

The RANNOCK - HSH

PART 1

Article by: Jeanette Gower
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Legacy

The story of RANNOCK - HSH is that of a horse which has been under the radar for a long time. This is partly because of his South Australian location, away from mainstream Australian Stock Horse breeding, but also because so many of the resulting descendants have been unregistered. The RANNOCK influence has been incredible, considering the lack of opportunity. It is also the story of the families involved, families who knew the lines well and wanted to keep them into perpetuity. Perhaps not unsurprisingly then, the line is gaining new attention, due to its long-standing record of producing smart, good looking and reliable, traditional stock horses which are a true Heritage Stock Horse outcross to most Australian Stock Horse lines today.

RANNOCK was bred by RT (Bob) Mackay, "Tinagroo" Scone, NSW, breeder of the famous foundation sire Panzer, to whom RANNOCK is inbred. Foaled a little over 50 years ago in 1967, RANNOCK was by Dundee (by Panzer) x TINAGROO MERSA (by Panzer) a half-brother/half-sister cross. All the immediate ancestors were high-class polo ponies in their own right. Panzer's dam, Nellie was a polo pony, foal recorded in the ASB studbook in 1933 but never raced due to the outbreak of WWII. She too was inbred to the Sydney Cup winning mare Diffidence which was purchased as a 17-year-old by JK and WH Mackay for 900 guineas in 1913, a princely sum!

The Mackay's bred Thoroughbreds to race, and like a lot of owners of the day, used them on the property after retirement.

TINAGROO MERSA's dam Ranmena was a successful racehorse, which also went on to become a good polo pony.

In an interview with Peter and Jeanette Gower in 1973, Mr Mackay said, "Panzer began his polo career as a rising five-year-old in 1949 and played until 1956 when he was 11 years old and about reaching his prime. I say this because each chukka he played was better than the one before.

"That year we won the Northern Challenge Cup at Quirindi for the third successive year but my health forced me to give up polo. Panzer retired with me, as did two of his daughters TINAGROO MERSA and Misra, both of whom had been playing beside him for the past two or three years. It was unfortunate for Panzer, as he would have played on for another four or five years at his top. He never developed a heavy neck as stallions do and become heavy to handle, but remained a very orthodox polo pony. He never pulled or ran on and always played off the single bottom rein of the curb.

"Although Panzer was a brilliant horse cutting out on a camp (I always used him for this work on the property) I never allowed him to competition campdraft, as for me he was a specialist as a polo pony." As was the custom in those days, Bob MacKay rarely sold a mare, preferring to sell colts, and used well-performed stallions from neighbouring stations when breeding out.

“MERSA, RANNOCK’s dam, was the first of Panzer’s progeny to play and was a beautiful mare to play on, being completely orthodox and simple to play in a single rein curb off the bottom ring only. Literally a finger-tip control! Her dam, Ranmena, was the best of three sisters I played in the 1930s.”



TINAGROO MERSA at 29 years

The Panzer influence is widely documented, Panzer quite rightly appearing in both the Australian Polo Hall of Fame and that of the Australian Stock Horse Society for his massive contribution to the depth and talent of Australian Horses. He is listed as a Waler Horse of Significance and is mentioned in Peter Gower’s Pedigree Book page 19 as one of the 14 foundation sires of the breed. He produced such great sires as MYRA BRONZE - FS HSH (1951), NABINABAH THE GUN - FS HSH (1957), (himself one of the most influential ASH sires), CAIRO - HSH (1957), Dundee (1959), BERRICO MATRUH - HSH (1962) a full brother to CAIRO - HSH, MR TARA KING (1964), CHECKERS ALAMEIN - HSH (1965), PRANCER (1966), TINAGROO ROMMEL (1973) which Bob MacKay kept himself as a replacement for Panzer, and PICARILLI BENGHAZI (1974).



Dundee in 1973

Dundee was purchased from Bob Mackay in 1962 by the Munro family and played A-grade polo for a number of years until so many of his stock were playing that he was retired to stud. Progeny of this great horse formed the nucleus of all teams of polo ponies played by Angus and Hamish Munro. Some of the most noted were Swallow (twice Champion at Quirindi) Mandy, Sarich (played two chukkas in every international match by Hector Grotto for Argentina, Rommel and Sonny (RAS Champion and played in all International tests by Joe Barry for the USA). Two full brothers to Sonny were used as sires on other Munro Properties.

Of Roseita, Dundee’s dam, Mr Mackay says, “I played her first chukka for several years; a very fast mare and top quality. Her dam was also a polo pony by Nassau (imp). Roseita was by Orby Anthus a 16hh Thoroughbred which sired good polo ponies and campdrafters, such as Ken Mackay’s Radar.” (An article on Orby Anthus appeared on page 29 of 1979 The Stockwhip annual.)



Roseita, born 1969 15.1hh



Orby Anthus ch 16hh

This makes RANNOCK - HSH a full Thoroughbred on bloodlines, though every bit a true Hunter Valley Stock Horse on breeding and type.

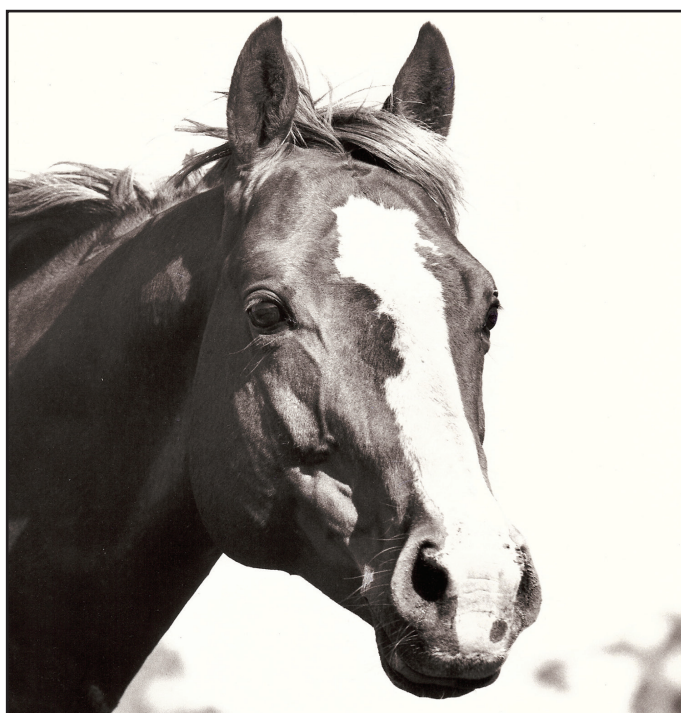
RANNOCK was sold to Mr Alan McGregor of “Roskhill” South Australia as a yearling, to be used for polo and as a sire. Unfortunately, shortly after being broken in, he received a paddock injury which blinded him in one eye. He was sent to another property, “Willalooka” in the South East of South Australia. Said Mr McGregor, “He ran with the station mares who were a rather rough bunch. One day a station hand rode through the paddock and his gelding was chased by RANNOCK resulting in injury to the rider’s arm. RANNOCK acquired a “reputation” from this, and that, together with his “Thoroughbred breeding” was something he had to overcome in conservative South Australia for the rest of his life. I brought him back to “Roskhill” with a couple of the better progeny and turned him out with my polo mares. When I saw the first foals, I thought “what have I done! – they were all ‘pretty’ chestnuts, with no neck, but I soon learned they would stretch out later and have a lovely rein.”

Having received only minimal amount of riding as a two-year-old, RANNOCK was not ridden again until rising seven years, when, in May 1974, he was ridden a couple of times for inspection by Australian Stock Horse Society classifiers. Brenton Matthews who rode him stated how impressed he was with the talent of the horse and that of the progeny he had been breaking in for Mr McGregor, the oldest of which was now three years old. “They were real naturals, and you could just play them right from the start.” RANNOCK was not ridden again until purchased by Peter and Jeanette Gower of Echunga in Sept 1975.



RANNOCK - HSH classification day 1974

By a rare quirk of fate, Jeanette (as secretary of the SA Central Branch) and Peter Gower attended that classification. Jeanette says "In spite of his paddock condition, and obvious lack of education, he was cool, relaxed and friendly. We instantly fell in love with the horse. He was, in fact, the most magnificent quality horse we had ever seen, true to type, and we couldn't believe it when we saw his classic breeding. Better still, that he was inbred to a horse like the mighty Panzer! The progeny were peas in a pod, with his head and compact type. My knowledge of genetics told me that this was the horse to send a mare to; little did we think we might ever be able to purchase him!"



RANNOCK - HSH at "Roskhill" 1975, one of the early photos used to advertise him at stud. The "look of eagles" was the Gower's favourite photo.

"One day, Peter received a call from Alan McGregor asking if we knew the best way to advertise him. Without even discussing it, or asking a price, Peter said "Look no further, we'll buy him!" It was done. Alan had bought another stallion, the Thoroughbred Romantic Gentleman, which later proved to be a good cross over the RANNOCK - HSH mares. However, when the first of the RANNOCK - HSH's progeny hit the polo field, Alan realised he'd made a mistake and asked to buy him back, sending mares on several occasions. John (Patto) Patterson, who started and played many of them in those early days, described them as "easy to play horses and very tough. No matter the question, they would rise to the occasion."

Jeanette continues "At that time, we only had our horses on agistment so we made arrangements to keep RANNOCK at the riding school of Peter's mother, Mrs Nancy Gower, at Echunga. We set up a paddock where he could run with his mares, and we would show him straight from the paddock, only washing him the night before. He always kept a smooth coat. He had no feather, a fine silky mane and almost no forelock."



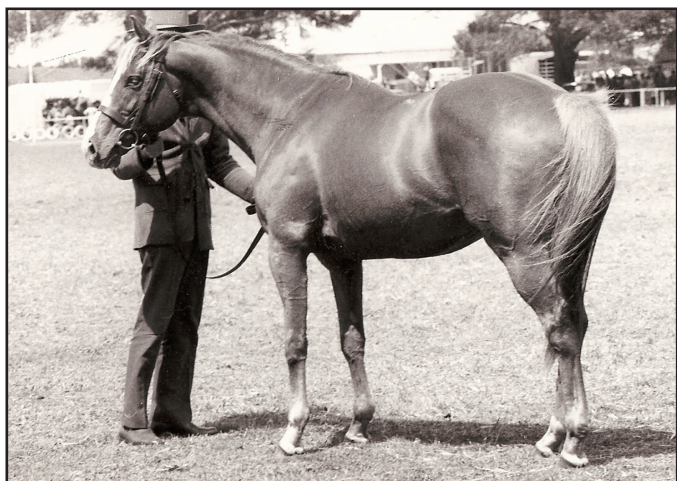
RANNOCK - HSH had beautiful conformation and was dead square behind.

"I've never struck a horse with the quality that still had the temperament of a kid's horse and a stallion to boot! Not once in all those years of owning him did he put a foot wrong, being ridden or tied up amongst the school horses and children. Despite being blind in one eye, he showed a natural aptitude and boldness over jumps. He could be ridden bareback amongst his mares, and I would sometimes lead horses off him. If you introduced him to something new, he just did it; there was never any fuss or scariness: I even did a bit of side-saddle with him as he had the type of back that would sit a side-saddle well."



"He was a beautiful looking horse with an outstanding head, long arched neck, roomy gullet, well defined wither, great elbow room, short back and cannons, with strong, square hocks. Although 15.2hh, he felt like a 16hh horse to ride, with a brilliant walk and long easy gallop. He was never known to disunite at the canter, and his progeny inherited this attribute. They were easy to sell, as they were kind, surefooted, smooth to ride downhill and consistently of the taller "polo height" 15.1hh-15.3hh, which fitted so well into the South Australian scene."

In his first season shown only in led classes 1975-76, he was Champion or Reserve Australian Stock Horse or Open Stallion, perhaps the two most prestigious awards being under judges Maurice Wright and June James. One time a well-known competitor in the line up next to us came very close with his fiery Arabian stallion to intimidate RANNOCK into misbehaving. RANNOCK stood rock solid, and his horse swung around dangerously with an impressive roar. With that, the man yelled out "keep your horse away from my stallion!" RANNOCK took the Championship.




RANNOCK - HSH prior to winning the 1975 Light Horse Breeders open stallion Championship, judge Maurice Wright.


In the next season, he won and placed at dressage, English and Western pleasure, trail and Western Riding, always giving a relaxed and comfortable ride. He went in everything a one-eyed stallion could compete in, and as there were no stock horse type events at that time, he competed in big open western classes against imported horses, showing his temperament and versatility.

During the 1975-76 season, RANNOCK - HSH 's oldest progeny began playing polo. GLEN DEVON HOLLY (1972), owned by Hugh MacLachlan proved an outstanding pony. She went on to play brilliantly for many years in Victoria and NSW, very quick on her feet and known as one of the smartest ponies around. She was out of Rosalie, by Emborough.


RANNOCK Sires Performers




Question



Swap



Holly



Narrator

QUESTION: Won Dumps Trophy for Adelaide Polo Clubs best novice pony 77-78 season, also 2nd only campdraft start (field of 83) Nangwarry, S.A.

HOLLY: Member winning team of ponies, Hexam 1978. Owner Hugh MacLachlan says "Holly played brilliantly in Victoria and N.S.W. and is one of the quickest ponies around, I have played. The other three are rapidly showing the ability which one has come to expect from the breed".

CHALANI RIMFIRE: Only 2½ years, 3rd in Trail Class, 1978 S.A. All-Breeds Gelding Show (class of 11), 1st in local dressage test (only start).

DANDALDO BOBBY DAZZLER: As yearling, 9 shows for 5 firsts, 6 seconds, 1 third in led A.S.H. and Pintos, 2 Reserve Championships, Champion Junior Pinto, Victorian Pinto Championships, Berwick 1978.

Mares and young stock for sale.

R. J. P. and J. T. GOWER
"CHALANI", Box 73, Echunga, S.A. 5153. Phone: 3888372 (08)

An early stud advertisement for RANNOCK - HSH, with the mares ROSKILL QUESTION, ROSKILL SWOP, GLEN DEVON HOLLY and ROSKILL NARRATOR.

Others soon followed; ROSKILL QUESTION (1972) played by John Kelly, was Adelaide Club's Champion Novice pony, 1978 and was second in an Open campdraft at Nangwarry, her only start, for Brenton Matthews. ROSKILL SWOP (1972) played brilliantly for John Patterson and was a finalist at the South Australian Open Campdraft Championships, Tintinara 1980. John Patterson (now at Wondaby, Victoria) played many of the RANNOCK - HSH progeny in those early years, describing them as horses that would "always rise to the occasion, no matter what was asked of them."



ROSKILL SWOP, Tintinara 1980 with Brenton Matthews.

At the 1979 Australasian Gold Cup, RANNOCK HSH's progeny played in three State A teams.

ROSKILL NARRATOR (1973), played 1981 Easter International Polo Tournament under Australian Team Captain and coach Jim McGinley, ROSKILL ACTION (1974), ROSKILL BRIQUET (1972) and ROSKILL BRITTLE (1975)

Soon to follow was WOODCONE GENIVEVE, who played from 1983-1990 for Nick Simpson. The stallions, CHALANI GYROCK and LITTLEWOOD MONTEGO HSH played alongside one another for Andrew Gray, later to make their mark as sires. Their stories are to follow. The Gowers donated a service to RANNOCK for the Champion Novice Polo Prize presented at each SA State Tournament, the first of which was won by the Reids of Kojunup Western Australia and later won several times by RANNOCK produce.

At this point, RANNOCK's progeny also began to dominate the South Australia performance scene. In 1980 he sired no less than half the winners of the 22 classes at the South Australia Central Australian Stock Horse Branch's Championship Show, including the Supreme Led Exhibit, three Champions, both Yearling Futurities and the Three-Year-Old Maturity. Several later went on to become very good eventers, as despite not being the typical height, they were bold jumpers and had a lot of scope.

From the Gower's first crops were:

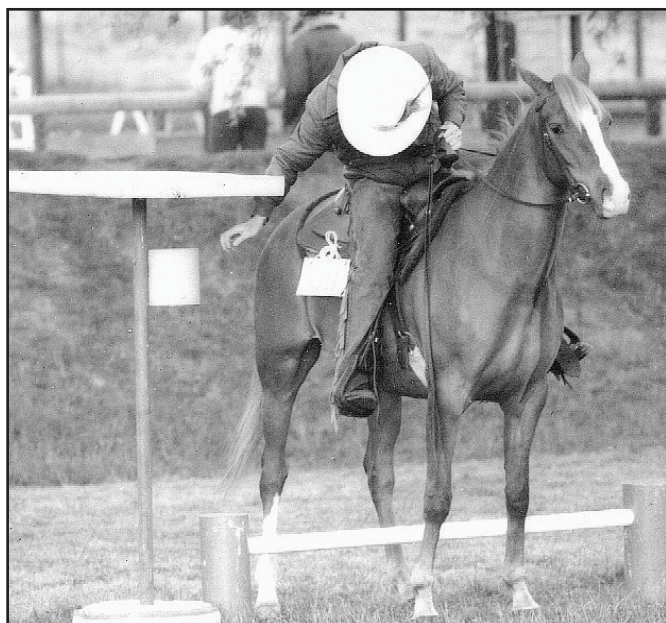
CHALANI RIMFIRE (1975): Winner 2 years running Trail Class, All Breeds gelding show (79-80), winner of the huge Expo 80 Open Hack Show, and outstanding performer for some 20 years.

CHALANI GARNET (1976): Winner first South Australian Reining Futurity 1980 and undefeated in open reining patterns over a two-year period before being sold for polocrosse.



CHALANI GARNET sliding stop with Neville Fennell aboard. 1980

CHALANI SKELTER (1975): Winner Expo 80 Trail Class, and High Point Snaffle Bit Horse of 1980, runner up to CHALANI GARNET in reining on numerous occasions. (Her story is told later in this series)



CHALANI SKELTER at the letterbox during the Expo 80 Trail Class.

CHALANI ASPEN (1978): A grade polo pony for five years, Champion Led mare Adelaide Royal 1987, while heavy in foal, and always hunted during the winter for Whipper-in, Andrew Gray, who described her as a "very fast, go anywhere mare with an amazing constitution". At the age of 20 years under the tutelage of stunt-master Bill Willoughby, she was used in the making of films for the South Australian Film Corporation. She was one of the favourites at Chalani.



CHALANI ASPEN, with Pat McGinley umpiring during the 1987 Gold Cup in South Australia.

Other high profile performers of the time:

Dandaloo Bobby Dazzler (1973): stood at stud at Trafalgar (Vic) for a number of years promoting the Australian Stock Horse in parades, carriage driving and demonstrations, and took out numerous Championships at Victorian pinto shows.

PASCALI (1977): Team Winner Aust Dressage Championships 1981 and hack winner, Alice Springs Show 1981 with numerous Hack and Dressage wins in the Northern Territory until 1985.



CHALANI WILDFIRE (grey) by RANNOCK out of CHALANI RICOCHET

'CHALANI RAPID FIRE (1982): The excellent eventer, dressage and 1990 Adelaide Royal Working Australian Stock Horse winner, CHALANI RAPID FIRE, was rarely defeated in led ASH gelding classes and was a RANNOCK - HSH Trophy winner.



CHALANI RAPID FIRE Reynella Horse Trials, Adelaide, Sara Chinner aboard.

CHALANI CATLOW (1983): Barry Sawyer's brilliant mare. Champion Working Melbourne Royal inaugural Alistair Irving Memorial 1988 and Barastoc Working and Led titles 89-91. She later came out of retirement as a broodmare and repeated her successes at the age of 25 years at Barastoc 2008, with 11-year-old youth rider Peter Robinson winning the working mare class. She'd won it the previous year ridden by Peter's brother Stuart. Ken Robinson added "She was given to me as a broodmare. When I rode her one day to move some cattle I thought she was too good, so I got her fit and started to campdraft her. She has since won many Working Championships, and in 2001 she was placed in the Alistair Irving at Melbourne Royal. See - Australian Stock Horse Journal-March/April 2009 for a full article on CHALANI CATLOW.



Barry Sawyer on CHALANI CATLOW

PEREGRINE (1977), who in Endurance, frequently took out both open and heavyweight divisions under Michael Heffernan.



Pictured here in 1986 at Mt Crawford South Australia, PEREGRINE recorded a State Heavyweight Record for 80 kilometres which stood for many years.

WIRREANDA CANDI (1980): Mare bred and owned by Grant Waterman and later Jo Cullen. Placed in numerous Australian Stock Horse and local events in the mid north of South Australia in both Hacking and Working.

Not to be forgotten were the exceptional mounts Mrs Nancy Gower bred for the riding school, which gave children pleasure for many years.



Three full siblings bred by Mrs Gower for the riding school and purchased by students. Left to right PANSEITA, REXSHEEM and PANROSIE.

REXSHEEM (1981): went on to become a very successful competitor in his own right in Australian Stock Horse and Dressage, for owner Cathy Beer, retiring only in his twenties.

RANNOCK's final foal, the well -performed sire, MASTER HERBERT was born in 1984. (His story will be told in the final part of this article)

RANNOCK's story would not be complete without special mention of the extraordinary mare TIMPANI, which for many years was the state's leading Australian Stock Horse performance mare. It is doubtful whether another as good has come along. Born in 1978, she was bred by Mrs Juliet Bleby who had enjoyed much success with her dam. Her story follows in Part II.

In spite of this success, South Australian breeders underutilised him, so in 1983, RANNOCK was loaned to polo player Anthony Baillieu of Mt Elephant, Victoria, to be given better opportunity. Tragically he was killed by a kick from a mare before siring another foal. Saddened by this loss, the Friends of RANNOCK donated an end of year High Point Ridden Trophy, a Mary Pinsent bronze, to the SA Branch, called the RANNOCK Trophy. It is still the most prestigious achievement to be awarded in South Australia. Several of RANNOCK's progeny have their names on this Award.

RANNOCK's record as a sire is unequalled by any other Australian Stock Horse stallion in South Australia. In 1986, the only year Australian Stock Horse Sire Ratings were published, he was listed in the top 20 sires of the country and was the only South Australian stallion on the list. He sired National and State polo ponies, Champion Led, Hacking, Dressage and Working Horses at all levels, including Adelaide and Melbourne Royals and a State Endurance Record Holder.

Stock Horse Journal Sires Ratings 1986		
Below is the list of sires who scored 10 or more points from the shows nominated for consideration. Basically, the points were allocated on the basis of 3 for first, 2 for second and 1 for third placing in all led and ridden classes at the nominated shows that were restricted to registered Stock Horses.		
You will note from the results that only 4 horses managed to get a rating of more than 20 and all the horses between 10 and 20 could be considered, under the variation of conditions which occurred, to be of more or less equal rating.		
And then were others such as Trio Pal, Rannock, Scrumlo Victory and Jet Straw, who built up points with consistent placings by progeny at a number of shows.		
Please feel free to contact the Journal with any questions or suggestions you may have about the Sires Ratings.		
Ratings		
Rivoli Ray	62 Cecil Henry	12
Elliotts Creek Cadet	45 Dyambern Richard	12
Cardinal	26 Jaipur	12
Quidong Brigadier	21 Rosebrook Abou	12
Cecil Bruce	19 Trio Pal	12
Hillview Black Panther	18 Daleys Rio	11
Sharif	15 Rannock	11
Quidong Tofruk	14 Wansey Leon	11
Valentine Master Luke	14 Convamore	10
Jet Straw II	13 Dalintober Kimberley	10
Raimondo	13 Scrumlo Victory	10

ASH JOURNAL JULY 87

Later the Australian Stock Horse Society honoured two South Australian horses with inclusion on the Society's Wall of Renown. These were the mare, CHALANI CAT BALLOU, and RANNOCK, both owned by the Gowers.

With the loss of RANNOCK, the Gowers decided to concentrate his blood in their stud, so as not to lose this valuable line. His characteristics have flowed down through the generations – the beautiful fronts, athletic ability, muscle definition, square stance, quality and heart. Notably, his blood has withstood the test of inbreeding with no deleterious effect. Jeanette says "RANNOCK is the type of Hunter Valley horse that the founders of the breed imagined when they started the Australian Stock Horse Society. Every breeder dreams of having a successful stallion that leaves his mark on the breed. We were honoured to have owned such a horse."

Even now, 50 years on, RANNOCK is largely unknown outside a few circles. It is extremely important for versatility and diversity of the breeding pool and the direction of the breed, to ensure such proven lines are not lost to the Society. They are a valuable outcross to more fashionable strains which can easily saturate a breed.

Space prevents detailing the achievements of most of the progeny, so this article will concentrate on the sire lines of influence, and predominantly only descendants who were registered.

They were, in order of birth, CHALANI GYPROCK (1978), WITCHETTY (1979), LITTLEWOOD MONTEGO (1983), and MASTER HERBERT (1984). 