

Web developer's note.

This web page has been created from the book "A History of Mountain District Horse and Pony Club. THE FIRST 50 YEARS." This was published at the time of the 50 year celebrations. Copies are still available from the Pony Club.

This version does not have photographs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Original booklet- 1994

Grateful thanks on behalf of the Mountain District Horse and Pony Club must go to MSD AGVET (Merck Sharp & Dohme - the manufacturers of Equimec Horse Wormer), for the printing of this history, and also for being a major sponsor of the 50th Anniversary of Pony Club in Victoria.

This history was compiled by one of our members for her HSC project in 1988 - our grateful thanks to **Sue Wilkinson** for her patient research and faithful recording of how our Horse & Pony Club came into being.

Thanks must also to Mrs. P Tozer for the history of the Club written in 1972 which helped considerably in compiling this documentation.

The 1994 edition was updated and edited by Lyn Orford incorporating the 1972 & 1988 histories.

Additional information, photographs and assistance has been gratefully received from:

Sister Margaret Douglas

Mr. Ern Barker B.E.M.

Mr. Murray Jones

Mrs. Jess Tomlinson

Mrs. Joy Aitken

Mr. Rob Aitken

Dr. Greg Buist

Mr. Roger Cotton

Mr. Ian Crook. Comcall Partners

Web version - 2001

Many thanks to Liz O'Neill for re-typing the text from the original booklet into a web file.

FORWARD

This chronicle of the first Victorian Pony Club is evidence of the tremendous time and devotion given over the years by a changing band of people mainly, but not always parents.

Their efforts have enhanced the enjoyment and well being of both children and their mounts and provided a healthy character forming environment.

Many of life's lessons can be learnt at Pony Club including that one must control ones temper in order to control ones horse and that force will not often achieve the best result.

It was inevitable that the Pony Club movement should spread throughout the country and that P.C.A.V. extend its mantle over all.

Best wishes to all Pony Clubbers during the next 50 years and thereafter.

(Signed)

Margaret Douglas

Founder

A HISTORY OF MOUNTAIN DISTRICT HORSE AND PONY CLUB

The Mountain District Horse and Pony Club was formed in 1944 and was the first Pony Club to be formed in Victoria. The inspiration came from a Pony Club at Ingleburn in New South Wales.

The Pony Club at Ingleburn had been formed by Mrs. Marjory Hirst who wrote ' *whilst home in England in 1938, I became very interested in the work of the Pony Clubs and decided to see what could be done on similar lines in this part of the world.*

The establishment of Mountain District Horse and Pony Club began one day in June 1944, when Miss Margaret Douglas was out driving in a horse and jinker from Croydon to Ferntree Gully, accompanying Miss Elsa Grace, who had employed Miss Douglas as a Land Army Girl on her farming property during the war years.

They had picked up the latest issue of the English magazine 'Riding', and while looking through it, they saw a letter from Mrs. Marjory Hirst of Ingleburn Pony Club in New South Wales.

Miss Douglas thought what a wonderful idea it would be to try and establish a similar Pony Club in Victoria, in an effort to give some helpful tuition and organised activity to all riders who had sprung up during the petrol rationed war years.

After considerable consultation with Mrs. Joyce Adams, who gave her a great deal of help and advice, Miss Douglas then wrote to Mrs. Hirst asking for more details on running a club.

Mrs. Hirst's letter in August 1944, told how the club was based on the English Pony Clubs, but how in Australia as many adults as children were interested, they used 'Horse and Pony Club' in the name.

Their aim was 'Education and Entertainment' with Horsemastership as important as 'Horsemanship' and that 'no matter how broken down the horse and how bad the saddlery or rider, we welcome then all.'

It was upon this letter that MOUNTAIN DISTRICT HORSE AND PONY CLUB was formed, and the same structure, aims and ideals were adopted.

THE FIRST MEETINGS AND RALLIES

A preliminary meeting took place on August 12th 1944, at Miss Grice's home "Wyeera", Hull Road, Croydon, at which the decision was made to form a Pony Club.

"Present at the meeting were Miss Grice elected President, Miss Douglas secretary, Miss Good Treasurer, Miss Aitken, Miss Margaret Drury, Mrs. Adams, Miss Stretton, Mrs Peters, Miss Cotton, Miss Griffiths and Mr Ray Hawking."

(The minutes of this meeting follows)

Mr. Hawking, with the help of Mr. Maddern, Mr. Rowles, Mr. Sutton and Mr. Dinsdale had been running Gymkhanas at Boronia and Ferntree Gully during the war years to raise money for the Red Cross, and shortly afterwards, these men came onto the Committee of the Mountain District Horse and Pony Club.

In the first year Mr. Murray Jones also joined the Committee, he proceeded to take an active part for 30 years.

To publicise the first rally a notice was put in the local paper 'The Mail' on the 24th August 1944. Mrs. Adams rode round the district nailing pamphlets onto fences and lampposts, which read:

Horse lovers, please note:

A Horse and Pony Club has been formed in this district, and the first rally will be held at the Boronia Sports Ground on September 2nd at 11.00am. Riders and others interested are invited to attend and to bring their own picnic lunch.

The aims of the Club are Entertainment and the encouragement of better horsemanship.

Annual fee 5/-.

Further enquiries from Miss M Douglas, Hon Secretary, Hull Road, Croydon. Ph. 54.

The original notice was framed by Mrs. Peters and presented to the Club, as well as the above it bears the remark "Grand Oak Trees from little Acorns grow.'

At the initial rally there were about thirty riders present 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 meeting.

Mr. and Mrs. Coffey kindly volunteered to instruct the young people and gave them some drilling exercises and some small competitions.

LOCATION OF RALLIES

So as to give wider coverage and so that no one would have to ride long distances all the time to attend rallies, they were held each month in different districts, at such places as Croydon, Ferntree Gully, Kilsyth, Boronia, Montrose and Mitcham.

During the winter months, the activities were hunting rides, (with the Club grouped into hares and hounds), and paper chasing. They rode through glorious bushland and open paddocks in such areas as Mitcham, Ringwood, Heathmont, Vermont and Croydon.

THE CLUB AT THE END OF 1944

At the end of the first year's activities there were over 160 members and numbers were steadily increasing. Members were joining the Mountain District Club from far and wide. This probably accounts for the fact that when looking back through old records and past programs of events, it is noticed that many well known names in the equestrian world have at some time been associated with the club.....Top showjumping riders, Garryowen winners, Champion Gentleman Riders, Lady Riders, Good Hands winners and Mooney Valley Steeplechase Riders, and more recently an Australian 3 Day Event Champion have all come from Mountain District.

FAMOUS NAMES ASSOCIATED WITH THE CLUB

At the commencement of the Mountain District Horse and Pony Club, Miss Douglas had asked Mrs. Bruce, wife of Major Bruce, or better known as Mary Grant Bruce, to become the Patroness, which she gladly consented to do. Mary Grant Bruce took an interest in the young riders and she was very well known for her writing of the "Billabong" books and others, which all children interested in riding used to delight in reading.

At one time Sir George Knox was Patron. Miss Jeanette Brooks, daughter of the Governor Sir Dallas and Lady Brooks, was Patroness for some years and used to occasionally attend rallies.

Helpful advice was given by Judge Stretton, father of one of the members, in drawing up a constitution of the club which was registered as a company, with a limited liability of five shillings per member. Permission was obtained from the Attorney General, to delete the word 'limited' from its name. Since then, many other Pony Clubs, as they were formed, applied to Mountain District for assistance in drawing up their constitution and information on conducting their rallies. Many a 'first rally' was attended by someone from the Mountain District Club to give them advice.

The Club became a registered member of the Light Horse Association of Australia, and later the Polocrosse Association.

During 1946 the members were asked to put forward their ideas for a Club Badge. It is interesting to note that help in laying out the original art work was given by Neil Douglas - brother of Margaret Douglas - who is now rated amongst the top Australian bush artists. The badge was then produced by Stokes (Australasia) Ltd, where it is still purchased from the Pony Club today.

In February 1947, the club became affiliated with the British Horse Society and in 1950, sponsored the formation of The Australian Horse Society, which was bound by the constitution of the British Horse Society.

THE CLUB IN THE 1950's AND 1960's

Olympic Games:

It is interesting to note that when the preliminary discussions were taking place regarding the 1956 Olympic Games to be held in Melbourne, Mountain District Horse and Pony Club was the only one registered here with the International Equestrian Association, and for some time it seemed possible that Club would be invited to conduct the Equestrian events at the Games. Eventually, the horses that were entered were transferred to Helsinki due to quarantine regulations. Mr Murray Jones, a President of the Club, had some interesting discussions in England with members of the British Horse Society regarding this matter.

The 1956 Olympics, which was held in Stockholm, saw Australia entering its first Equestrian Eventing Team, which consisted of:

Team Coach	Mr. Franz Mairinger
Team Manager	Mr. A R Creswick
Team Captain	Mr. David Wood
Team Members	Mr. Ern Barker Mr. W Thompson Mr. B J Crago

Against all of the odds this fantastic Team came fourth out of eighteen competing nations, not bad for a first attempt!

THE CLUB GROUNDS

As stated earlier, rallies were held in various districts, it was later that the Club had its headquarters at the Douglas property on Mountain Highway in Bayswater, and also the use of land on lease next door belonging to Mr. Karl Schmolling, one of the earliest settlers in the district. In early 1952 a lease was granted from the then Lillydale Shire later to become the Croydon Council, for the last fourteen acres of Cheong Park, Bayswater Road, Croydon and a clubhouse was to be erected.

Activities:

Late in 1949, the Boot and Saddle Shop of the Myer Emporium, donated a beautiful hand carved Shield to be competed for annually for General Horsemanship. Later on another shield was donated by Mr. Page, one of the committee members and was named the Wheatland Shield, in honour of the then President. These are now competed for at the Club Christmas rally along

with the Associates Cup, The Committee Cup and the Woodyett Shield, this Shield being donated to the Club by Dr & Mrs. Greg Buist.

At our AGM, the Club gives out the Ern Barker Awards, places 1 to 6. These places being gained by points awarded throughout the year at each rallies' gear check.

Also awarded at this time is the Tozer Award judged by the Clubs' Committee for the 'all rounder' pony clubber not necessarily assessed on riding ability; for the most improved rider there is the Eastfield Park Committee of Management Award, which is decided by the Clubs' District Commissioner.

Right from the beginning, the Club has conducted many Gymkanas. One of its main objectives in the early days was to raise money for the various charities such as the Baby Health Centres, Kindergartens, St. Johns Ambulance, the local hospital and also the Olympic Fund.

Camps have been among the Clubs activities both for instruction and entertainment, the first being in 1947, at the late Mr. Pape's property at Yarra Glen for six days, to which the majority of the members rode.

Instruction and Competition:

The Mountain District Horse and Pony Club through the years, has had the services of many great Horsemen and Horsewomen, who have given their time to help young Equestrians, without receiving any payment. First of these was Mrs. Coffey who helped with the instruction, judging and training. She became well known for her 'bag of bones', being a horse skeleton which she would demonstrate how Splints, Curbs etc, has formed on horse's bones.

Another person was the great horseman and Olympic rider, Ern Barker B.E.M. who came to the club in 1958 and was Chief Instructor for many years. It was due to Mr Barker's outstanding instruction that Mountain District were successful in the inter-branch (now called the Pony Club State Championships) in the years 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961 and equal first in 1962. The end of the 1960's saw Mountain District become a very prosperous Club, growing quickly and doing well in competitions. It still held its original motto of 'Education and Entertainment' and it has led the way for the establishment of other clubs.

THE CLUB IN THE 1970's AND 1990's

After the Clubs' move from Cheong Park in 1975, the new grounds were established at Eastfield Park, Croydon South. The Clubhouse at Cheong Park built by the members of the Club, was moved to the new site. The grounds at Eastfield Park, located behind the Light Harness Club, are where the Club's rallies are held, and these have been gradually developed over the recent years to meet the needs of the many people to use it. Out in the Park, barbecue facilities were erected, and the toilet block was built by the Croydon Council and the Eastfield Park Committee, so the Park could be more widely used as a recreational area and a place where associates like the Pony Clubs, could use for various events.

The Club grounds were improved with drainage, the removal of blackberries and fencing erected, and hitching rails were to be erected around the National Trust oak trees as late as 1981.

Club Activities:

The Pony Club itself, still bases its present day instruction on the instruction given on its foundation in 1944. Great importance is still placed on Horsemastership; caring for the horse and pony and understanding its needs and wants. The emphasis in the Club is not on competition, but for those who wish to compete and want to do well, the Club is always behind those members, helping and guiding them in their activities.

Horse riding, like any other sport today, has become more competitive over the years, asking for more skill, ability, understanding and knowledge to be able to do well in a very competitive field. Pony Club can form a very good basis from which to start.

Mountain District has been seen as a competitive Club and also a successful Club. Members have reached State Level, which is a great achievement in any sport and teams have competed successfully at State Level and at lower levels as the Pony Club Team and One Day Event Teams. These events make up a big part of the Club's yearly activities, with members continually trying to improve and do well in their chosen area.

Members have also been ready to participate in any activity, be it organised by either the P.C.A.V., their zone or in Celebration Parades held by the Melbourne City or their local Council, Mountain District Horse and Pony Club's Sky Blue jumpers can always be seen.

The Shell Award is the highest award a Pony Club Member can achieve. The Club can proudly claim to have had six of its members awarded this prize.

In more recent times, another area of Pony Club activities at all clubs, is in the area of achieving Certificates in various levels of Horsemastership. These Certificates or test are not only based on riding, but also on a written test, where a sound knowledge of the horse and the care and attention it requires is needed. This sort of test is valuable in the Pony Club because it allows those not so competitive to also do well in an area of the Pony Club. In this area Mountain District does well, with members achieving high certificate levels.

RALLY DAYS

The Rally Days are held on the first Sunday of every month, with members saddled and ready for inspection (gear check) at 10.00am in front of the clubhouse. Members are then divided into groups, depending on their ability and their horse's ability. Flatwork is usually done in the morning, with theory and jumping done in the afternoon. During the lunch break, a meeting is held where competition results are heard and future events are discussed.

The Pony Club also has a Junior Committee which allows the younger members of the Club to have a say in the running and organisation and they also can offer ideas which may add to the Club in some way.

In 1994 Mountain District Members continue to compete on both a team and individual basis. The emphasis is still on 'Education and Entertainment', with Horsemastership as important as Horsemanship. It is still predominately a Horse and Pony Club, although not in its original sense which was that it was open to all age groups, the age limit now being 21 year's.

And so we celebrate not only the Mountain District Horse and Pony Club 50th Anniversary, but the beginning of the Pony Club Movement within Victoria, and wonder if Mrs. Peters back in 1944 had some premonition when she included on the framed original sign which still hangs proudly in the Clubhouse, the remark:

'GRAND OAK TREES FROM LITTLE OAK TREES GROW'

THE FUTURE

Today, fifty years from our founding we stand as we did then, on the threshold of the future. Our focus is on our young people, today as it was in 1944. For the young people of today are tomorrow's parents and leaders of our Club.

HONOUR ROLL

President - The first 50 years

Miss E Grice
Miss M Drury
Mrs. Peters
Mr. M Jones
Mr. L Cunningham
Mr. S Chapple
Mr. Jefferson
Mr. H Wood
Mr. D Tozer
Mr. B Bebbington
Mr. M Dexter
Mr. N Leggatt
Mr. K Seymour
Mr. I McLeish
Mr. P Wilson
Dr. G Buist
Mr. S Skerl
Mr. B Orford

Life Members

Miss E Grice
Miss M Douglas (Founder)
Miss M Drury
Mrs. Mary Grant Bruce
Mrs. Hume
Mrs. Adams
Miss Good
Mr. & Mrs. C Giles
Mr. & Mrs. M Harvie
Mr. M Jones
Mr. B. Robinson
Joyce Marshall
Mr. & Mrs. D Tozer
Mr. R Sullivan
Mr. B Bebbington
Mr. E Barker B.E.M
Sister Purvis
Mrs. J Oliver

District Commissioners

Miss L Smidt

Dr .G Buist

Mr. R Aitken

(NB: The District Commissioners position was combined within the Presidents' duties prior to the election of Miss L Smidt).

SPONSORS

Listed below are the names of those people kind enough to support & sponsor this history and the 50th Anniversary celebrations, for which the current parents and members of Mountain District Horse and Pony Club extend their gratitude:

Major Sponsor:

MSD AGVET (Merck Sharp & Dohme - the manufacturers of Equimec Horse Wormer)

Other Sponsors:

A1 Rose Marie Florist Ringwood	Margaret Douglas (Founder)
Alf and Charlie East - Blacksmiths-Montrose	Carol Simpson (nee Abrahms)
Australian Horse Newspaper-Sydney	Rob & Joy Aitken
Buckskin Jodhpurs- Montrose	Michelle Aitken
Headway Helmets- Sydney	Bryan & Lynne Orford
The Horse Magazine - Melbourne	Aimi Turner
Horseland-Ringwood	John, Thelma & Tammy Uiterwyk
John Yates Heating and Air Conditioning (Croydon)	Peter, Wilma, Julie & Cathy Knox
Myers Melbourne - Victoria	Denis, Sue & Abby Carmichael
Pitcher Partners - Chartered Accountants (Melbourne)	Don, Wendy, Andrew & Cathy Morrison
Rembrandts Restaurant - Wantirna	Buist Family
Royal Agricultural Society - Victoria	Danny Wilson
Saddle-Up- Ringwood	Peter & Judy Wilson
Stokes (Australasia) Limited-Ringwood	Francis Corry
Vermont Fuel and grain Store - Vermont	
Victorian Pony Clubs Southern Metropolitan Zone	
Winton Horse Agistment - Vermont	
Wixmore Photography - Croydon	