

From Sydney to Mudgee in a Rubber Tyred Sulky

This article appeared in the Mudgee Guardian in the 1970s. Copy provided by Eric Brookes

A man who drove from Sydney to Mudgee in 1924 in a rubber tyred sulky pulled by a champion trotter, returned for the first time this week for a few days at the Central Motel. The man is William H. Brookes of Riverstone, still hale and hearty. The horse, not with him on this trip, was the New Zealand bred *Dillenvale*. Bill's mate on the first trip was Charlie Cafe, a colourful character who used to race a few horses around the outer Sydney area in the early days.

"As a matter of fact" said Bill, "I rode *Vauchuse* for Charlie in eleven races for 9 wins and 2 seconds."

Dillenvale's greatest race was when beaten a head in the Sydney Thousand. "We harnessed *Dillenvale* into the shafts of a sulky that had just won first prize in the Sydney Show and set off for Mudgee with a pack of greyhound dogs" he said.

"We reckoned we'd do a bit of rabbiting around Rylstone. The old cattle track from Kurrajong to Bell was pretty rough and we were about frozen by the time we reached

Bell." Bill said they were taken in for the night by a woodcutter named O'Rourke, an uncle of the famous Australian fighter Les Darcy.

"We tried to ring *Dillenvale* in for a race at Mudgee but the Inspector of brands was 'on to us' and knew more about the horse than we did" said Bill. They did a bit of rabbiting in the district for a while but they were 'pretty broke'. "On the way back a miner in the Capertee pub challenged us to a race for ten quid. We didn't have ten bob but Charlie put the sulky, the harness, and the horse for the ten quid. We were back in the pub and half finished a schooner of beer by the time the miner's horse finished" said Bill with a nostalgic grin.

When asked of changes Bill said he didn't see a lot of changes in Mudgee, but that Capertee had shrunk. It used to be a fairly big place in those days.

John Byrne of Annangrove who drove Bill Brookes to Mudgee this week is the brother of Kevin Byrne, former well known compositor of the *Mudgee Guardian*.