



Mid Week Moments #59

Wednesday 12 May 2010

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Welcome to your Midweek Moments. In this issue we profile Blueberries tutor Deborah Louie and in our Who Wants to be a Milliner? column, we take a historic look at the great Aussie Akubra.

### Who wants to be a Milliner?

#### **The Secret Life of Hats, Episode 9 – The Akubra**

Okay, technically Akubra isn't an actual type of hat, but the name of the company that manufactures a whole range of wide-brimmed hats designed for the harsh climate of rural Australia. But the name has become so synonymous with the traditional headwear of Aussie farmers, horsemen and stockmen and women that it can be treated as a specific kind of hat in its own right, at least for the purposes of this column.

Some famous Aussie Akubra wearers...



*Rachel Ward  
in Rain Shadow*



*Hugh Jackman (with Nic)  
in Australia*



*Tom Burlinson in The Man  
From Snowy River*

The Akubra story dates back to 1870 when newly-arrived British immigrant Benjamin Dunkerley set up a hat-making business in Hobart. The ace up Dunkerley's sleeve was the machine he had invented that removed the hair tip from rabbit fur, leaving the softer and more luscious under-fur available for use in the manufacture of hats. No other milliner was able to do this, except by hand, which was a painstaking and time-consuming process. Dunkerley's business quickly proved successful and he expanded it after relocating to Sydney. It was in Sydney that Dunkerley took on experienced hat-maker Stephen Keir, who later became his son-in-law after marrying Dunkerley's daughter Ada. The company was known at the time as Dunkerley hat Mills Ltd, but adopted the trade name 'Akubra' (an Aboriginal word for head covering) in 1912.

After Dunkerley's death in 1925, Stephen Keir took over the company until his retirement in the early 1950s. Twenty years later the business transferred to even larger premises in Kempsey, northern New South Wales, where it remains to this day.

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Akubra manufactured the slouch hats of the Australian Army for both the first and second world wars and, today its various styles of wide-brimmed hats are almost universally regarded as Australian icons. They can be spotted in any movie or TV show set in the Australian bush and have appeared on the heads of some of Australia's best known actors.

## Blueberries Bus Trip to the Sydney Craft and Quilt Fair

Blueberries has organised a Bus to take you to the Sydney Craft and Quilt Fair!



**Dates:** Wednesday 16 June or Sunday 20 June 2010

**Departure Times:**

7:45am - Location 1, Blueberries, 4C Amy Close Wyong and  
8:15am - Location 2, Tourist Information Centre Mt Penang  
Parklands The Avenue, Kariong

**Arrival Time:**

9:45am at Sydney Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour

**Cost:** \$38, which includes return bus fee and entry into fair. A deposit of \$20 (non-refundable) is required for bookings with the balance due no later than 31 May 2010.

The bus will depart Darling Harbour at 4pm and arrive back at Location 2 by 5:30pm and Location 1 by 6pm.

To book online now click [here](#).

For more information regarding the Sydney Craft and Quilt Fair click [here](#).

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### Tutor Profile on Deborah Louie



**How long have you been quilting and what got you started?**

I've been quilting for 20 years. I've always been a sewer and was in the textiles and printing industries for years. Then, after the birth of my first child, I was lonely and in a new neighbourhood, so I went along to the local patchwork shop. I haven't looked back since.

**How long have you been teaching and what do you specialise in?**

I've been teaching for 10 years and I specialise in domestic machine quilting, which is teaching students to make their own quilts on their own machines efficiently.

**What inspires your creative ideas and/or projects?**

I'm often inspired by the texture of a quilt and the three dimensional texture that Trapunto quilting can give a quilt. I also get ideas from a lot of classic design books, European and French Renaissance design and also from nature, like leaves and flowers.

**What's your favourite quilting colour and design?**

My favourite quilting colour would have to be white. I like transforming a white fabric into a beautiful image, like an artist with a blank canvas.

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**What have you learnt from your students as a tutor?**

I've learned to have a lot of fun when I'm teaching and to really enjoy the company of the students. I also think it's important to be humble and grateful for what I do. I get a lot of pleasure out of guiding students who don't think they can do it and then to see their faces when they make those amazing breakthroughs.

Deborah's next classes are on Thursday 24 for [Machine Quilting Lesson 1](#), Friday 25 for [Machine Quilting Lesson 2](#) and Saturday 26 June for [Lesson 4 - Quilting with Stencils](#) all classes from 9:30am to 4.00pm at Blueberries.

*Quote of the week: Behind every sewer is a huge pile of fabric.*

Til next week!  
The Blueberries Team.