

## News From Under the Southern Cross (Edition 68):

### Galloping Horses

12 April 2022

I had an exceptional experience. Invited to a farm on Sydney's outskirts, I had the opportunity to observe how racehorses are trained. There, I saw with my own eyes how the bonds between Japan and Australia extend beyond interactions between people to interactions between horses too.

#### 1. Warwick Farm

The farm I visited was the famous Warwick Farm, located in the western suburbs of Sydney. Since I took up my post as Ambassador of Japan in Australia, I have come to see that, not only does horse racing regularly take up many pages in the sports section of major newspapers, but also that horse riding is embedded in the Australian lifestyle.



Warwick Farm in Sydney's west

In Japan, horse racing is stereotypically associated with a flock of casual and weary gamblers, carrying a rolled-up daily tabloid full of sporting and racing information, and tucking a red pencil behind one ear. In contrast, in Australia, horse racing developed as a social occasion, as typically demonstrated by the famous Melbourne Cup. That is why I brought a morning suit with me from Japan in case I am invited to such a formal social event. I also wanted to see the place where racehorses are raised and traded. I was blessed with exactly these opportunities at Warwick Farm.

Warwick Farm's enormous grounds are two times the size of Tokyo Dome Stadium. On Sunday 3 April, a grand lunch was held for over 400 guests. In the two days that followed, 460 lovingly-raised yearlings were to be sold at auction.



The enormous racetrack in the enormous farm, two times the size of Tokyo Dome Stadium.

## 2. Connections with Japan

What graceful creatures horses are, particularly when seen up close! The tight, rippling muscles with no excess fat whatsoever, the perfectly manicured coat and beautiful, gentle gaze. I realised why a high quality racehorse can sell for AUD \$300,000-\$400,000, and in some cases even 1 million dollars.



To my delight, among the horses appearing for auction that day, about 20 of them were from Japan – specifically, Hokkaido’s ‘Northern Farm’. Actually, before coming to Australia to take up my position as Ambassador, an acquaintance had introduced me to this farm’s owner, Mr YOSHIDA Katsumi. Representatives from Northern Farm, who came all the way from Hokkaido were among the attendants at the occasion at Warwick Farm, and I had a very pleasant and interesting conversation with them.

According to an Australian industry representative, in the past the majority of racehorses in Australia were Australian-bred, but recently more and more are imported from the United States, Europe and Japan, among other countries. I was told that compared with Australian horses, Japanese-bred horses are a little smaller in size, but often attract attention because of their high quality. Even in a race the day before the lunch banquet, a Japanese-bred horse had a very successful run, winning first place.

### 3. Concerns

I heard that currently the biggest concern in the industry is how to handle protests from animal welfare activists. You do not hear about it much in Japan, but in Australia, activists express strong opposition on issues such as the use of the whip, keeping horses in small stables and racing them from a young age.



Although the circumstances are quite different, I recalled my days in Tokyo, as Director-General of the Economic Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I was involved in the whaling issue. I would receive persistent protests on the issue, with protesters saying, “Why would you kill a mammal as intelligent, majestic and cute as the whale?”

The saving grace is that I heard the horses from Japan were adjusting well to their new homes and weather in Australia and were growing up in an excellent environment in which they felt totally comfortable. I went to visit their stables, and saw that they were receiving the best of care. The sight of them galloping freely on the lush, green racetrack in morning dew was beautiful and gracious beyond words.

#### 4. A special guest

Some of you might be wondering why a Japanese Ambassador would be invited to an event like this. Since 1867, five generations of the Inglis family have been training racehorses, and it is the fifth generation – Arthur and Charlotte Inglis – who invited me on this occasion. Actually, Charlotte once lived and worked in Japan as part of the JET Programme.



Mr Arthur and Mrs Charlotte Inglis

Initially, it was me who invited the Inglises to my residence last year. My friends of many years, Mr Manuel Panagiotopoulos and his wife Suzanne introduced the couple to me. We all sat at the tempura counter at my residence and enjoyed Japanese food. This time, the couple kindly reciprocated by inviting me and my wife to their farm.



Top: With racing greats - Gai Waterhouse and Arthur Inglis

Bottom: With Mr Manuel Panagiotopoulos and wife Suzanne

At the aforementioned lunch at the farm, I met with many eminent people, including my acquaintance, Chair of the Australian Olympic Committee, Mr John Coates AC and his wife.

This can be said for personal relationships as well as in the world of diplomacy, but there are moments when one realises that by connecting the dots, lines are formed, eventually developing into a vast and dense network. It was with this thought that I departed that charming farm. I look forward to the day when I can meet those majestic horses again.

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