



Farleigh

Archibald Bell Jr's homestead, 'Pickering'.



The dovecot in the garden, on a misty morning.

"Everyone has to earn their keep here."

Farleigh Stud principal, Deborah Bell, echoes the sentiment, and carries on the philosophy of the 19th century settlers in the New England and Hunter Valley regions of NSW. The history of the area and its development is populated by men of vision and large families, and a good many of them are related to Deborah's husband, Frank. Whilst the premise of this short feature is to describe the 3000 acre cattle grazing property and Riding Pony Stud, Farleigh, 13 kilometres from Armidale, a brief flirtation with the history of the pioneering ancestors and seemingly larger than life personalities, gives colour and insight in to the enlightened running of a modern, sustainable farm.



A picture of the original Farleigh taken in 1924, with FG White (Frank's uncle), cousin Bruce Braund and Frank's mother PM (Phyllis) White with her dog, looking down over Armidale.



The modern incarnation of Farleigh, with the dressage arena in the foreground.

Archibald Bell arrived in the colony of NSW in the early 19th century with his wife, Maria Kitching and nine children, with the tenth child born in Australia. He prospered and is described as a 'land owner, magistrate and Member of the Upper House'. Although well known in his own right, it was his second son, Archibald Bell Jr, who really put the Bell name in the colony's history books. In 1823 at just 19 years old, Archibald junior, with the help of the local Darug people, found a way through the Blue Mountains from Richmond to Lithgow, which is now known as the Bell's Line of Road. Add to that Mt Bell, the Bell Range and Bilpin that used to be Belpin, and young Archibald literally put the family on the map. Archibald also explored the Hunter River region and reputedly saved the explorers, Howe and Singleton, from starvation. His efforts did not go unrewarded and Bell was given a land grant of 1000 acres near Singleton, and called the estate, 'Corinda'. He introduced cattle and was well known as a breeder of coach and hackney horses for the Sydney market. In 1859, Archibald purchased 'Pickering', an estate of 8000 acres on the Hunter River near Denman, where this branch of the large Bell family (Archibald produced seven children), remained until the 1970s.

Meanwhile, one of the earliest grazing runs was established on the New England Tablelands by Henry Dumaresq, who called his 100,000 acre squatting station, 'Saumarez' after connections in the Channel Islands, quite possibly to the naval hero, Admiral James Saumarez, the 1st Baron de Saumarez who was born in Guernsey. The spelling 'Saumarez' indicates the close French connection to the Channel Islands, over which the English and French had been squabbling for centuries. >>>



On Farleigh, there are reminders of the days when there were many farm hands on site. The blacksmith shop is one example, as are these, standing where the station hands would run the stock horses in every morning. They would be tied up and have their oats before they went out to work.



This fine looking Australorp rooster oversees the production of eggs.



The old Belfield cemetery on Farleigh.



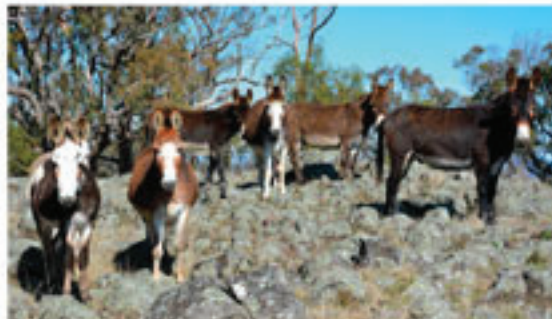
Even the letter box is well designed.



Another example of days gone by is this 1880s shepherd's hut, which has since been done up.



A Governess Cart made in Sydney from Saumarez Station. Deborah hopes to have it restored eventually for use.



The English and Irish donkeys are not just a decorative totem of Deborah's. "In point of fact, they will protect sheep, goats, etc. from foxes, dingos and wild dogs". Apparently, they are quite formidable defenders, two have been broken in by Nigel Bell, "before he grew too big". L-R Sinbad, Panda (hiding behind Sinbad), Tinsel, Big Ears, Kitty, Noddy and Danny.



The old blacksmith's shop dating back to the Belfield days is still operational. The Farleigh Stud brand is understandably a bell.



Jamie Bell is passionate about Farleigh and very much involved with its sustainable philosophy. Raised garden beds were made from old water tanks on the property, and here Jamie harvests some fine looking carrots.



Fifteen year old Polly comes from a long line of working dogs and has produced four generations at Farleigh.



The house is every bit as elegant as one would expect. The beautiful early Victorian dining table belonged to Deborah's mother.

Despite their close proximity to France, the inhabitants of the Islands are British subjects. By the early 1870s, 'Saumarez' consisted of a freehold property of 23,000 acres owned by prominent Armidale identity, Henry Thomas. Second generation Australian and substantial NSW property owner, Francis White, purchased 'Saumarez' in 1874. After his father's death in 1878, Francis John White, 'FJ' arrived at 'Saumarez' as a 23 year old. He married, had seven children and was noted as a visionary farmer and manager, and along with his brothers, had substantial holdings throughout NSW and Queensland.

"We run goats here as a weed reduction program rather than the production of goats as such, although we do sell older goats. The goats rotate the paddocks with the cattle and the horses, which greatly helps with the parasitic problems.

The importance of a good wife goes without saying, and although the production of many children was a 'bridge too far' for Deborah, she has produced two fine sons, to continue the work of the enterprising Bells. And like the innovative and active White sisters of 'Saumarez', as of 1984 a National Trust property, and the earlier Bell wives, Deborah is enterprising, active and supportive. So what, you are perhaps thinking, has all the previous history got to do with Deborah Bell and Farleigh? Her husband, Frank Bell, is the great great grandson of Archibald Bell and great grandson of FJ White. In keeping with the visionary gene of his forebears, Frank is a successful and thoughtful farmer and custodian of the land, as is evident at the modern Farleigh where good type and good temperament are evident in all its inhabitants. The next generation of Bells is clearly cut from the same cloth as eldest son, Jamie Bell explains. "My brother and I represent the eighth generation of Bells farming in Australia. When pioneer Archibald Bell sailed to Australia aboard the Young William in 1806 and was granted land, he could not have known that an unbroken family tradition would endure for more than 200 years. We have grown crops, bred animals for food and fibre, and in the case of horses, for work, performance and pleasure. Whatever paths our lives may take, I am sure that our parent's passion for producing livestock of the highest order, will remain a strong interest. It is a privilege we don't take for granted." Love of the land is also evident in university student, Nigel Bell. "I'm grateful to have spent a childhood living on a farm - you're never bored because there's always something to do or an animal that will play with you. Nowadays, it provides a welcome respite from time spent studying environmental science in Brisbane."

Julie Wilson



Jamie Bell with the 27 year old Thoroughbred stallion, Samos by Sir Samuel (CAN). "Samos has produced some very nice foals for me. They used to train all the apprentice jockeys on him. He's very quiet and sweet, and has two mares in foal this year."



The Bell family of Farleigh. L-R Nigel, Frank, Deborah and Jamie, riding Dreams, Blacky, Farleigh Manon and Farleigh Tudor Rose.

And it is about time we heard from Deborah. "The name 'Farleigh' was the name of a smaller property that was adjacent to 'Saumarez' and given to Frank's grandmother, Mollie Baker, and through her to her daughter, Phyllis White, who married Frank's father, Ronald Douglas 'Paddy' Bell. The original Farleigh was sold and when they bought the property here about 40 years ago, the name was transferred. This was originally a Bellfield (no relation) property and along with the nearby property, Primley, was purchased by Frank's parents. When I married Frank there were two small houses on the property and we lived in one. I designed the house we live in now, which is about a kilometre from the front gate. We have 550 head of Angus breeding cattle and the heifers are covered by Wagyu bulls." Interestingly, the bulls are selected just as much for conformation and temperament as the ponies. "We run goats here as a weed reduction program rather than the production of goats as such, although we do sell older goats. The goats rotate the paddocks with the cattle and the horses, which greatly helps with the parasitic problems."

"Interestingly the bulls are selected just as much for conformation and temperament as the ponies."

"We try to be sustainable in all our farming practices, and aim to get a nutrient cycle happening. All the stable manure and sawdust goes on the garden and the vegetable garden, and what's left after harvesting goes in to compost and to the chooks, with the chook manure going on the garden as well." The aesthetic is easy elegance and practicality, with the occasional delightful folly to please the eye, if the 360° views of the New England Tablelands are not enough.

Join us again next month when we look further around Farleigh Stud and meet some of the horses. 🐾



No, Deborah does not get decked out like this every time she goes riding! Pictured aboard the Thoroughbred, Dreams, by Greenlander, Deborah gave a side saddle demonstration in aid of the Tour de Rocks Charity.



The goats are an important part of paddock maintenance. A combination of feral, Boer and some Saanen, they are pictured on the highest point of Farleigh.



Well organised cattle yards and well behaved cattle.

Signature
PROPERTY

Signature PROPERTY

Part 2

Story Anna Sharpley

Farleigh

A bit of Europe in the Australian landscape. The Italian fountain is a wonderful feature of the Farleigh garden, and comes from Deborah's childhood home in Botolph.



You never know what you will find around the corner at Farleigh. Here, a flock of Dorper sheep follow the stallion Farleigh Tom Kitten, through the wildlife plantation.



Julie Wilson

Mondiso Park Just A Jewel and her foal, Farleigh Cossette by Trellech Enigma (imp), both stand and smile for the camera.



Julie Wilson

A Border Collie pup on the run.



The end of the house on a winter morning, showing some of the garden, and the 160 year old bell from 'Pickering'.

“Many of the Farleigh ponies, galloways and hacks have jumped and evented, which greatly adds to their usefulness.”

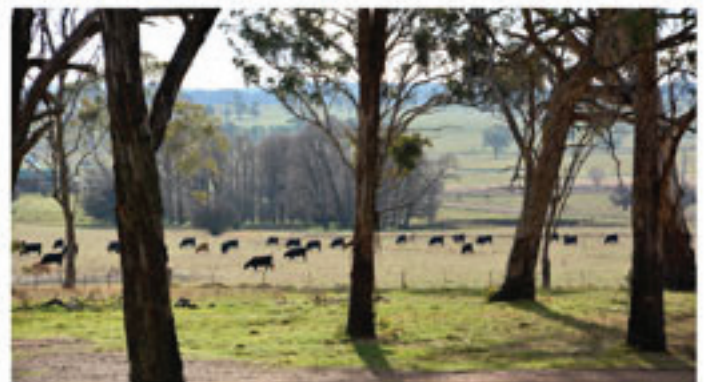


Jamie, after a day's mustering aboard Farleigh Tudor Rose, photographed by his brother, Nigel. “We don't have a motorbike on the place. All the stock work is done with horses. The cattle are much quieter and work better for horses as well; they are happier and more placid”.

Deborah (Wickman) Bell was born in Sydney and grew up in Bowral, not far from the Equestrian Federation training property there, and rode with Doug Green and Australian Team Trainer, Franz Maringer. “I had a dressage and performance background, and then I came to the University of New England up here and met Frank. I continued with a bit of dressage and eventing, but when I came to Farleigh, it became almost impossible to travel as much. We started Farleigh originally as a racehorse and performance horse stud, with winners in many fields. Showjumpers and eventers had successful careers and were sold overseas (NZ and Japan), and several successful hacks were bred and shown. Two early stallions at Farleigh were the Thoroughbreds, *Big Hat* (GB) by *High Hat* by *Hyperion* that came via Olympian Bud Hyem, and *Some Lute* (FR) that had a double cross to the French Champion, *Djebel*. As commitments to family and property increased, smaller show horses and ponies looked a more attractive prospect.”

“As I got more interested in show horses, I started off with the remnants of the dressage/racehorse herd and put English Riding Ponies over them to breed attractive performance and show horse types with a good temperament, which is important to me. The Riding Pony stud really started when I purchased *Furzey Kit-cat* (Syon Royal Portrait (imp)/*Furzey Catoushka*) from the well known breeder and artist, **Mary Pinsent**. She had finished breeding and gave me her mares.

>>>



Heifers in calf to Wagyu bulls.



A beautiful drawing of a young Furzey Kit-cat.

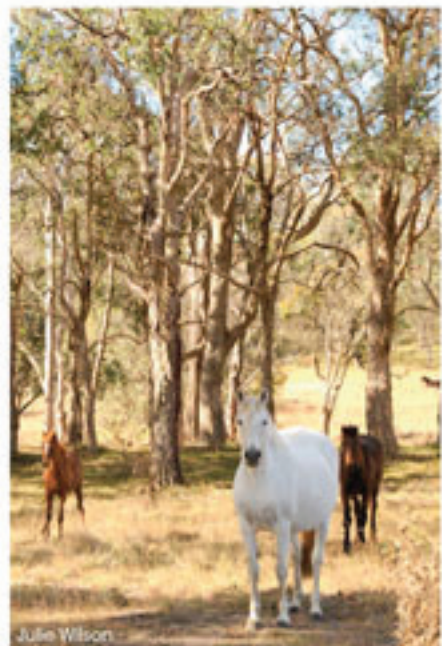


The delightful Spanish Fountain at Farleigh.



Julie Wilson

A Mary Pinsent bronze of Farleigh Manon.



Julie Wilson

Broodmare, Farleigh Catalina, enjoying the good life and indeed, a good paddock.



Julie Wilson

In keeping with the sustainable philosophy at Farleigh, four banks of solar panels, a ten kilowatt system, feeds power straight back in to the grid. The panels pivot to always be facing the sun. "Our power bill is more than amply covered by what we are paid by the electricity company".



The imported pony stallion, Trellech Enigma, stands "Fury" like in his paddock at Farleigh. It's a nice life if you are lucky enough to get it.



Julie Wilson

Deborah with her 2012 Grand National Winner Small Show Hunter Galloway, 'Farleigh Manon' (Farleigh Nimrod / Farleigh Martinique).



A lovely 'horsey' weather vane.



A rather rare painted Mary Pinsent statue. This is Furzey Gatoushka, Kit-cat's mother, and she is still alive at 30yo.

The progeny were successful in the show ring and I have continued to introduce new blood along the way." King Lodge Jeremy Fisher (Janinas Little Joker imp/ Hamptonne Heaven Sent imp) was added to the mix. Deborah, the daughter of a WWII RAF Spitfire pilot, makes frequent trips back to the UK to visit family and on one of these excursions, Trellech Enigma (Cusop Fingerprint/ Trellech Spirit of Spring) was purchased from Carol Gould, to bolster the stallion ranks at Farleigh, and in 2012, another trip to the UK saw the purchase of the colt, Howetown Dreamcatcher (Stanley Grange Royal Appointment/ Trellech Chantilly Dream). The son of two very successful ponies, Dreamcatcher, will no doubt further add to the success of the Farleigh breeding regime, where type coupled with temperament is the fundamental breeding principle, as is suitability.

"As I am the family dwarf at 5'8", it seems futile to breed ponies; we like to ride what we breed!"

"Whilst I don't consider myself exceptionally skilful in any particular equestrian pursuit," explains Deborah, "I think I have a reasonable eye, and the imported horses compliment the broodmares. They are also far removed from the usual imported Riding Ponies, both in breeding and size. As I am the family dwarf at 5'8", it seems futile to breed ponies; we like to ride what we breed! Trellech Enigma (imp) is just under 14.2hh and Howetown Dreamcatcher (imp) looks as if he will eclipse his stablemate."

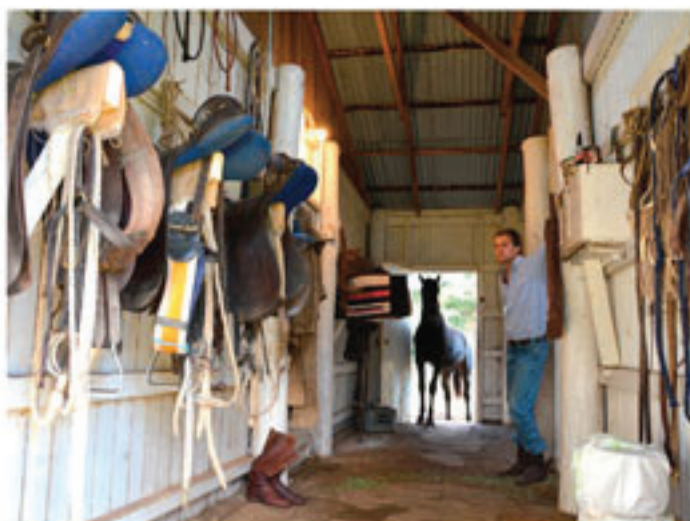
There have been countless Farleigh Champions both led and ridden, including the Thoroughbred hack, Bahamaby Big Hat (GB), Champion Show Hunter Galloways, Farleigh Manon and Farleigh Lytton, and Hacks, Farleigh Leander and Farleigh Unique (NZ), that have enjoyed outstanding careers. These are just the tip of the iceberg and Deborah tells us, "they still have family representatives on the stud". Many of the Farleigh ponies and galloways have jumped and evented, which greatly adds to their usefulness, and there have been some dressage specialists, such as Farleigh Zebedee, Farleigh Top Cat and Farleigh Siegfried. The Bells are well aware of their responsibility to the land and their animals, and both are cared for with vision, intelligence and love, but as Deborah says, "everyone has to earn their keep here".



What about the workers! L-R Alice, Teddy and Patsy are decorative and useful and ready for action.



Deborah describes the main stable block as, "not the prettiest". The very functional Australian design has four boxes and is home to the main show horses. There is storage / accommodation above and provision for eight horses to be stabled on the property.



Jamie introduces Howetown Dreamcatcher (imp), the most recently imported stallion from the UK, to the "colonial" tack room. A far cry from what he was used to in the UK, as is his apparent liberty.