

# THE GEEBUNG POLO CLUB

## by BANJO PATTERSON

[One of Australia's most famous poets was Andrew Barton "Banjo" Patterson. He wrote many bush ballads, such as Clancy of the Overflow, The Man From Snowy River, and the most famous of them all, Waltzing Matilda. Some of his stuff is hilarious, and one of my favourites, which can be read with great dramatic flair at a campfire, is this one]

It was somewhere up the country, in a land of rock and scrub,  
That they formed an institution called the Geebung Polo Club.  
They were long and wiry natives from the rugged mountain side,  
And the horse was never saddled that the Geebungs couldn't ride;  
But their style of playing polo was irregular and rash--  
They had mighty little science, but a mighty lot of dash:  
And they played on mountain ponies that were muscular and strong,  
Though their coats were quite unpolished, and their manes and tails were long.  
And they used to train those ponies wheeling cattle in the scrub;  
They were demons, were the members of the Geebung Polo Club!

It was somewhere down the country, in a city's smoke and steam,  
That a polo club existed, called the "Cuff and Collar Team".  
As a social institution 'twas a marvellous success,  
For the members were distinguished by exclusiveness and dress.  
They had natty little ponies that were nice, and smooth, and sleek,  
For their cultivated owners only rode 'em once a week.  
So they started up the country in pursuit of sport and fame,  
For they meant to show the Geebungs how they ought to play the game;  
And they took their valets with them - just to give their boots a rub  
Ere they started operations on the Geebung Polo Club.

Now my readers can imagine how the contest ebbed and flowed,  
When the Geebung boys got going it was time to clear the road;  
And the game was so terrific that ere half the time was gone  
A spectators leg was broken - just from merely looking on!  
For they waddied one another till the plain was strewn with dead,  
While the score was kept so even that they neither got ahead.  
And the Cuff and Collar Captain, when he tumbled off to die  
Was the last surviving player - so the game was called a tie.  
Then the Captain of the Geebungs raised him slowly from the ground,  
Though his wounds were mostly mortal, yet he fiercely gazed around;  
There was no-one to oppose him - all the rest were in a trance,  
So he scrambled on his pony for his last expiring chancee,  
For he meant to make an effort to get victory for his side;  
So he struck at goal - and missed it - then he tumbled off and died.

By the old Campaspe River, where the breezes shake the grass,  
There's a row of little gravestones that the stockmen never pass,  
For they bear a rude inscription saying "Stranger, drop a tear,  
For the Cuff and Collar players and the Geebung boys lie here."  
And on misty moonlit evenings, while the dingoes howl around,  
You can see their shadows flitting down that phantom polo ground;  
You can hear the loud collisions as the flying players meet,  
And the rattle of the mallets, and the rush of ponies' feet,  
Till the terrified spectator rides like blazes to the pub-  
He's been haunted by the spectres of the Geebung Polo Club....

**CLANCY OF THE OVERFLOW**  
by  
**ANDREW BARTON ("BANJO") PATTERSON**

I had written him a letter which I had, for want of better  
Knowledge, sent to where I met down the Lachlan years ago;  
He was shearing when I knew him, so I sent the letter to him,  
Just on spec, addressed as follows, "Clancy, of the Overflow."

And an answer came directed in a writing unexpected  
(And I think the same was written with a thumb-nail dipped in tar);  
'Twas his shearing mate what wrote it, and verbatim I will quote it:  
"Clancy's gone to Queensland droving, and we don't know where he are."

\* \* \*

In my wild erratic fancy, visions come to me of Clancy  
Gone a-droving "down the Cooper" where the Western drovers go;  
As the stock are slowly stringing, Clancy rides behind them singing,  
For the drovers life has pleasures that the townsfolk never know.

And the bush has friends to meet him, and their kindly voices greet him  
In the murmur of the breezes and the river on its bars,  
And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,  
And at night the wondrous glory of the everlasting stars.

\* \* \*

I am sitting in my dingy little office, where a stingy  
Ray of sunlight struggles feebly down the between the houses tall,  
And the foetid air and gritty of the dusty, dirty city,  
Through the open window floating, spreads its foulness over all.

And in place of lowing cattle, I can hear the fiendish rattle  
Of the tramways and the buses making hurry down the street;  
And the language uninviting of the gutter children fighting  
Comes fitfully and faintly through the ceaseless tramp of feet.

And the hurrying people daunt me, and their pallid faces haunt me  
As they shoulder one another in their rush and nervous haste,  
With their eager eyes and greedy, and their stunted forms and weedy,  
For townsfolk have no time to grow, they have no time to waste.

And I somehow rather fancy that I'd like to change with Clancy,  
Like to take a turn at droving where the seasons come and go,  
While he faced the round eternal of the cash-book and the journal --  
But I doubt he'd suit the office, Clancy, of The Overflow.

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The Overflow is an area in Victoria where the mountain rivers overflow the plains. The Lachlan and the Cooper are rivers. Queensland is the only State in Oz worth going to (shutup McGregor!)

-- Thanks to Gordon Greaves, Cairns Australia

**THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER**  
by  
**ANDREW BARTON ("BANJO") PATTERSON**

There was movement at the station, for the word had passed around  
That the colt from old Regret had got away,  
And had joined the wild bush horses - he was worth a thousand pound,  
So all the cracks had gathered for the fray.  
All the tried and noted riders from the stations near and far  
Had mustered at the homestead overnight,  
For the bushmen love hard riding where the wild bush horses are,  
And the stock-horse snuffs the battle with delight.

There was Harrison, who made his pile when Pardon won the Cup,  
The old man with his hair as white as snow;  
But few could ride beside him when his blood was fairly up --  
He would go wherever horse and man could go.  
And Clancy of The Overflow came down to lend a hand,  
No better horseman ever held the reins;  
For never horse could throw him while the saddle-girths would stand --  
He learnt to ride while droving on the plains.

And one was there, a stripling on a small and weedy beast;  
He was something like a racehorse undersized,  
With a touch of Timor pony - three parts thoroughbred at least --  
And such as are by mountain horsemen prized.  
He was hard and tough and wiry - just the sort that won't say die --  
There was courage in his quick impatient tread;  
And he bore the badge of gameness in his bright and fiery eye,  
And the proud and lofty carriage of his head.

But still so slight and weedy, one would doubt his power to stay,  
And the old man said "That horse will never do  
For a long and tiring gallop - lad, you'd better step away,  
Those hills are far too rough for such as you."  
So he waited, sad and wistful - only Clancy stood his friend --  
"I think we ought to let him come," he said:  
"I warrant he'll be with us when he's wanted at the end,  
For both his horse and he are mountain bred.

"He hails from Snowy River, up by Kosciusko's side,  
Where the hills are twice as steep and twice as rough;  
Where a horse's hoofs strike firelight from the flint stones every stride,  
The man that holds his own is good enough.  
And the Snowy River riders on the mountains make their home,  
Where the river runs those giant hills between;  
I have seen full many horsemen since I first commenced to roam,  
But nowhere yet such horsemen have I seen."

So he went; they found the horses by the big mimosa clump,  
They raced away towards the mountain's brow,  
And the old man gave his orders, "Boys, go at them from the jump,  
No use to try for fancy riding now.  
And, Clancy, you must wheel them, try and wheel them to the right.  
Rise boldly, lad, and never fear the spills,  
For never yet was rider that could keep the mob in sight,  
If once they gain the shelter of those hills."

So Clancy rode to wheel them - he was racing on the wing  
Where the best and boldest riders take their place,  
And he raced his stock-horse past them, and he made the ranges ring  
With the stockwhip, as he met them face to face.  
Then they halted for a moment, while he swung the dreaded lash,  
But they saw the well-loved mountain full in view,  
And they charged beneath the stockwhip with a sharp and sudden dash,  
And off into the mountain scrub they flew.

Then fast the horsemen followed, where the gorges deep and black  
Resounded to the thunder of their tread,  
And the stockwhips woke the echoes, and they fiercely answered back  
From cliffs and crags that beetled overhead.  
And upward, ever upward, the wild horses held their way,  
Where mountain ash and kurrajong grew wide;  
And the old man muttered fiercely, "We may bid the mob good day,  
\*No\* man can hold them down the other side."

When they reached the mountain's summit, even Clancy took a pull --  
It well might make the boldest hold their breath;  
The wild hop scrub grew thickly, and the hidden ground was full  
Of wombat holes, and any slip was death.  
But the man from Snowy River let the pony have his head,  
And he swung his stockwhip round and gave a cheer,  
And he raced him down the mountain like a torrent down its bed,  
While the others stood and watched in very fear.

He sent the flint-stones flying, but the pony kept his feet,  
He cleared the fallen timber in his stride,  
And the man from Snowy River never shifted in his seat --  
It was grand to see that mountain horseman ride.  
Through the stringy barks and saplings, on the rough and broken ground,  
Down the hillside at a racing pace he went;  
And he never drew the bridle till he landed safe and sound  
At the bottom of that terrible descent.

He was right among the horses as they climbed the farther hill,  
And the watchers on the mountain, standing mute,  
Saw him ply the stockwhip fiercely; he was right among them still,  
As he raced across the clearing in pursuit.  
Then they lost him for a moment, where two mountain gullies met  
In the ranges - but a final glimpse reveals  
On a dim and distant hillside the wild horses racing yet,  
With the man from Snowy River on their heels.

And he ran them single-handed till their sides were white with foam;  
He followed like a bloodhound on their track,  
Till they halted, cowed and beaten; then he turned their heads for home,  
And alone and unassisted brought them back.  
But his hardy mountain pony he could scarcely raise a trot,  
He was blood from hip to shoulder from the spur;  
But his pluck was still undaunted, and his courage fiery hot,  
For never yet was mountain horse a cur.

And down by Kosciusko, where the pine-clad ridges raise  
Their torn and rugged battlements on high,  
Where the air is clear as crystal, and the white stars fairly blaze  
At midnight in the cold and frosty sky,  
And where around the Overflow the reed-beds sweep and sway  
To the breezes, and the rolling plains are wide,  
The Man from Snowy River is a household world today,  
And the stockmen tell the story of his ride.

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In fact "The Man from Snowy River is a household world today. And the MOVIE-MAKERS tell the story of his ride." So if you would like to see the movie of the poem, trot down to your video hire emporium, and get a copy of "The Man From Snowy River", a great film. Kosciusko - highest mountain in Oz at 2228 metres. Old Regret - a mare. The Cup - the Melbourne Cup, Oz's most important horse race. Mimosa, kurrajong, mountain ash, stringy bark - trees. Wombat - Oz marsupial, burrows in ground, adult about 1 metre long, weighs around 25 kg, built low to the ground, wrecks cars that hit them :-)

All right, read the poem to your kids, then follow it up the next week with the video. Does the movie stick to the poem? You be the judge!

-- Thanks to Gordon Greaves, Cairns Australia

## **THE LIGHTS OF COBB AND CO. by Henry Lawson**

[Arguably Australia's greatest poet was Henry Lawson, (1867-1922). More serious than Banjo Patterson, his words live on down the years. In America there was Wells Fargo; in Australia there was Cobb and Co, the famous coachline. Here is a poem by Henry Lawson. Read it the way he wrote it - with fire in the voice!]

Fire lighted; on the table a meal for sleepy men;  
A lantern in the stable; a jingle now and then;  
The mail-coach looming darkly by light of moon and star;  
The growl of sleepy voices; a candle in the bar;  
A stumble in the passage of folk with wits abroad;  
A swear-word from a bedroom--the shout of "All aboard!"  
"Tchk tchk! Git-up!" "Hold fast, there!" and down the range we go;  
Five hundred miles of scattered camps will watch for Cobb and Co.

Old coaching towns already decaying for their sins;  
Uncounted "Half-Way Houses" and scores of "Ten-Mile Inns";  
The riders from the stations by lonely granite peaks;  
The black-boy for the shepherds on sheep and cattle creeks;  
The roaring camps of Gulgong, and many a "Digger's Rest";  
The diggers on the Lachlan; the huts of Farthest West;  
Some twenty thousand exiles who sailed for weal or woe--  
The bravest hearts of twenty lands will wait for Cobb and Co.

The morning star has vanished, the frost and fog are gone,  
In one of those grand mornings which but on mountains dawn;  
A flask of friendly whisky--each others hopes we share--  
And throw our top-coats open to drink the mountain air.  
The roads are rare to travel, and life seems all complete;  
The grind of wheels on gravel, the trot of horses' feet,  
The trot, trot, trot and canter, as down the spur we go--  
The green sweeps to horizons blue that call for Cobb and Co.

We take a bright girl actress through western dumps and damps,  
To bear the home-world message, and sing for sinful camps,  
To stir our hearts and break them, wild hearts that hope and ache--  
(Ah! when she thinks again of these her own must nearly break!)  
Five miles this side the gold-field, a loud, triumphant shout:  
Five hundred cheering diggers have snatched the horses out:  
With "Auld LAng Syne" in chorus, through roaring camps they go  
That cheer for her, and cheer for Home, and cheer for Cobb and Co.

Three lamps above the ridges and gorges dark and deep,  
A flash on sandstone cuttings where sheer the sidlings sweep,  
A flash on shrouded wagons, on water ghastly white;  
Weird bush and scattered remnants of "rushes in the night";  
Across the swollen river a flash beyond the ford:  
Ride hard to warn the driver! he's drunk or mad, good Lord!  
But on the bank to westward a broad and cheerful glow--  
New camps extend across the plains new routes for Cobb and Co.

Swift scramble up the sidling where teams climb inch by inch;  
Pause, bird-like, on the summit--then breakneck down the pinch;  
By clear, ridge country rivers, and gaps where tracks run high,  
Where waits the lonely horseman, cut clear against the sky;  
Past haunted half-way houses--where convicts made the bricks--  
Scrub-yards and new bark shanties, we dash with five and six;  
Through stringy-bark and blue-gum, and box and pine we go--  
A hundred miles shall see tonight the lights of Cobb and Co!

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A slight change of names, and he \*could\* have been talking about Wells Fargo, couldn't he?

-- Thanks to Gordon Greaves, Cairns Australia

## MIDDLETON'S ROUSEABOUT by Henry Lawson

Tall and freckled and sandy,  
Face of a country lout;  
This was the picture of Andy,  
Middleton's Rouseabout.

Type of a coming nation,  
In the land of cattle and sheep;  
Worked on Middleton's station  
Pound a week and his keep.

On Middleton's wide dominions  
Plied the stockwhip and shears;  
Hadn't any opinions,  
Hadn't any "idears".

Swiftly the years went over,  
Liquor and drought prevailed;  
Middleton went as a drover  
After his station had failed.

Type of a careless nation,  
Men who are soon played out,  
Middleton was;--and his station  
Was bought by the Rouseabout.

Flourishing beard and sandy,  
Tall and solid and stout;  
This is the picture of Andy,  
Middleton's Rouseabout.

Now on his own dominions  
Works with his overseers;  
Hasn't any opinions,  
Hasn't any idears...

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Since much of Lawson's work was based directly on real people, and in those days using people's real names was acceptable, one wonders what either Middleton or Andy thought about the poem! A Rouseabout is an odd-job man, a gofer, a person who does all the grungy jobs around the station (ranch).

-- Thanks to Gordon Greaves, Cairns Australia

## The Drover's Dream...

One night while droving sheep, my companions lay asleep,  
There was not a star to 'luminare the sky;  
I was dreaming, I suppose, for my eyes were nearly closed,  
When a very strange procession passed me by.  
First there came a kangaroo, with his swag of blankets blue,  
A dingo ran beside him for a mate;  
They were travelling mighty fast, but they shouted as they passed,  
"We'll have to jog along, it's getting late!"

The pelican and the crane, they came in from off the plain,  
To amuse the company with a Highland fling;  
And the dear old bandicoot played the tune upon his flute,  
And the native bears all sat round in a ring.  
Then the possum and the crow sang a song of long ago,  
And the frill-necked lizard listened with a smile;  
And the emu standing near, with his claw behind his ear  
Said "The funniest thing I've heard for quite a while!"

Some frogs from out the swamp where the atmosphere is damp,  
Came bouncing in and sat upon some stones;  
They each unrolled their swags and produced from little bags,  
The violin, the banjo and the bones,  
The goanna and the snake and the adder wide awake  
With the alligator danced the "Soldiers Joy";  
In the spreading silky oak, then the jackass cracked a joke,  
And the magpie sang "The Wild Colonial Boy!"

Some brolgas darted out from the tea-trees all about,  
And performed a set of "Lancers" very well;  
Then the parrot green and blue gave the orchestra it's cue  
To strike up "The Old Log Cabin In The Dell!"  
I was dreaming I suppose, of these entertaining shows  
But it never crossed my mind I was asleep  
Till the boss beneath the cart woke me up with such a start  
Yelling "Dreamy, where the heck are all the sheep?"

-- Thanks to Gordon Greaves, Cairns Australia