

The 'live and energetic' Herb Hill of Richmond

Cathy McHardy May 2017

Under the heading 'CHALLENGE' the following advertisement appeared in the Windsor and Richmond Gazette of 20 May 1893¹:

I JAMES HUNT, do hereby Challenge HERBERT HILL to Make One Dozen Horse Shoes, quickest and best. Or for the best-shod horse in the quickest time, for £1 or £5. Man and money at George Cobcroft's Hotel, Windsor street, Richmond.
JAMES HUNT,
May 17, 1893. Richmond

Never afraid of a dare, the 'live and energetic' Richmond farrier Herbert Roland Hill presented an alternative challenge the following week²:

Challenge.

I THE undersigned, in reply to a Challenge issued against me in last week's GAZETTE, by JAMES HUNT, am prepared to accept that Challenge to Shoe One Horse against him, quickest and best, or the Best Day's Work at Shoeing for the sum of Not Less than £10, providing that the said James Hunt will act like a sensible man and come to any reasonable terms.

I also wish to state that if he is not satisfied with me beating him fairly at the Hawkesbury Exhibition, I am prepared to show the same set of shoes against his, at any other Exhibition in the colony. Man and money at my shop at any time. Stuff up, or shut up.
(Signed) H. R. HILL.
Richmond, May 23rd.

Hill had not only accepted Hunt's challenge but upped the stakes to not less than £10...man and money at my shop at any time'. As nothing more appeared in the newspaper regarding the matter it may be presumed that Hill's counter challenge was enough deterrent.

Sixth child of Joseph and Sarah, Hill was born in Windsor in 1869³. In 1891, after serving his apprenticeship with Walter Dillow of George Street Windsor, the ambitious young blacksmith purchased the establishment of Mr R Graham on the corner of East Market Street and March Street Richmond, opposite the railway gates⁴.

Recognising the value of frequent and eye-catching advertising, he commenced some of his advertisements with the words 'DON'T READ THIS!' instantly drawing the reader in to decipher what it was all about⁵.

He was also a master of name-dropping, often reporting that he had satisfied orders for notable citizens of the district including Phillip Charley of Belmont: 'Mr Herb Hill, of March-street, has turned out a couple of traps, the property of Mr Phillip Charley, which, judging by appearances, must prove eminently satisfactory to that gentleman'⁶.

In June 1893, Hill fitted shoes to 'one of the best bullocks' in the team owned by Mr Wilson of Kurrajong. The Gazette reported on this novel idea as being probably the first [bullock] that has ever been shod here. By all accounts a difficult operation and Herb was knocked down once or twice in the process⁷. Known as a bit of a dare

devil, Hill also had a liking for riding a horse 'bare-back', however in March 1896 he was thrown from his mount and sustained a fractured shoulder⁸.

By September 1894 he was able to expand his business to include coachbuilding, adding two extra staff to his team⁹. Over the following two years he erected an additional forge to his premises¹⁰, took over the adjacent shops along the March Street frontage¹¹ and constructed additions to the rear¹². In 1898 he advertised the services of a first-class coach painter from Sydney had been obtained to take charge of the painting branch of the business¹³.

Herb Hill was also an active member of the community, playing football for Windsor in the early 1890s¹⁴ and was a member of the Richmond Fire Brigade¹⁵. He was also awarded the rank of Sergeant Farrier in the Hawkesbury Squadron of Lancers, a local volunteer military corps. In his capacity as Sergeant of the corps he had purchased for himself a fine chestnut horse from Mr W Davis of Kurrajong for £20¹⁶.

Moving with the innovations of the times, Hill introduced the fitting of solid rubber tyres and ball and roller-bearing axles to either existing or newly constructed vehicles. Time payment was available to purchasers and he was known for his 'Liberal and easy terms' which may have contributed to his financial problems in later years¹⁷.

It is difficult to imagine how he had the time, but between 1907 to 1918 Hill's other business interests included winning the tender for the delivery of mail to various parts of the district¹⁸. In 1923 he opened a general store in the adjacent premises in March Street, formerly occupied by Mr Samuel Orchard's Railway Stores¹⁹.

Diagnosed with the debilitating kidney disorder, Bright's Disease in 1923²⁰, Hill's health began to fail and over the next four years he became increasingly unable to work at his usual frenetic pace. Bankruptcy proceedings were commenced against him in March 1927, with the sale of the premises and stock-n-trade, plant and fittings of the general store in March Street being submitted to auction as a going concern²¹.

Sadly, Herb Hill died at the age of 58 years in May²² of 1927 leaving his wife of thirty-six years, Martha Mahon whom he had married at Parramatta in 1891²³ and a family of six adult children. He was buried in St Peter's Anglican Cemetery, Richmond²⁴.

The process of sequestration which was commenced before Hill's death continued to take its course. The value of the household furniture had been assessed at £20, however, rather than being disposed of by public auction, the court allowed his widow Martha to buy back the household furniture and fittings for the sum of £15. It was judged that assessed sum would not be realised should the items be presented at auction as the citizens of Richmond would not wish to bid due to the respect they held for her late husband²⁵.

References:

1. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 20 May 1893 p 9.
2. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 27 May 1893 p 9.
3. NSW Index to BDMs – Birth of Herbert R Hill Windsor 19587/1869.
4. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 17 Dec 1892 p 9.
5. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 10 Sept 1898 p 2.
6. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 8 Feb 1896 p 12.
7. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 17 June 1893 p 3.
8. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 8 Feb 1896 p 4.
9. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 6 Oct 1894 p 4.
10. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 21 Dec 1895 p 4.
11. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 7 Dec 1895 p 4.
12. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 8 Feb 1896 p 12.
13. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 6 Aug 1898 p 12.
14. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 27 Jun 1891 p 4.
15. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 8 July 1893 p 10.
16. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 29 Dec 1900 p 3.
17. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 12 Oct 1907 p 2.
18. See *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, 1907-1918.
19. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 20 May 1927 p 3.
20. Death Certificate Herbert Roland Hill Richmond 10756/1927.
21. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 25 March 1927 p 4.
22. Death Certificate Herbert Roland Hill Richmond 10756/1927.
23. NSW Index to BDMs – Marriage of Herbert Roland Hill and Martha Mahon Parramatta 6508/1891.
24. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 20 May 1927 p 3.
25. SANSW: NRS 13655 [10/24280] Bankruptcy File Herbert Roland Hill Storekeeper Richmond 26324 15/03/1927.

Hello! Here We Are Again!

H R HILL

GENERAL STOREKEEPER AND PRODUCE MERCHANT.

HAS got large fresh supplies of best brands of Groceries, etc., etc., in
for Christmas and New Year's trade.

If you like a square deal, fresh goods, best quality and reduced prices

PATRONISE HIM

Prime Bacon, Fresh utter and Cheese Daily. Agricultural Seeds a
Speciality. All varieties on hand in bulk or packet.

Tinware, Ironmongery, and Crockery all greatly reduced. And ALWAYS
have the best chaff at lowest price delivered in bulk lots anywhere.

PRIME WHEAT, OATS, MAIZE, BRAN, POLLARD, &c., ALL DOWN.

**All Orders promptly attended to and Delivered to any part
of District.**

March Street, RICHMOND—Opposite Railway Gates
PHONE 74.

Don't Read This !

Electors, and people of the Hawkesbury,
your old friend, **HERB. HILL,**

The live and energetic **COACH BUILDER**, of **RICHMOND**, wishes heartily to thank you for the liberal support you have given him during the last six years, and now wants to notify that he has added two more first-class tradesmen to his competent staff of men, and is prepared to build anything from a wheelbarrow to a carriage, or make anything with iron, from a needle to an anchor. Just call and state what style or class of work you would like, and I will guarantee to execute same with skill and despatch. It matters not who **WASTES THEIR POOR BRAINS ON ANY DESIGN**, we are prepared to improve on it, as we have already done. The class of work being turned out of my establishment at present is far superior, in cheapness and durability, to anything yet done in the district, and I claim the right to say that I have the most complete and best staff of men in the Hawkesbury. I do not use other builders' names, and have achieved in months what it took others years to do, and while they are grumbling at our success we are working.

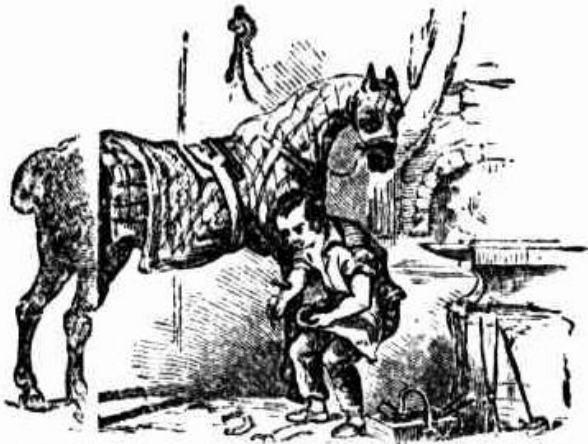
All work done on liberal and easy terms. Patronise your fellow countryman, a Hawkesbury native.

AND A MAN.

H. R. HILL,

**Coach Builder, Horse-shoer, General
Blacksmith, Wheelwright, &c.,
MARCH-STREET, RICHMOND.**

(Opposite Railway Gates.)



A Prosperous 1901 to All.

H. R. HILL,

Coachbuilder, Wheelwright, Horseshoer, and
General Blacksmith,

March-Street, **Richmond,**

A GAIN takes the opportunity of thanking his many customers for their liberal support during the year past, and hopes by civility, good workmanship and strict attention to business to merit a continuance of their support.

The work turned out from his establishment is all guaranteed, and a trial will satisfy the hardest to please.

While I Live I Grow !