The Good Companion

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Now we are 60! Happy birthday CDC!

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The Club's early years

By June Rowe

This year we celebrate the Club's 60th anniversary. This article about the Club's early years is extracted from the Club's official history compiled by Honorary Life Member June Rowe in 2002. Newspaper extracts have been obtained from digitised copies of The Canberra Times accessed via Trove (https://trove.nla.gov.au/).

Are YOU interested in owning a

WELL TRAINED AND OBEDIENT DOG

The recently formed A.C.T. COMPANION DOG CLUB conducts classes each SUNDAY MORNING under the direction of Mr. Kurt Schmidt.

Breeds of dogs eligible for instructton include: German Shepherd, Airedale, Pinscher, Boxer, etc.

For further details please contact: During working hours, Mr. K. Schmidt, at X1051-2-3, or after six o'clock, Mr. N. Sorrelle, Qbn. 79.

Above: *Advertisement published in The Canberra Times on 18 April 1958 promoting the new club.*

The ACT Companion Dog Club was founded in April1958. We still have a complete set of minutes of Committee meetings going back to the very first meeting. It would appear that the actual training of dogs was a fairly low priority for our founding fathers. The early minutes indicate that a high proportion of committee time was spent on organising social events!

The Club applied to become an incorporated organisation under the Associations Incorporation Ordinance 1953 and received the number A46 on 30th April 1959.

The dog training was initially done on vacant allotments in Queanbeyan and Canberra but within a year the Club was very fortunate in acquiring the late Hon Jim Fraser MP as a patron. He enabled the Club to obtain the use, for a peppercorn rental, of an old weatherboard schoolhouse in Collie Street, Fyshwick, surrounded by five acres.

A part of the grounds was planted with mature pine trees, which gave us shady parking and places to tether dogs. The area had been part of a large camp for early workers in Canberra in the 1920s. The building had a certain rustic charm but the outside loos were of the 'red back under the toilet seat' variety. Ancient plumbing and wiring meant that in the winter the water supply had to be turned off at the mains every time we left to prevent burst pipes and no more than two power plugs could be used at once or the fuses would blow! Another problem was rats!

In the early years money was short and Club members gave a lot of time to developing and maintaining the building and grounds. Working bees were held regularly to cut grass, prune trees, repair the driveway, paint the building inside and out, lay lino and even build a large ornamental fireplace of blue stone. Curtains were made and oil heating installed.

1953.

The objects and purposes of the association are as follows:

The aims and object for which the association is established are:

(a) The breeding and training of companion dogs, and to make the handling of trained dogs popular.

(b) The promotion of sporting activities in connection with dog trials and training.

(c) The acquisition of a Club House and the providing of refreshments for members of the club for their recreation.

Above: *The original 'objects and purposes' of the Club published as part of its incorporation process (The Canberra Times, 17 March 1959)*

For many years the Club employed various resident caretakers who lived in part of the building and had cleaning and maintenance duties. A lot of committee time went on interviewing prospective tenants. The arrangements did not always prove satisfactory and in 1977 the Club dispensed with the caretaker and took over the whole building. This gave us much more space and the secretary had an office and the instructors had a meeting room.

Many of the early members had German Shepherd Dogs but there were a few representatives of other large breeds such as Boxers, Dalmatians and Labradors. A concern of the committee was making representations to the government concerning the legislation that required German Shepherds to be sterilised. In 1960 these efforts resulted in the Minister for the Interior accepting the recommendation from the ACT Advisory Council that German Shepherds being trained at the Club should be exempted from the sterilisation requirement.

There were some early dramas. Some members wanted their dogs taught 'man-work' (ie protection work) but eventually the policy was adopted that such training wasn't appropriate for the Club. In 1961 there was friction over whether cross-bred dogs should be accepted in the Club. This led to some people leaving and forming the ACT Non-Sporting and Working Dog Club. Those left in the Club adopted the policy, still valid today, that the Club makes no distinction between dogs that have pedigree papers and those that do not. (However, it wasn't until 1980 that dogs without papers were allowed by the various Kennel Controls in Australia to enter Obedience Trials.)

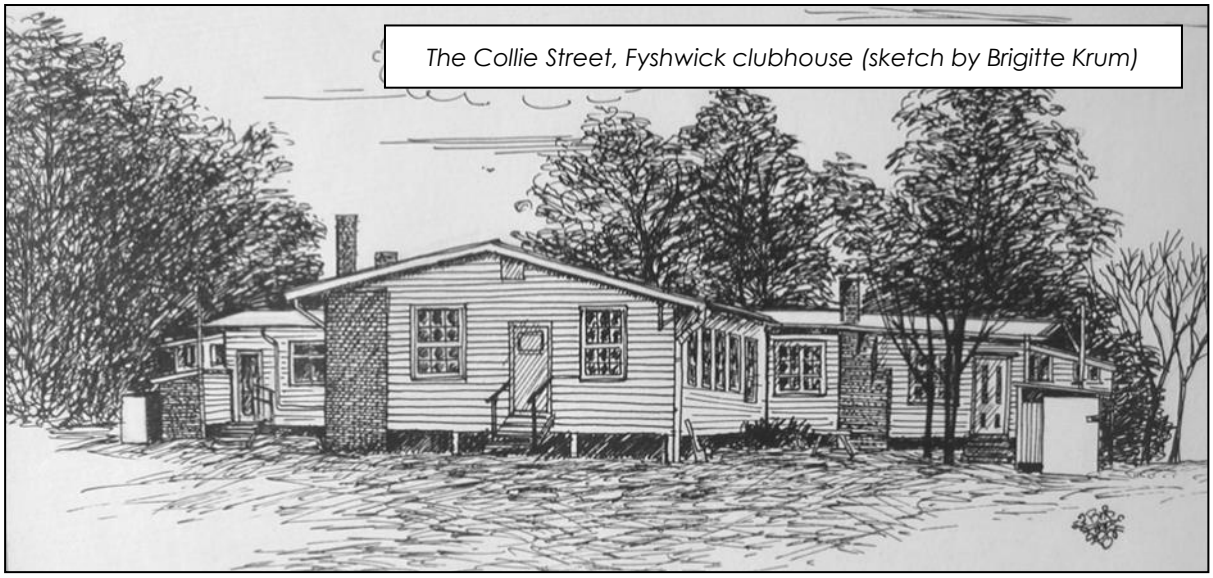
When the Club was first formed all the instructing was done by the President, Kurt Schmidt. In 1962, a group of members, including Garth Hardham, undertook an

Below: *Article published in The Canberra Times on 2 September 1958 announcing the opening of the Club's premises at Fyshwick*

berra University College.

COMPANION DOG CLUB ROOMS OPENED

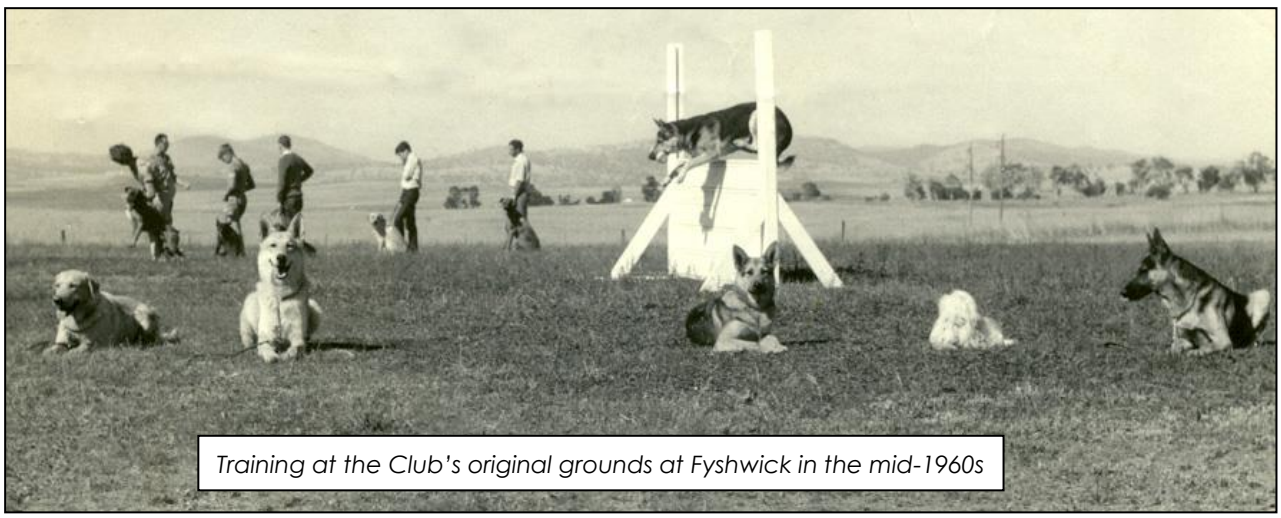
The A.C.T. Companion Dog Club held its first social evening at the new headquarters at the police training centre at Molonglo on Saturday night. Included in the programme were films on the training of German shepherd dogs as carried out by the Royal Air Force in England. The official opening of the new clubrooms was performed by Mr. J. R. Fraser, M.P., who spoke of the work which a well-trained dog was able to do. The president of the club, Mr. Kurt Schmidt, thanked Mr. Fraser for attending. Mr. Fraser was made an honorary member of the club. Another special guest was Mr. W. Hoffmann, of the Canberra Kennel Association.



The Collie Street, Fyshwick clubhouse (sketch by Brigitte Krum)

Left: *Mary Holmes being congratulated by Kurt Schmidt on winning the first ever obedience trial held in Canberra at Manuka hockey ground in November 1959. Kurt and Mary were foundation members of the Club. Kurt was the first President and Mary subsequently served as a Vice President. Both were awarded Honorary Membership of the Club.*

Right:
The Honourable Jim Fraser MHR, the first patron of the Club



Training at the Club's original grounds at Fyshwick in the mid-1960s

instructors' course, run by the Royal Agricultural Society Kennel Club (now the Royal New South Wales Canine Council trading as Dogs NSW), by correspondence and by journeys to Sydney.

In subsequent years the Club ran instructors' courses on behalf of the Canberra Kennel Association (now Dogs ACT).

The Club became affiliated with the Canberra Kennel Association (now Dogs Act) in 1959.

The first Obedience Trial was held in Canberra in 1959 and four members (three German Shepherds and a Dalmatian) gained titles in that year. Only one pass was needed to obtain a title (today three passes are needed) and encouragement of the dog was allowed. For many years Obedience Trials were the only form of competitive activity available to members who wished to do some form of dog sports. (Non-Slip Retrieving Trials were also available but they were restricted to the Gundog breeds).

Record Entry For Spring Kennel Show

A record entry of 191 dogs has been received for the Canberra Kennel Association's spring championship show to be held on the Manuka hockey ground on Sunday.

This is nearly 50 dogs more than the previous highest entry established earlier this year at the autumn show.

Some 35 breeds will be shown including some not seen in Canberra before such as Schipperkes (the Belgian barge-dogs), a Chihuahua (the South American toy dog) and a wire-haired Dachshund as well as both miniature and standard long-haired Dachshunds.

Dachshunds top the breeds in entries with 33 exhibits, followed by Welsh Corgis, Cocker Spaniels, Pekinese and German Shephards.

For the first time two judging rings will be in operation simultaneously during the day. Another new feature will be the first Companion Dog Trial to be held in Canberra.

Conducted in association with the A.C.T. Companion Dog Club, this has attracted seven entries.

Two judges have been engaged from Sydney. Mr. J McCreadie will judge the Companion Dog Trial and gundogs, and Mr. G. W. Ross will judge the balance of breeds and the sweepstakes.

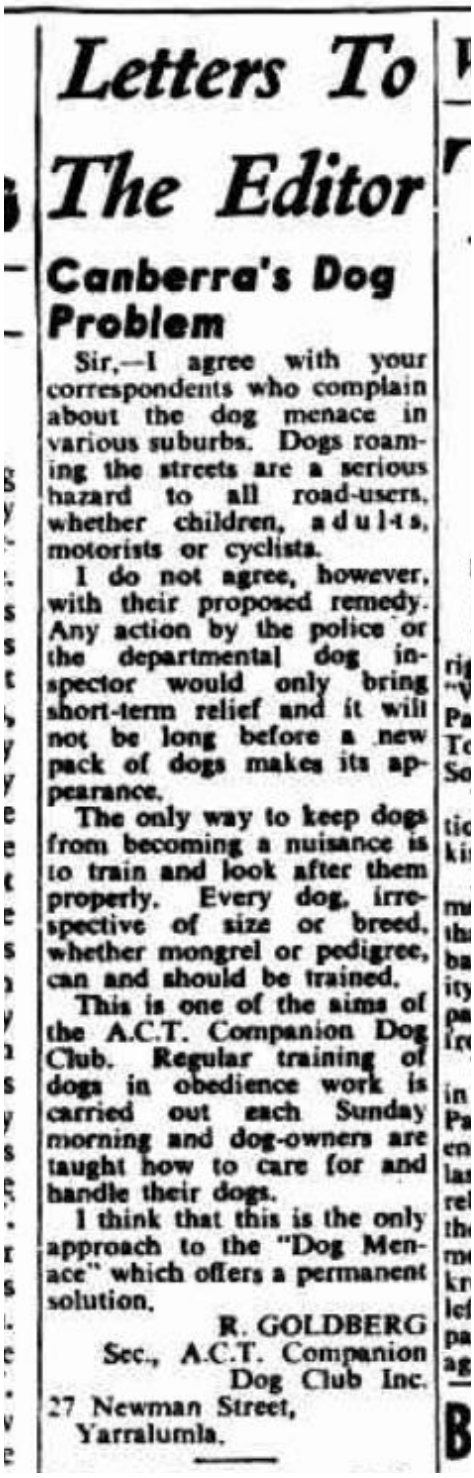
FOR SALE

HOMES HOMES

CAMPBELL: Modern 3 B.R. Brick Home. £7,000.

DEAKIN: 4 B.R. Contemporary Home; luxury living in exclusive area. £14,400.

GRIFFITH: 3 B.R. attractive



Letters To The Editor

Canberra's Dog Problem

Sir,—I agree with your correspondents who complain about the dog menace in various suburbs. Dogs roaming the streets are a serious hazard to all road-users, whether children, adults, motorists or cyclists.

I do not agree, however, with their proposed remedy. Any action by the police or the departmental dog inspector would only bring short-term relief and it will not be long before a new pack of dogs makes its appearance.

The only way to keep dogs from becoming a nuisance is to train and look after them properly. Every dog, irrespective of size or breed, whether mongrel or pedigree, can and should be trained.

This is one of the aims of the A.C.T. Companion Dog Club. Regular training of dogs in obedience work is carried out each Sunday morning and dog-owners are taught how to care for and handle their dogs.

I think that this is the only approach to the "Dog Menace" which offers a permanent solution.

R. GOLDBERG
Sec., A.C.T. Companion Dog Club Inc.
27 Newman Street,
Yarralumla.

Above: *Announcement of the first obedience trial in the ACT (The Canberra Times, 13 November 1959)*

Right: *The Club promotes responsible dog ownership through training (The Canberra Times, 21 October 1959)*

Further articles on the history of the Club will appear in The Good Companion during our anniversary year.