



THE WORKING KELPIE COUNCIL OF AUST INC.

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Forbes Trial and Kings Kelpie

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The 'Forbes' Sheep Dog Trial and 'Kings Kelpie'

When the WKC was formed one of the aims was to research the origin of our Kelpie a task for which I was fortunate to have the guidance and support of the late Stuart Hume, a well regarded historian whose relatives originally owned the property 'Yarrowonga 'where' Rutherford's Moss' was bred. Stuart insisted that each and every published account of Kelpie background be researched for documentation to support the data. In due course it became obvious because of the perpetuation of the same errors that each new account had been based on a previous edition without any sort of check. For instance the Kings were quoted in Dr R B Kelly's 'Sheep Dogs' p.7'. My grandfather, John King of Hanging Rock Station, Wagga was the first to import these dogs to Australia in 1825....' John King, son of Thomas, was born in 1825. John King purchased Hanging Rock Station from Mrs Susannah Brown in 1873 and the transfer gazetted in 1874 - a time frame error of approximately 50 years. Over the years a number of writers have incorrectly quoted the date of the Forbes Trial at which Kings Kelpie competed. Their references have obviously been based on 'hearsay' rather than research. It would appear that the writers, perhaps keen to be considered authorities, accepted without question the words of the King family and/or Kaleski both of whom are quoted as the source of the incorrect data. Because the records of Forbes Newspapers prior to 1880 had been destroyed by a fire, it was difficult, in the first instance, to obtain any reference as to when this first Forbes Trial took place.

By sheer luck one of our research team, Shirley Drew, happened upon a write up of the first trial in Sydney Newspaper. 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 shows that Kings Kelpie and Gibson's Tweed divided for first a fact never acknowledged by either the King family or Kaleski. According to a published letter written by C T W King he broke Kings Kelpie in to sheepwork and she was four years old when she competed at Forbes.

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 1878 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 when 'Kings Kelpie' 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 Genanagie 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 specially 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.

Flockmasters 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, and 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, were 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.