A SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE FEATURE
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF

DR ROBERT INGLIS (Bob) TAYLOR BVSc

22-8-1917 - 6-3-2006
Founding member of Illawarra Historical Society.
by
Carol Herben - Honorary President

Dr Robert Taylor, a young veterinarian whose practice was located in the old stables at the rear of the ES & A Bank building (presently ANZ Bank) on the corner of Crown and Kembla Streets, Wollongong, was also a member of the Rotary Club of Wollongong and part of a group of young professional men who participated in "The Illawarra Discussion Group". The subject raised one night was the need for a Wollongong Historical Society.

Being also a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS) it fell upon Robert Taylor to approach the General Secretary and Fellow Mr Charles Price Conigrave to attend the Public meeting called for 7-30pm on 5 December 1944 at the Wollongong Council Chambers.

The meeting was well attended by members of the Rotary Club and the public and was opened by the then Mayor of Wollongong J J Kelly who then handed over the meeting to Mr John N Harrison.

It was moved at that evening that there be an Illawarra Historical Society formed. A further motion was placed forth that a provisional committee of seven be formed. Those nominated, including Robert Taylor, were all professional men located in the Wollongong District.

The first general meeting was held on Thursday 1 February 1945. The main business of the evening was the consideration of the constitution which had been prepared by the provisional committee. As there were no objections placed forth the constitution was adopted.
Robert Taylor was elected at the first general meeting to the position of Research Officer. At the time of the formation of the society Robert Taylor was very busy establishing his own business in Wollongong.

During the early days of the society collection of artefacts and publications from printers was carried out by Dr Taylor in his veterinary hospital van. Any accompanying committee members would be seated in the rear with the animal cages.

Whilst in the process of building the first purpose built veterinary hospital in Keira Street, Wollongong Dr Taylor was still deeply involved with the society. It was not until mid 1950s that Dr Taylor did not stand for re-election on the committee and by 1968 he left Wollongong to relocate to Harden.

Robert Taylor renewed his membership annually ever since. His assistance was most appreciated in the preparation of the early years of the society's 60th Anniversary publication.

It is only the foresight and drive of a young man, who, with a small family in 1944 and establishing his own business, still had precious time to spare to set up in Wollongong the Illawarra Historical Society and the Illawarra Museum that we, the members, have built upon, maintained and preserved today.

Thank you Robert Inglis Taylor.

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Robert Inglis Taylor was born on 22nd August 1917 at Northland, Wellington, New Zealand the son of William (accountant) and Marion Taylor, with one grandfather a farmer the other a preacher. Two sisters, Enid and Betty, closely followed when the family resided at Kelburn in Wellington. The residences of his grandfather & grandmother, the Rev. Robert & Jessie Inglis, and his uncle, aunt and cousins, the Dallards, all lived in the same street. Boka and Grannie Inglis ruled the Dallard and Taylor families with an iron hand - their rule and authority was absolute. Life in the early days revolved around the church.

Young Robert at the age of 14 showed the first glimpses of his life long attitudes to individuality and independence of thought and action. A quote from some recollections written by his sister Enid.

"After Bob turned 14 he announced he would prefer to walk in the Botanic Gardens or over the Wellington Hills than attend church. This shocked Mum and Dad and caused consternation in the adult family group when the heresy was announced. Bob's independence and lack of godliness were never forgiven. Soon after this he began tramping during the weekends... ... ... ... How I envied his male independence."

Bushwalking, tramping in New Zealand, the world of plants, animals and science became his passion. There was a whole world out there and he wished to discover and understand it all.

Robert was educated at:
The Terrace School (Primary) Wellington 1922 – 1929
Rongotai College Wellington 1930 – 1933

He excelled both academically and on the sporting field. First places in Science, Mathematics, History, 220 yards, 100 yards and High Jump in his senior year as well as being a member of the First XV, Rugby team.
When Robert and John, along with their families, returned to Rongotai with Dad, his photos and sporting records still adorned the walls and trophy cabinets of the school. A tear appeared as we toured the corridors of his old alma mater.

F M Remmer, principal of Rongotai, wrote in a reference for him in 1934 when he left to attend university:

"He has, without doubt, a scientific turn of mind, and will do well in a profession based on science or in medicine. Whatever he chooses, I have no doubt that he will fully uphold the reputation of his school and fulfill the high hopes we have of him and realize the good wishes with which we endow him."

Victoria University Wellington 1934 – 1935 Faculty of Science.

In 1935 his father, William Taylor, was appointed as New Zealand Trade Commissioner to Australia based in Sydney. Robert enrolled at the University of Sydney and was accepted into the faculty of Veterinary Science, the only Vet School in Australasia. The founding Dean, Professor JD Stewart, headed a list of luminaries on the teaching staff at that time. The names Gunn, Carne, Gregory, Webb, Whitehouse and Gordon are all outstanding pioneers of the profession. Keep in mind we are talking about 1936, pre war, pre scientific methods, pre antibiotics, pre tranquilises, pre antihistamines & corticosteroids, pre realistic & reliable anaesthetic agents. Good medicine rested on observation, clinical perception, history & good nursing.

Toward the end of 1939 Robert was offered a position as a Veterinarian by the New Zealand Department of Agriculture. "A salary of 400 pounds per annum, with the usual deductions...assuming you complete your BVSc this year." An offer I'm sure set up by a public service "mate" of his father. BUT, Bob had other ideas. During his final years he had worked with a few vets in Sydney. One had connections with major farmers on the South Coast whom he and Robert visited on several trips to the area for TB testing. Also, during his days at University, "I visited and enjoyed the bushwalking and beaches of the beautiful South Coast." When questioned why he would go into private practice, considering that he would be the only private practitioner outside Sydney and the metropolitan area. He replied:

"1. I believe that vets could provide a service to dairy farmers.
2. My desire for practical clinical veterinary work was influenced by many visits to my grandfather's farm at Fernside on the Canterbury Plains of New Zealand. My Grandfather apart from being a farmer was the local unregistered vet."
His desire to practice in Wollongong was resisted on two fronts, by his father and Prof. Gunn, Professor of Surgery who assured him he would fail and "go broke". Pop having already experienced his son’s determined independence, though of the same opinion as Gunn, supported Bob with 50 pounds ($100) "... and when it is gone you can go back to New Zealand."

And so a remarkable pioneering story begins. A remarkable pioneer sets out to succeed.

Armed with a BVSc and 50 pounds, no car, no premises in which to practise and no place to live, Bob was confident that he had made the right decision. He serviced the South Coast, Helensburgh to Nowra and Bowral, Moss Vale and Camden on the Tablelands. Providing a clinical service to dairies and involved in brucellosis & tuberculosis eradication. Attended working horses at 32 collieries between Helensburgh and Tongarra. He was the Veterinary Surgeon to Racing, Trotting and Greyhound racing clubs in the area for 28 years, up to 4 meetings a week. He built the first "purpose built" Veterinary Hospital in Australia at Keira Street Wollongong in 1951, providing modern facilities for hospitalized animals. In 1968 when he left Wollongong to "retire" to Harden, the Illawarra Veterinary Hospital employed seven veterinarians.

Around this time Bob was approached to accept a chair as professor of Small Animal Medicine in the new Veterinary School at Melbourne. A tempting offer and one we know gave him some agonizing hours pondering the decision. we were well aware of this as we were directly asked our intentions for the future as regards his dream to buy a farm. At the age of 50 years he felt he would require some youthful exuberance to enhance his experience.

So, Bob decided to fulfill that long term dream influenced by his visits to his grandfather’s farm and so he and the family moved to ‘Weirview’ (Harden NSW) in 1968. Principally to retire from vet practice and work the farm. Farming in Australia, as you all know, can challenge you with droughts, rising costs and low prices. With wheat quotas & falling wool prices of the late 60s and early 70s and the fact that word was out there was a new farmer in town who was a vet, Bob decided to start full time practice and established the Harden Veterinary Hospital in 1969. He remained actively involved up to a couple of years ago. His two sons Grahame & John now run that practice.
The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA).

In 1940 he joined the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA), another passion that remained within him until the end. It would take us another couple of hours to do justice to his involvement with the association. He gave his time unselfishly, not for self-aggrandisement, but for the prestige of the profession and the betterment of the veterinary family. (Including wives and children of the members.)

We therefore summarise his involvement:

1957 He formed the South Coast and Tablelands Branch of the NSW Division of the AVA.

1960 - 1970 He became a committee member of the NSW Division and Convener of the sub committees on the Veterinary Surgeons Act, Fees and the Benevolent Fund.

1965 - 1974 He aggressively promoted the formation of the AVA Benevolent Fund. A fund to be set up to assist and support members of the profession and their families who fall on bad times through death, sickness or injury. Particularly the private practitioners who lacked the support of an industry body or government department.

1974 AVA Benevolent Fund was established and he became the foundation Trustee and Secretary.

1967 – 1991 He was the AVA representative on the Post Graduate Committee in Veterinary Science, Sydney University.

1969 He was awarded the Sedden Prize by the Division.

1969 – 1974 He was a Federal Councillor of the AVA.

1975 He was made a Fellow of the AVA.

1975 He formed the AVA Historical Collection and became the foundation Curator.

1982-1985 He formed the South West Slopes Branch, NSW Division of the AVA and was branch foundation secretary.

1984 He was presented with a Life Fellowship of the AVA presented at the AVA conference of that year by the Nobel Laureate, Dr Peter Dougherty.

1991 He became the foundation President of the Australian Veterinary History Society and served as president until 1995 and was subsequently made a Life Member of the Society.
The Australian College of Veterinary Scientists.

1971 – 1977 Member of the working committee to form an Australian College of Veterinarians.
1977 Foundation Fellow and Councillor.
1984 Life Fellow
1974 – 1994 Convener of Awards Sub Committee

University:

1948 – 1975 External examiner in Veterinary Medicine, University of Sydney.

We are sure this appointment came to an abrupt end in 1975 when he inadvertently forgot to turn up. We were dipping sheep, one of the worst tasks on the farm, when a message came down from Mum that the university had phoned to advise they had a line up of final year students waiting nervously to be examined. A complete change had taken place, no secretaries to organize the daily tasks and a brain switch from veterinarian to farmer had temporarily relaxed him. Embarrassed he rushed to apologise, which was accepted, but no further requests for his services were forthcoming.

1973 External examiner in Veterinary Medicine, Queensland University.

1980 – 1986 Appointed by University of Sydney Senate a member of the faculty of Veterinary Science, as a person distinguished in Veterinary Science.

Government:

1960 – 1981 Appointed by Minister of Agriculture as examiner in Veterinary Surgery for registration of Foreign Veterinary Graduates.

Rotary International:

Bob joined the Rotary Club of Wollongong on 16th April 1943 at the age of 25 years. He became the youngest, to this day, President in 1951 aged 32 years. He was an extremely active member, participating in and most times chairing many organizations sponsored by Rotary.
1. The Crippled Children’s Society.
2. South Coast and Tablelands Boy Scouts Association

He remained an active member of the Wollongong Club until he left for Harden in 1968 where he joined the Harden Rotary Club. He became a Paul Harris Fellow in 1988 and continued active service until this year (2006).

All in all 63 years of service to the community.

A matter of History:

In 1944 Bob became the Foundation Secretary of the Illawarra Historical Society. Over a 13 year period he served as Research Secretary, Vice President and Councillor.

From 1970 to 1973 he was the foundation President of the Harden-Murrumburrah Historical Society and returned to the Presidency in 1985-86. He has been a member of the committee from 1970 through until 1989. He continued to support and attend meetings right up to the present day.

As already mentioned his love of history carried over into Veterinary Science which included researching early Veterinarians in Australia, such as John Stewart MLC who came to Australia in 1841.

Also note his contribution as an author in the “Australian Dictionary of Biography” authoring no fewer than seven biographies of prominent Australians including:

James Douglas Stewart 1869-1955 published 1991,
Max Henry 1883-1959 published 1996,
Reginald Montagu Cairns Gunn 1893-1974 published 1997,
Robert Anthony Patten 1889-1958 published 2000 and
He has also instilled a sense of history into both his children and grandchildren.

Which is the perfect segue into his family life. Much of his personal life remained very private. Suffice to say he had an enormous sense of family, of nurturing and developing the same individuality he possessed.

Let me start at the beginning. In 1942 he married Leila Pook, they were to produce, raise and educate three sons Robert, Grahame and John. Although a very BUSY person, an expression we often heard, Bob was determined, to be present at most endeavours taken on by his sons. This stems from a deep disappointment that his father never saw one football game or attended any sporting activities or academic presentations Bob was involved in.
The family home in Wollongong, "Pipiriki", was situated at 10 Corrimal Street. The land backed onto Kembla Street and the driveway went through from Kembla to Corrimal Street.

He and Mum would turn up to all athletic carnivals or football matches from primary school in Wollongong to High School in Glenfield usually with the appropriate glucose tablets. In most cases in his BUSY life he made all speech nights, some play nights and the yearly fetes. He would even take time out to come and talk to the teachers about the children’s education. He was a strict disciplinarian but tempered with good fatherly support.

We were introduced to the delights of camping and bushwalking, many times taking off from home after a race meeting at 10-11 o’clock at night to head for Kangaroo Valley or Wee Jasper or holidays along the Murray River or to Bundaberg.

His pioneering sense of adventure took him all over Australia and overseas. Not your organized tours of today, not four wheel drive safaris on sealed roads, but travelling through the centre of Australia in an old Mainline utility through “bull dust” creeks and bogs or jumping on a coastal steamer trading around the pacific.

He was also an avid reader, of novels to scientific journals. Very rarely were you enquiring about a book that wasn’t to be found in his library.

It is said, busy people MAKE time, he sure fitted more than 88 years worth in!

Each and every member of the family believed they were most special from his children, down to his grandchildren and great grandchildren. Each of them believing that ‘Weirview’ house was their home.

Wherever they may roam, school, boarding school, travelling interstate or overseas the FIRST port of call was ‘Weirview’ to see Ma Ma & Grandad. The Tree Club, the croquet, cricket on the front lawn will all be enthusiastically revisited.
Travelling to sporting and school events continued with the grandchildren, to Glenfield, to Canberra, to Parramatta, to Glenfield again and back to Canberra.

It is hard to believe he had so much time for the kids in such a BUSY work schedule but I fear he had ulterior motives that justified him making the time. He was busy making true independent individuals out of each of them and revelled in their success.

As with the children he had the ability to make everyone here feel special, he was interested in you as a person, in what you were doing, in what you thought and how he could help you.

Each of you had the most special friendship, each of you was his most important client and each of you was his closest colleague. I’m sure the animals he treated felt the same. He’d probably call you by a name that was not yours no matter how many times he was corrected – BUT what’s in a name, he was interested in you.

Robert lost his wife and "partner in life", Leila, when she passed away in 1999. At the time of his passing, at Young in the early hours of Monday 6 March 2006, Robert was 88½ years old.

The funeral was held at “Weirview” as requested by him. Afterwards he was cremated and his ashes will be spread at the next family gathering over Leila’s extensive rose garden where hers were spread 7 years ago. An appropriate plaque was attached to a beautiful piece of granite which now will also carry Dad’s name. They will never be far away from the family.

He is survived by his three sons, 12 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren.

Vale
Robert Inglis Taylor
better known as
Robert, Bob, Dad and Granddad.

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Address given by Dr. Robert I Taylor
to
A General Meeting of the NSW Divisional of the AVA. on
21st July 1990

"Early practice days in Wollongong and the region"

Mr. President, Ladies, Members of the Profession and Guests.

It is an honour and privilege to come back home, to be invited to address this assembly of colleagues, friends, old and new, and to commemorate an event which I participated in more than 50 years ago.

I have always had great regard for our honoured profession and I guess that is why my life and work has been so intertwined with its development.

When Bruce Dunkley phoned me some moths ago and asked me to speak at a branch meeting, I said yes, as I considered no preparation would be involved. I could just talk of the top of my head about the early days of practice. Alas, a week ago when I learnt it was a Divisional function I felt I had to present something more formal. Those of you who know me well will forgive me if I stutter and stammer it is not because I have a speech impediment, but because I frequently have great difficulty in interpreting my hand written words.

Knowing my long association with history, both Illawarra and Veterinary I hope I can introduce enough to satisfy your varying interest but not enough to send you to sleep. I will mention people and dates so please correct if my information is incorrect. Please ask any questions as we go along.

To start at the beginning I was born in New Zealand in 1917 during the First World War.
Attended Rongotai College and then completed 2 years of Science at the University of New Zealand, Wellington. Came to Sydney in 1935. Admitted ad audem statum and joined the Veterinary Faculty in 1936.

I recall my first contact with the University of Sydney. It was with Assistant Registrar, Geoffrey Dale, a jolly, corpulent individual who welcomed me warmly, took me on a tour of the University precincts on foot, ending up at the Vet School, where he introduced me to Professor J D Stewart.

James Douglas Stewart was born at Windsor, NSW in 1869, son of a very early veterinary practitioner, John Stewart Jnr MRCVS. He was the grandson of John Stewart MRCVS, MLA, MLC the first qualified veterinary surgeon to come to Australia, in 1841. John Stewart MLC had a close connection with Wollongong and lived for some 15 years in Judge Therry's home of Mt Keira Road. I have addressed you in detail about this very prominent veterinarian previously.

J D Stewart had qualified at the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College, Edinburgh and became a MRCVS in 1893. He returned to Sydney, had a brief involvement in practice with his father at Windsor, left to join the Department of Agriculture and also accepted an appointment as lecturer in charge of the Veterinary course run by the Sydney Technical College. The serious inadequacies of the course convinced him of the necessity of university training for Veterinarians in NSW.

He required the support of the NSW Government, Sydney University Senate and money. The money became available from the David Berry bequest of 1889, which had made provision for the building of a hospital (human) at Berry and for the establishment and maintenance of an institution for the promotion of Agriculture and Veterinary Science. David Berry was a brother of Alexander Berry, a merchant and settler. Alexander Berry, a Scot, studied Medicine at Edinburgh University, became a Surgeon's Mate on vessels trading with China and India. His dislike of flogging of seamen and the opportunities in commerce led him to abandon medicine. Berry first visited the Shoalhaven in 1822. His original grants were located on the north side of the Shoalhaven River
where he established his HQs at the foot of Mt. Coolangatta. His first grant was 10,000 acres – by 1863 he had acquired 40,000 acres.

Alexander Berry died in 1873 without children and his property passed to David. David’s beneficence enabled J D Stewart to pursue his vision and in 1908 a Senate Report recommended the establishment of Agriculture and Veterinary Schools at Sydney University. Stewart was appointed to plan and develop the school and became its first Professor of Veterinary Science. Of interest his brother-in-law Professor “Dickie” Watt was appointed to introduce Agriculture to Sydney University in the same year, 1909.

The Vet School was opened in 1910 with Stewart as Dean and sole Professor, and with an initial intake of 16 students. Melbourne University Vet School had opened one year earlier in 1909.

In 1936, when I entered the Faculty, I remember Prof. Stewart as a charming, conscientious and very enthusiastic Dean. He was known to all as “The Old Prof” (behind his back of course). His enthusiasm extended to faculty spirit & sport. The student intake in 1936 was quite large, over 40. This the largest year science establishment of the faculty. All major subjects in 1st year were with the Science Faculty. Only Vet Subject, Veterinary Anatomy 1, “Osteology”. We were a pressured group as the Senate had decided that from 1937 the course would be extended to 5 years to match overseas university requirements for Veterinary Graduates. So if we failed a year we would have 2 years to catch up.

1939 was the year “the Old Prof” retired. This took place on the day he turned 70 which happened to be at the end of 1st term. As foundation Dean and sole Professor he had led the School for 29 years with low student intake, inadequate finance and facilities, through a World War and a major depression – quite an achievement!

I was not impressed when I got to final year and attended his lectures. These consisted of anecdotal accounts of his early life and experiences – strangely enough mostly on the South Coast of NSW;

Incidentally I had the privilege of researching and writing his Biography for the “Australian Dictionary of Biography” last year. It will be published in November 1990.

Sydney University in the 1930s. Personal memories of Staff.

Dr Gunn (Gunga)
A most capable surgeon, researcher and academic. His work on AI (Artificial Insemination) and infertility was of world importance and acceptance. A clear, lucid lecturer. His personality did not allow him to relate well to students and he would not suffer fools. After graduation my relationship with Gunn changed dramatically and we became friends.

RMC “Dickie" Webb
A top lecturer with a complete grip of his subject. Very tough on students and a hurdle to many aspiring young vets.

Dr Carne (Harold) – (Died this year)
A kind, highly intelligent and courteous man. Outstanding Pathologist. His lectures given at 2 pm with slides and blinds drawn, never failed to put all our year to sleep even keen kids like Kay Kesterven. His printed notes terrific – used by Grahame and John (Bob’s sons who did vet. science) years later.

Hugh McLeod Gordon. “Hughie”
I think we were the first students he lectured to in Parasitology. In those days he spoke very quickly and I think he was nervous. But he managed to get his message across and even enthused the majority of us in an exciting discipline.

Prof Davies “Pete”
Lectured in Physiology to Med, Vet, Dental and Science students. Often under the influence and almost incoherent. His early years in research at Oxford said to be brilliant. Died a few years later when he
tumbled down the wide stairs at the University Club and had a cerebral haemorrhage. His 2nd IC Dr. "Frankie" Cotton. His work on the centrifuge was of great importance later with the development of supersonic flight.

From 1914 – 1924 graduating years were small averaging 3.2 persons per year and in 1916, 1917 & 1921 only 1 student graduated, Lucas, Whitehouse and Ian Clunies Ross.

From 1924- 1934 average 4.5 persons per year and in 1927 only one student graduated, Harold White who died recently.

Then the "flood" started.

1935 10 graduates
1936 31 "
1937 29 "
1938 24 "
1939 31. "

World War II was declared in September 1939. The final year Vet. Science was in Armidale with RMC Gunn and "Jimmie" Newcome the Senior House Surgeon seeing some veterinary procedures in the field. With the German Blitzkrieg in Europe it was apparent that horses in combat had a limited future and the AAV Corp which had been established for many years saw little demand for veterinarians as such. Early we were placed in reserved occupations and so few veterinarians served overseas in WWII as Vets. A number played an active and vital role in Australia.

To the Illawarra.

You thought I wouldn’t get there.

From the age of twelve I was involved and fascinated by bush walking (called tramping in New Zealand). During my Sydney University period I still continued this activity to some extent limited by my involvement with Rugby during the winter. I can remember carrying a volume of Drabbles Meat Inspection in my pack during an August vacation spent bushwalking in Barrington Tops. Bush walking brought
me to Otford, Burning Palms, to Kangaroo Valley, Saddle Back Mountain and Pigeon House.

In my final 2 years I had worked closely in Sydney with Sid Hebden. Sid had a modern Veterinary Hospital right in the business centre of Double Bay, New South Head Road. I also worked with Rowley Pursell in North Sydney, just over the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Norman Larkin, Bondi Junction and Bruce Potty in Redfern.

Nobody arranged extra curricular activity – I just called in and offered help and in all cases was accepted (NO pay).

At this time in Sydney there was a lot of pressure on Dairy farmers, big and small, to produce TB free milk for raw milk consumers. This also applied later in major centres like Newcastle and Wollongong. Many Sydney Vets did considerable testing of cattle in metropolitan dairies and Sid Hebden used to go to the South Coast to test cows headed for raw milk suppliers in the Sydney market. This was my introduction to Unanderra, Dapto, Albion Park, Jamberoo and Kiama.

On graduation I had a job arranged in New Zealand. However because of my association with the beautiful South Coast and parental support of $100 (absolute limit) I decided to set up practice at Wollongong. The $100 enabled me to purchase an old bull nosed Morris for $15 – some old instruments (mainly horse) from a registered vet ($30) and look for somewhere to live and work.

I commenced a practice in the old ES & A Bank stables at 86 Kembla Street (now shops and club, 1st floor). Great site, 100 yards from Town Hall and main Post Office – right opposite the Wollongong Hotel and a Bank adjoining. A large weatherboard building with solid corrugated iron roof and two rough rooms. One room became an office and the other combined consulting room and surgery. The horse stalls became the kennels. Completely open to the public. Large double wooden gates always open except when exercising our dogs. One became expert at doing complicated surgery and carrying on a conversation with a client on an entirely different matter at the same time.
Wollongong 1940.

Large country town. Population around 25,000 including Port Kembla. Escarpment almost undeveloped. Main access road Bulli Pass, very steep and narrow, and part gravel. (No Mt. Ousley Road – built during the war 1942-3)

Many dairies, some large but most small – Helensburgh, Bulli, Fairy Meadow, Balgownie, West Wollongong, Figtree, Warrawong, Unanderra and all down the coast to Nowra.

A.I.S. Port Kembla, established 1927 and employed around 3,000 folk. M.M and ER&S Co big industries and established about the same time due to port facilities – no inner harbour. Lysaghts a major industry.

37 Collieries, all with horse haulage, between Helensburgh and Tongarra (Albion Park). Fishing Industry small but active at Wollongong, Port Kembla and Kiama.


Commencement of Practice.

Commenced practice 16th March 1940. No qualified practising veterinarians between Sydney & Victorian border and west to Perth.

The only qualified veterinarians who had resided on the South Coast were John Stewart MLC 1852-67 and B. C. “Bertie” Veech, V.O. (Veterinary Officer, Dept. Agriculture), Kiama 1933-35.

In 1940 it looked like a fertile field for veterinary science, but don’t get carried away. There were lots of unqualified vets practicing and one registered vet at Nowra, Eugene Veron 1930-52. There were experts in horses, calving, abortion, vaginitis, dogs and especially greyhounds.
**Dairy Work**

Difficult and slow to get recognition. Called in when everybody else had had a go and in most cases too late.

Remember in 1940, no antibiotics were available as we have today. Although sulphonamides and penicillin were available for human use and relatively expensive. Good consultants only worth 12 – 15 pounds. The students appreciated my help and kept me going in the early days.

**Collieries**

All large collieries had an ostler (hostler) or head groom. Most were very knowledgeable and capable of major surgery without anaesthetics – removal of eyes – castration, repair of horrific muscle and skin lacerations. Mines were run by a Manager usually aged 60-70 – who had started as a wheeler, then a miner and became with study, a deputy – under-manager then manager. He held power and expected respect. Men dipped their hats or caps when they met him. Once a year he might get a vet down from Sydney – Dottie or Stewart. Often the horse was dead on arrival. Great disruption was an outbreak of strangles. Most collieries had 100 plus horses and some had breeding farms. Some collieries had the horses stabled underground and only saw sunlight during Xmas - New Year 3 week break. Sizes of the horses depended on the coal seam. Tongarra -Shetland size, Bulli-14-15 hands.

**Horse Racing**

Racing: 1 race meeting monthly – Kembla Grange  
Trotting: 1 meeting monthly

**Greyhound Racing**

Major Coulter MRCVS, 65 years, came down from Sydney (Old South Head Road, Rose Bay) to attend meetings. In fine weather, on an old Harley Davidson motor bike. He carried a pair of scissors and a fishing line in his pocket and kept cotton wool, three bandages and suture needles in a box at the Track. He used powdered lime as a dressing for all
injuries. Coulter was paid a fee of 2 pounds 10 shillings for attendance. It was 12 months before I obtained the appointments at Wollongong and Dapto. 3 pounds 3 shillings per night – 4 ½ hours. We attended two meetings weekly and later with Bulli operating three meetings weekly.

**Development of the Practice on the South Coast – First Decade**

In 1942 – I married Leila. She was a tremendous support in my professional and private life. We produced three sons – Robert, Grahame and John – all now associated with the Veterinary profession.

In my reading last week, I came upon the following:

M.J.A August, 1989
Caring wives do protect against cardiac disease. A. J. Coble Senior – Cardiologist – Austin Hospital, Melbourne.

1946 – Jim Cartwright joins the first Dairy Co-op Vet Service at Kiama.

1946 – Bill Sedman commenced practice at Camden

1947 – Morrison practised near Camden

After 8 years working on my own, in 1948, I was joined in the Wollongong practice by David and Helen Rees. A great colleague and by his loyal support and our mutual co-operation over 13 years, enabled us both to become involved in professional and community activities not directly associated with the practice.

1948 – Bruce Frecker practised at Gerringong for 2 years.

1949 – Peter Royal set up in practice at Bega.

Before we reach the next decade, time will not permit to get into detail of ordinary practise activities, but 3 subjects come to mind and I will digress:
**Distemper**

The major disease condition seen in dogs at this time. A fatal and crippling disease – no protection until Laidlaw and Dumkin, UK, developed live vaccine in the 1930s.

We would see many dogs, often whole litters, which had developed incurable encephalitis. Greyhounds appeared to be particularly susceptible. Medical treatment was not very successful. So many quack remedies and medications. We used a ‘live’ virus vaccine - CSL - which did give good protection if the dog didn’t prove susceptible and some did develop encephalitis.

Intradermal injection of virus to skin of one thigh, followed in two hours by 10ml distemper serum in other thigh, subcutaneous.

THANK GOD for safe distemper vaccines – the first egg adapted – which arrived in the 1950’s.

**Viral Disease in Cats**

Virulent viral disease of cats – was commonplace in the 1940s. No vaccines available. We used sulphonamides which probably affected secondary invaders, but very high mortality. In industry it was important, for example Lysaghts rat & mice control. In 1946 they lost hundreds of cats & the rats took over. The Management was concerned and called a conference. I suggested they support research at Sydney University but no action was taken by Col. Parbery.

**Tick Paralysis**

This was our common and constant spring condition with a peak at the October holiday weekend depending on rainfall & temperature. Clunies Ross had researched Ixodes holy cycles for his PhD in the 1920s and had suggested an immune serum for treatment. Arthur Webster and CSL had worked on it and were able to produce some commercially in the early 1940s in very limited quantities and very dubious titre. CSL produced primarily for human use. It was almost impossible to
obtain supply and we had many dogs affected each year. There were pockets of scrub all over the Illawarra area and right in Wollongong where bandicoots were plentiful. (i.e. Mangerton & Stuart Park). With much effort & hard work we developed highly immune dogs, starting with dogs exposed to heavy natural infection, mainly hound breeds collecting and attaching ticks and harvesting serum monthly. In the late 1940s and early 1950s we were the only veterinarians who had good quality hyper-immune serum available and folk came long distances to receive treatment (Bega & Sydney). We learnt tricks in collecting and attaching the ticks. At one time I was so desperate I decided to see if I could build up my own immunity and succeeded in having three fully engorged ticks on my chest at one time but unable to continue the exercise as Leila objected and incidentally I had at that stage a constant headache & intense itchiness.

In these early years many students spent time seeing practice with us, some prominent in the profession today. I like to think we provided them with a practical outlook and some added enthusiasm for their chosen vocation. During the 1940s and 1950s I had close association with two lecturers at Sydney University, Douglas Blood and Jim Steel. Both spent many hours on the South Coast cooperating with us on disease investigations and helping to elucidate some obscure conditions which occurred over that period. I studied cardiology with Jim over a three year period and researched the normal and abnormal cardiogram of the racing greyhound with him.

**The Second Decade – 1950s -- When it all happened.**

A busy time for development on the South Coast & Australia wide.

The following veterinarians were listed along with the dates they arrived, where they worked and in some cases the years they left.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-1951</td>
<td>Dick Hewartson</td>
<td>AI Centre Berry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-1955</td>
<td>John Chalmers</td>
<td>Nowra Cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td></td>
<td>Illawarra Vet Hospital completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-1953</td>
<td>Len Hart</td>
<td>Moss Vale Cooperative</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
On the 27th April 1957 the South Coast & Tablelands Branch, NSW Division of the AVA was formed at a meeting held at the Brighton Hotel, Kiama. A preliminary meeting was held at our home “Pipiriki” to meet overseas graduates in practice on the coast. Douglas & Marion Blood attended.

I would like to pause and divert to make two tributes. Firstly to recognise and commend the part our colleagues from overseas played in the development of Veterinary Practice in the Illawarra. They gave good service to a large and important dairying industry previously neglected. They converted many to become users, and some enthusiastic, of the many services the veterinary profession could provide.

Secondly, I mention briefly my departed good friend and colleague, John Beardwood. He and the South Coast Branch were able to bring the south coast practitioners closer together in the interest of all.

I have covered in detail the 1st & 2nd decades, 1940 & 1950s. I leave to someone else to complete the recording of the 1960s, 70s 80s and 90s.
In conclusion may I be permitted to say something about the future of the veterinary profession. Apart from providing top quality veterinary service and facilities we must display courtesy and a caring attitude to both clients and our patients.

Veterinarians should remember they are part of the community they live in and should actively join in community activities. They must know and respect their professional colleagues – I do not mean they must be close friends, but they should be seen by the public to be united in their calling.

The AVA is their only hope of future professional advances. We live in a world which is changing dramatically & fast as is our association. Give it your support, even if it means personal sacrifice.

Thank you all for your attentive hearing. I hope it has not been painful.

Mr President, thanks for inviting me.

Robert I Taylor BVSc MRCVS FACVS

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