the family deciding to sell a number of mares and foals, he was receiving telephone calls asking about what mares he was planning to sell.

### A punch on the nose!

Two calls in particular raised speculation that a spot of trouble could be brewing over the forthcoming sale as two friends of the Allen family insisted they wanted the same mare.

Both had informed him by phone how before the passing of his father, Max had all but given his word to both that if ever he was to sell the mare Illinois, a daughter of Lucia's Maid, each believed they had the first right of refusal.

Illinois, foaled in 1954, was a large mare with a long barrel; the type many breeders believed made the best producing mares. She had been sent to stud without racing.

The first of the two callers to stake their claim was Leo Newbound, then with his brother Kevin enjoying great success with Gay Reveler at their Forest Lodge Stud. Allen had supported his one-time stallion even after it had moved to Victoria. Now, Leo was making it clear they now expected to buy this young mare.

When word of this phone call became known to another friend of the late breeder, fencer Bernie Kelly from Coleambally, this young man was quick to phone Don to explain his late father had earlier told him should Illinois ever to be sold, Kelly had the right of first refusal.

Kelly made a living from building fences, and when Max a few years before had taken over another farm, he had Bernie build sheep yards on this property. Like the Newbound's, Kelly too had enjoyed a working relationship with the highly successful breeder.

Don also knew Kelly from football. While Bernie turned out for a rival district team and was never considered to have been quite in the class of Don Allen as a player, Kelly was tall, athletic and tough. He never minded throwing his weight around during a footy game, though at times he was inclined to play the joker.

A suggestion now circling in the district was how someone might get a punch on the nose if Kelly did not have the right to buy the mare Illinois. It may or not have been all a joke. But Don Allen was not prepared to wait until the day of the sale to find out if any blood might be spilt among friends over one of their mares.

He moved swiftly to end any strife between them.

He phoned both parties, explaining he would be pulling Illinois and its full sister Lucia's First out of the sale. Don was happy to sell these two broodmares only to the Newbound's or Kelly. He explained how it was now up to both to get together and work out who got what.

That these two mares would become truly greats of Australian breeding makes this true story of their sale all the more fascinating.

Bernie Kelly won the right to buy Illinois and take her home where she left 11 winners for him, going on to be the ancestress of classic-winning colts and fillies that included Greg Kelly (Australian 2YO of the Year), Albert Kelly (Australian 3YO of the Year), Frith (Vic & WA Oaks), McRae's Mate (1:51.4), along with smart winners Miss Paula, Lady Waratah, Von Trap, Kirlan, No Soup For You and Intoxicated.



Pictured: Among today's pacing stars from this great maternal family is Lennytheshark (Chris Alford up), probably the best four-year-old pacer in Australia of 2014.

It was not surprising Kelly named his breeding operations Illinois Stud. He still to this day produces winners from his favourite mare's family after moving to a property near Wagga.

But Kevin and Leo Newbound would also have much to smile about with Illinois's older sister Lucia's First.

The second of her 13 foals are listed by Harness Racing Australia as bred by the Allen's. However, Lucia's First when purchased by the Newbound brothers was in foal to Gay Reveler, carrying Gay Acres, one of the all-time great producing mares of Australian breeding.

Gay Acres produced Classic Garry, a fine pacer and later a No 1 sire in Australia; then there was Australia's one-time fastest mare Provocative (1:53.8TT) for Ron Peace, along with Gallant Garry, Young Symbol, Special Garry and Jotto, all noted pacers of their day. The Newbound's sold the 1964 colt from Gay Acres (Honest Reward) to Campbell's Creek milkman Ralph Ford where it quickly raced through the classes to open company.

Kevin and Leo not only had one of the truly great broodmares, but they always kept their motors running when it came to obtaining classy sires. They were the first in Australia to stand a son of Adios when introducing Golden Adios to breeders here, and when Gay Reveler was starting to age a little, they obtained the well-bred Kiwi horse Garry Rowan to stand at stud.

By Garrison Hanover from a U Scott mare, Garry Rowan sired 167 winners, including Classic Garry and Garry's Advice, with his progeny winning in excess of \$4 million in stake money. (The late Bert Alley who raced two smart thoroughbreds in partnership with this writer, once made a gift of a gelded full brother of Garry Rowan to him. He was a good city winner, but when thinking about the fine deeds of its brother as a sire, it was a shame someone had earlier wielded the knife.)

Gay Acres would die in 1986 from complications when heavily in foal to Kevin Newbound's latest fine stallion Windshield Wiper.

Another of Don Allen's mares was High Power (Gay Reveler-Burda). After winning the 1965 MIA Breeders Plate, the next season she won the NSW Oaks and later the Queensland Christmas Cup. There were high hopes for her as a broodmare, but unfortunately, with her very first pregnancy, both mare and foal died while struggling to give birth.

When the Newbound brothers later moved to separate properties near Shepparton they more or less went their own ways with their mares. It seems Kevin did not lack for the bloodlines dating back to Ranji Maid, as many of the more recent outstanding pacers from this famous line have been bred by Kevin. Up-and-coming champion Lennytheshark is one of Kevin's finest products.

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## Finding a broodmare

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However, for breeders that might be interested in learning how to take a short-cut to possible success, the following names are likely to be of some help as each of these mares have been associated with classic winners of more recent times concentrating more on Lennytheshark's relatives - Mozambique, Botswana, Lourenco Marques, Sister Dancer and Classic Kate.

Mozambique appears in the pedigree of numerous smart pacers of the present day.

Her line to Lennytheshark follows Mozambique 1974 - Lourenco Marques 1979 and Botswana (17 wins) in 1999.

Botswana is not only the dam of Lennytheshark (NSW Derby and one of the finest pacers in Australia today), she is also the dam of Led Suitcase (winner of the 2YO Breeders Crown).

Penny Veejay was bred by Kevin Richards, Queensland. (The winner of The Legends, the Vic. 4YO & 5YO Championship and an Inter Dom. heat), her dam Newbold Penny was a daughter of Lourenco Marques - the dam a winner of eight races.

Vansumic, bred by John Yeomans and a winner of a NSW Ladyship Mile, is from Somewherein Africa, whose grand-dam is Mozambique. Pacific Charm, a winner of a Victorian 4YO and 5YO Championship, is a daughter of Forest Charm, yet another grand-daughter of Lourenco Marques.

Another highly successful producing mare from this family has been Classic Kate that Kevin Newbound sold to Garry Graham at Bendigo. A daughter of Gay Debutante (Lucia's First) she left Sister Dancer, dam of Royal Verdict (1:53.5 & \$535,305, Australian 2YO of the Year when winning the Australian Pacing Gold, Breeders Crown etc.

To show this was no fluke, the following season Sister Dancer produced Hexham Heartbeat (Vic. SS 3YO Final).

Among the mares Don Allen held back from that dispersal sale was Hot Spell becoming a NSW Oaks winner.

Hot Spell would leave five handy winners including 1968 Riverina Derby winner Dictator. The mare also became the grand-dam of Harold Park FFA winner Spell It Out (\$144,606), God Spell (Vic. Sapling Stakes) and Trojan Leo (\$98,241).

Don would carry on actively breeding with the tools his late father had left him until a serious accident on the farm. He was working with an acetylene torch which accidentally touched petrol. His legs took the full force from the explosion.

Since then he has been plagued by problems from the accident, leading to a leg having to be amputated in 2009. His mind remains active, and so too are his memories of his father's remarkable maternal family that has gone on producing many fine pacers to have graced Australian tracks.