

AGRA HALL OF FAME

SAM BLADON (Inducted 2006)

Category: TRAINER

Greatest Coursing Trainer in History

Trained in the late 1800's and early 1900's

He won Waterloo Cups with Belgravia in 1892, and followed up with Bloomer in 1893, and again with Bloomer in 1894.

He then won the N.S.W. Waterloo Cup, run at Orange, N S.W., in 1897, with Bunny.

He also won the Victorian Waterloo Cup in 1898 with Bogan, and the N.S.W. Waterloo Cup in 1900 with Braddon's Blot.

In addition to these successes he won the Waterloo Cup no less than three times with Bulwark, namely 1906, 1907 and 1909.

He also won the N.S.W. Derby with Bulwark in 1906, besides many other successes both in N.S.W., Victoria and New Zealand.

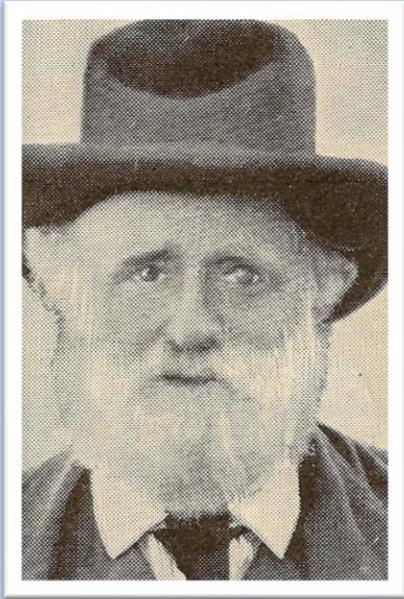
Many interesting stories are told of the late Sam Bladon, who was termed the "Wizard." He came to Australia in the year 1852 from England, and he spent about 20 years amongst the gold diggings at Bendigo, Victoria. He afterwards went on to New Zealand, where he married. He later returned to Australia, and for five years he was private trainer to the late Mr. H. M. S. Cox's father in Daylesford, Victoria, and prior to that he had been game-keeper for the Chirnside family at Werribee, Victoria.

Amongst the greyhounds owned by Mr. Cox, of Daylesford, was a bitch named "Daisy," which in Bladon's charge had won many stakes for Mr. Cox, Snr. A little while later, owing to the sudden death of Mr. Cox, Snr. Sam Bladon left Victoria to take up residence at Rooty Hill, N.S.W., and as a parting gift Mr. H. M. S. Cox presented "Daisy" to Sam Bladon. This bitch afterwards laid the foundation of one of the most famous kennels of greyhounds known to the Australian coursing fraternity for all times. When owned by Sam Bladon, Daisy was mated with Hopmarket, and she gave us Leoline, the dam of Leopold, and grand-dam of Braddon's Blot. Braddon's Blot was the sire of Black Cygnet, who when mated with White Hope (imp.), gave us those wonderful greyhounds, Beauty Spot, Benediction, and a host of others of the same breeding.

It would be safe to say that the most conspicuous personality who ever graced a coursing enclosure in Australia was the late Sam Bladon. He came out from England with the late Percy Lamb, of "Woodstock Enclosure," Rooty Hill, N.S.W., and he trained the latter's dogs for some time. Bladon won his first Waterloo Cup in Australia with Mr. Percy Lamb's Livingstone, in the year 1887. He won his second Waterloo Cup with the same owner's Lincoln in the following year, 1888.

About this time he severed his connection with Mr. Lamb, and commenced breeding and training on his own account. That Bladon was successful is proved by the number of Waterloo Cups and other classic events to his credit. He commenced his own score of Cups with Belgravia in 1892, and followed up with Bloomer in 1893, and again with Bloomer in 1894. He then won the N.S.W. Waterloo Cup, run at Orange, N S.W., in 1897, with Bunny. He also won the Victorian Waterloo Cup in 1898 with Bogan, and the N.S.W. Waterloo Cup in 1900 with Braddon's Blot, and in addition to these successes he won the Waterloo Cup no less than three times with Bulwark, namely 1906, 1907 and 1909. He also won the N.S.W. Derby with Bulwark in 1906, besides many other successes both in N.S.W., Victoria and New Zealand. These dogs were all bred and trained by the late Sam Bladon, his only assistant being his niece, the late Miss Buckley (who later became Mrs. C. Bennett, of Rooty Hill). They invariably travelled together with their dogs and

Miss Buckley was as well known as Mr. Bladon.



A notable feature in Bladon's success was the fact that he rarely ran more than one dog from each litter he bred. On one occasion Mr. P. H. Killeen, of Melbourne, travelled to Sydney by train with the late Wm. Stapleton, who was a bosom friend of Sam Bladon's, and he (Mr. Stapleton) told him the way the veteran could pick the best" puppy from a litter was uncanny. When the puppies were only a few days old, Bladon would usually make his selection. He would handle each whelp separately, and carefully examine it, commenting at the time as to its future career. He would say, "This one is no good." "You might win a stake with that one." "Ah, here's the good one," etc., etc., until he went through the lot of them. He was never known to be wrong in his choice, and many times his rejects were rear Strange to say, Bladon was almost as unpopular as he was successful. He never associated with other owners or trainers, and he was invariably a lone figure. He rarely missed important meetings either in N.S.W. or Victoria, and when he had a dog running, whatever beat his nomination had a second to none chance of winning the stake. Nobody ever saw him back his dogs, but the general

impression was that he had a friend who used to do it for him. He never "celebrated" after a win, and he never joined the crowd after any of his many victories. This is probably the main reason why he was unpopular.

In the Waterloo Cup of 1898, run at Moonee Valley, Victoria, his runner, Bogan, pulled up very lame after his first course, and he was led to the kennels on three legs. Most people would have been very worried over this, but not so with Bladon. He led the dog to the grandstand, turned the water tap on, and allowed Bogan to drink his fill. He was then approached by an onlooker, who consoled with him in his misfortune. Bladon replied: "Oh, he'll be all right directly." In his second course Bogan came out and ran as though' there was apparently nothing wrong with him, and the same procedure took place after the course, and this continued until the final, when he went' to the slips very lame; but he duly led, and easily defeated Kelly Bros. Goldspur in the final.

The following year, 1899, Bladon made his first and only attempt at winning the English Waterloo. Bogan was the dog which he selected to take with him by others, only to find that the Old Man's judgment was sound and correct. Although he won three courses in the Cup, he could not see it through to the final. Bladon on his return to Australia made no excuses for his defeat in England beyond saying "the conditions were different to those existing in Australia." Bogan was afterwards sold to Mr. A. C. McLaren, the international cricketer.

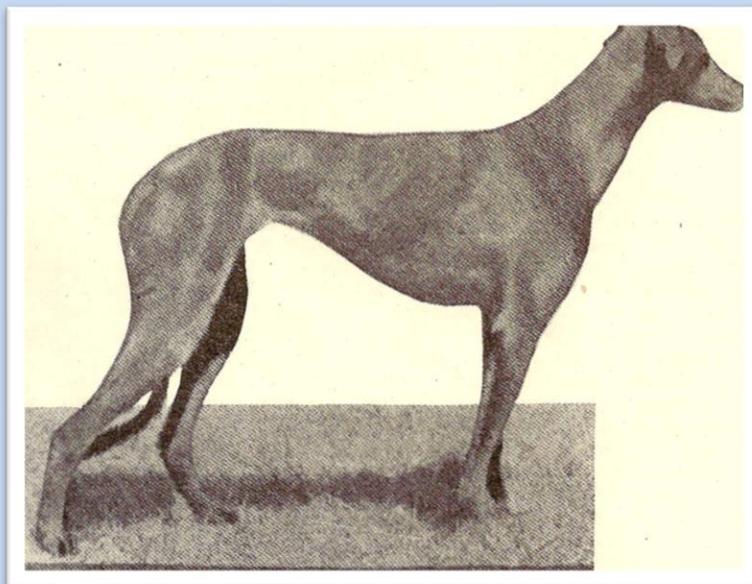
In '1900 Bladon came to light with one of the best dogs he ever owned, Braddon's Blot, by Leopold-Besant. In that year this puppy, when only 15 months old, won a 128 Dog Stake run at Rooty Hill, N.S.W. With a puppy of that age most owners would be considering giving him his first hare, let alone competing in a 128 dog stake. The win was no fluke, as Braddon's Blot, or The Blot, as he was commonly called, proved to be a veritable champion. Just at this time Victoria had a champion dog named Aqua Fortis, owned by the late A. B. Pearson, and a meeting of these two champions was eagerly looked for. This meeting happened at Moonee Valley in the first course of the Waterloo Cup of 1900. Aqua Fortis led by about one length, and in a medium length course won a well contested trial. They met again at Moonee Valley, and Aqua Fortis repeated his former victory over Braddon's Blot.

With regard to Aqua Fortis, there is a remarkable incident attached to this dog. He won the St. Leger at Moonee Valley in 1899, and after his victory the late Alf Scott, one of the greatest enthusiasts of his day, related a dream he had. He said "he dreamed that Aqua Fortis would win the Waterloo Cup, and that (Scott) would die before it took place." Scott was then apparently in the very best of health, but strange to relate the dream came true. Scott died within a few weeks, and Aqua Fortis duly landed the Waterloo Cup. This is no make-believe, as Mr. P. H. Killeen heard Scott relate his dream, and he saw Fortis win his Waterloo Cup after Mr. Scott's death.

One heard all sorts of tales about the late Sam Bladon, but it was the opinion of those who knew him best, that Bladon had a soul of honour, and he would not stoop to even think of anything

shady. He, however, kept all his knowledge jealously to himself, as he realised that the man who knew more about greyhounds than he did was non-existent in Australia.

It was a remarkable thing, and it happened almost invariably when Bladon's dog had a bye, he would put another of his team down with the bye dog, and he would in nearly every case well trounce the bye dog in the course, but the most notable thing about it was the fact that his dog running in the stake would come out next course as fresh as paint, and run rings around his opponent. If Bladon was a betting man he would have amassed a small fortune backing his dogs in the course after they had run a bye, as long odds were frequently laid against them. Later on, however, the Books began to suspect something, and they took no risks.



**BUNNY,
Winner, N.S.W. Waterloo Cup, 1897**

The late Wm. Stapleton, Bladon's personal friend, has stated that in an interview he had with Bladon just prior to his death, and when there was no hope of the Old Man's recovery, he revealed the following information. Before Bladon left England to come out to Australia a well known coursing authority in England, "Mr. Blank," personally gave him a secret of how to preserve a dog during the running of a bye. This information was given to Bladon on the understanding that he kept the information to himself, and that he told nobody. The promise was readily given, and if any person ever had suspicion against Bladon's integrity, what I am about to relate should convince them that, above all things, he was a man of honour.

During the interview Stapleton asked Bladon what he was going to do regarding the bye dogs. Bladon said: "What do you mean?" "I mean regarding the information given you in England by 'Mr. Blank'." "I am not going to tell anyone!" "But surely you will tell your niece, Carrie" (meaning Miss Buckley). "I won't. I promised that I would tell no one." "Surely 'Mr. Blank' did not mean you to take the secret to the grave with you? You will agree that if 'Mr. Blank' were here now, he would approve of your telling your niece on your death-bed?" "I don't know anything about that, but I gave him my promise that I would never tell anyone, and I've never broken my word in my life, and I will not do it now!"

That should sum up the late Sam Bladon. He did what probably not another man in the world would have done. It was not, I am sure, that he could not trust his niece, but he had made up his mind to keep faith with his informant, and nobody will ever know the secret which he kept as to how to run a dog in a bye.

Another thing about the late Sam Bladon was the wonderful regard he had for his dogs, and his absolute abhorrence of tobacco. When travelling by train with his dogs he was never known to enter a smoking compartment, and whether he was in the guard's van or in a non-smoker, he took every precaution to see that no tobacco was used by anyone in the carriage. In fact, when travelling to Melbourne for some of the big meetings, he has been known to reserve a special carriage for himself and his dogs in order to avoid the fumes of tobacco smoke on the journey. On many occasions on a coursing ground strangers may wander about the grounds and they would perhaps approach his sanctuary whilst smoking. Immediately the Old Man would become alarmed, and a change would come over his demeanor. He would frown, and commence to walk away with his

dogs, and if the smokers' came too close to his dogs he would call out to them to put their pipes out, and tell them not to come near his dogs whilst smoking. He was never known to use the kennels where rival greyhounds were housed, but would, if possible, obtain accommodation elsewhere. For instance, at Moonee Valley the kennels were erected on the hill running parallel with the southern fence. Bladon kept his dogs about 150 yards away, under the grandstand. Most people did not understand him and in fact, very few did. Assuming that he sought isolation so that nobody would see his final preparation, and although there was probably something in that, many were of the opinion that the real reason was to keep his dogs way from tobacco fumes.

Bladon's first consideration was his dogs. Everybody knew that. In fact, he never left them whilst attending a meeting. Bloomer was his favourite, and he had many successes with this grand bitch. Her course with Kelly Bros.' Victorian greyhound Blackbird, was a revelation.

In the Maribyrong Cup of 1894 both Blackbird and Bloomer were entered, and everyone was looking forward to witnessing a course between these two outstanding greyhounds, but fate ruled otherwise. When Bloomer was in the slips for her course in the first round of this Cup, she by some means or other broke loose from slips and ran to the top of the ground. Without a moment's hesitation Bladon withdrew her from the stake. She ranked as equal favourite with Blackbird to win the Cup outright, and in all probability a lot of kennel money had been invested on her. All that was nothing to Bladon.

The one thing he saw was that Bloomer would be placed at a disadvantage, and sooner than risk the chance of defeat, he did what few owners would have done under the same circumstances, and withdrew the bitch.

Bladon used a whistle to call his dogs, and if they did not respond to the whistle, the Old Man would use his voice, and it was a very powerful one. No man had greater control over his dogs than Bladon. They instinctively obeyed his command. Another thing that struck onlookers was how unexcitable his dogs were. Many a good dog has lost a stake through his excitable nature in the final. This never troubled Bladon. His dogs would walk by his side as quietly as possible, and even when being taken to the slips they did not become excited like most other dogs. I think it would be no exaggeration to say that the Old Man could have led his dogs to slips on a thread of cotton, they were so tractable. His dogs took no more notice of what was going on around them on a coursing enclosure than if they were doing their daily exercise.

A noticeable instance in this connection was Bladon's triple Waterloo Cup winner, Bulwark. This dog was exceedingly tractable when being led to the slips, but once the slips were placed around his neck he would at once "get on his toes" and from the quite, unassuming dog which he was he would instantly transform into one full of fire, straining on the leash to secure the break out of the slips and reach the bunny first.

It was in June, 1893, when the late Sam Bladon arrived in Melbourne from Sydney for the Derby and Oaks meetings, to be decided at Diggers' Rest enclosure. The Rooty Hill trainer had with him his litter brother and sister Bentley and Bloomer, by Livingstone-Bliss. Bladon was quite well known in Victorian circles. In fact, he had raced dogs in Victoria in 1887 and 1888, and 1892 he trained the winner of the Waterloo Cup.

Bentley, running in the Derby of 1893, was going grandly, but was badly injured in the semi-final round, and Goldsmith (Hedley-Sonnet), owned by the redoubtable Kelly Bros., easily won the deciding course.

Bloomer, running in the Oaks of that year, met a grandly bred puppy named Myrtle Exeter (Rufford-Good News) in the final, and Bloomer never allowed Myrtle Exeter to score one single wrench in the deciding course.

The form displayed by Bloomer was the feature of the meeting. The N.S.W. Derby and Oaks meeting opened at Rooty Hill on July 2 of the same year. Bladon again ran Bentley in the Derby, but, after reaching the final round, the puppy's shoulder again gave way, and he was defeated by A. F. Devlin's Ringarah (The Wreck-Thine Alone), rather easily in the final.

Bloomer was not produced in the N.S.W. Oaks; she was reserved by Bladon for bigger things to come. The N.S.W. Oaks in that year was won by Messrs. Lamb & Allen's bitch Actress, a sister to Leopold (Livingstone-Leoline), whose brother also divided the Woodstock Stakes on the same day with Bladon's bitch Bliss, the dam of Bloomer and Bentley.

Returning to Victoria after the Sydney classics, Sam Bladon took with him Bloomer to run in the Australian Waterloo Cup. The bitch, who was still a puppy, went through to the final, leading and beating everything she met with the greatest of ease. In the final she met Kelly Bros.' Lindsay Gordon, and thus added still another Waterloo Cup to Bladon's score.

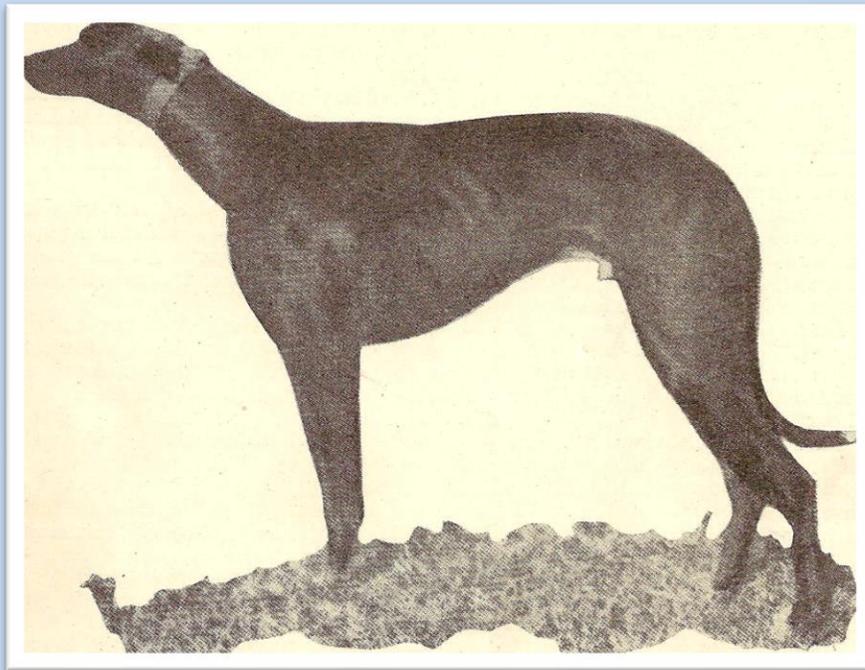
Bladon opened the season of 1894 by winning the Benalla Champion with Bloomer. This meeting was held on June 20 and 21, 1894, and after her victory in this stake Bladon eased the

bitch in her work. The following month the Waterloo Cup was to take place, and it was given out that the wonderful Bloomer had "gone off."

Bloomer, nevertheless, ran through to the final, and once more she was called upon to meet Kelly Bros. Goldsmith was her opponent on this occasion, he having previously won the Victorian Derby for Kelly Bros. She won the final course very easily, and thus created a record for winning the Victorian Waterloo Cup in consecutive years, namely, 1893 and 1894. All the "going-off" concerning Bloomer's condition was: she was 60 lbs. on the scales when she slipped for her first course in the Cup of 1894, and when she went to slips for the final course she drew the scales at just 58 lbs., her normal racing weight. She was "Bladon conditioned," and so ran her best course at the finish of the stake.

The following season we see Bloomer again among the entrants for the Benalla champion. For this classic event of 1895 the Benalla Club received a response of no less than 66 of Australia's best greyhounds, and amongst them were Bloomer and Blackbird. Blackbird, by the way, was sired by Kildahl, and out of that wonderful bitch Sonnet, the dam of Goldsmith. At the end of the 1894 season, Blackbird and Goldsmith had divided the Federal Stakes at Maribyrnong for their owners, Kelly Bros. The owners of Blackbird had been waiting to meet Bloomer, as from "something" which this dog had shown they were very confident of downing Bloomer when they met, and now was their opportunity. Both went through to the final, and then met.

As the pair went to the slips the weight of money behind Bloomer sent her to 4 to 1 on in the betting. There was no delay when the dogs were handed over to the slipper. Naturally the best hare was picked out for this historic final, and when the hare dashed out from the boxes, the course which so many had long waited for was definitely on.



BULWARK,
Winner of Australian Waterloo Cup, 1906, 1907, 1909

Bloomer immediately gained nearly a length's advantage, and as the "fur" dashed past the 250 yards mark, the bitch held her early advantage. The hare broke of its own accord to her side, and she gained the first turn by a bare length. The hare had turned almost at right angles, but Blackbird went on with his job like the wonderfully good greyhound he was. He displaced Bloomer, and once in possession he ran up a series of wrenches that made the layers of odds on Bloomer sit up and take notice.

As the hare reached within 100 yards of the escapes, Blackbird had almost evened Bloomer's early score. Then Blackbird, making one supreme effort, scored a brilliant full turn. Bloomer was beginning to feel the effects of the terrific strain of her previous running. Blackbird went on to score again, and he drove home a gallant and convincing winner by 1 1/2 points-said the judge.

It is impossible to describe the scene at Benalla enclosure that moment when the judge pulled out his flag in favour of Blackbird. Pat Kelly, one of the part owners of Blackbird, was present to witness the final, and his clear sounding voice had never ceased from the time that Blackbird had

gained possession and commenced to score. But, as Pat Kelly saw the flag given in his favour, he stopped exulting, and before you could drop an eyelid he dropped unconscious to the ground. Of course, assistance was at hand, and in a few minutes he was around again and quite normal, and amid cheering friends he was able to give a reason for being so overcome under the tense excitement.

That evening it transpired that Messrs. Kelly Bros. had known for some considerable time that in Blackbird they had a champion. In a trial with Goldsmith, Blackbird had led by over six lengths, but, unfortunately, at the end of this wonderful trial Blackbird, who won the course easily, dashed into an iron seat under which the hare had run for safety. So they had to run Goldsmith in the Cup of 1894, and for the second year in succession provide the runner-up to Bloomer. But they waited, and had their revenge on Bladon, and incidentally landed a nice win, for the Kelly Bros. certainly knew how to "pop" it on when they thought they had a good one.

Sam Bladon thus for once had his colours lowered by his greatest rivals, Kelly Bros. On going to the slips with another of his charges later in the proceedings, Sam was questioned about his prospects:

"Well," he said, "if it gets beaten I won't holler, and if it wins I won't faint like Kelly."

But that Bloomer might not have absorbed all the limelight of that period is a possibility not at all remote. Her litter brother, Bentley, after his accident, only ran once, and that was at Rooty Hill, when he when he was defeated in the Derby by Ringarah. Then Bladon sold him for breeding purposes to Joseph Brann, of Chiltern, Victoria. Later Bentley sired Transit and Ben Bolt, the former winning the Australasian Waterloo Cup run at Moonee Valley in 1900, for Mr. A. J. Thomas, a well-known Benalla sportsman.

Lots of people had a mistaken idea that Bladon gave his dogs some secret stimulant or dope to make them win, but this is not so. His secret was that he had his dogs in the pink of condition, and he knew from his own observations exactly how his dogs were. He also knew how to feed his dogs and what class of food to give them. He never used to rub his dogs down after a gruelling course. He contended that the dog required rest, not rubbing, and when people argued with him, he generally ended by saying: "What about the hare? Who rubs it down?" He used to joke about the other owners rubbing their dogs down, and he would say: "Oh, I rub my dog down with a brick when I get him home."

Bladon was always gifted with good health and he lived to the ripe old age of 81 years. He died on January 23, 1910, and just prior to this he won the New South Wales Waterloo Cup with his dog Bulwark, this being the third Waterloo Cup won by this dog.

The late Sam Bladon was without doubt the greatest personality who ever graced an Australian coursing enclosure, and his deeds will live forever amongst the coursing fraternity.

His niece, Carrie Buckley, afterwards married Mr. S. Bennett, and they carried on the famous kennels for many years afterwards with very great success. Classic after classic was won by descendants from Bladon's wonderful strain. After the death of Mr. Bennett, his wife still carried on, with the assistance of W. Buckley. "When the latter gentleman passed on to "happier resting grounds," Mrs. Bennett still kept the kennel intact, and to this day she still has her greyhounds, and wins more than her share of the rich stakes on the coursing enclosures.

In conclusion, one little episode in the late Sam Bladon's life is worth recalling.

"When he was introducing his wife to the late Maurice Kelly, he said, "Allow me to introduce you to Mr. Kelly; I've beaten this man for thousands."

The number of times that Bladon had beaten Kelly Bros. in the final was remarkable.

In 1892 Bloomer beat Lindsay Gordon. In 1893 Bloomer beat Goldsmith.

In 1898 Bogan beat Goldspur.

In 1910 Bulwark beat Delegate.

Maurice Kelly admitted that the Old Man was right in what he said.

Of all the good greyhounds which the late Sam Bladon possessed, Bloomer was the best. In fact, he said: "She was the best greyhound that ever looked through a pair of slips."

He probably was correct, for here is her wonderful list of performances: 1893, won the Victorian Oaks at Diggers' Rest (Vic.).

1893, won the Waterloo Cup at Diggers' Rest (Vic.).

1894, won the Waterloo Cup at Diggers' Rest (Vic.).

1894, won the Champion Cup at Benalla (Vic.).

1895, won the Consolation Stake at Dunedin (N.Z.).

1895, ran up for the Champion Cup at Benalla (Vic.).

1896, won the Challenge Stakes at Dunedin (N.Z.).

1896, won the Champion Cup at Echuca (Vic.).

Bloomer was whelped in August, 1891, and was by Livingstone, from Bliss, owned and bred by the late Sam Bladon. She was black in colour and raced at 58 lbs. She was without doubt as near to a perfect type greyhound as it was possible to see. She was a very racy type of bitch with a wonderful loin and hindquarter. She was noted for speed, as her record will show, but she also had a wonderful drive, and she was a deadly killer, thereby making many of her courses short.

By J C FITZPATRICK