

**THE 2009 INTERNATIONAL MOUNTED GAMES EXCHANGE  
BY DAVID AND DIANE HARRIS  
AUSTRALIAN COACH AND CHAPERONE**

**Background**

1. The 2009 International Mounted Games Exchange was hosted by Canada and was conducted in the Edmonton / Calgary districts of Alberta from 24 June to 7 July. The four-nation championship was programmed to coincide with both the Canadian Pony Club's 75th anniversary commemorations and the Calgary Stampede.
2. The Australian International Mounted Games team for 2009 comprised:
  - a. Harriet Haddleton – WA,
  - b. Jacob Gliddon – WA;
  - c. Bradley Ward – SA;
  - d. Gareth Farmer – NSW; and
  - e. Rhys Farmer – NSW.
3. David and Diane Harris from NSW were Coach and Chaperone respectively of the team.
4. The Exchange was preceded by a training camp at David and Diane Harris' property at Berrebangalo in NSW, one hour's drive from Canberra. The interstate riders arrived at Canberra Airport on Friday 19 June, while the NSW riders were delivered by parents direct to the Harris' property. At the conclusion of the training camp the team traveled to Sydney by road on 22 June, assisted by Jo Farmer, mother of the two NSW riders. The team overnighted at the Farmer's residence, and Robert Farmer then drove the whole group to Sydney airport to depart early on 23 June.

**Objective of the exchange**

5. The objective of the International Mounted Games Exchange is the meeting, exchange of views and development of better understanding between Pony Club members from the countries taking part, and to broaden the scope of the Pony Club Movement. It is dependent upon good sportsmanship, team spirit and the ability of team members to cheerfully participate in all activities planned, either by the hosting nation or their Coach and Chaperone.
6. From the Australian perspective it is felt that the objectives of the exchange were met and that the experience for all concerned was most positive and rewarding.

**Exchange itinerary**

7. The following activities were conducted:
  - a. **23 June.** 23 June was a 'rest and recovery day' in Edmonton prior to the Exchange commencing.

**Comment:** The rest and recovery day was adopted as a result of previous experience when travelling to North America / UK. The flight from Sydney (nearly 15 hours to Vancouver, followed by a one hour connecting flight to

Edmonton) was crowded with none of the team members able to enjoy any useful sleep. The rest day allowed the team to recover sufficiently from the effects of the trip to commence the Exchange refreshed and ready for a busy schedule.

**For action:** Hotel staff informed Diane Harris that one of the four rooms booked for the Australian team for the night of 23 June had actually been booked for four nights in error. The hotel would only submit an invoice for the single night, but they suggested that the Australian agency (Pony Club Australia?) that originally booked the accommodation should check to ensure that they were not subsequently charged for the additional nights.

- b. **24 – 26 June.** The first three days were spent at Camp Nakamun, about an hour's drive outside Edmonton, to give the participants time to get to know each other. Camp Nakamun offered space, facilities and a wonderful natural environment for the teams to meet and share a variety of events and experiences that formed the basis for the relationships that developed during the Exchange. Planned activities included use of their climbing tower and Zip line (Flying Fox) with the associated instructors and safety officers, supervised canoeing and paddle boat rides, swimming with buoyancy vests off a moored pontoon, swimming in an indoor pool, basketball and volleyball.

**Comment:** These three days allowed the teams to build strong relationships before they were separated for hosting by billet families. This provided an important foundation for the subsequent success of the Exchange.

- c. **26 Jun.** The teams returned to Edmonton by bus. This bus and its driver remained with the touring party for the rest of the Exchange. The teams visited the historical display at Fort Edmonton Park on the return trip, where they learned about the region's history from early colonisation of the Edmonton district by the Hudson Bay Company, through to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the conclusion of this visit, the teams met their Edmonton billet families.
- d. **27 – 29 Jun.** The highlight of this period with the billet families was a 'friendly' mounted games competition on the afternoon of 28 June. This was conducted with scrambled teams and many of the ponies used were subsequently taken to Calgary for the international championship the following week. It was conducted under somewhat trying conditions in a small arena and a number of the ponies were not experienced mounted games ponies. The riders acquitted themselves well and a good time was had by all. The competition was followed by a BBQ with the billet families in attendance. The teams departed by bus for Calgary the following morning.
- e. **29 June – 2 July.** The arrival point in Calgary was Spruce Meadows, the international show jumping facility, where all members were given special Calgary citizenship in accordance with Stampede tradition. The new billet families took team members for two days of regional familiarization. On the afternoon of 2 July billet families delivered their team members to the Mount Royal university campus where the teams were accommodated for the remainder of the Exchange.

- f. **3 July** – Teams took part in the Stampede breakfast and parade through Calgary. In the afternoon and evening team members were given entry to the Stampede and rodeo. Almost without exception, group members purchased tickets to view the evening chuck wagon races and grandstand show, which proved to be an outstanding success.
- g. **4 July.** Teams visited Kananaskis national park.
- h. **5 July.** The day was spent at Spruce Meadows to watch a day of international show jumping. This was followed by dinner at a local pony club, then a familiarisation session with the ponies to be used in the championship, conducted at the championship location of Calgary Polo Club.
- i. **6 July.** The Championship started in fine weather but this deteriorated from about the midway point, with the final races conducted in rain. This challenged riders to ride to the prevailing conditions, adding another valuable dimension to the competition. The day concluded with the final Championship dinner held at Heritage Park in Calgary, with many of the billet families in attendance as well as the teams, team officials and international delegates to the International Mounted Games Committee.
- j. **7 July.** Teams departed Calgary for home locations.
- k. **9 July.** The Australian team arrived in Sydney on the morning of 9 July, having ‘lost’ 8 July in transit, and riders were handed over to parents and nominated responsible adults.

### **Championship results**

- 8. The championship consisted of 16 games run in brackets of four races. The results were:
  - a. First - Australia (having won 10.5 of the 16 races)
  - b. Second - Great Brittan (2.5 wins)
  - c. Third – Canada (3 wins) and
  - d. Fourth - USA

### **Points of Note**

- 9. The following points and observations are made with a view to providing feedback and to suggest how the Exchange might be enhanced in future.
  - a. **Provision of uniforms.** The uniforms provided are smart in design (and coveted by the other teams!) and comfortable to wear. There was, however, a problem with sizes, which could not be rectified in time to provide polo shirts for one member (Di Harris) prior to departure. This was resolved by each of the Farmer brothers giving up one polo shirt, though it proved difficult to cycle the shirts through the laundry regularly in order to wear the team uniform on all the required occasions.

**Recommendation:** Uniforms should be provided to team members with about two weeks to spare before departure, to allow time to address problems such as this.

- b. **Travel Costs.** While Pony Club Australia made an equal contribution to the travel costs of each rider, financial assistance provided to members by State Associations differed between states. It is understood that the two NSW riders had their air fares and associated costs (less spending money) paid for by PCANSW. PCAWA and PCASA could only provide a very limited amount of financial support to their team members.

**Comment:** The cost of traveling to the northern hemisphere to represent Australia in the Exchange is considerable. It would be a shame if the anticipated costs of the Exchange caused potential team members to decline the opportunity to seek selection due to the not insubstantial financial burden for some parents.

**Recommendation:** Pony Club Australia might wish to seek the opinions of all states as to how the level of financial support provided to riders might be more equitable, noting that some state associations are financially stronger than others.

- c. **Code of Conduct.** The code of conduct that the riders signed before departure allowed the Coach and Chaperone to discuss behaviour standards proactively. The behaviour of all team members during the Exchange was a credit to themselves, their parents and Pony Club Australia. That said, the ability to enforce the provision that states that a rider who fails to comply with the code of conduct will be dismissed from the team and sent home immediately is problematic, if not practically impossible. Discussions with Mr Del Zelmer, the coordinator for the Exchange, confirmed that the Canadians / hosts had no mechanisms in place to remove a rider - or coach or chaperone - if such action was warranted in the case of a breach of the code of conduct.

**Comment:** Consequences for inappropriate behaviour need to be appropriate, timely and feasible. If the intention is that a person misbehaving will be returned home, consideration needs to be given to how this is to occur. Should the chaperone accompany a team member being sent home? If so, how can the remaining coach perform both roles if the team is a mixed gender team? Should parents / guardians be asked to commit to the expense of a short notice flight to the Exchange location to escort an offending rider home? If so, parents / guardians would need to confirm they have current passports and that they are prepared to bear the cost of such travel before the team departs Australia. Is it a better option for Pony Club Australia to dispatch one of its own staff to the host country to accompany an offending rider home, at the expense of the relevant parents / guardians? If it is simply not practical to send a rider home, other sanctions should be considered and written into the code of conduct instead.

**Recommendations:** The executive of Pony Club Australia should consider appropriate sanctions for breaches of the Code of Conduct, and how those sanctions might be practically applied, in order to clarify its policy prior to the conduct of the next Exchange. While it may not be necessary for all four countries to adopt the same approach, it is further recommended that Pony Club Australia

consider whether it would be appropriate to seek the views of the other countries on this matter.

- d. **Public speaking.** On the first evening of the Exchange, all team members and staff were asked to introduce themselves to the group and say a few words about themselves. Our Australian team members had practiced this during the training camp that preceded the Exchange, including discussion on the range of matters that might be covered in the introductions, eg thanking the hosts, wishing the other teams good luck, expressing their gratitude for the opportunity to participate, etc. While many members of the other teams were clearly uncomfortable in the public speaking role, our members spoke easily and naturally. This drew favourable comments on more than one occasion from the other countries. The following week in Calgary, one team member and the coach were interviewed by a local television crew and the coach by the local radio station at the Polo grounds. Again, they handled this task with [apparent] confidence.

**Recommendation:** In the package of information provided to team members and staff prior to leaving Australia, Pony Club Australia might consider including advice to the effect that team members should anticipate having to speak publicly, and that preparation for this task is advisable.

- e. **‘Numbered’ competition uniforms.** In a team event such as mounted games, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to recognise individual riders from the sidelines. Numbers on the team ‘bibs’ might serve to enhance spectator interest and enjoyment, and to give recognition to riders when they perform particularly well in aspects of the games.
- f. **Championship ‘Trophy’.** The Australian team won the championship and members were keen to “get their names on the trophy”. At that point it became apparent that there is, in fact, no trophy for this annual competition. Prince Philip has provided a trophy for British National Championships, but there has never been a similar trophy for the international championship.

**Comment:** In discussions between all team coaches and chaperones after the competition concluded, the UK coach and her husband (Marian and Tony Harding) stated their view that if Prince Philip were approached to provide and present a trophy at next year’s international championship (to be held in the UK) he might well consent to do so, other commitments permitting.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that The Pony Club be requested to approach Prince Philip on behalf of the International Mounted Games Exchange (IMGE) committee and ask if he would be prepared to provide, and ideally present, a perpetual trophy at the International Mounted Games Exchange in 2010.

- g. **Championship Award Ceremony.** When the games concluded, results and placings of the four countries were announced, the riders congratulated each other, the ponies were led away, and shortly afterwards the teams boarded the bus to return to the Mount Royal Campus accommodation to prepare for the final

dinner later that evening. This felt like something of an anti-climax, particularly as the winner's sashes were awarded many hours after the competition concluded.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that when we host the 2012 Exchange the championship sashes be awarded in an appropriate ceremony on conclusion of the competition at the games arena. If by then there is also a trophy to be awarded (see sub paragraph d. above), presentation of the trophy could be held over until the final dinner.

- h. **National Saddlecloths.** All teams participating in the competition provided national saddlecloths for the ponies in the first string they rode. Unlike the saddlecloths of the other countries, Australia's saddlecloths were very thin and designed to be used over the top of a more conventional, thicker, saddlecloth. This created some minor problems in that pony owners were not advised to provide a saddlecloth. It was also apparent after the competition that the other countries then presented the saddlecloths to their riders as a lasting memento of representing their country.

**Recommendations.** It is recommended that the Australian saddlecloths be of the thicker type intended to be used without the need for an additional saddlecloth underneath. It is also recommended that these saddlecloths be donated to the Australian team members after the competition.

- i. **IMGE Committee meeting.** The IMGE committee was convened during the Exchange and Australia was not represented. This is understandable as no member of the Executive was on tour and a considerable cost would have been incurred to send an Australian representative to attend just one meeting.

**Comment:** If briefed on the requirements of the Australian Executive, and dependant upon the timing of the meeting, it would have been possible for either the coach or chaperone to represent Pony Club Australia views at the meeting.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that in instances where a member of the Pony Club Australia executive cannot attend the IMGE meeting, that the coach or chaperone of the touring team be briefed on the desired Pony Club Australia outcomes from the agenda items for discussion.

- j. **Riding Activities.** Most riders from all countries expressed a desire to have more horse-related activities, including riding, during the exchange if possible.

**Comment:** When Pony Club Australia conducts this Exchange in 2012 it may be worth including more equestrian related activity in addition to any friendly 'scrambled team' competition, such as the one conducted on this Exchange. To provide a uniquely Australian flavour, something like a Stockhorse Horsemanship Clinic might prove especially interesting for the overseas riders. If the Exchange is to be conducted in NSW, for example, it is considered likely that enough suitable horses with appropriate training could be loaned for this type of activity. The opportunity for Exchange participants to view a campdraft – competition or demonstration – would be another highly suitable activity.

- k. **Wearing of Uniforms.** Dress for the final dinner to celebrate the Exchange and formally announce the Championship results was left to the judgment of individual team staff. This resulted in a 'non-uniform' approach, in that the Australian and US teams attended in national uniform, the Canadian team had decided to buy matching dresses for the event, and the British team was advised to bring suitable non-uniform outfits with them to wear to the dinner. Some riders required to wear uniform to the dinner felt quite uncomfortable in the company of others who were able to 'dress up' for the occasion.

**Comment:** What is worn to this final dinner is probably somewhat irrelevant, as long as all teams have a common approach. The consensus among riders, however, was a strong preference for not wearing their uniforms as they had, by that stage, been wearing team uniforms almost constantly for two weeks.

**Recommendation.** It is recommended that Pony Club Australia write to The hosting Pony Club prior to the next Exchange to seek their guidance on this point, as it seems reasonable that the host country might specify what is expected for the dinner. Team staff from all the national teams in Canada were happy to wear either uniform or other appropriate attire, with a preference for a consistent approach by all teams attending.

- l. **Funding the Exchange.** In a post-competition discussion, Del Zelmer advised the visiting team coaches and chaperones that he and his organising committee had been fundraising and seeking sponsors for the last three years to cover the costs of the Exchange. The two week format of this Exchange, with a combination of billet family hosting and camp/campus accommodation, provides excellent 'balance' between getting to know Canadian Pony Club families while ensuring that team members from the four countries can get to know each other. But this clearly comes at a significant cost, even though there was nothing luxurious about the accommodation provided. The costs of our attendance at the Calgary Stampede, Spruce Meadows and the final dinner (including a 'Wild West' style show), as well as bus hire for about eight days, were also covered by the Canadian Pony Club.

**Recommendation:** With Australia to host the Exchange in 2012, it might be timely for Pony Club Australia to consider an indicative budget, as well as location, as soon as possible to determine whether dedicated fundraising is necessary, and what sponsorship arrangements might be able to be put in place.

### **The Canadian Organisation Structures**

10. The organizing structures the Canadian Pony Club used for the Exchange worked well and may be worth adopting / adapting when it is Australia's turn to host the Exchange in 2012. Structures were:

- a. **Chairperson of the International Mounted Games Exchange.** Mr Del Zelmer was the Chairperson and coordinator of all activities. He was also instrumental in fund raising to support the Exchange. His energy and consideration were invaluable in the senior coordinating role.

- b. **Canadian Pony Club National Chairperson.** As National Chairperson, Mr John Moehring's role was more behind the scenes but he was responsible for the financial planning for the event and ensured that funds were secured and quarantined from previous budgets to allow the Canadian Pony Club to fund the central activities.
- c. **Canadian Pony Club National Prince Philip Games Chairperson.** Mrs Alison Rainford chaired the meeting of coaches after the Championship and was also the Technical Delegate for the Championship.
- d. **Canadian Pony Club Chairperson of Disciplines.** Ms Cheryl Leask was the main coordinator with the Calgary stampede organizers and was responsible for hosting the visit in the Calgary region.
- e. **Alberta North Tour Cordinator.** Mrs Jane Goodliffe was responsible for all aspects of the Edmonton part of the tour. ;
- f. Other positions appointed were:
  - i. Catering coordinator,
  - ii. Ponies coordinator;
  - iii. Safety Officer (included first aid, ambulance and emergency management);
  - iv. Equipment coordinator; and
  - v. Announcer.

### **Conclusion**

11. Our Canadian hosts were outstanding. The tour was thoughtfully organized with a good balance of social interaction with billet families and the other teams, and organized events.

12. The Australian team acquitted themselves well and were very good young ambassadors for Australia. At the Championship dinner speeches, several senior Pony Club representatives commended our young riders on their riding skills and consideration for the horses while competing.

13. Diane and I were honoured to be selected for the role of Coach and Chaperone and would be delighted to be considered again for the task in 2011.

David and Diane Harris  
2009 Australian IMGE Coach and Chaperone

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