

# AGRA HALL OF FAME

## Vivian James Berresford (Inducted 2010)

Category: TRAINER



*Vivian Berresford during the War years*

Vivian Berresford was an early pioneer of professional greyhound training in Tasmania including developing a mobile walking machine. Widely known as the Baron, this nickname became a trademark of many successful racing greyhounds, such as Hobart Thousand Winner, Baron Woomera.

Vivian James Berresford was born at Fingal on 27 January 1921 and died in Launceston, as a legend of our sport, in his eighty fourth year on July 16 2004. The son of Fingal's Sergeant of Police, Viv, from the age of seven would catch dogs for their owners at the end of their live coursing, either at Symmons Plains, or the Plumpton (enclosed coursing) at Elwick. He bought his first greyhound in 1931 but it died of distemper before racing. So he gave it up! That was, until 1947, when he purchased a bitch named Laura Murray whilst in the pub for fifteen pounds.

That purchase changed his life, and for the next 38 years Viv would become a dominant figure in our sport. Not only did Laura Murray become a legendary broodbitch, throwing winners of nearly six hundred races in five litters, but her descendents just kept throwing on, and as late as the 1970's were still as productive. With it and far beyond, grew the legend of the nom-de-plume "Mr. J Vivian", or just Viv, or as most simply knew him "the Baron" .

This success emanated from Glen Dhu Street in Launceston. Dhu meaning Black Glen in Scottish, was the prefix of many of his early dogs. Irish Dhu, in the early fifties was particularly smart. Later, it was mainly Baron or Baroness, that became the Berresford trademark. Viv was probably the first true professional in our sport. He paid tax on his earnings from greyhounds and later on agistment. He stressed that care must start from birth, that internal parasites must

be attacked within a fortnight of whelping, pups must be well kennelled and have plenty of space to gallop in. This allows the proper development of the heart and lungs.



***Baron Woomera the 1956 Hobart Thousand winner***

Known to perform his own digital operations and autopsies on greyhounds, very few had “the Baron’s” knowledge of their welfare and treatment. He named Tom Moriarty and Rex Jacobson as early mentors, and learnt much about injuries from Sydney vet Ron Bowen.

Baron Dhu, by Diamond Andy out of Laura Murray, was just one of so many Beresford dogs to win a huge number of races. He rated this dog his best training performance. Not only did he win the heat, semi and final of the 1952 Maiden Thousand, but twenty eight days later this virtual pup, backed it up with a win in the 1952 Hobart Thousand against the best in the land. Just for good measure Viv won the Hobart Thousand again in 1956 with Baron Woomera (over four years old), another of the Laura Murray breed, this one by Erin’s Ace.

In the late 1950’s Viv Berresford purchased fifteen acres in White Hills Road at Evandale, with another fifty acres purchased nearby in 1972. With his house not built until 1962, he lived in a railway carriage on the property. Viv also famously housed his greyhounds in disused railway carriages about thirty metres away. He considered Evandale the perfect spot for dogs. He claimed these ingenious kennels kept the dogs really warm and comfortable. The carriages backed out on to well fenced grass runs where the dogs could gallop.



***The ingenious horse drawn dog walking machine***

It was at this new abode that Viv Berresford really raised the bar. Training large numbers of dogs, with his homemade mobile walking machine, then later from both sides of a cream Holden ute, he won virtually every major races in Tasmania, and often multiple times. The one race that continually eluded him was the one dearest to him. Never winning a Launceston Cup, he came closest in 1956 when Moomba Queen ran second. Viv also ran third the

following year with the same bitch (which also won the 1956 Devonport Cup). Ripple Bay also ran third in the Lonnie Cup of 1964.

On Boxing Day 1972, one month prior to his fifty first birthday, this hitherto bachelor married Janet Cartledge, daughter of another well known dog man Lance. Janet had worked for Ray Foley in the LGRC office. In 1973 Janet and Viv had a daughter Belinda, and in 1976 another daughter Melissa. Now dog racing at the Beresford's was truly a family affair. With babysitters hard to get, the girls would come with mum and dad in the ute at dog walking time.

From the mid 1970's "the Baron's" many other interests, especially the Evandale Council, saw him concentrate on the agistment side and he handed over training duties to Janet. She continued to train until the early eighties, with Viv in a supervisory role, but the success rate was just as remarkable. Janet had great success with Sunshine Mac (Devonport Cup), Denholme Charm (Gold Collar winner), Denholme Spot (Tom McKenna winner) and prolific winner Karlim Diro. She once won eight in a week, and four in one night at White City with Baron Band and his three brothers.

The great Berresford dogs were too many to number, he having won upwards of 2500 races, some 1500 traceable back to Laura Murray. We will look at some of the elite here. Viv rated White Danny as possibly the fastest dog he trained, especially in the early days. Testament to his training was his ability to keep dogs racing to ages considered impossible by today's standards. Baron Ridgeside, a 31 2/10's hurdle record holder at the TCA, won his 42nd race as a seven year old. Lady Zealon won her 40th race at six and a half whilst Logan Belle won in top grade at six and three quarters.



***The Baron with Hobart and Maiden Thousand winner Baron Dhu***

As mentioned Baron Dhu and Baron Woomera won Hobart Thousands, and the former a Maiden Thousand. Star bitch Moomba Queen, yet another of the Laura Murrays, and Ripple Bay won Devonport Cups. Janet made it three Devonport Cups in 1976 with Sunshine Mac. Moomba Queen's litter sister Miss Maserati was also very good. The champion Baron The Great won the first State Final of the National Sprint Championship in 1965. He also ran third in the same race in 1966 apart from winning the 1965 Nelson Cup and 1966 Easter Cup. Gay Delaware also won a State Sprint Final in 1969.

The classically bred Ripple Bay was possibly his finest all round dog. By Lucky Bingo from the amazing broodbitch Our Barbara, Ripple Bay won 27 from 58 starts with 21 placings. A Harold Park winner, he also captured the 1964 Devonport Cup and was third in the 1964 Launceston Cup. At career's end and considering his classic bloodlines, it is little wonder he became the sire of his generation. From in excess of sixty litters he produced countless top notchers including Jan Remie, Brazil Star, Tubby Salter, Forbes, Ripple Star, Iman Ace, Cheetah Doll, Fenton Spark, Carnival Rock and countless others.

Who could forget the grand sprinter Baron Band and his many clashes with Tugrah Beaver! This bloke was a genius at White City, where he won thirty four races. Big races did elude him but was second in an Easter Cup, Peter Jackson Classic, Show Cup and was third in a Derby.

Other marvels under "the Baron's" care included Baroness Beauty (1972 Nelson Cup and prolific broodbitch), Lady Maserati ( Puppy Championship, Gold Collar), Baroness Belle (1978 Tasmanian Oaks), Forbes (4th in Benjamin John's Hobart Thousand), Baron Rover, Baron Good, Baron Bid, Baron Respect, Baron Belmont, Lady Legana, Morven Park, Miss Maserati, Jessie Mite and Ripple Harbour, Miss Zealon, Golden Sivanee, and Lady Ridgeside. The list seems endless.

His greatest single training performance came up in one night in 1963. He had six winners and a second from seven starters at White City, whilst winning the Tasmanian Puppy Championship at Hobart with Lady Maserati. Topping it off, Ripple Bay scored at Harold Park. One four occasions he won six races in a night, remembering it was ten dog fields until 1968. In one season he trained 93 winners, an unheard of figure for the time. And this is even more remarkable when ninety five percent of his winners were home bred.

He was a member of the LGRC and long time servant of the LGOTBA, serving two years as president. He was proudly made a Life Member of the latter for his significant contribution over many years.



*Viv with wife Janet and daughters Belinda and Melissa*

Whilst Viv Berresford was a legend of our sport, other aspects of a marvellous life must be mentioned. A qualified fitter and turner with the Government Railways, he spent the World War Two years as an RAAF Engineer, which included two years as Technical Instructor at the Test Pilot Training School at Laverton. Spending twenty five years as a Northern Midlands Councillor, including Warden, his achievements would fill a book. He was a JP, the 1993 Australia Day Citizen of the Year for Evandale and received greyhound racing's Outstanding Achievement Award in 1991. In 2000 he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his service to Local Government.

Viv expressed particular thanks to fellow trainers Bill Day and Reg Thomas for their advice especially with breeding matters, and stood out Arthur Morgan and Peter Wright as outstanding administrators. The fourteen time leading trainer (some ten in a row) was proud of Janet's training achievements after him and claimed that dogs responded better in general to women, the latter being more meticulous and having more patience.

Viv was quoted by the Saturday Evening Mercury in July 1974, "love your animals, and if they are good enough they will reward you with their racing performances."

***By Greg Fahey***