



“WADDA YA MEAN YOU’VE NEVER DONE A LANDING BEFORE?” PHIL AND MAX ON A CROSS-COUNTRY EVENT.

Jumping at the opportunity

Mandy Thane talks to Phillip Pollen

YOU PROBABLY KNOW mild-mannered Phil if you frequent Eureka Pizzeria in the evenings. What you probably don’t know is that he is a fearless horse trainer by day.

Phillip Pollen was born in the Lake District in England twenty-eight years ago. When he was twelve his sister got a pony for Christmas. Riding his new bicycle behind her he wondered why this had happened. “The upkeep of a horse is so expensive. I have always been a bit of a worry-head”, says Phil, waving his hands around. “I didn’t have any interest in horses at the time but eventually I did get on that trotting pony which both annoyed and intrigued me.

“I moved to Manchester to attend university — to study primary school

teaching but too much partying and involvement in the ‘Eventing’ squad caused me to drop out.”

Eventing (also known as horse trials) is an equestrian event where a single horse and rider combination compete against other combinations across the three disciplines of dressage, cross-country, and show jumping.

Phil has a natural affiliation with horses: “I have no fear but have immense respect for them”. After various stints at working in boring jobs he had enough money to travel. “I decided on Australia because my brother and other relatives were here.”

Those relatives happened to be Conrad and Carol Kindrachuk. Phil thought he might spend two weeks with them in Araluen — being the hippie organic guy. He started really

loving Braidwood and decided to stay on. He got some track work at the local racecourse where he enjoyed the experience and learned a lot.

“I met a Danish girl who introduced me to ‘How High’ — a horse stud and equestrian property near Harolds Cross. I moved there and loved working with the horses. I had a one-year working visa and was really keen to stay on in Braidwood.”

Luckily for him, living in regional NSW gave him the opportunity of staying longer as a Woofer*. From his hospitality management background in England he was able to gain permanent employment at Eureka Pizzeria that is favourable in his application for permanent residency. Phil has now lived here four years.

Phil was becoming more and more involved in equine activities (including riding for the vet). At How High, a particularly crazy and difficult thoroughbred gelding called Max was destined for Mogo Zoo. “I decided to buy him and train him.”

Max (Highland Lad is his show name) and Phil have developed a good working partnership. Max was six years old when they met. Now ten, they have competed in many Events. “We came 6th at Two Star Level in Sydney last year – I was so happy with that result because that level is only one below the most advanced category.

“Max loves to gallop so cross country is his favourite — he is very bold — but he shines at show jumping. The dressage — well, he’s not so fussed on that but I love grooming him. Plaiting is my forte, and at Two Star Level, I get to wear the top hat and all the regalia — this signifies how far we have come together.

“Many people ask me if we are close and does he follow me around and stuff — the answer is no. It’s not like those horsey relationships you see in ‘Pharlap’ and ‘War Horse’ but he loves to work and we work well together, we trust each other.”

Phil’s dream is to ride in the Olympics for Australia one day. He acknowledges that he could not have got this far in his sport back in Britain where it is all a bit snobby and posh. “I want to give back to Australia because this country has allowed me to pursue my dream — it just wouldn’t have happened for me back in England, it’s more affordable and viable here.”

Phil’s next big competition is in Adelaide at the end of the year.

*WWOOFer: World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms visiting workers.

BRONWYN’S GARDEN IN



WINTER

Bronwyn Richards gives us her seasonal garden tips

WINTERTIME IS A QUIET time in the garden, which is always good. Everybody’s garlic should be in and growing well so, one of the things to be doing over winter is monitoring your garlic, seeing if it needs weeding or mulching, whatever you might want to do.

It’s all those clean up tasks over winter. Time to prune the fruit trees, things like that. The apple trees could all be pruned. Some of them are already starting to bud so you want to have that pruning done.

You don’t have to stop plantings. I’m currently planting brassicas, cabbages, cauliflowers and broccoli. I’m planting them under cover, because its quite cool at the moment and I’m mulching to heat the soil up a little bit, but they’ll all be ready for Spring, which will be nice.

It’s really hard to get seeds to grow in the cold soil at the moment, so if you want to be starting to raise some seeds you could be doing that with a little hot tray. You can buy heated pads for seedlings or put them near your fire to keep them warm and get them going. I’m planting seedlings at the moment. It’s much easier than having to try to raise the seed.

In July you can start planting peas, through into August, particularly climbing peas. It’s too early for what we would call summer vegetables, or other climates might call spring vegetables, but it’s too early for all of

that. But you want to be starting to plan what you’re going to be planting for Spring and Summer.

You need to be thinking about where they’re going to go, what that soil might need, what you might need to add, what you need to grow a seed and when to start that. So its the time of the year for a bit of planning and preparation — a clear up around the garden, monitoring things and putting things under cover if you are going to plant out in the open at this time.

We’re still harvesting too. I’m harvesting broccoli that’s been under cover. What happens in the hard frosts here is that the broccoli heads and particularly the cauliflower heads, get frost affected. So, at the beginning, in April into May you can grow without covering but as soon as those heads start to form, you need to cover them so that they stay strong and healthy and don’t get frost affected.

We’re harvesting broccoli that’s been under cover. There are some cabbages that are ready. There are still salad greens very happily growing away and there are lettuces that are quite happy. We’re also still harvesting potatoes from the ground — they’re just sitting there. Any other root crops that are still growing are just sitting there and are all harvestable. Carrots store best in the ground in this climate so it’s a good place to keep them. We’re still harvesting and still eating from the garden.

To make a winter cover for your garden, if you’ve got shadecloth you can use that. Depending on the type of

shadecloth, it doesn’t let a lot of sun through but you can use it, it’s a good frost protection. At Braidwood Rural they’re selling Thermashield which is a spun plastic that’s woven, so its porous. I like the porous covers because they enable air circulation and water to reach the plants but also provide frost protection.

With Thermashield you can just throw it over your garden bed without doing anything. You don’t need to hold it up off your plants. It will do better if it’s a bit above the plants but it won’t hurt if it is resting on the plants.

To make it a bit better, you can do simple things with a bit of steel rod. Dig a 300mm piece of steel rod into the ground on each end of your garden bed. Have a metre and a half piece of polypipe that you stick onto the steel rod and you can throw your mesh across that. You can use plastic. Whatever you’re using, throw it across and secure it down. It’s a very, very simple way of doing it.

To get your bed prepared, it’s the usual things, compost, manure and whatever else the soil might need but that depends on your soil type. Basically you need a good compost and a good manure that’s not hot. A hot manure is one that’s fresh so you want an aged manure and that can be sheep, horse or cow etc.

And can you put in an apology? In the Autumn BWD we talked about ‘green’ manures but it was printed as ‘grey’ manures. Otherwise, people will be wondering how they can get hold of grey manure!

