

MOUNTAIN DISTRICT PONY CLUB

Ten years before the establishment of the Pony Club Association of Victoria, the first Pony Club in Victoria was formed at the instigation of Miss Margaret Douglas, initially for the children in the Ferntree Gully area who rode, uncontrolled, especially at weekends. They attended Red Cross gymkhanas and were keen but had very little help with their riding. They lacked finesse.

The idea was the result of Miss Douglas reading a letter to the Editor of "Riding" magazine from Mrs. Edward Hirst of the Ingleburn Pony Club in New South Wales. She wrote to Mrs. Hirst and received a six page letter in reply. Mrs. Hirst explained that the aim was Education and Entertainment with Horsemastership being as important as Horsemanship and "no matter how broken down the horse, how bad the saddlery or rider, we welcome them all."

The same structure, aims and ideals were adopted for the Mountain District Pony Club at the inaugural meeting held at the home of Miss Elsa Grice in Croydon on the 12th. August 1944.

Present were:

Miss Elsa Grice	elected	President
Miss Margaret Douglas	"	Secretary
Miss Helen Good	"	Treasurer
Miss Aitken	"	Committee
Miss Margaret Drury		"
Mrs. Adams		"
Miss Althea Stretton		"
Mrs. Peters		"
Miss Cotton		"
Miss Griffiths		"
Mr. Roy Hawking		"

In the first year, Mr. Murray Jones became a member of the Committee and has continued to take an active part in the Club ever since. He has helped with instruction at rallies whenever he could.

HORSE LOVERS PLEASE NOTE!

A HORSE & PONY CLUB

**Has been formed in this District, and the first
rally will be held
at the
Boronia Sports Ground
on
SATURDAY SEPT 2nd, at 11 a.m.**

**Riders and others interested are invited to
attend and bring their own picnic lunch.
The aims of the Club are 'Entertainment and
the encouragement of better horsemanship.'
Annual subscription 5/-.
Further enquiries from Miss M. Douglas,
Hon. Sec., Hull Road, Croydon. Phone 54.**

To publicise the first rally, a Notice was put in the local paper. Also, Mrs. Adams went all round the district nailing pamphlets onto fences and lamp posts, which read as follows:

To this day, a photostat copy of this original Notice is framed and hanging in the Club House with the caption, GRAND OAKS FROM LITTLE ACORNS GROW.

At the initial rally, there were about thirty riders and a number of interested spectators and over 40 members were enrolled. Mr. L. Monod and Councillor Lyall, representing the Royal Agricultural Society, were present and addressed the gathering. Mr. and Mrs. Coffey kindly volunteered to instruct the young people. They gave them some drilling exercises and small competitions.

A discussion was held on whether adults should be admitted to membership. At that time, most parents were competent riders and wished to ride with their children.... Ethel Hume and daughter, Paddy, and son, Guy; Joyce Adams and Gay; Bill Robinson and John; adults without children such as Margaret Douglas, Wilbur Wallis, Murray Jones and others, and so the word HORSE was added to the title of the Club.

To give a wider coverage and so that no one would have to ride long distances each time to attend rallies, they were held alternately in different districts such as at "Devon Park" Ferntree Gully (by courtesy Mr. Hamilton), Kilsyth (by courtesy of Mr. & Mrs. Grieve), Bayswater (by courtesy of Mr. Connelly) and "Pytchley Hill", Heathmont (by courtesy of Mr. & Mrs. Hume) and at Boronia, Montrose and Mitcham.

Hence the name "Mountain District" suggested by Mrs. Peters.

At the end of the first year's activities, there were over 160 members and the numbers were increasing steadily, members coming from far and wide to join the Mountain District Club. Probably this accounts for the fact that looking through the records, it is noticed that nearly every well known name in the equestrian world has at some time been associated with the Club.

The Club became a member of the Light Horse Association of Australia and later on, of the Polocrosse Association. In February 1947, it became affiliated with the Institute of the Horse and Pony Club Association of London, which in turn became affiliated with the British Horse Society. In 1950, the Committee sponsored the formation of the Australian Horse Society.

The Club has never employed paid Instructors and yet, throughout the years, has had the services of great horsemen and horsewomen who have given their time without payment.

People who have helped the Club and been rewarded for their services with Life Membership are:

Miss Elsa Grice, original President.

Miss Margaret Douglas, founder of the Club who still attends rallies

Miss Drury, Secretary very early and for nine years.

Mary Grant Bruce, First Patroness (author of the Billabong books)

Mrs. Hume

Mrs. Adams

Miss Good

The late Cliff Giles and Mrs. Giles (there is a Memorial Fountain outside the Clubhouse for Mr. Giles who did much of the hard work in building the Clubhouse)

Mr. Mac Harvie, well known for his excellent performance as a commentator for Show jumping and Eventing.

Mrs. Harvie.

Mr. Murray Jones, very early Committee member who has helped in every possible way for forty years and now, has a daughter who is a member and a son who is a member of the Ringwood Pony Club (brother and sister use the same horse on different rally days).

The late Bill Robinson, early member.

Mrs. Joyce Hobart. now Mrs. Marshall.

Mr. & Mrs. Donald Tozer

Mr. Ron Sullivan, Treasurer from 1955 until recently when ill health forced him to resign.

Mr. Brian Bebbington.

Mr. Ern Barker, an Olympic horseman who came to the Club as an Instructor in 1958 and gave his services in an honorary capacity for twenty years. His great knowledge of horses and his enthusiasm inspired many young riders to go further ahead. However, he always kept in mind the original object of the Club: "Primarily to instruct and assist riders, especially the children without anyone to help them". A child on a shaggy Shetland received as much attention,, if not more than the member on a better mount who was able to afford outside tuition.

Although emphasis in the Club was not on competition, it was due to Mr. Barker's outstanding instruction that M.D.P.C. was successful in the Interbranch Competition in the years 1959 1589 1592 160, 161 and equal first in 1962.

Mr. Barker was awarded a B.E.M. in the 1976 Queen's Birthday Honours.

There were many others who gave their administrative and financial assistance to the Club.

Editor's note:

This has been copied form the original held by the MDHPC committee.

A note associated with this text was attached.

14.10.93

With Compliments . . .



Dear Lynne,

Encl. some papers which may be of some interest to you - remembered that the late Eileen Ewing had gathered info for a history of PCAV, on which Miss Irving is now working to complete for PCAV's 40th Anniversary next year. These papers are copied from Mrs Ewing's manuscript!

Kind regards

Frances Bowry

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