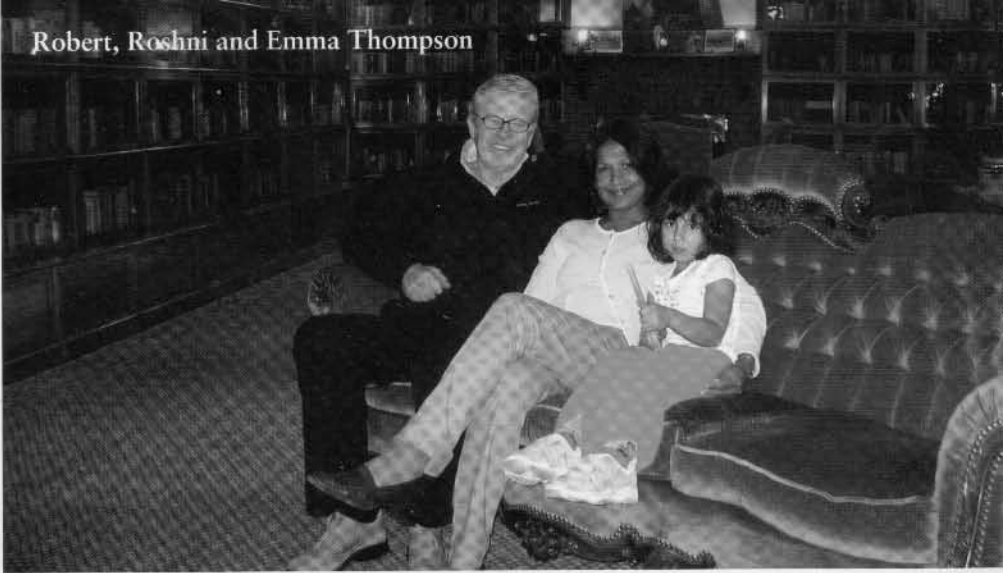


A new chapter
starts at

Mornmoot Stud





Later this year, Robert Thompson will host an official function to unveil a headstone which will truly recognise the great achievements of Century.



**Thoroughbred
Breeders**
VICTORIA INC

From the moment you turn into the driveway at Mornmoot Stud it feels as though you are taking a trip down memory lane. The beautiful tree lined driveway gives the feeling of a thoroughbred property which oozes history and everything that goes with it.

Not too many thoroughbred properties in Australia can boast the sort of history that has been generated by Mornmoot Stud. Located in Whittlesea Victoria, Mornmoot was previously owned by the Leighton Family for over three decades and lays claim to some, if not the, most important chapters in Victorian breeding history.

For those of you who are not familiar with the property, it was of course the home to champion stallion Century. Century was born in 1969 and in the seasons of 1972-1974 set the racing world alight with feats of excellence on the track with Roy Higgins in the saddle and Bart Cummings his trainer. Century won the Lightning Stakes, Newmarket Handicap, Ascot Vale Stakes and of course the race which can make a potential stallion, the VRC Sires Produce Stakes.

And make a stallion of him it did, Century became Champion sire of Australia with only two of his crops

racing, a feat that makes him one of the greatest stallions in Australian history. He was the sire of horses such as Euclase, Centaine, Centro, Valley of Georgia and of course the recent Victorian champion stallion Rubiron, who has carried on his legacy some 25 years after the halcyon days when Century was at stud.

It was after the season of 1978 that it became clear that Century was a serious stallion. He topped the Leading Sires table in that season with 27 individual

winners totaling 58 wins and prize money of \$621,093. That was \$50,000 more than his great Victorian rival Showdown, who topped the list in the previous season and finished third to Century in the 1979 season, with the champion racehorse and sire Vain a distant second.

It was an incredible year for Century who also topped the Two-Year-Old Sires Earnings list by the length of the Flemington straight, with Vain again second by a long way. His stakes winners



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in that season included Century Miss (Golden Slipper), Double Century (Queensland Derby & Sydney Cup), Ryder, Stage Hit and Valley of Georgia who collected an AJC Oaks and an Underwood Stakes. Just to reiterate his achievements in that year, he sired the winner of the Golden Slipper, AJC Oaks, Queensland Derby and Sydney Cup.

In the season of 1987, some 10 years after he burst onto the breeding scene, Century finished third on the sires table thanks to the Cox Plate-winning performance of the great Rubiton.

In that year he had 50 individual winners amassing 118 race wins, and was beaten only by the super sires Zamazaan and Bletchingly, with Sir Tristram a close fourth.

Century never had the luxury of serving royally bred mares but managed to do what only the great stallions can do and that is upgrade any mare lucky enough to grace the grounds of Mornmoot. One of the great relationships he forged was with the broodmare Oh Calcutta, who visited the champ on 11 occasions, with progeny including; Mornmoot Lady, Indian Raj and Stage Hit.

Other stallions which have pounded the turf at Mornmoot include Pax In Bello, Lord Seymour, Toy Pindarri and Cossack Prince.

Fast forward to 2004 and enter Robert and Roshni Thompson. The Thompson's purchased the property from David Leighton, the son of the late Stanley Leighton, and saw an opportunity to once again bring this sleeping giant back to some of the glory days of the 70s and 80s.

Moving from their NSW-based breeding operation, the Thompsons had been traveling to Victoria's Spring Racing Carnival for over a decade with the view of settling in the southern state once their children were at the right age.

Robert Thompson was a pioneer in the international grain trade for years, dealing mostly barley to Asia and it was while working on an international marketing project that he met his now wife Roshni, a solicitor. After a period of courtship, Robert wore Roshni down and the rest is history. They now have two beautiful daughters, Victoria aged eight and Emma aged four, with Victoria attending the local school in Whittlesea.

Their reasons for the move to Victoria were simple; it was a better place for their daughters to grow up; the Super VOBIS scheme, which Robert credits as the best of its kind by far; and the unique opportunity to purchase the historical property of Mornmoot Stud and forge a new chapter in Victorian breeding history. Given Robert's history in real estate it was a chance that he wasn't going to let slip easily.

The property had been let slide somewhat in its later years of proprietorship by the previous owners so the work needed to be undertaken was no small task. But Robert and Roshni are in no great hurry and have taken a bit-by-bit approach to resurrecting the old girl back to her former glory.

One of the greatest disappointments for the Thompsons since arriving at Mornmoot was the burial site for the late Century. The old champ is buried on the grounds of the property without any acknowledgment of a headstone or the like. That was simply not satisfactory for Robert who later this year will host an official function for the sole purpose of unveiling a headstone that truly recognises his achievements as a stallion, a sentiment that is fully supported by Thoroughbred Breeders Victoria. Given Robert is a born and bred New South Welshman it is a wonderful gesture for his family to finally acknowledge the late great champion.

So what does the future hold for Mornmoot Stud? Well if you have ever met Robert you would know that he is not one to rest on past glories and has every intention of forging a new era for this once great stud. Robert has a keen marketing mind, so the chance to stand stallions at Mornmoot seemed a terrific opportunity given the profile the stud already had established. The 2005 line up of stallions at Mornmoot offers all breeders a unique opportunity to access some exciting proven bloodlines, but most importantly at affordable prices.

Heading the line-up is the newly acquired stallion Fomalhaut, which the Thompsons purchased themselves. His name is derived from the northern hemisphere autumn sky as a "wonderful first magnitude star" a point that Mornmoot hopes will rain true for this equine equivalent.

Fomalhaut is a stakes performed half-brother to leading sires Machiavellian and Exit To Nowhere and from the family of Northern Dancer and Danehill. He is by the champion miler and leading sire Spinning World from one of the world's great broodmares Coup De Folie.

Fomalhaut's dam Coup De Folie is quite the super mum, with descendants including the 2004 Arc de Triomphe winner Bago, who was rated the leading three-year-old in Europe last year, Coup de Genie a half-brother to Fomalhaut, who was Champion Two-Year-Old of France and of course Machiavellian a half-brother to Fomalhaut and another to have the title of Champion Two-Year-Old of France. Another of his half-brothers, Exit To Nowhere is the sire of more than 200 winners including the French Group 1 winner Shaka.

The grand dam of Fomalhaut, Raise The Standard, also produced the sire of the superstar galloper Silent Witness in El Moxie. Fomalhaut possessed abundant speed, which saw him stakes placed on numerous occasions, and that should carry him well with mares of all types. Based on his racing traits and comments made by his northern hemisphere connections he looks to be the ideal stallion to take advantage of the Super VOBIS prize money on offer in Victoria.

Being the pioneer that Robert is, he also offers a unique deal for any broodmare owners booking a service to Fomalhaut.

In an era of booking fees and inflated agistment prices Fomalhaut's service fee of \$7,700 (inc. GST) includes free agistment and a veterinary contract, an offer that should appeal to many.

Whilst many studs demand booking fees up-front to safeguard themselves against those who don't turn up, Robert believes that it is important to have an element of transparency when selling stallion semen and will not be seeking booking fees to his stallions in 2005. He believes this approach will nut out the tyre kickers from the genuine and valued clients that are already streaming through the gates of Mornmoot.

Another of the 2005 residents at Mornmoot this season is the son of Machiavellian, Hobb Alwahtan. The dam of Hobb Alwahtan, Colorado Dancer is a three-quarter sister to Northern Aspen, Hamas, Fort Wood and Bianconi, a half-sister to Timber Country and is the dam of the departed world champion galloper Dubai Millennium.

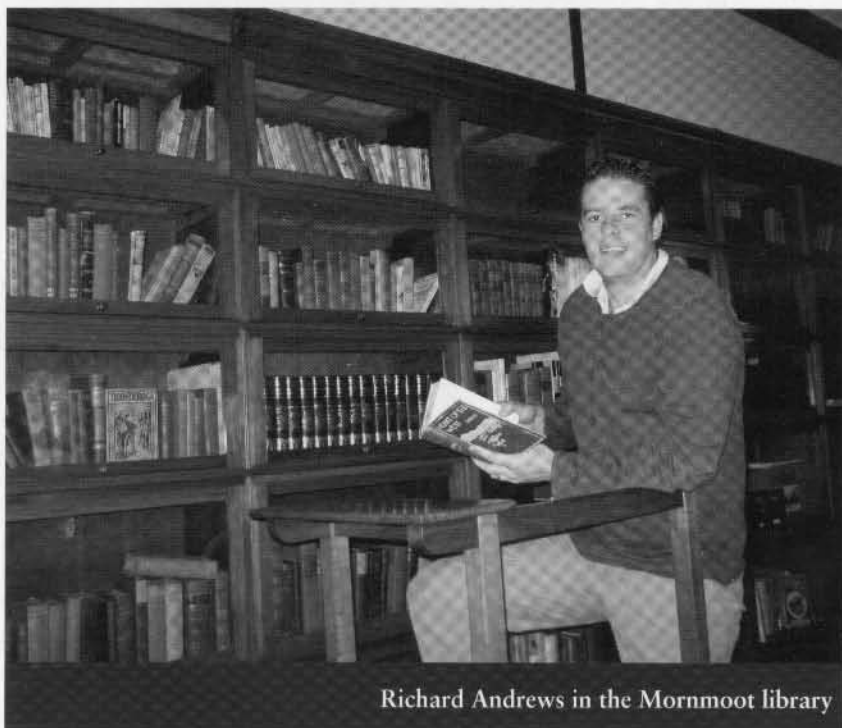
Hobb Alwahtan is owned by Sheik Khalifa, which is a coup for the stud as they have now forged a close relationship with this racing and breeding magnate. Hobb Alwahtan will stand at \$3,300, which represents excellent value given his royal pedigree.

Rounding out the 2005 roster is the proven speed sire Happy Giggle. Previously located at Lakewood Stud in South Australia, Happy Giggle is another who will allow broodmare owners to take advantage of Super VOBIS riches as he himself was an outstanding two-

year-old, winning the Maribyrnong Trial Stakes, the Maribyrnong Plate as well as the Merson Cooper Stakes and the Blue Diamond Prelude. Like his father, Happy Giggle throws precocious types that will be ready to chase two-year-old riches. His service fee has been set at \$4,400.

The history of the property isn't just confined to the stallions that have been through the property over the years as I found out when Robert took me to the famous Mornmoot library. Inherited with the sale of the property, the Mornmoot library is truly a hidden jewel in this great state. Consisting of over 7000 books housed in the most beautiful bookshelves, 350 individual cases made from Tasmanian Blackwood to be exact, it is something that can't be experienced anywhere else. With fireplaces at both ends of the library and antique furniture throughout, any visitor could be excused for losing themselves amongst the shelves of history for hours. There are race results and historical breeding information dating back to the 1860s and the sort of smell that is only found in the world's oldest libraries. A truly unforgettable experience.

With the breeding season almost upon us, I have no doubt that all who choose to make Mornmoot the place for their broodmare will experience a refreshing approach to modern day breeding in an environment that is truly a place to remember. 🐎



Richard Andrews in the Mornmoot library