1871 - 1998

HARNESS RACING

Always a highlight at the
## MELBOURNE SHOW

Rural Insurance
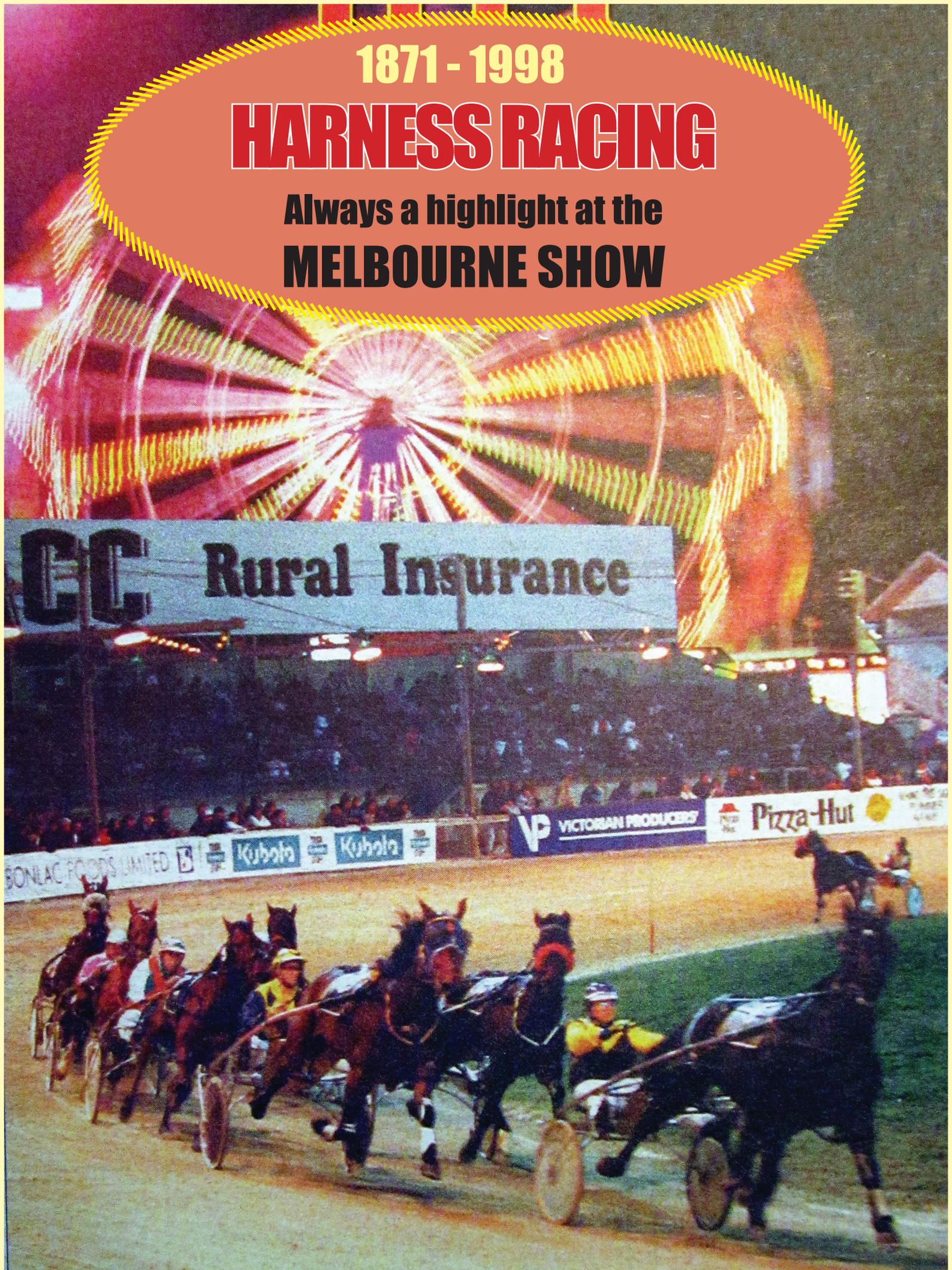
It All Began In 1871 On St. Kilda Road

The first issue of the Melbourne Argus in 1871 hit the streets on Monday, 2nd January and within the multitude of news was a simple item that read, "The New National Agricultural Society of Victoria has now been fairly established. A constitution and code of rules have been adopted and a considerable number of members have been enrolled."

One month late office bearers were elected by secret ballot - President, Hon. William Degraves MLC (Melbourne); Vice-Presidents, Hon. Phillip Russell (Carnham), Hon. Robert Simson (Langi Kal Kal), Hon. Neil Black (Mount Moorhead), Hon. John Cumming (Terinallum), John Benn (Melbourne) and George Carmichael (Geelong); and the Trustees were Sir James McCulloch (Melbourne), T.J. Sumner (Merri Creek) and Robert McDougall (Essendon).

The twenty five (25) member Council consisted of Hon. Francis Robertson (Goulburn), Duncan Robert McGregor (Queen Street), John Hood (Elizabeth Street), Matthew McCaw (Bourke Street), William McCulloch (Queen Street), John Williamson MLA (Emerald Hill), Josia Mitchell (Model Farm), Robert Hammond (Bourke Street), William Sumner (Swanston Street), Fred Search (Flemington), Andrew Murray (Boroondara), James Donaldson (Alphington), Archibald Fisken (Buninyong), Joel Harwood (Sandhurst), James Addis (Castlemaine), Peter Fanning (Heidelberg), Alexander Patterson (Cranbourne), James Buchanan (Berwick), Dr. Andrew Plummer (Sandridge), John Buncle (Hotham), John Murray Peck (Essendon) and Robert C. Morton (Mt. Derrimut). John Cooper (Bundoora) replaced James Addis (deceased June 1872).

Originally land was granted to the Agricultural Society for the inaugural Exhibition on Sydney Road, however, it was deemed unsuitable and insufficient for future needs and the Society obtained another on St. Kilda Road (see below) in September 1871 by having the land temporarily reserved from sale before it was officially declared in the Government Gazette No.10 on 16 February 1872, three months after the first Exhibition that took place on Thursday 30th November, Friday 1st December and Friday 2nd December.
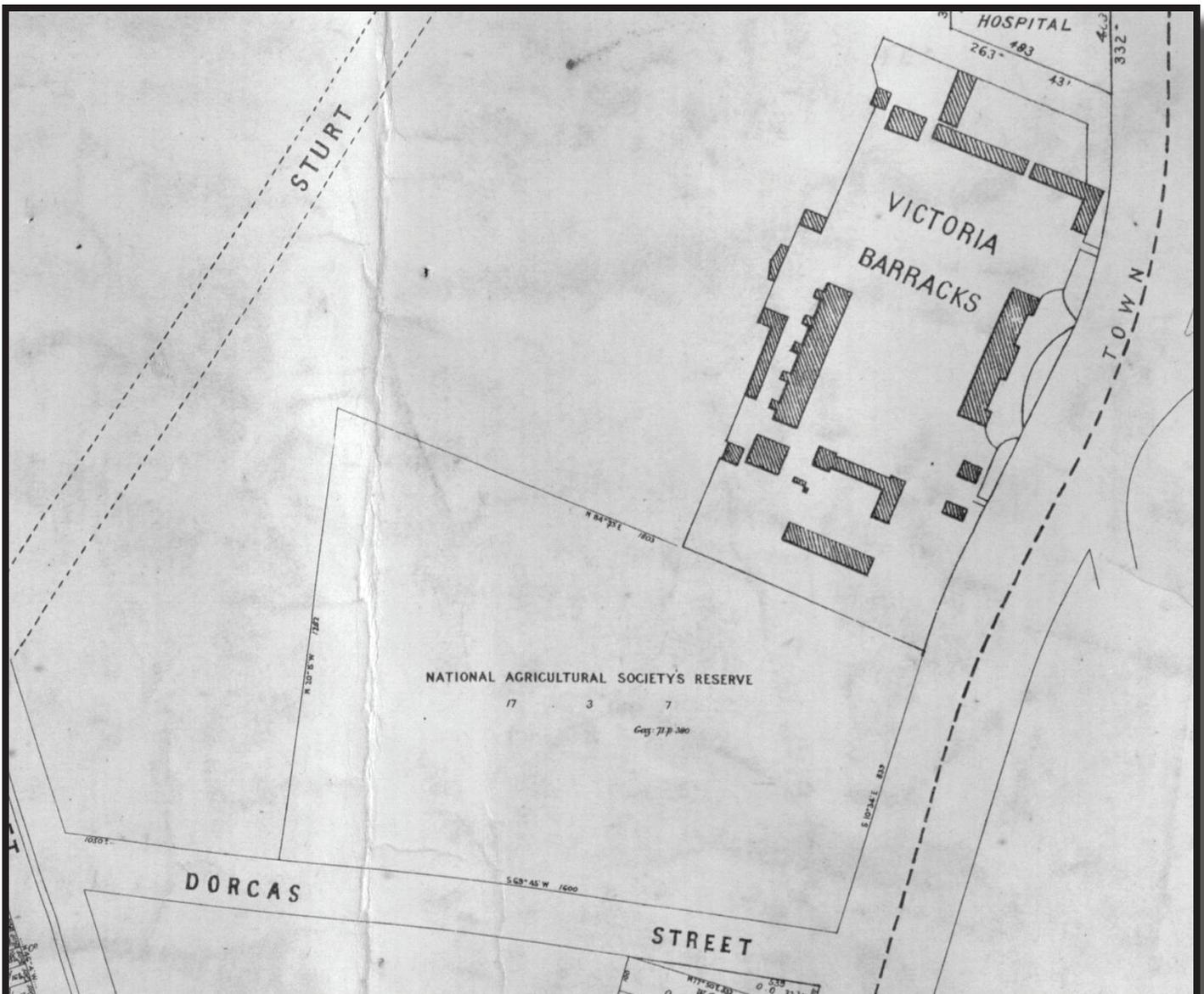
The Melbourne Argus reported the opening day in the following way and trotting was there front and centre:-

"*The first show of the society was thrown open to the public at noon yesterday, and there was a large number of persons ready to enter by that hour. Yesterday the ground was pretty well filled up with exhibits, and only the entire horse stock was wanting to make the show complete. The yards wore a lively appearance throughout the afternoon.*

*There was abundance of variety for the visitors - the splendid specimens of cattle, the horse stock, sheep, swine, and poultry on the one side, the extremely varied collection of implements in the middle, and the busy machines on the other side. **On the flat below, while the judging of the animals went on, a busy scene was enacted; the hackneys were put through their paces, and the trotting horses shown at their best, before the eyes of those who had to determine where the merit lay.** The number who were privileged to witness the forenoon work on the flat, however, was small, and when the bulk of the spectators came in the afternoon, one of the most interesting portions of the show was nearly over.*

The weather was very favourable for the exhibition. The attendance was not remarkably large, for the returns from the gates gave the number as 2,000. No doubt, the fact that the show is not confined to one day, but extends over three, stood in the way of a large assemblage on any given day, particularly on a partial holiday, for which so many different kinds of amusement had been provided for the public. During to-day and to-morrow, a more numerous attendance may be expected.

The exhibition, from the comprehensive prize list which has been issued, goes considerably beyond one which is chiefly interesting to agriculturists. The machinery and implement divisions contain many curious apparatus, which help to make up for the deficiencies of the live stock department in regard to numbers. Some of the machines had crowds round them almost the whole day long, one set of persons coming up as another set melted away. There was considerable traffic up and down the streets, as they may be called, which were lined by the live stock stalls. In fact, there was bustle in all parts of the grounds.

There was a plentiful supply of omnibuses and cars between the centre of the city and the yards, and the thoughtfulness of the corporation in keeping the St. Kilda road well watered prevented the drive out from being very dusty. It was a little dusty at times, but that was owing to the fact that many vehicles travelled over the unmetalled ground at the side of the road, instead of keeping to the proper track.

The hunters, hackneys, trotters in saddle, and trotters in harness, are an attractive portion of the show. *Around the convincing ground, at the foot of the slope, a large concourse assembled whilst the trials were proceeding. In the hunter class, Mr. James Hearn's Romsey is first, and Mr. Glasscock's Redlight second, out of a small section of four. In the weight-carrying hackney section, the Hon. Robert Simson's Conrad is first, Mr. Glasscock's Brownlock and Mr. Latham's Hector being respectively second and third. In pairs of buggy horses, Mr. McPherson, of Bungeeltap, divides Mr. Garton's two well-known pairs. Mr. Wagner's Jemmy gains the prize in the saddle trotting section, and in that for horses trotting in harness Mr. Joseph Thompson is first.*" Official results were:-

BEST TROTTING HORSE (in saddle) (First prize £6) - John Wagner, Melbourne, bay gelding JEMMY.
BEST TROTTING HORSE (in harness) (First prize £10) - Joseph Thompson, Melbourne, bay gelding SIR WILLIAM DON; second, B. S. Thompson, Melbourne, grey gelding BUCK; third, Robert Collins, Carlton, bay mare FLOSS.

Although the etching below appeared in relation to the 1872 Exhibition, it was definitely depicting the performances at the inaugural Exhibition in 1871 as the horse on the right hand side is actual "pacing" (legs on same side move together) not trotting and the second horse is a grey who is "trotting". No pacer competed in 1872.

The pacer is none other than champion Sir William Don, regarded by historians as the greatest pacer in the Southern Hemispher in the 19th century and was the 13th fastest pacer in the world. In 1871 was owned by the famous bookmaker Joe Thompson and was driven in the majority of his races by the accomplished horseman "Dinny" Bowes.
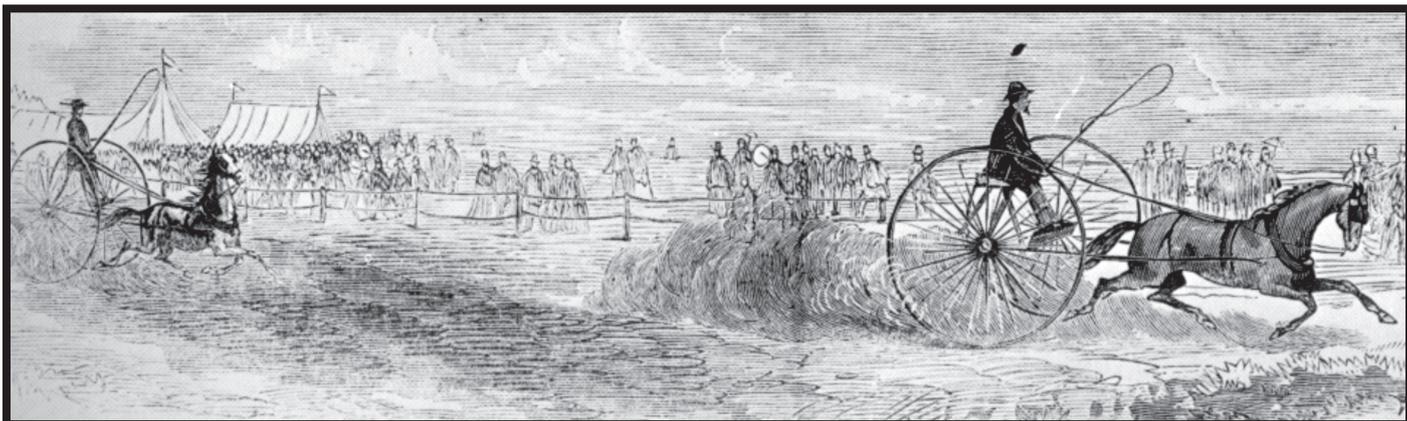
1872 National Agricultural Society Spring Show

The Argus reported on the second National Agricultural Society Spring Show in its issue of 26th October:- The second spring show of the National Agricultural Sooiety, whioh began on Wednesday (23rd October), and closes this afternoon at flve o'clock, haa been attended with marked sucoess, the weather throughout having been as favorable as could be wished. The first day was allotted to the judging of the implements and the maohinery, and the visitors to the yard were limited to the judges, officials, exhibitors, and a few who chose to pay a crown for admission.

Early on the morning of the second day all the live stock (except entire horses), including draught, haokney, and other horses, shorthorn and other descriptions of cattle, sheep, swine, poultry, and dogs, were on the ground, and were adjudicated upon during the forenoon, the show being thrown open to the general public, at an admission fee of half-a-crown, at midday. The entire horses took their place in the yard yesterday morning, and made up the full complement of exhibits in all the departments.

Regarded as a whole, the show must be pronounced a very good one and embraces much to attract attention and awaken interest. The display of implements and machinery, which covers between three and four acres of ground, is really splendid, and bears testimony alike to the skill and energy of our local makers and the enterprise of importers.

The horses are quite up to the mark, and the performances of the trotters in saddle and harness, which are turned out several times during the day, are not the least interesting feature. It may be mentioned that the first prize horse in each case is in the hands of Henry Gigney, an accomplished jockey, who came out from England last Christmas. Results were:-

Best trotting horse (in saddle): G. G. Watrnough, Melbourne, chestnut horse FARMER.
Best trotting horse (in harness): 1st, P. G. Dixon, Melbourne, bay gelding WANDERER; 2nd, B. Isaacs, grey horse BUCK; 3rd, Peter Carroll, Melbourne, bay mare POLLY.

Wanderer (pictured below) was the champion trotter of the 1870s, winning nine races in Melbourne (7 at Kensington and 2 at Croxton Park) and earned the distinction of winning off the longest handicap mark ever - 900 yards. The watercolour painting of Wanderer and his owner, Phillip Garnet Dixon, founder of the Dixon Aerated Water Manufacturing Company, adorns the Board Room of the Royal Agricultural Society at Ascot Vale.
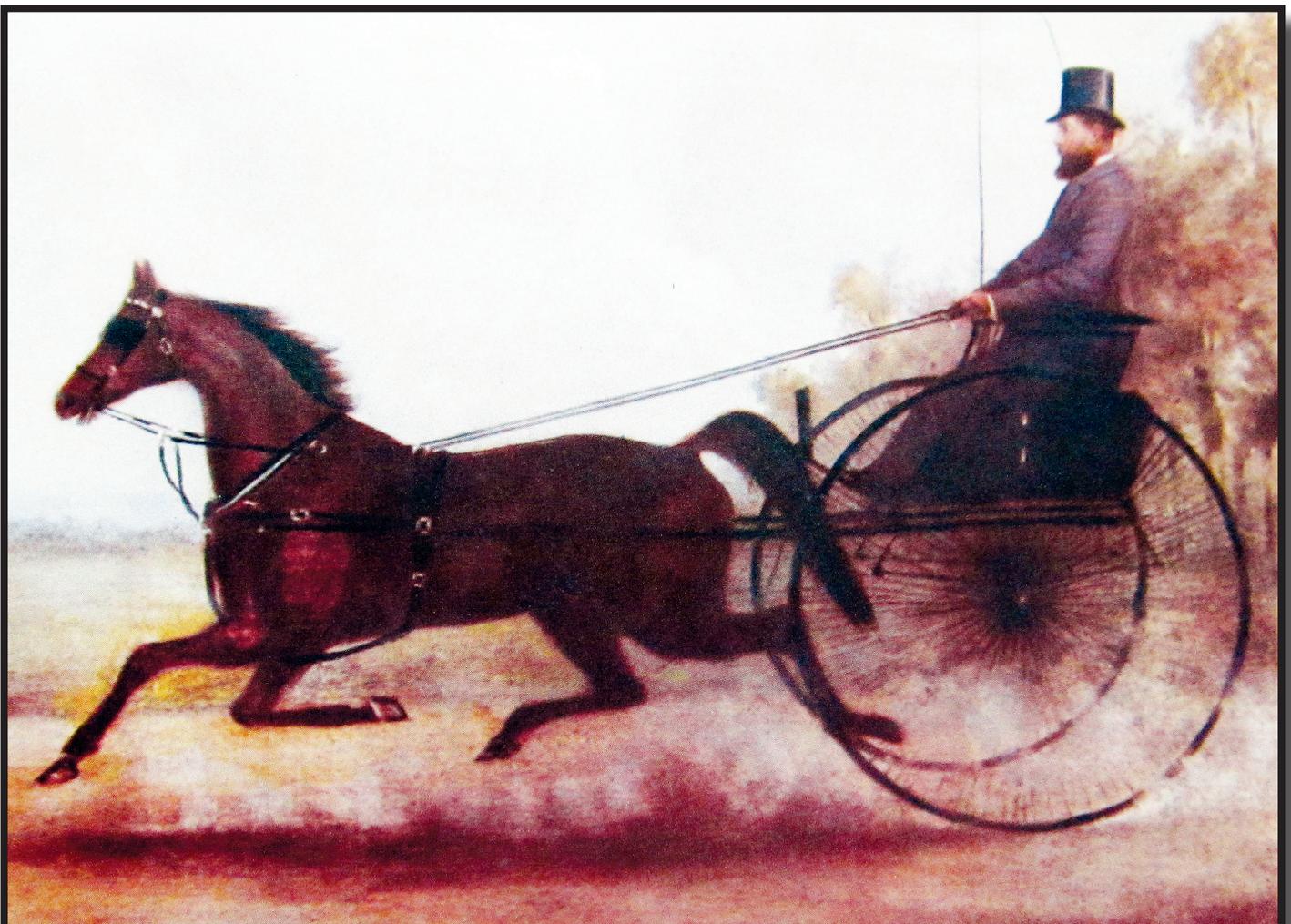
1873 National Agricultural Society Spring Show (Oct. 22-23-24)

The trotting horses were few in number Bay Judy took the first prize in saddle, and Polly was the victor in harness.

Best Trotting Horse, in saddle: First prize silver medal, W. H. Fagan, Melbourne, bay mare BAY JUDY; second prize bronze medal, Thomas Adams, Melbourne, black gelding CLANSMAN

Best Trotting Horse, in harness: First prize silver medal, Peter Carroll, Melbourne, bay mare POLLY; second prize bronze medal, Luke Nolan, Brunswick, bay gelding PRIN.

1874 National Agricultural Society Spring Show (Nov. 2-3-4)

Best single horse, buggy and harness: 1st, Thos, Adams, Little Collins street, black gelding CLANSMAN ; 2nd, J. R. Walker, Bundoora, brown horse FLYING MORGAN.

Best trotting horse (in harness): 1st, P. G. Dixon, West Melbourne, bay gelding TOM SAYERS; 2nd, J. B. Young, Melbourne, bay gelding BUTCHER BOY; 3rd, Jas. Hembry, Carlton, bay mare LADY LIGHTFOOT.

Extra Horse Stock (Prize of £5 5s) - S. Gardiner, trotting stallion, SERENADER (UK)

TOM SAYERS
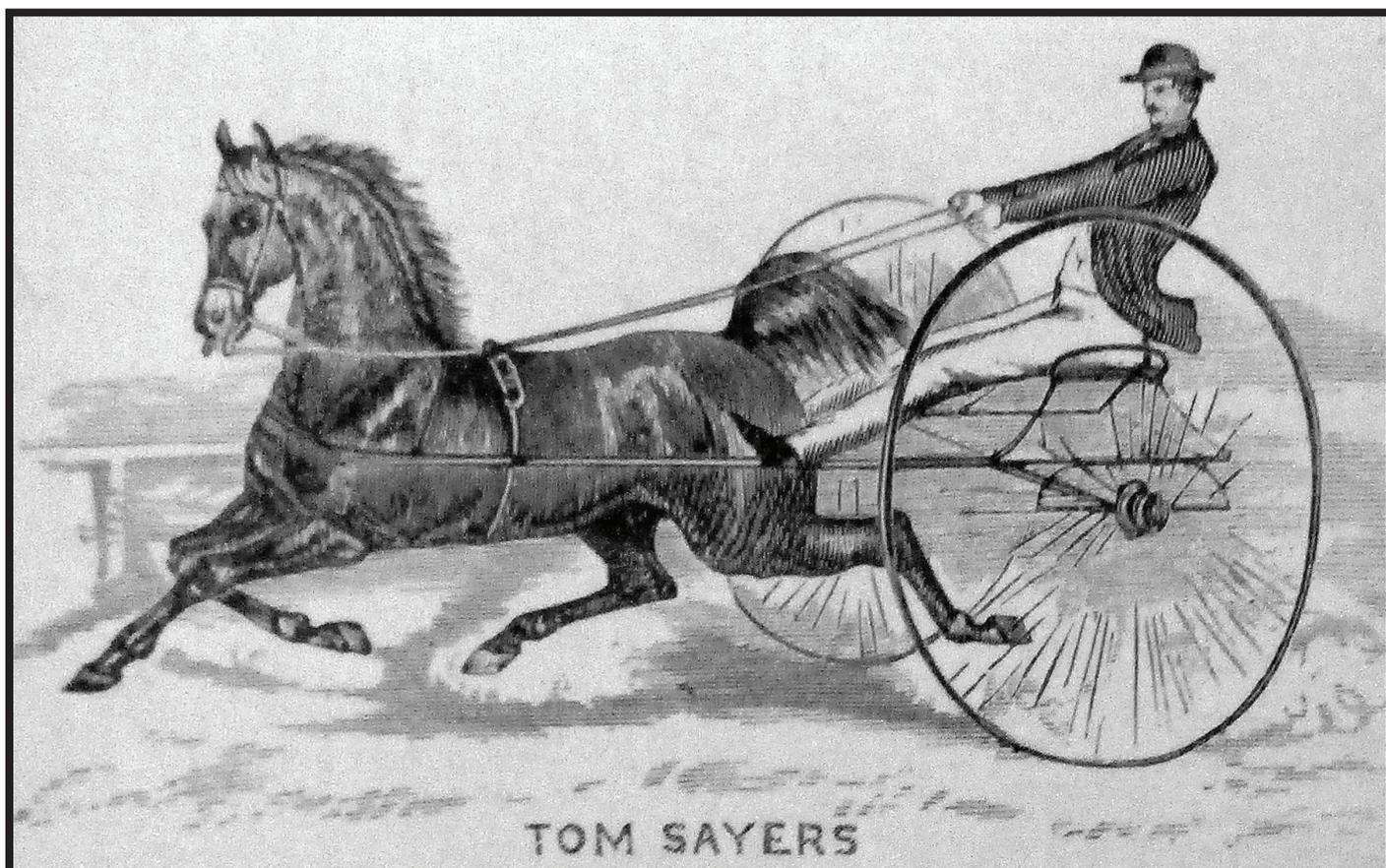
1875 National Agricultural Society Spring Show Nov 10-11-12

Bust single horse, buggy and harness: 1st. John Robertson, Melbourne, bay mare PET.

Best trotting horse, in saddle: 1st, Stratford Strettle. Narre Warren, brown mare POLLY; 2nd, J. R. Walker, Bundoora, brown horse FLYING MORGAN.

Best trotting horse, in harness (First prize £8) - 1st, Henry Hoyt, Melbourne, brown entire MERRIMAN; 2nd, George Plant, Northcote, chesnut gelding, COLONEL

Extra Horse Stock (Prize of £5 5s) - S. Gardiner, trotting stallion, SERENADER (UK)

# 1876 National Agricultural Society Spring Show Nov 8-9-10

Flying Perfection and Serenader, the two imported English trotting horses, attracted a good deal of notice, and there was a rush to the ring every time they were trotted round. The judges were unable to separate them, and gave both honorary certificates. Three trotting horses were shown in harness. Mr. H. Hoyt's Merriman, by Maribyrnong from Lucy Escott, was by far the most taking animal.

Best Single Horse, buggy, and harness: First, John Robertson, bay mare PET

Best Trotting Horse, in saddle: First, George Glasscock, chestnut mare SHRIMPTONS POLLY; second, Stratford Strettle, Narre Warren, grey gelding TOMMY.

Best Trotting Horse, in harness: First, Henry Hoyt, Melbourne, brown horse MERRIMAN; second, George Plant, Northcote, chestnut gelding COLONEL

Extra Horse Stock (Prize of £5 5s) - S. Gardiner, trotting stallion, SERENADER (UK)

SERENADER.
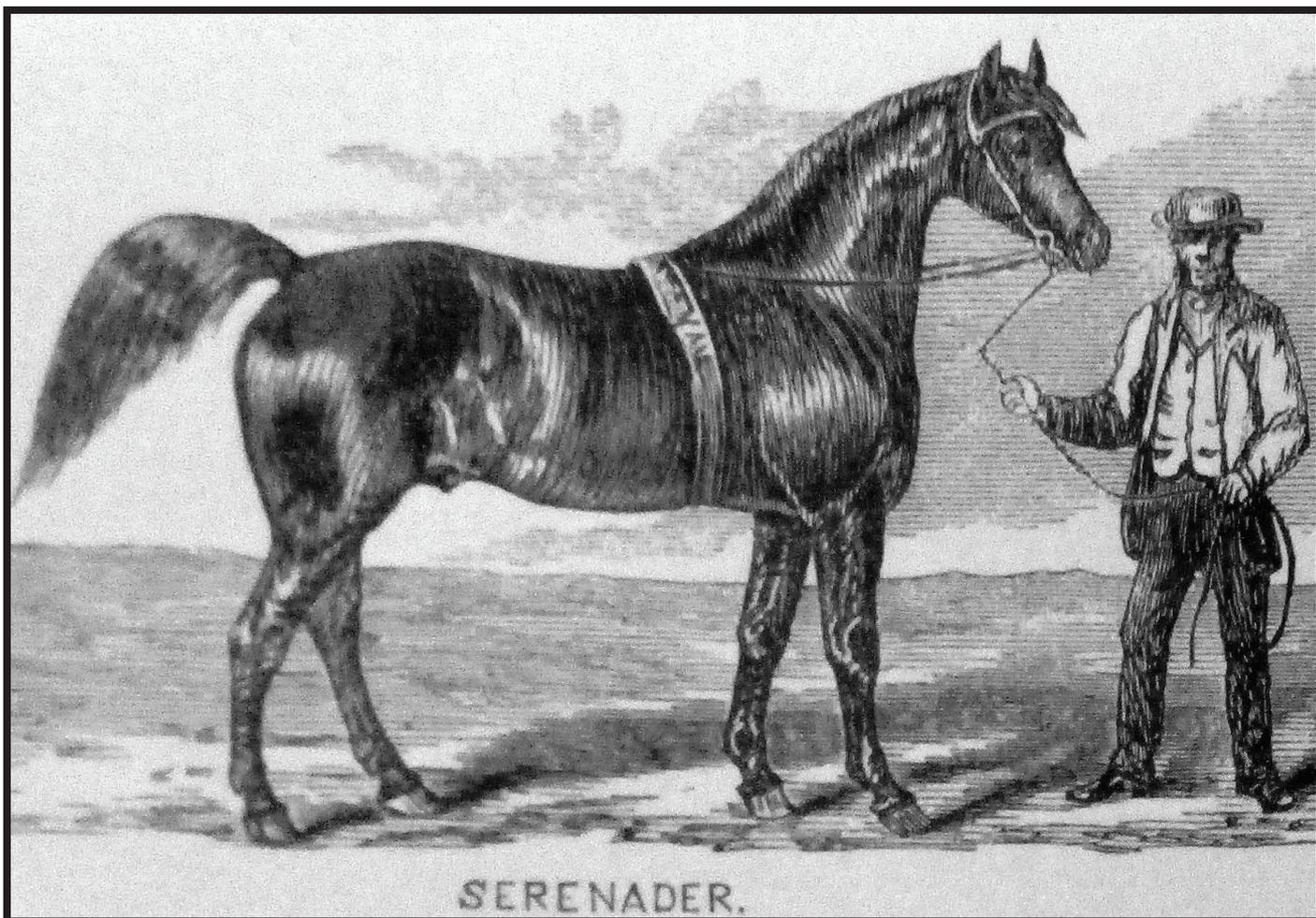
1877 National Agricultural Society Spring Show (Nov. 7-8-9-10)

A good many trotters were shown, who exhibited their trotting horses in saddle and harness. Mr W. J. Winter took firat prize for horse, buggy, and harness. Mr. P. G. Dixon was first with Wanderer, who won in saddle, and first with Teviot in harness.

Best Single Horse, Buggy, and Harness - First, W. I. Winter, Stanhope, bay gelding SURPRISE

Best Trotting Horse (in saddle) - First, P. G. Dixon, West Melbourne, bay gelding WANDERER.

Best Trotting Horse (in harness) - First P. G. Dixon, grey gelding TEVIOT; second, J. W. Fleming, Brunswick, bay gelding MERRYHAWK (by Sluggard); third, C. J. Hoyt, Bourke Street, chestnut horse LANTERN

Extra Horse Stock (Prize of £5 5s) - S. Gardiner, trotting stallion, SERENADER (UK)

1878 National Agricultural Society Spring Show (Nov 6-7-8)

Though only four buggy horses were shown they at traded a great deal of attention. The horses were all remarkably fine animals, well harnessed and the buggies all of good style.

Mr. Jas. Garton took first prize with one of the best buggy horses we have seen at any show. He was well harnessed, and the buggy was very neat. Mr J Robertson sent a remarkably neat turnout, the horse being much admired. Mr. D. G. Clarke's handsome grey horse, with his excellent buggy and harness, excited much admiration. The other exhibit was a very nice turn out, with a handsome bay horse, sent in by Mr. J. Garton.

The appearance of these four horses, when trotted round the ring was thought by many to be one of the most attractive features of the show.

In the class for hunters, Mr G Glascock s Timber Top, who took first prize was decidedly the best across the fences. Ten hacks were sent in, Mr Graham Mitchell's Stuart, by Athos, being first and Mr. W. P. Bowes' Snip second. They were both excellent animals.

The trotting horses were of all sorts and sizes, Wanderer took first prize for trotter in sulky, Merry Hawk, by Ace of Clubs a very neat bay, being second, Cyclone was considered the best of the trotters in saddle.

Single horse, buggy and harness (1st, gift of Mr. Joseph. Clarke) - James Garton, Melbourne, bay gelding UNNAMED; 2nd, John Robertson, Lonsdale Street, bay mare PET

Trotting horse (in saddle)(1st, gift of Messsrs. Robertson and Moffatt) - First, P. G. Dixon, West Melbourne, roan gelding CYCLONE; 2nd, Geo. Plant, Northcote, chestnut gelding COLONEL

Trotting Horse (in harness) (1st, gift of Mr. Wm. Cumming) - First, P. G. Dixon, West Melbourne, WANDERER 2nd, J. W. Fleming, Brunswick, bay horse MERRY HAWK (by Ace of Clubs) 3rd, J. Woods, Fitzroy, grey mare MAUDE.
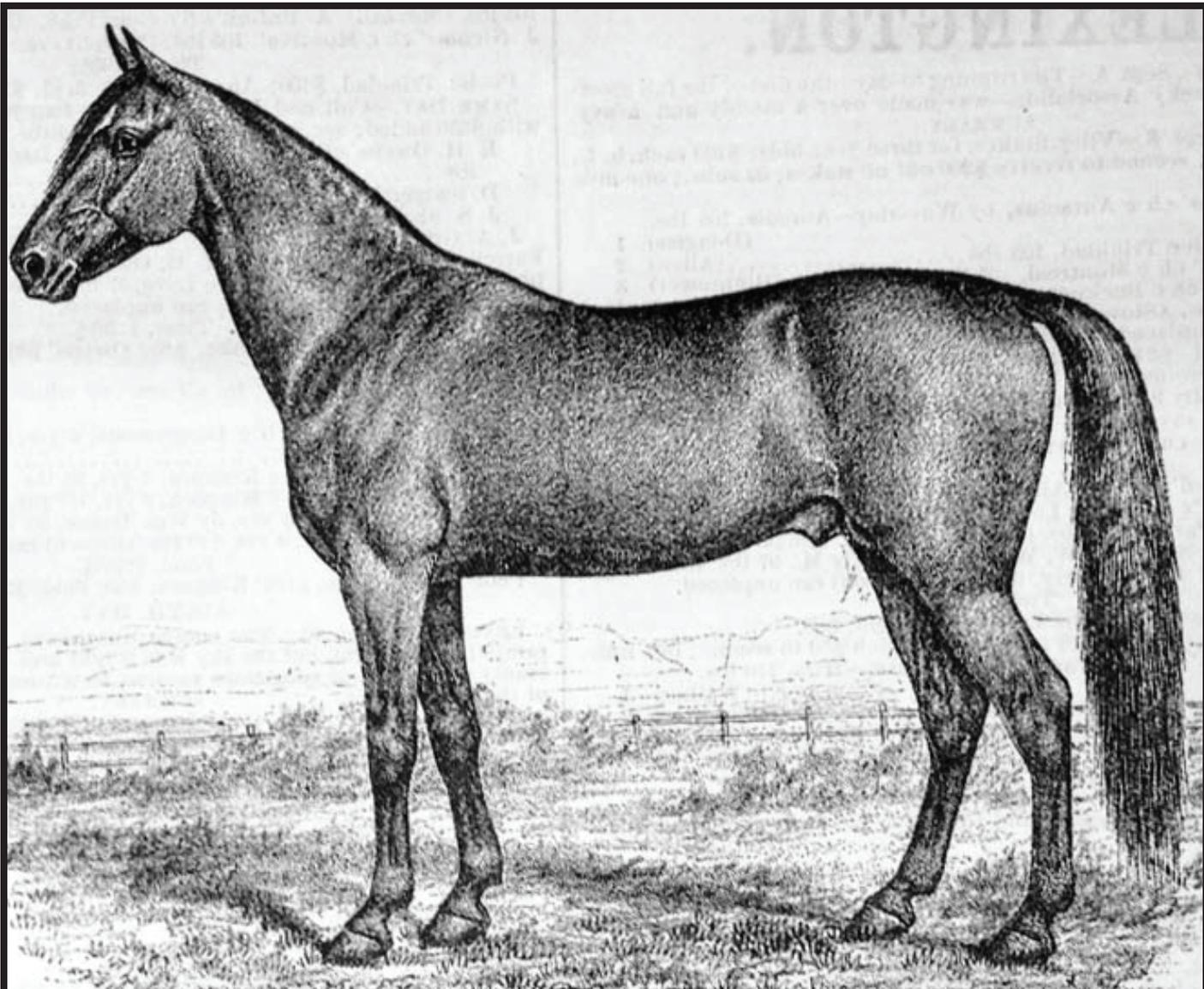
Imported North American Trotting Stallion VON MOLTKE JUNIOR

1879 National Agricultural Society Spring Show (Nov 5-6-7)

The Cup given by Mr. W. J. Wagner, for the best stallion for getting hackneys, trotters, and carriage horses, brought out some excellent animals. Mr. T. Gidney s imported Norfolk trotting cob Merrylegs, a powerful black horre, with great action, was placed first. Mr. Fleming exhibited a very useful horse, Merry Hawk, by Ace of Clubs, from Black Hawk Belle. Mr. J. Gidney and Mr i; J Martin showed a couple of young horses, both by Flying Perfection

Of the trotting stallions in saddle and harness, Mr. C. Colbath's Von Moltke Junior, an imported American horse, six years old, stood out greatly superior to anything shown. He was driven in a trotting buggy, and his grand action and fine appearance attracted the notice of everyone on the ground. He is a good upstanding horse, with a huge constitution and excellent temper and should make his mark in breeding trotters .

Horse, buggy and harness - 1st, John Pritchard, chestnut gelding TALK; 2nd, L. Mason, bay gelding CAPTAIN COOK.

Trotting horse (in saddle) - 1st, John Todd, Carlton, chestnut gelding TALK ; 2nd, Allen Cameron, Janefield, bay gelding NIMROD; 3rd, G. Plant, Northcote, chestnut gelding COLONEL..

Trotting horse (in harness) - 1st, Charles Colbath, Fitzroy, VON MOLTKE JUNIOR (USA) ; 2nd, J. W. Fleming, Brunswick, bay horse MERRYHAWK.

1880 National Agricultural Society Spring Show (Nov 3-4-5)

J. Robertson took first prize for horse buggy and harness with a very neat turnout. The prize for the best trotting horse was taken by Mr. C. Colbath with Von Moltke Junior, an imported American.

Single horse, buggy and harness - First, J. Robertson, Lonsdale Street, bay gelding DANDY; second, Peter Carroll, Melbourne, bay gelding UNNAMED.

Trotting Horse, saddle or harness (first prize £10, with £5 added, the gift of Mr W Cumming) - First, C. Colbath, Fitzroy, bay stallion VON MOLTKE JUNIOR (USA); second, J. Todd, Carlton, chestnut gelding TALK; third, John Pritchard, Collingwood, bay mare DOLLY.