



By Lucy McCormick

# Meet 'Scruffy' the 40-year-old all-rounder

**T**hey say '40 is the new 30'. Without being too presumptuous, it's difficult to imagine that rising 40-year-old stallion Oregon Park is too troubled, if, in fact, he is aware of his impending milestone.

His human companions, Bannockburn couple Brian and Sheila Peacock are merely pleased to have had the pleasure of his company for a greater length of time than usual, and the placid entire known as 'Scruffy' to the Peacocks has their diligence and care to thank for his longevity.

Remarkably, Scruffy is not the only 'mature' equine resident at the Peacock property. Bay gelding Harry Dundee is approximately 35 years of age, while relative spring chicken Only The One is nudging 20.

"When I first saw him coming off the truck he was just the ugliest horse," says Sheila, explaining the origin of Oregon Park's stable name. "He was so small and gangly. But he did grow into a nice-looking horse."

At the time of Scruffy's arrival, the Peacocks were helping good friend, trainer Bob Kuchenmeister. The new arrival proved a challenge even for that expert tutelage.

"He just used to gallop, and we couldn't stop him," Sheila explains. "Sometimes when he had the race shot to pieces.

He was a trotter originally, but he could pace too. He ended up dual-gaited."

His former trainer remembers Oregon Park the racehorse well.

"He did have a problem with galloping," Bob remembers before

explaining he was 'truly dual-gaited'. "You could just take the hobbles off, change his shoes, and you had a trotter."

Such was the quiet nature of the horse it was eventually suggested the Peacocks purchase him and 'have a go' at training. Brian had had his trainer/driver's license for a while, and Oregon Park ended his career as a pacer with some modest placings.

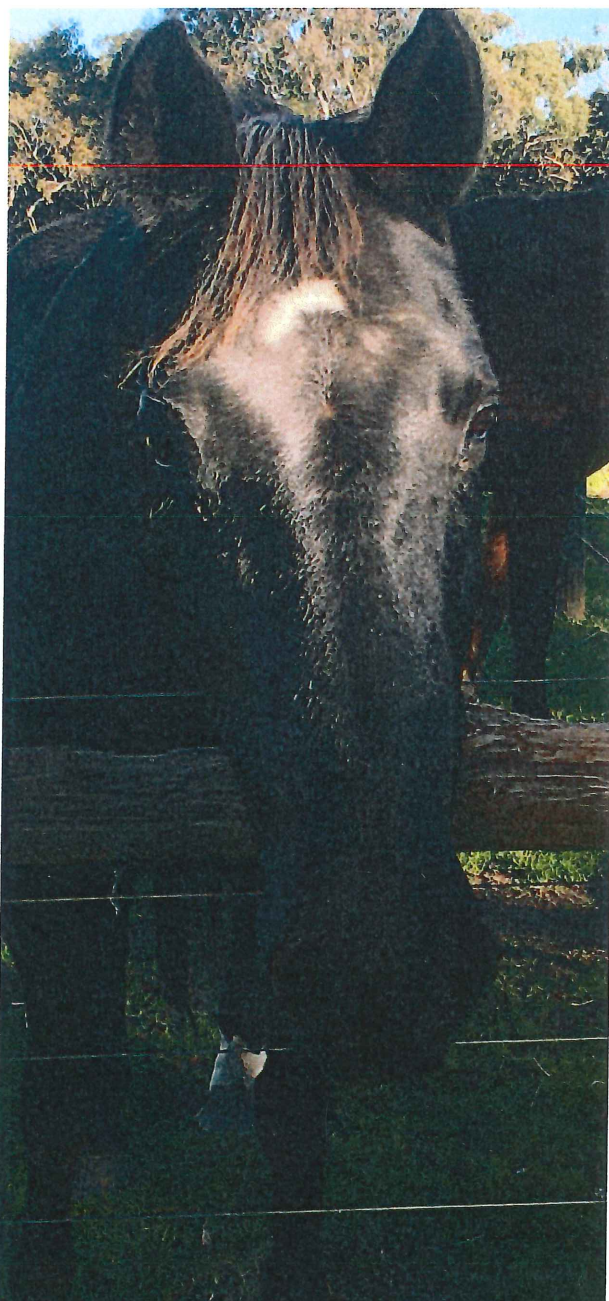
"He did just keep galloping, and we had other horses to train," Sheila tells. "We retired him when he was about nine."

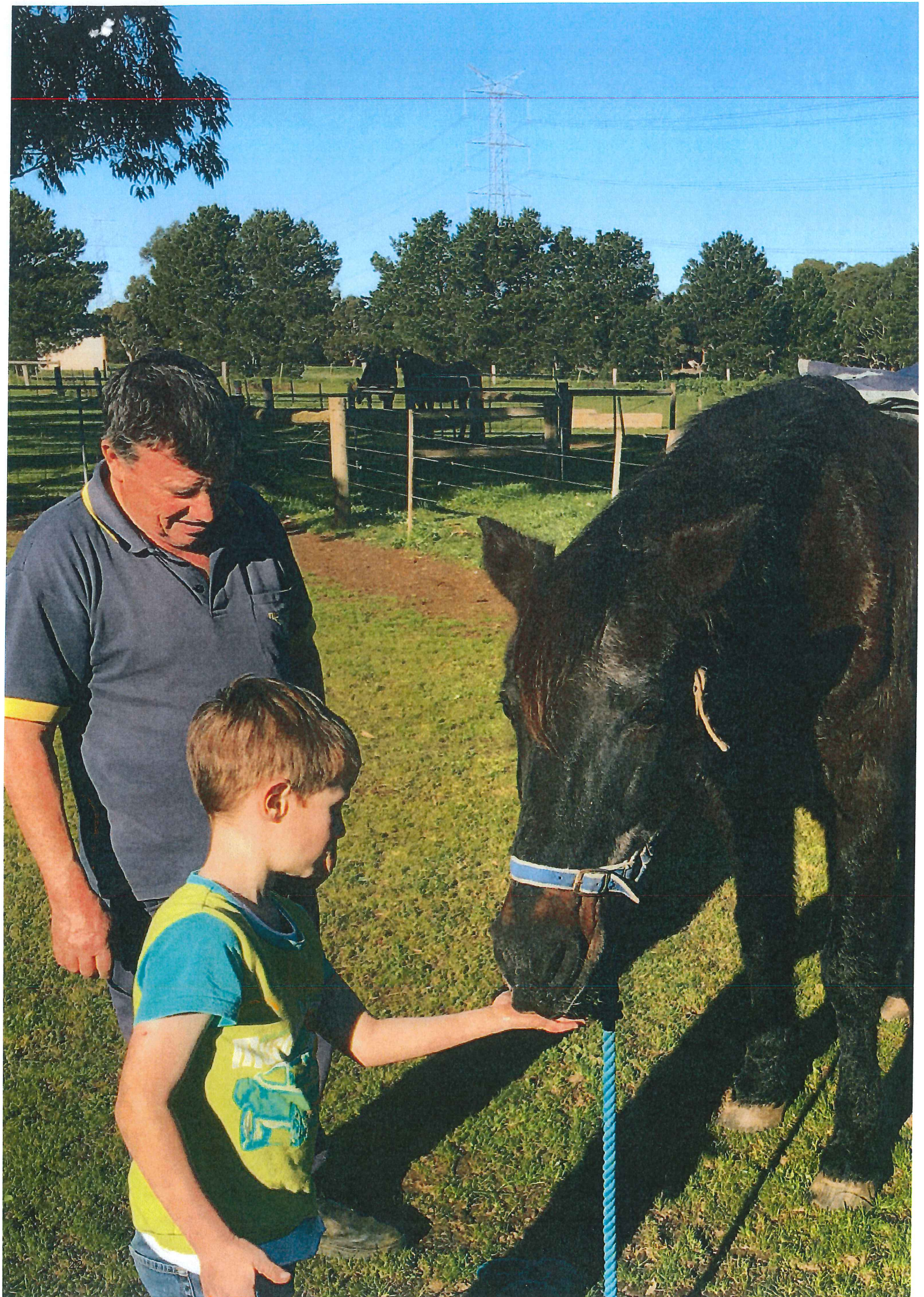
Today, Oregon Park is a picture of health for his age. Kept in his paddock, close to the house, he has a warm rug, neat shoes and is well fed.


"I think he's put a bit of weight on recently," Sheila ponders. "He does still get a hard feed and manages it really well." A little extra hair for warmth and a quiet demeanour are the only things likely to betray his advancing age. It's been a chilly winter, however, and as to temperament, the stallion is naturally kind, according to his owners.

"He never bites, never kicks," Sheila affirms. "He's hardly ever had anything wrong with him – even a cold. He's a little bit

## ***"He never bites, never kicks"***







*"I wanted to know exactly where he was and what happened to him"*

arthritis, I guess."

Being nice isn't a prerequisite for earning a safe home at the Peacock place. Scruffy lives solo in a paddock of his own – "He is still a stallion. He can be a little funny," Sheila says.

He does have several friends nearby, however. Harry Dundee lives in a close paddock. Described as 'a bit mean', he nevertheless enjoys the same comfort as others on the property.

Somewhat better performed on the racetrack is fellow retiree Only The One (NZ). Placed second in a Victoria Derby early in his career, in his later years he was sent to Western Australia to the powerful Gary Hall stable. An unfortunate injury led to the end of his racing days, and Gary Hall offered to find the horse a good home.

"I told Gary to put him on the truck and send him home," Sheila notes. "I wanted to know exactly where he was and what happened to him. No doubt Gary would have found him a nice home but I had to be sure."

Running a successful business – B&S Stock & Pet Supplies in Bannockburn – for a while took its toll on the racing and training operation.

Enter Anakie trainer Tim Bolitho – initially a customer and then a very good friend.

"Tim said he'd find another horse for us, but we forgot about it," Sheila says. That was until a phone call from Tim letting the Peacocks know his search had been a success.

That horse was Our Summer Wind (NZ), and to this date the son of Mach Three CA has won almost \$100,000 in prizemoney for his owners.

Also promising is Miss Dangerfield.

Asked about the origin of Miss Dangerfield's name, Sheila is a little sheepish. "Well... we tried Miss Hawkins and Miss Selwood... but eventually we got this name."

For now, life is good at the Peacock residence. Brian is working hard building a new stable to house Our Summer Wind, who, having sustained an injury, needs time and loving care. Grandson Josh is delighted to assist, running around from horse to horse, playing with them and the family dogs, Rosie and Rocky.

Everyone is treated with the same amount of care and respect, including the odd cow plus eccentric sheep, Lamborghini.

Sheila laughs when she says: "That sheep used to run along the road with us while we worked the horses in the bush. The dogs would come too. It was quite a procession – people must have thought we were very strange."