

Information supplied to Nillumbik Shire Council on 3 September 2012 by Lois Kennett

A shortened version of the Sam Cracknell story – as I know it.

Sam Cracknell's parents were Samuel Ireland Cracknell born 1811, Banham, Norfolk and Judith Mobbs, daughter of John Mobbs and Ellen/Eleanor Mallows, and was born 1817, Kenninghall, Norfolk. They and their family of 5 children arrived on the 'Duke of Bedford' in 1848 in Adelaide. Sam was a tailor and lived the rest of their lives in Norwood, South Australia, where they had another 5 children. Sam died 1878 and Judith in 1893.

Sam (the jockey) was born in 1847 in Kenninghall Norfolk, and moved from the family home in S.A. to Victoria to further his riding career. He married Caroline Griffiths in 1876, and from around 1877 they lived in the New Market/Flemington area until they moved to Panton Hill around 1891. Five of their children were born at home – 33 Victoria Street, Flemington, and Alice Beatrice being born at 'Kenninghall' Panton Hill.

Sam was a successful light-weight jockey; he was four feet ten inches tall – 1.47m, and all his life he weighed around the six stone mark– 38kg. He had a calf measurement of 15 cm, and had a prolific flowing red beard! His boots (which I have) stand 30.5 cm high, 21.5 from heel to toe, 7cm at the widest part of the foot, and 28cm circumference at the top of the boot. He rode in some 14 Melbourne Cups but was successful in only one -1879 on Darriwell. In the 1885 Caulfield Cup he was one of the 17 horses and riders who came to grief and suffered severe injuries. He rode in many Caulfield Cups but without success, but did win many other important races in N.S.W., Victoria and South Australia – Sydney Cup, Newmarket Handicap and AJC summer Cup to name just a few. His last race was in the 1890 Melbourne Cup won by Carbine.

He invested his money in property owning houses in Princes Street – numbers 34 and 36. 34 has the name 'Darriwell' etched in the glass panel above the front door. I was told that at the auction in 1984, there was a letter read out stating the history of the home and the original owner, that was to be passed onto the successful bidder, to be passed on when sold again.

Sam bought 40 acres in 1890 at £40 an acre, at Panton Hill, but only moved there when the house was finished around 1891. The area had to be cleared for the house and orchard, and whilst doing this, he and his wife's brother lived in a bark hut behind where the house stands. He later also owned the property 'Bushy Park' in the same area, selling it after some time to his nephew, Henry Cracknell. Sam never trained horses or owned race-horses, only had what was needed for the family transport.

Caroline died in 1921 and Sam in 1933, and both are buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery, in a family plot, together with three of their children, Caroline Norma, John and Alfred. Other children were William Henry, Samuel Arthur, Caroline Ruby and Alice Beatrice Cracknell. Ruby and Beatrice were the youngest children of Sam and Caroline Cracknell, and lived out their lives at 'Kenninghall'. Ruby died in 1974 and Beatrice in 1978, and are buried at Kangaroo Ground Cemetery. Beatrice had married 'Pop' Johnston in 1944 and he also lived there until his death some time before 1974.

'Kenninghall' was left to a Cracknell descendant who lived there until he sold it in 1998.

In the mid 1970's, the original 40 acres was subdivided, with 20 acres sold to Samuel Arthur Cracknell's son Don and wife Bel Cracknell who built a house there and retired from their orchard in Alma Road, Pantan Hill, and 19 acres to Graham Motschall, with 1 acre being kept around 'Kenninghall' homestead.

Sam's son, Samuel Arthur Cracknell born 1878 at New Market, and in 1902 married into the pioneering Smith family, by marrying Alice Smith born 1880 in Pantan Hill. He and Alice worked at developing the orchard on 'Kenninghall' as well as their own in Alma Road, Pantan Hill. Their home was called 'Kardella', and still a family home - now number 69 Alma Road. They raised 8 children there, Arthur, Elsie, Jack, Keith, Bob, Don Jean and June. Sons Arthur, Don and Bob were later orchardists also in Alma Road. Sam died in 1957 and Alice in 1968.

The only other member of the family to live in Victoria was Fred, Sam's brother, who was born in Norwood, S.A. in 1856, and married Fanny Webb in 1880 in Adelaide. They moved to Victoria with four children around 1888, and lived at 'Elmsdale' 134 Vine Street, Monee Ponds - where another five children were born. Fred was a plasterer and had a small factory in Monee Ponds where he manufactured plaster ceiling roses and fancy cornices. Fred died in 1925 and Fanny in 1926, and are buried at the Coburg Cemetery.

Their eldest child was Frederick William Cracknell born 1881 in Stepney, S.A. and he married Amelia Fallon in Melbourne in 1905. He was a registered jockey in Victoria in 1900, but moved to West Australia and was registered there in 1910. He became a successful rider there both in the country and the city, and also spent some time riding in India and Mauritius. He rode until 1931 when he was granted a trainer's licence.

Amelia died in 1929, and Fred married Mabel Cropper in 1934. Fred died in Perth in 1938 and Mabel died in 1970 in Perth.

More information available from Wikinorthia.net.au or from 'Picking up the Threads' by Lois Kennett, available in the State Libarary, or the old Eltham Shire library.

Other photos you may be interested in that I have:

- Sam's boots etc.
- 33 Victoria Street, Flemington.
- 34-36 Princes Street, Flemington
- 'Kardella'
- Sam and Fred – two jockeys when Fred was leaving for W.A.
- Camelia tree @ 1960
- Wooden bench on front verandah at 'Kenninghall'
- Photos of all Cracknell's mentioned above