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## From the regions - another national museum?

In addition to the Australia-wide activities of the National Museum of Australia in Canberra, our country boasts a number of other museums with national objectives. They include the National Dinosaur Museum, the National Wool Museum, the National Portrait Gallery – and then there is the Australian Racing Museum and Hall of Fame (ARM).

The ARM is located in the vibrant heart of Melbourne at Federation Square, which has become a destination in its own right for visitors to Melbourne. This central location has contributed to the Museum's increasing profile and growing popularity.

The Museum celebrates the success and history of thoroughbred racing, its many heroes, characters and personalities, and contextualises the industry's broader role within Australian cultural and sporting heritage. It simultaneously presents a picture of contemporary practices, and continues to research, discover, communicate, and care for aspects of our heritage.

Throughout its history, perhaps more than any other nation in the world, Australia has maintained a strong and vibrant relationship with thoroughbred racing. Within twenty years of the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, racing was being conducted in Sydney with the blessing of Governor Lachlan Macquarie and from the early 1800s it was patronised by many in the colony. It has also captured the imagination of Australian poets such as Banjo Paterson (an inductee in the Australian Racing Hall of Fame) and Adam Lindsay Gordon, who was a trainer and jumps jockey as well as a poet.

By far the most popular exhibit at the Museum is the Carbine animation. Winner of the 1890 Melbourne Cup, Carbine has had a lasting and significant influence on thoroughbred bloodlines in Australia and England. The skeleton comes to life through an animation overlay which explores the animal's circulatory system, its respiratory system and the dynamics of its legs.

The sounds of horses pounding down the track resonate throughout the Museum, in combination with shouts of spectators cheering their favourites on, Fashions on the Field competitions being judged, and the familiar voices of Bill Collins and Bert Bryant as they call the races. All these sights and sounds evoke the hustle and bustle of the track.

Some of the many wonderful objects on display are Bart Cummings' eleven Melbourne Cup Trainers' Trophies,

gorgeous hats by Peter Jago, Tommy Woodcock's passport issued in 1931 for the ill-fated trip to America with Phar Lap, paintings of magnificent steeds by Frederick Woodhouse, Australia's earliest moving film image which was taken at the Melbourne Cup in 1896, jockey colours belonging to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and those of John Wren. Racing stories are nothing if not colourful, and diverse.

Reflecting its status as a national museum, the collection explores racing from all over, including Onslow, Ceduna, Kalgoorlie, and Charleville to Birdsville, as well as all the capital cities. Unlike most other racing nations, in Australia traces of thoroughbred racing can be found in almost every town and city. In Victoria alone over seven hundred courses once operated throughout the state, although sadly the only evidence remaining today for some is a suburban street named, rather oddly, Racecourse Road.

As keepers of the flame of thoroughbred racing heritage, the Australian Racing Museum and Hall of Fame appreciates its responsibilities and obligations to a nation of horse lovers and racing fanatics. Even if you don't yet count yourself amongst them, a trip to Federation Square might help you understand these folk, and how racing is a key part of the Australian identity. After all, what other country would have a public holiday for a horse race?

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