



THE WORKING KELPIE COUNCIL OF AUST INC.

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The Story of Jack Gleeson

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The Kelpie Foundation

Introduction: Following its formation in 1965 the Working Kelpie Council undertook to research the origin and development of the Kelpie sheepdog breed. Following advice and under the guidance of Stuart Hume a professional historian it set about the task of proving or disproving written accounts by seeking primary source documentation. This research project has proven to be both difficult and very time consuming. Gathering the background material about the Gleeson and associated families was reasonably easy, especially after the freeing up of what used to be classified information. The movements of stockmen like Gleeson who were employed by others are often difficult because they were often not eligible for listing on such things as electoral rolls and directories.

Searching for information about dogs prior to events like sheepdog trials becoming established is almost impossible except by references in family papers and chance discovery of newspaper accounts of imports etc. etc.

We were able to confirm the source of the Rutherford collies through contact with the family in Scotland who had retained records, and through the writings of Gerald S Kempe who was a staunch supporter of the strain as were members of the Tully family.

Documenting the source of the dogs bred by the Robertson's at 'Wando Vale' or 'Worrock' is still being researched. It is known that John G Robertson migrated to Tasmania in 1831 where he worked for two different people- The latter being W E Lawrence (after the death of R W Lawrence for whom he managed 'Formosa' for 7 years. W E Lawrence's daughter Mary Ann married Francis Henty. We know that the Henty's imported dogs, sheep, cattle, horses etc. and we also know that they assisted John G Robertson in selecting 'Wando Vale' near Casterton, Victoria.

George Robertson of 'Worrock' was John's cousin, he came out in 1840 joined John and helped with the shipping of John's sheep, cattle etc from Tasmania to Portland Bay 17th February 1840. George worked as Manager for John at 'Wando Vale' until he took over 'Worrock' station in 1843. There is little question that John G Robertson brought dogs over with his stock from Tasmania. The association with the Henty's could possibly suggest that his dogs originated from the strain brought out and in use by the Henty's. There is also a possible link to the Gibson's of Tasmania whose dog Tweed tied with Kings Kelpie for first at the Forbes Trial. The background of the Robertson dogs is still being researched.

Sheepdog trial results, whilst often difficult to locate, have been invaluable. The newspaper accounts of the entry and performance of Brutus and his son Caesar in sheepdog trials and later again the newspaper account of King's Kelpie performance when she tied with Gibson's Tweed in a field of seven at the 1879 Forbes Show trial have provided the primary sources for correction of the dates quoted in much of the published material to date.

Monuments have been erected at Casterton Victoria and Ardlethan NSW to commemorate the birth place of the original Kelpie and the foundation strains established by the late J D 'Jack' Gleeson what is now known as the Ardlethan district.

J D 'Jack' Gleeson arrived in Sydney, aged approximately 2, with his parents Denis Jnr and Mary, nee Ryan on the 'William Metcalfe' 13/3/1844. As assisted passengers they paid 18 pounds 14 shillings each and 9 pounds 7 shillings for son John. Denis jnr had served 12 months in Ireland as a result of an altercation over non payment of rent by the family's tenant and died as a result of a serious accident in 1846 leaving his wife

and his family to rear J.D. 'Jack' Gleeson 4 and his sister Bridget 2. Denis Snr, eldest son William and brother-in-law Cornelius Bourke were transported arriving aboard the 'Clyde 1' in 1838. Denis Snr's wife Mary, with daughters Margaret and Honora and sons Edmond and Patrick, arrived on the 'Livingstone' 1841 and went to Port Macquarie to join the menfolk. When free to do so the family moved to Victoria, where sons Edmund and Patrick were already established, and they were joined by Cornelius Bourke's wife and family. The families were all well educated folk and soon became firmly established in the Warrnambool/Port Fairy/Koroit districts of Victoria.

The future of what was to become the foundation of the Kelpie breed began whilst 'Jack' Gleeson was employed on Murray's 'Dunrobin' station. Gleeson described by his friends as a keen lover of good horses and dogs became aware of the strain of sheepdogs being bred and used on nearby George Robertson's 'Worrock' station. He took a particular fancy to a black and tan female pup owned by a young relative of the property owner and tried unsuccessfully to buy her. He persisted with his efforts to acquire the pup and eventually managed to organise a swap of one of his stock horses for the 'Worrock' bred pup.

'Jack' Gleeson left the district shortly afterwards and making his way north stopped for a while at Ballarook station, West Wimmera, where he broke in the pup he had called 'Kelpie' at shearing time.

On the way to the Lachlan district to take up a position as overseer on North Bolero where the Quinns had a conditional purchase selection, 'Jack' Gleeson called in to see his friend Mark Tully who was the manager on Goonambil, a station on Billabong Creek, 12 miles south of Urana.

The Tully's were keen sheepdog men, breeders and great admirers of the Rutherford bred collies both before and after the Rutherford and Tully families migrated to Australia. The Tully's became well known breeders in the Riverina/Murray/Darling River districts. Mark gave his friend 'Moss' a black dog bred by the Rutherford's on Yarrowonga station sired by 'Yarrowonga Clyde' and out of 'Rutherford's Lassie'. Mark and his family moved onto Warraweena station in the Bourke district. Mark's grandson Peter states that Mark always used 'Barbs' whilst his father William used Kelpies on the Darling River property.

Moss was mated to Kelpie and the first litter were born shortly after Jack Gleeson took over as Overseer on North Bolero c1873. Amongst other people given a pup from the litter was Thomas Keogh, quoted as being on North Bolero at the time which he named 'Swan'.

Gleeson's appointment as overseer on North Bolero would have given the then young John Quinn, later the very well known owner/breeder of Kelpies, his first introduction to the outstanding working ability of Gleeson's dogs.

Michael Quinn had made application for conditional purchase of a block on North Bolero block 'A' in 1871 part of a property listed as being held by Julian Richard 30.000 and Charles Clarke 25.000. The details were as follows:-

1871 C.P 71/3549 pounds 10 paid Michael Quinn residing at Narrandera- selected at Wagga 28/9/1871.40a. c Bourke, Portion 1, C110.Yalgogring, C Cooper, LD Narrandera. 'County of Bourke - parish unnamed (Parish of Yalgogogring pencilled in) 40 acres North Bolero Block A run 'Commencing at a pine tree marked (2) at Yalgogrin Mountain at the back of a small water coarse on the right, width of creek to run down it 22 chains to where a dam is being erected and bounded these by lines ascending to the land cut to include the area and take on both sides of the water coarse' The Quinn's complied with all the requirements and thereby gained control over what was probably a very important source of water. Although the application was in the name of Michael the family included his father Patrick, his brothers Jeremiah and Patrick - John Quinn's fathers and were all listed on the 1874/5 electoral roll. They held the title until 1874 when they sold to Granville Robert Murray Collins of Wodonga for 40 pounds.

'Jack' Gleeson possibly in an effort to gain security, also made application for conditional purchase of a Portion of the Bolero Block A. but never went ahead with the residency requirements. 1875 C P.75.296 40a. Portion 10, C465 J D Gleeson which was transferred in 1878 to Andrew Crozier. When the Quinn's left the district and purchased 'Springfield' station 'Jack' Gleeson took up position on North Yalgogrin. The block was gazetted for public purpose in 1879. A historical plaque has been erected on the site to identify the area selected by Jack Gleeson.

Kelpie was mated again to Moss and her second litter was born either just before or just after Gleeson moved to Cox's North Yalgogrin as superintendent. Steve Apps who was employed on Cox's 'Merringreen' station, which adjoined Yalgogrin, was given a female from this second litter which he named Lass often referred to later as Apps Old Lass.

A little earlier Arthur Robinson had brought out from Scotland 'Brutus' and 'Jenny', a pair of black and tan collies, for his brother-in-law Gilbert S Elliot of the firm of Elliot and Allan, Geraldra Station, Lambing Flat, NSW. The pair were mated on board ship and Jenny whelped shortly after arrival. Caesar a black and tan pup from the litter became the property of John Rich of Narriah Station a run that adjoined North Yalgogrin. Caesar was mated to Gleeson's Kelpie and produced amongst others Kings Kelpie who tied for first at the first sheepdog trial held at the Forbes Show in 1879.

The following description by Mr Phil Mylecharane gives an idea of what Brutus and Jenny looked like and their working ability. 'In 1870 I went out to Mr Allen, of Geraldra Station, to buy flock rams for Goldsborough Mort and Company. When I got there Mr Allen told me the rams were out in the paddock, but he would soon get them in for me. So saying he opened the yard gate, whistled up two smooth, prick-eared black and tan dogs, a male and a female, and sent them out into the paddock. In a very short time they were back with the rams, and put them into the yard. I never saw dogs work sheep like these two did, and noticing that the bitch had pups, made up my mind that I must have one. So after I bought the rams (I took a big lot of them) I asked Mr Allen where he got those dogs. His answer was that they had just imported them from Scotland from a wonderful working strain there; the dog's name was Brutus and the slut Jenny. I asked for a pup. He told me there was only one left, and he thought I wouldn't like its colour. We went around to see the pups, and he pointed mine out, a little red-coloured one, exactly like a dingo; the rest were black and tan. I thought that it was a dingo. Mr Allen assured me that this was impossible, as the pups were sired on board, and every care taken. He advised me to take the pup, and he would write home to the breeders and see about it. I took his advice and the pup. The latter turned out a splendid worker. After having him for two years he was stolen from me down at Coolagong, near Forbes. The next time I saw Mr Allen he told me that the breeders of Brutus and Jenny had written back to say that in nearly every litter they got a similar pup to mine and that they were great workers'. Brutus won the sheepdog trial at the Burrangong Show April 1871 shortly after his arrival and repeated the performance a year later. The following description of Brutus's win appeared 29/4/1871 in the Town & Country

'In sheepdog there were three entries and the prize taken by a dog the property of Elliot and Allen. The performance of this dog was something wonderful. Three sheep were let loose and taken outside the ground and the dog upon word being given brought them into the ground and across through a crowd of people running here, there and every where in a manner which would confuse a human being, to the pen, without so much as a bark. So uncommonly well did this shepherd's friend behave himself that the other competitor resigned all claim to the prize, and would not put their dogs upon trial.' and in the issue 18/7/1872:-

'The trial between sheepdogs, two of which viz Mr Allan and Mr W Rutherford entered the lists - was very interesting. The animals were both thoroughly under control and evidently masters of their business and through a long and severe trial many were the bets hazarded as to how the judges Messrs Todd and Hammond would give their decision. The preference was, however, in the end given to Mr Allan (Brutus BMC), the same dog which took the prize and even frightened all competitors from the field last year.'

Mr John Rich's 'Caesar' (Brutus x Jenny) sired Gleeson's Kelpie's third litter which were born on North Yalgogrin in c1875. A black and tan female pup from this litter was given to C T W King who named her 'Young Kelpie' after her dam. She later became known as 'King's Kelpie'. When she was 4 years old she made a name for herself and the strain with her performance when she tied for first place with Gibson's Tweed at the inaugural sheepdog trial conducted at the Forbes Show in 1879. The following accounts clearly show that the trial at which Kings Kelpie competed was 1879 not 1872 as is invariably quoted. All three of the following published accounts clearly show that Kings Kelpie and Gibson's Tweed divided for first.

The Forbes Pastoral and Agricultural Show was formed in 1872. The foundation President being Josiah Strickland and foundation Secretary William Brooke. The first show took place in 1873. Research of the published Show results between 1873 and 1879 finds no reference to sheepdog trials. It was at the 6th Annual Show that a class for sheepdogs was included and this is the year 'Kings Kelpie' when competed. The following account of the trial appeared in the August 1879 Town & Country newspaper.

'Forbes Thursday- The pastoral and Agricultural show has been fairly successful, notwithstanding the unfavourable weather. Messrs Burcher and Strickland took the chief prizes for thoroughbred horses. In

draught stock Messrs Strickland and Walsh were the principal prize takers. The cattle were rather poor, but the sheep good. Mr Dowling took champion prize with merinos, bred on Genanagie station. Mr Pearson, of Wongagong, took the other prizes. Edols and Co. took the prize for best two-tooth ewe. The champion ram and ewe were station-bred from the well-known Genangie flocks of Messrs R Dowling and Co. They were grand animals. At the trial of sheep-dogs today, there were seven entries, including some of the best dogs in the colonies. After some severe tests the judges divided between Mr Charles King's Kelpie and Mr C F Gibson's Tweed. The latter dog was sent for especially from Tasmania to compete. Both dogs worked magnificently, and it is likely that the amount of first prize (20 guineas) will be doubled, so that both owners will get equal money. Flock masters came from distances of 150 miles to see the trial, and avowed that it was the grandest contest they ever saw. The dogs worked one and three sheep respectively, and notwithstanding the continuous rain, some hundreds of people watched the trials for six hours with unflagging interest. The town is full of visitors. The dinner and ball took place last night, and about 60 persons were present'

Another account appeared in the Parkes and Forbes Gazette 8th August. 'Rain all day, and water and mud everywhere - From dawn to dusk it came down without intermission, rendering the road quagmire. Nevertheless a goodly number braved the storm to go and witness the sheep dog trials, an through they had faced discomfort, those who went were well rewarded, as they witnessed, perhaps the most interesting, and even exciting contest ever seen at Forbes. The intelligence, patience and skill shown by the dogs was something marvellous and after witnessing what they, unaided, merely at a signal from their masters, were enabled to perform, we can thoroughly believe there is a great deal in Darwinism. The trial took place in the outer part of the Show ground, the condition being that each dog should work 3 sheep, and without assistance from his master put them in a yard 10 yards square. Each dog was allowed a quarter of an hour, and no one, save the judges, was permitted to go within 100 yards of the pen. Messrs Mylechrane, Webster and Waugh were judges and there were seven entries. viz: J Gleeson's Corby, C King's Kelpie, G A Hearn's Rover, R Smith's Lassie, C T Gibson's Tweed and Bet, & E Gerard's Topsy.

To describe the manner in which each dog did his allotted task - coolly, without hurry and without mistake would be impossible. In their hands the sheep were under the most perfect command and all present, were unanimous in declaring, that this was the feature of the Show and that the committee had kept the best to the last. Of course everyone, got a good drenching, but the sport afforded, amply atoned for it. The prize was divided between Mr King's black and tan bitch Kelpie and Mr Gibson's black and tan dog Tweed. We, in the name of all, are greatly indebted to Mr Dennis for initiating the dog contest and trust to see many more such, as nothing is of greater value to a squatter than to encourage the breed of good sheep dogs.

Sydney Mail: August 9 1879 p 17 'At the trial of sheep-dogs today, there were seven entries, including some of the best dogs in the colonies. After some severe tests the judges divided between Mr Charles King's Kelpie and Mr C F Gibson's Tweed. The latter dog was sent for especially from Tasmania to compete. Both dogs worked magnificently and it is likely that the amount of prize money (20 Guineas) will be doubled, so that both owners will get equal money. Flock masters came from a distance of 150 miles to see the trial and avowed that it was the grandest contest ever. The dogs worked one and three sheep respectively etc etc. '

The following extract from a newspaper published letter written by C T W King confirms the breeding of his Kelpie and her age at the time of the first Forbes trial. Which establishes that she was whelped 1875.

'..... Mr Gleeson was the owner of Moss and a black and tan slut called Kelpie. She had half-pricked ears and was mated to a dog called Caesar, belonging to Mr Rich, manager of Narriah Station, N S W. The dog Caesar was a son of Jennie and Brutus. Mr Gleeson made me a present of a slut pup out of his slut Kelpie by Caesar, which I called Kelpie after her mother. I broke her in myself, and when she was four years old I worked her at Forbes, (N S W) Show (in first dog competition ever held there) for a 20 guineas prize. Eight other dogs competed. Mr Charles Gibson, of Tasmania, promoted this competition, his object being to bring out a dog called Tweed, belonging to an uncle in Tasmania, who was a great sheep-breeder.....'

The following data from published correspondence by Mr David Hawkins of Barmedman, NSW confirms the part played by the Gleeson Strain of Kelpie. Mr Hawkins was living at Ungarie when Mr C T W King took his slut Kelpie to Forbes and was with her. Mr Hawkins states that she, (Kings Kelpie) had no Brutus blood in her (this statement conflicts with WKC research findings although R W Creswick stated he was unsure if Kings Kelpie was out the litter by Moss or the next litter by Caesar but that Brutus and Jenny blood may have been crossed at a later date. He went on to say: 'Gleeson came from the Western districts of Victoria with his dogs to Wallandool (R W Creswick suggests) Walbundrie also owned by the Ryan's in the Albury district early in the seventies, and thus the Kelpie strain, of which King's slut was a descendent, was introduced into New South

Wales. King refused 50 pounds for Kelpie. This at the time was considered a high price, but subsequent events proved otherwise, when the value of the blood became better understood. Mr Hawkins witnessed the working ability of Gleeson's Kelpie as follows: 'They had been drafting sheep at Bolera (Bolero. A killer was required for station use). After the other sheep had been taken away, Gleeson threw the killer over the fence, mounted his horse, and rode to the homestead, whilst Kelpie brought the sheep after him to the station yard- a beautiful piece of work, which Gleeson regarded as nothing out of the common'.

Gleeson's Kelpie had at least two further litters to Moss. Gleeson worked a young male named 'Corby' of this breeding against 'Kings Kelpie' at the 1879 Forbes trial and had a young all black female named 'Wylie' with him at a sheep muster on Lake Cowal West station late 1879 or early 1880.

Whilst 'Jack' Gleeson was on North Yalgogrin he married, 1878, Mary Ryan, daughter of Lancelot Ryan of Wallandool station. Pat Cox of 'Merringreen' and Harry King of 'Wollongong' had earlier married Grace and Elizabeth 'Kate' Ryan. Leaving North Yalgogrin, shortly after the death of the owner, John Cox, 'Jack' Gleeson took up employment on Lake Cowal West where he contracted hepatitis. With his wife Mary expecting their first child the Gleeson's left the district and made their way to Crossley in Victoria where Jack Gleeson died 1880 shortly after the birth of his son. Mary and her baby son Denis returned to her family on Wallandool.

When leaving the district Jack Gleeson left old 'Kelpie' with his friend T J Garry and 'Moss' with P J Cox of 'Merringreen' who lent him to C T W King for stud purposes. 'Moss' was found dead on the chain at Gainbill, Lake Cagelligo. 'Old Kelpie' developed a cancerous growth and had to be destroyed.

R W Creswick who knew Jack Gleeson in Victoria and NSW wrote a letter to the Australasian giving a good overall account of J.D. 'Jack' Gleeson's and association with the foundation of the Kelpie. The following extract from the letter further describes the ability of the foundation dogs and also refers to the origin of the name given to the Robertson bred pup and the dog Gleeson entered at the 1879 Forbes trial etc.

'With Kelpie and Moss Gleeson would do what he liked with sheep, whether few or many. The writer on very many occasions had the opportunity of seeing them work, both mustering and in the drafting-yards, and never saw their equal, nor any man who could handle dogs better than their owner J D Gleeson. The suggestion.....that the name Kelpie was taken from a racehorse of that name is not correct, as Gleeson said when asked where he got the name, that Kelpie was an Irish term for a witch or evil spirit, and that Corby (who competed at Forbes against King's Kelpie) BMC note which was the name of a young dog he had at the time, (a Moss x Kelpie pup BMC note) meant the same thing. He may have said it was Irish or Scotch but in all events, he made no mention of the racehorse of that name.'

'The last pup old Kelpie had, which survived, Gleeson took with him when he left Yalgogrin, to Lake Cowal. Meeting him there one day at a sheep muster, when he had the little slut with him, he told me he thought she was going to as good as her mother. She was very small, rough-haired, jet black, and I think he called her Wylie. This turned out to be the last time that the writer saw Mr Gleeson, as shortly afterwards, and whilst living at Lake Cowal West, he contracted an illness which resulted in his death.....

In the short space of approximately 7 years Jack Gleeson produced the foundation the breed now known as the Kelpie. As far as is known Gleeson's Kelpie only produced the one litter to J Rich's Caesar resulting in Kings Kelpie, Cunningham's Nero, Wylie II, Swan II. and at least 4 litters to Moss producing Keoghs Swan, S App's Lass/or Old Lass, Gleeson's Corby, Gleeson's Jet, Gleeson's Wylie.