

18 April 2005

Last Bullocky

Meet a bullocky.

FIONA BLACKWOOD: Sandy Richards learnt how to [rein in](#) a [bullock team](#) when he was just a boy.

The [tricks of the trade](#) and the tools used to [yoke](#) a team together have changed little over the years.

There's also a [timelessness](#) to the language used to communicate with these [massive beasts](#).

FIONA BLACKWOOD: What are you saying to them?

SANDY RICHARDS: Pull back.

They know better than doing that so you talk to them like people.

"Walk back" or whatever.

To start 'em, "Gee" or "Come hither", "Gee" or "Come here", whichever you like to call it.

FIONA BLACKWOOD: What are some of the other commands you use?

SANDY RICHARDS: I better not tell you some of them.

FIONA BLACKWOOD: Do you swear much?

SANDY RICHARDS: Not much, no -- only when they do the wrong thing, I swear at 'em.

FIONA BLACKWOOD: Do you need a whip to [keep them in line](#)?

SANDY RICHARDS: Not really, it's just natural to carry a whip.

I think it's just a bullock driver's privilege to have something like that.

FIONA BLACKWOOD: Sandy Richards and his brother Rusty learnt the ways of a [bullocky](#) from their father, George, who worked teams around the North-East of Tasmania during the late 1800s.

SANDY RICHARDS: Nearly everyone had a team then, a bit like tractors and dozers now -- there's contractors about.

A bloke at Scottsdale, I think, he had 100 bullocks.

I don't know how many was around here -- but a lot of teams.

The old man had a couple of teams at New England sawmill up here.

FIONA BLACKWOOD: In those days a bullock team was the [backbone](#) behind [forestry](#) and farming.

RUSTY RICHARDS, BULLOCKY: They've made a lot of living out of them, people have over the years.

Logging, and one thing or another, clearing farms and that.

See they cleared all the farms with them years ago.

FIONA BLACKWOOD: This farm nestled in front of the Blue Tier was cleared by Rusty and Sandy Richards' father and the brute force of a bullock team.

The pair and their 10 brothers and sisters grew up here.

SANDY RICHARDS: SANDY: Fairly tough, but it was good for you.

RUSTY RICHARDS: You had to earn it, them times -- you didn't get it without earning it.

FIONA BLACKWOOD: It's perhaps this tough upbringing as well as a strong connection to the past, which [led](#) the brothers to revive the tradition of the bullock team.

story notes

rein in

To **rein in** is to control something, or make it go more slowly.

Rein can also be a noun. A rein is a long thin piece of material, usually leather, used to control a horse.



bullock team

A **bullock** is a bull that has been castrated.



And a **bullock team** is a group of bullocks tied together to pull heavy loads.



tricks of the trade

The **tricks of the trade** are the ways of doing things in a particular job or trade.

yoke

To **yoke** a team of bullocks together is to connect them so that they can share the work of pulling something. Here, **yoke** is used as a verb.



But note that the wooden bar used to connect the bullocks together is also called a **yoke**. So **yoke** can also be a noun.



timelessness

Timelessness is the state of not changing over many years

massive beasts

very large animals

keep them in line

To **keep someone or something in line** is to control them and make sure they behave properly.

Example: It was hard work **keeping the class in line**.

bullocky

A **bullocky** is a person who works with bullocks.



backbone

Here, **backbone** is used to mean the most important part of something. It's a thing that provides support for everything else.

Of course, **backbone** is also another name for the spine of an animal or human.

forestry

Forestry means the cutting down of trees for their wood.

led

Here, **led** is the past tense of the irregular verb **lead**.

more information: [lead](#)
