

GETTING TO KNOW ... OUR CLUB (PART 1)

CDC celebrates its 30th anniversary at Narrabundah

By June Rowe



This year we celebrate our 30th anniversary at Narrabundah Lane. The club moved here in 1983 from its original grounds in Fyshwick (coinciding with the club's silver jubilee). This article is extracted from the club's official history compiled by Honorary Life Member June Rowe in 2002.

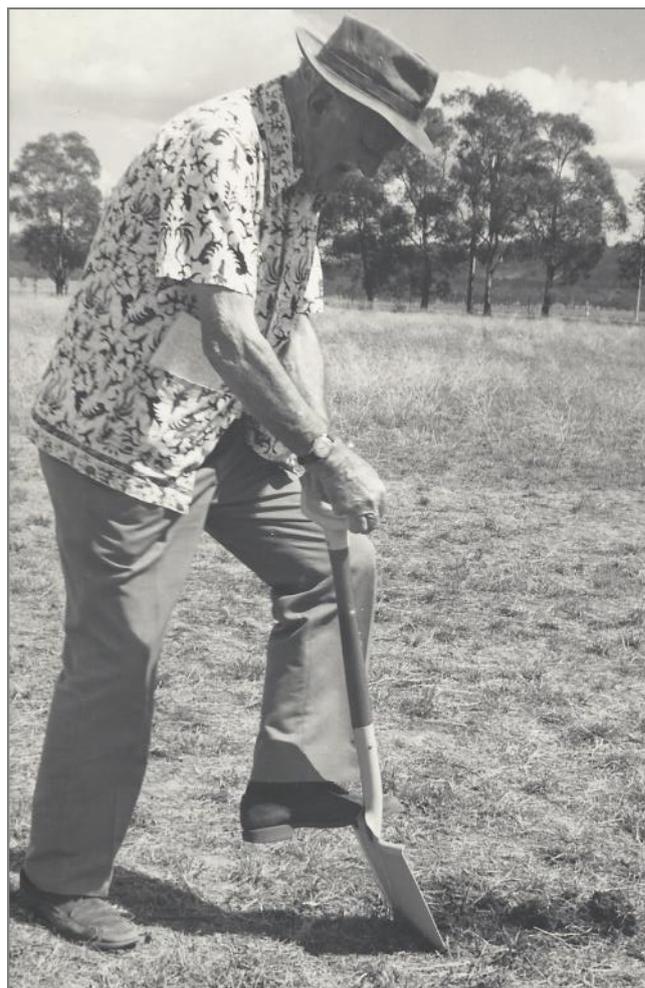
The ACT Companion Dog Club was founded in 1958. Training was initially done on vacant

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 St, 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.

During the negotiations in 1976 between the Club and the Department of the Capital Territory, to obtain grounds for a new club in Belconnen, questions were asked as to the future of the Club's home in Fyshwick. To our consternation we were told in writing that we would have to move but probably not before the end of the year! This was the beginning of five years of negotiations to find ourselves a new home. We were initially shown a site at Oaks Estate but that soon dropped from the agenda. Other spots were considered, including the site of our current neighbour, Capital Indoor Plant Hire. Then the authorities had a change of mind and plans were drawn up for us to stay in Fyshwick. Then the government had second thoughts and brought in outside consultants. We were able to convince them that our needs were considerable and reasonable and subsequently we were offered our current lovely site. Negotiations again bogged down over issues with the ACT German Shepherd Dog Association (GSDA) as to whether it should be a joint lease or whether the GSDA should be a tenant of ours. Eventually the GSDA decided to find their own accommodation elsewhere and we finally signed a 50 year lease for our current grounds in 1981.

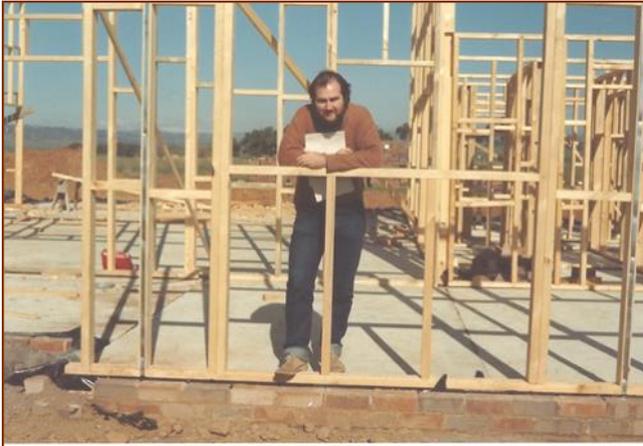
Throughout this negotiation period and in the early eighties, much club effort went into fund raising for the new clubhouse we planned to

build. We sold prodigious numbers of Wagon Wheels (a chocolate covered biscuit) in the Club shop, ran plant and garden produce stalls, secondhand book stalls, and held pie and sausage roll drives. The last of these efforts nearly ended in disaster when some of the customers found the pie contents had gone green! Every Christmas we collected non-perishable food (human!) for a Christmas hamper and then sold raffle tickets all over Canberra. A major fundraiser was the selling of bulk dog food but the storage caused us considerable mice problems. At committee meetings members often sat with legs curled up on their chairs!



Above: Colonel Redvers Dunbar, CDC Honorary Life Member, turns the first sod for the clubhouse on Narrabundah Lane in March 1983.

Getting to know our club ... continued



The clubhouse under construction in May 1983



The first job we did on the new grounds was to have the site fenced with rabbit proof fences as we wanted to grow trees. The front gate was inserted at a point decreed by the lease conditions. Within a week we had two problems - thieves raided the Indoor Plant Company [next door] and cut our new fences in two places; and a horse in the bottom paddock fell over the fence into our field and damaged the fence as he did so. Our first working bee on the new site (in September

1981) was to plant some thirty large shade trees down the centre. They were Chinese elms, golden ashes, claret ashes, a plane tree and willows. In the meantime plans for a new building were being drawn up and submitted for approval, a grant was applied for and investigations were going on into field lighting systems.

The clubhouse was designed by a club member, Michael Pilkington (left), a young architect who was part of the design team for new Parliament House. Michael offered to supervise the construction of the building so tenders were called for and the contract was eventually given to Blackett Constructions Pty Ltd for \$91,644. A grant of \$27,400 from the ACT Community Development Fund was a big help and the building was completely paid for by the time it was finished. The Club applied for a loan from the bank to install the floodlights so that we could have night training as soon as we moved on to the new site.

A 'Turning of the First Sod' ceremony was held on Sunday 6 March 1983 when Colonel Redvers Dunbar, using a new 'golden' yellow spade, performed the honours. Unfortunately it was extremely hot and there wasn't a tree on the site so the ensuing sausage sizzle was cut short as we all mourned the lovely big trees on our Fyshwick site. The field surface was a grass paddock, just as the sheep had left it, full of thistles.

Part 2 of the club's early history at Narrabundah Lane will appear in the Good Companion later this year.



GETTING TO KNOW ... OUR CLUB (PART 2)

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This year we celebrate our 30th anniversary at Narrabundah Lane. The club moved here in 1983 from its original grounds in Fyshwick (coinciding with the club's silver jubilee). This article is extracted from the club's official history compiled by Honorary Life Member June Rowe in 2002. Part 1 appeared in the May 2013 issue of The Good Companion (see www.actcdc.org.au/new/actcdc_011.htm)

As noted at the end of Part 1, a "Turning of the First Sod" ceremony was held on Sunday 6 March 1983 when Honorary Life Member Redvers Dunbar, using a new 'golden' yellow spade, performed the honours. Unfortunately it was extremely hot and there wasn't a tree on the site so the ensuing sausage sizzle was cut short as we all mourned the lovely big trees on our former Fyshwick site. The field surface was a grass paddock, just as the sheep had left it, full of thistles.

The story now continues ...

A memorable working bee was held to cut the grass just before we moved to the Narrabundah site. Members with a dozen lawn mowers

and one ride-on mower cut the whole field at a record rate. Probably because the wind chill factor was minus 9 degrees!

Rainy weather slowed the progress of the building's construction so it was not until Saturday 10 September 1983 that we were able to move. The rain had also turned the entrance driveway into a muddy swamp so we ordered 18 tons of gravel, which was dumped on to the mud in a huge pile, making entry to the grounds impossible. The day before our planned move, the President and Secretary were to be seen shovelling gravel for all they were worth!

On the Saturday we hired a small van and 21 members moved it all - old furniture, jumps and ring stakes, pie warmer and fridge, Companion Dog of the Year photos, card filing boxes, urns and coffee cups. The main room in the new

building looked like a second-hand auction room. The next day we had normal training classes on the new grounds but had no electricity for the coffee urn and we had a path of planks for members to cross the muddy car park. The power was connected on the Tuesday and we all came out to test the field lights which were needed for Thursday night training. When first switched on, our lights are

very weak but gradually come up to their full intensity. So there was a heart stopping moment when we thought we had paid a huge amount of money for very poor quality lighting! The following



A sea of mud greets members at the first training session on the new grounds, September 1983

Saturday we ran our first obedience trial on the new grounds.

We held an 'official' opening of the new clubhouse on 4 December 1983 in conjunction with our traditional Christmas Barbecue and Presentation of Awards night. The cutting of the ribbon ceremony was performed by Lady Francis, wife of the New Zealand High Commissioner, in front of many members and invited guests.

An unexpected benefit (?) of our new site was that we found that on Thursday nights - during lulls in class work - members could watch the screen of the drive-in cinema across the road (now the Best Western Sundown Motel Resort). Some of the more 'lively' movies could bring a class to a stand still!

Getting to know our club ... continued



Clockwise from top:

- * The new clubhouse - from farmer's paddock to dog training facility
- * Then President Ritchie Butler helps out with the club's DIY moving day on 10 September 1983.
- * The rear of the clubhouse in early 1984
- * A class in progress on the rough grass
- * Former President Garth Hardman turns on the flood lights for the first time on 15 September 1983
- * The official opening of the clubhouse - Ritchie Butler with Lady Francis, wife of the New Zealand High Commissioner, on 4 December 1983



Getting to know our club ... continued



It was quite a while before we were able to afford external paving so the verandas were a muddy mess. The concrete floor of the clubhouse quickly became covered with mud - and we had to clean up with a shovel at the end of a session!

Over the years the Club has gradually improved the facilities. We added car park fences, ring fences, storage sheds, irrigation, improved grass surfaces, paved paths, garden seats, more lighting, and more trees and shrubs. In the clubhouse we installed chairs and tables, carpets, blinds, fridges, ovens, office storage and equipment, bookcases and security systems.

In 1990 we were given the opportunity to extend our original five acre lease by an additional three and a half acres. This became possible because of the opening of the new Monaro Highway and the closure of Jerrabomberra Avenue. Negotiations about the detail of the lease, particularly our need to have an entrance at the far end of the block on to Jerrabomberra Avenue, took a long while and the new lease was finally signed in August 1991. Since then we have developed the new area and put in fencing, trees, irrigation, lighting and new grass. In 1992 the committee made the far-sighted decision to sink our own bore, which enables us to irrigate more of the grounds. The brick workshop building was constructed in 1993 and included a toilet for the disabled. This and many other projects were partly funded by grants we were able to obtain from government agencies.

Developing and maintaining our grounds, buildings and equipment has involved many committee members in much hard work and support has also been given by members at innumerable working bees.

What will the next 30 years hold for the club?

Be part of our 'future' history by volunteering to help develop and maintain our wonderful facilities.

Facts and figures

- Construction coincided with the club's Silver Jubilee
- Clubhouse designed and project managed by club member Michael Pilkington
- Built by Blakett Constructions at a cost of \$92,000 (including a \$27,400 Community Grant)
- Barbeque table donated by Werner Roth (and still standing under the Ashes at the rear of the clubhouse)

Where are they now?

- Ritchie Butler - then President, instructor and ANKC Obedience Judge; now Honorary Life Member (1985) and still judging
- John Green - then Senior Vice-President and instructor; now Honorary Life Member (1986) and ANKC Obedience Judge
- June Rowe - then Secretary, instructor and Honorary Life Member (1976); now Comp Day photographer, club historian and Wednesday classes session manager
- Sid Schuck - then instructor, ANKC Obedience Judge and Honorary Life Member (1982); now still judging

- Vikki Evans - then newly qualified instructor and obedience trialler; now Honorary Life Member (1992), and still trialling in agility, obedience and rally-o
- Di Easter - then obedience trialler; now Honorary Life Member (2004) and ANKC Obedience Judge
- Mary Dalgarno - then obedience trialler; now Honorary instructor (2013)

" We should never lose sight of the fact that our club's prime aim is to help people train their dogs to be a better companion in the home and a more acceptable part of the social environment in the city in which we live."

President Ritchie Butler, ACT Companion Dog Club Newsletter, July 1983

" It is hard to imagine what the next 25 years will bring but we can be sure that the club's new ground will have matured into an ideal setting for our activities."

ACT Companion Dog Club Newsletter, July 1983