



LET'S RIDE! POLICE EXHIBIT AT THE 1987 SYDNEY ROYAL EASTER SHOW. LEFT: MOUNTED POLICE ARE PRESENTED WITH PRIZE RIBBONS IN THE MAIN ARENA CIRCA 1950

Hello, hello, hello

While operational policing has always been an important part of the compact, NSW Police have traditionally joined in the fun of the Show, taking part in activities which go above and beyond normal duties.

For more than 120 years the men and women of the NSW Police Force have been at work and at play at the Show. They've kept us safe. They've entertained.

They've competed. Over those years an interconnected relationship has developed between the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) and the force, to the mutual benefit of both organisations.

Close ties were first forged with the Mounted Police Unit, who became early neighbours of the Showground at Moore

Park, but as the Show's effectiveness as a forum to connect with the public was recognised, other arms of the Force got involved.

BEGINNING WITH THE MOUNTIES

In 1901 the NSW Mounted Police found themselves in urgent need of a home. Turfed out of their Belmont Park barracks to make way for construction of Central Railway Station, they found

temporary accommodation at the Moore Park Showground while new stables were built – just a short clop away in Baptist Street, Redfern. The stables were completed in 1907 and that same year the Mounties performed their first Musical Ride at the Show, perhaps as a thank you to their hosts. A drill and sword display had been performed by the Mounted Unit in 1895, but adding the NSW Police Band to the mix was a clincher. From the outset, main arena crowds loved the combination of riding

routes set to music and the Musical Ride has endured ever since as one of the great traditions of the Show.

For the Mounties, the event is important from a training perspective, and no doubt this has helped ensure its survival. Intensive pre-Show rehearsals sharpen skills used all year; in a crowd control situation or a demonstration, precise team-work and co-ordination between horse and rider could be life saving. Competition between troopers for trophies in six police horse classes at the Show is another incentive to hone horsemanship skills.

Police no longer compete in the tentpegging competition, but when the event was reintroduced in 1969 their participation was instrumental in getting the sport back up and running. The tentpegging perpetual trophy is known as the Golden Livermore Lance, named in memory of former Mounted Police Commander, Sergeant Ron Livermore. Police teams won the Lance on eight occasions. The event remains the most prestigious on the Australian tentpegging calendar.

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GRIZZLIER ENTERTAINMENTS

On the back of the Mounties' success, other units began to perform at the Show, demonstrating their abilities and law enforcement techniques to the public. The Dog Unit, formed in 1932, was the first to follow, and in 1972 the Police Motor Cycle Display Squad debuted. However, the most popular of all the force's public relations efforts was the Police Museum exhibit. This opened on a large scale in the Mark Foy's Pavilion in 1940, although it appears to have been trialled in a more modest form in 1938 – just after the police's in-house museum closed. Sydney people had been tantalised by newspaper reports of the grizzly contents of this museum for years, but it was strictly off limits to the public.

Created in 1910, the collection of weapons and criminal paraphernalia was used to educate trainee officers, but it also contained many items of genuine historical interest, such as the original arrest warrant for the Kelly gang. In the display at the 1940 Show, almost all of the museum's items seem to have been exhibited, including plaster casts of the unidentified victim of the famous Pyjama Girl murder, a case then perplexing police. Not surprisingly, the museum display was an instant sensation. Long queues were a problem. An entry fee was charged with proceeds going to the Police Boys' Club and some very tidy sums were raised. At the 1950 Show over 42,000 adults and 14,000 children were admitted. Nobody seemed concerned about murder weapons and gruesome

IMAGE COURTESY OF JOHN CARNEMOLLA



MARCH 1959 - RAS PRESIDENT SAMUEL HORDERN PRESENTS 'RAS' THE HORSE TO THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, CJ DELANY



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: VICTOR KING CIRCA 1949; LOST CHILDREN'S TENT AT THE 1938 SHOW; MOUNTED POLICE ON PARADE AT THE MOORE PARK SHOWGROUND

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photographs causing nightmares – on Children's Day the area was packed! But it wasn't all ghoulishness. Modern policing methods and scientific aids in criminal detection were explained, with a police lecturer on hand to answer questions about finger printing, ballistics and chemical analysis.

From time to time law enforcement used the opportunity of the exhibit to seek information from the public to help solve crimes, and community policing and safety messages increasingly featured. A special display about road traffic accidents and drink driving in 1954 was perhaps overdue, with NSW road deaths running at about 700 per year.

In those pre-internet, pre-TV days, the Show was a very effective way for the police to communicate with a broad spectrum of people.

The Police Scientific Exhibition and Museum, as it was later named, disappeared from the Show by the early 1960s, turning up again as a fully fledged public museum in 1992 at its present location in the old Water Police Courts in Phillip Street, Sydney.

ON THE BEAT

At any mass public gathering police are needed, but at the Show some law enforcement tasks are unique. In the old days at Moore Park, police were vital to coordinate access and parking and had their own scale model of the Showground to help with planning. Escorting 'cash wagons', overseeing closing hours of sideshows and bars, assisting with the marshalling of Grand Parades and reuniting lost children with parents

were some of their jobs. Getting patrons to leave the Members' Bar was apparently tricky. Technically the bar was not a public place within the meaning of the Liquor Act, so although police routinely ordered everyone out, they weren't necessarily obeyed!

As well as performing, Mounted Police have always had a very practical role, carrying out daily patrols and helping with crowd control, but also acting as bodyguards. Each year at the Show's opening ceremony the Mounties escort the horse-drawn vehicle carrying the Vice-Regal. While it all looks ceremonial, the Troopers are very much operating as the close-quarters security detail – a very big responsibility, especially when the dignitaries are members of the Royal Family.

A police station has always been provided at the Showground for officers to work from, and at Moore Park facilities even included a cell. Extra capacity has never been far away, however, with local stations at Darlinghurst and now at Flemington working closely in support.

RAS THE HORSE

When the Acting Commander of the Mounted Unit, Kylie Riddell, led the Musical Ride at the 2016 Show, she rode out on a police horse called RAS. The 17 hand gelding is the sixth in a line of horses donated by the RAS. The first was sourced in 1959 from Goonoo-Goonoo Station, managed by former RAS Vice-President Dolf Schmidt. The horse was presented to police unbroken, but a year later was fully trained and used for normal police duties.

LOST

For a wily, cash-strapped junior in need of refreshment, taking yourself off to the Lost Children's Tent at the 1950 Show was a good option. That year the 700 lost children who visited the tent consumed more than 60 dozen bottles of drink, 24 gallons of milk, 1000 ice creams, 12 dozen chocolates and innumerable tins of biscuits.

Traditionally, police looked after lost children at the Show at their on-site police station, but by the 1920s there were days when the station was chaos. To handle

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increasing numbers police pitched a tent, which was staffed each year by 'matrons'. Police reports indicate that most stays were short with parents turning up within ten to fifteen minutes. Given the generosity of the hospitality, waiting was usually not too traumatic. In 1909, however, there was one tragic case where the parents of a two-year-old boy could not be found. When public appeals yielded nothing, authorities assumed he'd been abandoned. The child, too young to identify himself, was given the name Sidney Moore, after the Showground. After a short stay in a State institution he was adopted by a family of means, though how he ultimately fared is unknown.

Thankfully, happier stories abound. When this photograph (top left) of police escorting a lost boy was reprinted in 2003, the young tyke in question came forward to identify himself. He was Victor King – well

and truly grown up – and obviously none the worse for his adventure.

NEW ERA

With the move of the Showground to Homebush the closeness of the relationship between the RAS and NSW Police could easily have changed, especially in an era of user pays. But good leadership on both sides prevailed and special agreements were made in regard to the Mounties, who were no longer near neighbours. To offset the cost of services provided at the Show, the RAS offered the Mounted Unit year-round access to stabling. These facilities are used as a second base when on operational patrol in the western suburbs. It's a nice echo of former days when the Mounties needed a home. ■