

# RACEHORSE OWNERSHIP – GET INVOLVED!

ALISTER FRASER HAS BEEN ON AN INCREDIBLE JOURNEY, ALL THANKS TO WONDER MARE ORTENSIA WHO HAS PERFORMED WITH EXCELLENCE ON THE WORLD STAGE

WORDS: SHARON HUNT (EXECUTIVE OFFICER – NSWROA)

Readers will need no introduction to the name 'Fraser' which is very much entrenched in the history of the Hunter Valley Thoroughbred Industry.

The name is synonymous with St Aubins Stud at Scone which has been run generation by generation by the family since the 1930s.

In the care of Kate and Nairn Fraser for the past 35 years, it was initially Kate's maternal grandfather, W J "Knockabout" Smith, a Sydney-based industrialist, who turned St Aubins Stud into one of the top studs in Australia in the 1930s and 40s.

So it was with great pleasure that I caught up with NSWROA member Alister Fraser to discuss, amongst other things, the wonderful success of Ortensia both in Australia and on the international stage.

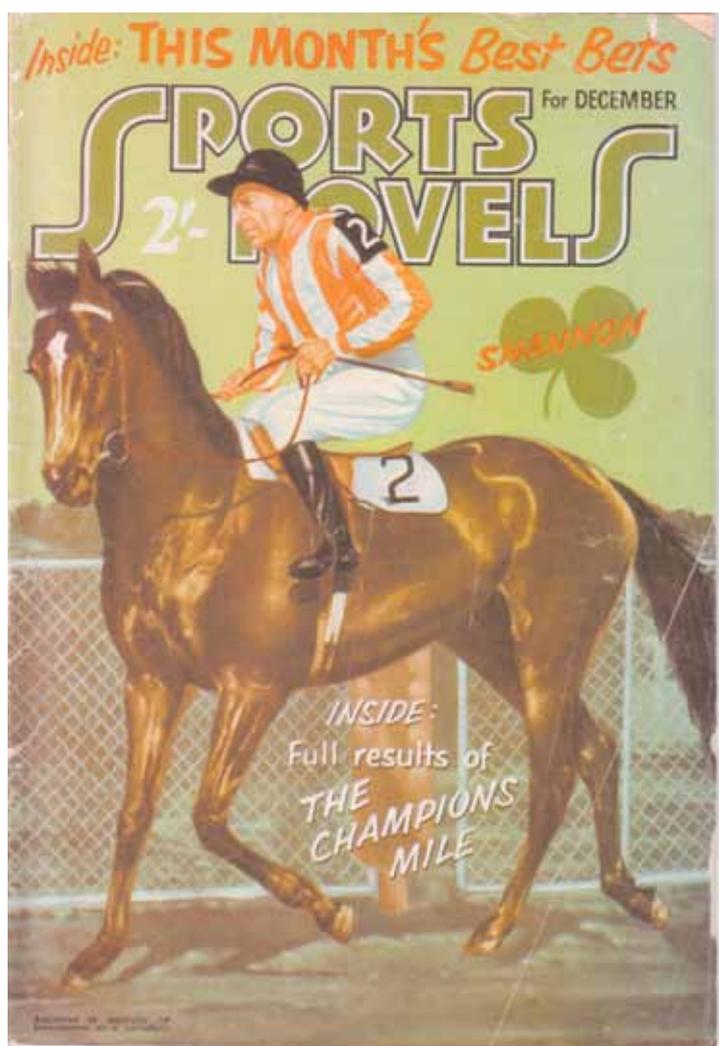
As is the case with so many 'diehards' in racing, Alister has loved horses all his life, having grown up on the farm and later boarding at The Scots College, Bellevue Hill.

He readily confesses that too much time was spent on the form guide rather than his studies.

**AFTER LEAVING SCHOOL HE RETURNED TO SCONE AND UNDERTOOK A THOROUGHBRED MANAGEMENT COURSE AT SCONE TAFE. THIS LED TO HIS FIRST JOB AT THE MITCHELL FAMILY'S YARRAMAN PARK STUD WHERE HE SPENT TWO SEASONS AS A STUD GROOM.**

Following his first season at Yarraman Park he was given the opportunity by the Mitchell family to attend the National Stud in Newmarket, England to further his skills.

This was Alister's first overseas trip and it made a lasting impression. Upon his return he spent another season on Yarraman Park before returning to England for another stint.



ABOVE: Shannon in the orange and white stripes of W J Smith  
OPPOSITE TOP: Ortensia with Craig Williams aboard. Picture by Bronwen Healy  
OPPOSITE: Alister Fraser (R) receives Ortensia's NSW Country Champion Horse of the Year award from Sky Racing's Brendan Parnell



Unfortunately this stint was only partially completed but nevertheless proved invaluable experience for Alister.

His 'fate' of joining the ownership ranks was sealed when he was given the orange and white stripes racing colours of his great grandfather, W J Smith.

These colours were carried to victory many times for Mr Smith including twice by the outstanding racehorse Shannon who saluted the judge in the Canterbury Stakes and the George Main Stakes.

Alister never for a moment thought that one day these colours would see Group One success again in Australia, and on the international stage, as they have with the wonderful mare Ortensia.

Alister had been looking for about a year or two for a yearling and had given the task to well-respected bloodstock agent, Steve Brem to select.

It was whilst Alister was working in Dubai that Steve secured the desired lot at the 2007 Inglis Premier Yearling Sale; a filly by Testa Rossa out of Aerate's Pick from the draft of Riverside Park for the sum of \$50,000. The horse, of course, was Ortensia.

During his time in Dubai, Alister had met trainer Tony Noonan who was racing some horses there with success so he decided he could train the filly.

**ORTENSIA SHOWED ABILITY FROM DAY ONE BUT WAS VERY FLIGHTY AS A TWO-YEAR-OLD. HER FIRST PREPARATION IN 2008 RESULTED IN THREE WINS INCLUDING THE GROUP 3-THOUSAND GUINEAS PRELUDE (TRANQUIL STAR STAKES).**

Ortensia's second preparation saw her travelling interstate for the first time, netting four wins including the Listed-P J Bell Stakes at Royal Randwick, the Listed-Glenlogan Park Stakes at Doomben and the Group 2-QTC Cup at Eagle Park. She also ran a gallant third to Black Piranha in the Group 1-Stradbroke Handicap.

After a short let-up she returned for her third preparation comprising five runs – all Black Type races – collecting a win in the Group 2-Winterbottom Stakes in Perth.

A well-deserved break then ensued prior to commencing an autumn campaign.

A first-up trial win at Warwick Farm was followed by success in the Group 1-The Galaxy at Randwick (which she was later disqualified from) and then three unplaced runs in Group One races.

After spelling again she returned for her fifth

preparation and first overseas trip.

The mare finished third first-up to Champion Black Caviar in the Group 1-Patinack Classic and this was followed by a fifth placing in the Group 1-Hong Kong Sprint to the South African Champion, J J the Jet Plane on International Raceday in Hong Kong.

She had three further runs in the Group 2-Australia Stakes (4th to Whitefriars), the Group 1-C F Orr Stakes (3rd to Typhoon Tracy) and the Group 1-Futurity Stakes (6th to More Joyous).

Another short let-up followed and after two disappointing runs, it was decided that she would be retired to stud.

However, Ortensia did so well while out in the paddock at the farm that Alister decided to send her down the road to local trainer Paul Messara to see if the change in environment made her want to race again – and didn't it what!

## **FOLLOWING TWO TRIALS, SHE HAD TWO STARTS FOR TWO WINS IN THE LISTED-G H MUMM STAKES AT FLEMINGTON AND HER SECOND SUCCESS IN THE WINTERBOTTOM STAKES IN PERTH – NOW A GROUP ONE EVENT.**

But her next campaign saw her reach the pinnacles that most other owners can only achieve in their dreams.

Alister is the first to point out that it was Paul Messara's idea to go to Dubai and what an excellent judgment call that was!

Ortensia duly saluted in the Group 1-Al Quoz Sprint on Dubai World Cup Day at the incredible Meydan Racecourse. She won by 1.3 lengths going away from them.

It was then off to England for a crack of more international spoils.

Following unplaced runs in the Group 1-King's Stand Stakes (Ascot) and the Group 1-July Cup (Newmarket), to the great delight of all she scored in the Group 2-King George Stakes (Goodwood) and the Group 1-Nunthorpe Stakes (York) where she came from a seemingly impossible position with 200 metres to go to win by a neck. Simply awesome!

Unfortunately Ortensia suffered an injury in her next run, the Group 1-Sprint Cup at Haydock Park, and so closed an international campaign comprising six runs netting three wins – two at Group One level and a Group Two success.

When asked what it feels like to be a part-owner of such a good horse, Alister said it is a big thrill with a lot

of great highs as well as lows.

"When you have a horse of this calibre the expectations are so much higher and the setbacks and injuries seem to hit harder," he said.

"I have to say it was nice to go back to England and obtain my ultimate dream of winning races there. And the icing on the cake was receiving the NSW Country Champion Horse of the Year award at both Racing's Night of Champions, the NSW racing industry's night of nights, and the NSW Country and Provincial Racing Awards."

For the record, Ortensia has 13 wins (three at Group One level including two at International level), three Group Two wins (including one at International level), a Group Three win and three Listed Race successes.

Alister also has sage advice to those thinking of entering the ownership ranks: "Get Involved – you will love it. Enjoy your wins as they are hard to come by.

"Don't forget a win is a win whether it is a maiden at Orange or a Group One in England. I have been most fortunate to have a life-changing experience and travelled the world to watch Ortensia run.

"Who would have thought that an animal with four legs could change your life so much?"

As to the future, Alister looks forward to being involved in the industry both breeding and racing and of course seeing Ortensia's progeny race in years to come.

## **AT THE TIME OF WRITING, ORTENSIA WAS TO BE RELEASED FROM QUARANTINE AT EASTERN CREEK. SHE WILL THEN SPELL AT ARROWFIELD STUD BEFORE EMBARKING ON ANOTHER, AND MOST PROBABLY, HER LAST CAMPAIGN CULMINATING IN THE DEFENCE OF HER GROUP 1-AL QUOZ SPRINT TITLE; ALL BEING WELL.**

To those owners who are not as yet members of the Association, why not join this winning team and become a member of the NSW Racehorse Owners Association.

Applications are now open for the 2013 membership year. For further information, simply visit our website - [www.nswroa.com.au](http://www.nswroa.com.au) - or telephone the NSWROA office on (02) 9299 4299.

As this is the last issue of Racing NSW Magazine for the year, may I take this opportunity, on behalf of the President and the NSWROA Committee, to wish all readers the compliments of the season and a happy, healthy and prosperous 2013. **RNSW**