



Wallingford – circa 1853

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Ormond Racing History

The Hon J D Ormond was one of NZ racing's major owner/breeders of the late 19th century. He established Karamu Stud on the Heretaunga Plains of Hawke's Bay, bounded on one side by the Karamu stream. There he built a two-storied house (now occupied by his great grand-daughter Karola and her husband Ian Brackenbury) and a large set of stables on the opposite side of the driveway. Either side of the one mile "driveway" he planted acorns which, over 100 years later, provide a magnificent Oak Avenue, now Ormond Road.

The original block of 400 acres on some of Hawke's Bay's best soils was home to his beloved thoroughbreds. In 1890 he retired from politics and focused on his growing hobby. He bred to race, and by 1900 his farm manager W P Archibald and private trainer Stuart Waddell (great grandfather of one of New Zealand's leading jockeys of today Jason Waddell) operated one of the country's largest and most successful racing stables.

Some great horses – probably his best being Zimmerman, who won a host of top races in 1907/8 including the Great Northern Derby and the Auckland Cup, carried JD's racing colours, all cerise. His interest extended beyond his own stables. He was one of the founders of the HB Jockey Club in 1866. In 1887 that club hosted a meeting of clubs from throughout the country and out of this the NZ Racing Conference (now NZ Thoroughbred Racing) evolved. J D Ormond was appointed the HB representative and held that position until his death in 1917. He served one term as its president, a position he also held at the HB Jockey Club.

JD's eldest son George who farmed on the Mahia Peninsula inherited his father's love of racing and owned many successful gallopers. He was also founding Master of the Mahia Hunt which still hunts on Pongaroa today. Although his youngest son Jack shared his father's passion for horses and farming at Wallingford, he found his hands were full helping to raise his 12 children and running his farm, and time did not permit him to indulge in racing in more than a very minor way. He did visit Karamu with his father regularly though, and supervised its management for many years.

After the death of the Hon JD in 1917, the stud was partly dispersed, with the first Sale conducted at the Karamu Racing Stables on 23 November 1917. 30 racehorses were auctioned by Hoadley, Son and Stewart in conjunction with Williams and Kettle. Top price of 2050 guineas was paid for the 3-year-old colt Hymestra, which had been the top 2 year old in the Dominion the previous year. A huge price and part of an excellent sale where every lot found a willing buyer. Three months later 70 mares and 50 younger horses were sold at auction again at Karamu. The auctioneers noted – "The broodmares may confidently be described as forming the most extensive and valuable collection yet offered at one sale in

the history of the New Zealand turf.” So the stud and racing stable were scaled down considerably however a number of the stud’s horses continued to race in cerise under the name of Frank Ormond – the middle brother, very deaf like his mother and perhaps “one sheep short in the top paddock”, although some of his contemporaries thought him quite clever and cunning, using his deafness to his own advantage.

In his later years the Hon JD had enjoyed nothing more than spending his free weekends traveling from his home at Tintagel on the Napier Hill to Karamu to inspect his horses and other stud stock and to collect the fresh vegetables. Before buying Tintagel, the Hon JD had planned to live at Karamu. Family history has it that he and his wife Hannah spent one night there, and she refused to spend another. Shortly after, they bought Tintagel from the Estate of Sir Donald McLean and selected the well known architect Lamb to draw up plans to enlarge and modernize the house. Hannah was delighted.

Back to thoroughbreds – Frank Ormond raced a number of good performers leased from the stud – one of the best being Great Trek – winner of the 1950 Winter Cup during Grand National week in Christchurch. Jack’s youngest son David and his eldest grandson Tim Hope represented the family and were charged with placing all the bets. Dave used to tell the story that they arrived back in Hawke’s Bay with a suitcase stuffed full of money and two very large hangovers. The stud through this period stood some very good stallions such as Bulandshar and Lang Bian, and was very ably managed by Mr. Bob McKay.

With McKay’s health failing, in 1960 the final Karamu Stud dispersal occurred when Wright Stephenson and Co auctioned the remaining stallion Tsaoko and 30 broodmares and young stock. The buyers that day included a Mr Charlie Roberts, an outstanding equine vet from Takanini, who is still breeding thoroughbreds and pedigree Friesians today, nearly 50 years later. Other well known racing names listed as buyers that day were Gudsell from Wanganui, and Boy Symes from Hastings whose son Tim is also a successful owner/trainer/breeder. Jack Ormond’s sons, Walcott, Dan, John and David who also formed a partnership to buy the remaining land from the estate of their late grandfather, purchased several of the mares. Karamu was reduced in size to 70 acres (the house apart which was inherited by the Wilson side of the family) and was planted with vegetable crops and maize, and shortly thereafter under the supervision of Wal – an apple and stonefruit orchard was established.

Wal Ormond was a very keen racing man, and devoted a huge portion of his working life to racing and breeding administration. He was president of the Hawke’s Bay Jockey Club, their representative on the NZ Racing Conference, and also a long serving president of the NZ Thoroughbred Breeders Assn. His son Arthur followed in his footsteps. After doing an apprenticeship under Eric Rophia in Woodville and spending two years working on studs in Kentucky, Arthur managed a stud at Waikanae before purchasing his own piece of land next to The Washpool near Hastings and developing Byerley Thoroughbreds. Arthur served as vice president of the H B Jockey Club, and later became an outstanding president of NZ Thoroughbred Breeders Assn, and that body’s representative on the board of NZ Thoroughbred Racing. Arthur also supervised the orchard at Karamu, which was finally sold along with all the old stables and a part of the family history in 1988.

In 2006, the cerise colours are still in the family, being seen on horses in which the Hon JD’s great grandson Mick Ormond and his son Ru have an interest. And for the first time in our history, a member of the family - Marcus Ormond (son of Arthur and Monica) has taken out a public trainer’s licence and trains his team at the Hastings racecourse.

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