

Pictures accompanying the article:opposite; A MINIATURE of the Badminton jump is used during the course.

below; MEMBERS OF SEVENOAKS RIDING CLUB who attended a course under the direction of Colonel Hance, at Redlands.



Proud saga of Sevenoaks Riding Club

From small beginnings to fame – in five years

Though formed only five and a half years ago, the Sevenoaks Riding Club is already considered to be one of the leading clubs of its kind in Britain.

Since it was set up, in October, 1948, the club has gone from strength to strength. Membership has doubled, and attendances and entries at its shows have steadily risen.

In inter-club events – the yardstick by which the success of such clubs is measured – the Sevenoaks club has been constantly moving to the top.

This year came the exciting climax for members, when their selected riders beat the pick of all other riding clubs, to win the enviable title of “the best.”

Scope of the club is immense, for it is the largest in Kent. At present members come for week-end rallies from as far afield as Benenden, Dorking, Crowborough and London.

Biggest bugbear for members who live away from the Sevenoaks district is transport to and from these weekly meetings.

In many cases, this involves hacking five or six miles to the venue on a Sunday morning! Some of the more fortunate members have horse boxes – but they are few.

AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

Object of the club is to create active interest in horses and horsemanship.

During the winter months, there is a series of lectures and visits to various stables and studs while the summer months are filled with all manner of riding exercises and lessons.

And, throughout the year, there is a constant round of social events which keep the non-riding members actively concerned with the working of the club.

Membership at present is nearing the 100 mark – more than double the number that attended the initial meeting – but over half of these are non-riding members.

Founder of the club was Miss Barbara Waters. She knew that, if she could get a crowd of people together, they could make a real success of it.

One day, she spoke of her plans to Miss Elizabeth Franks, and got the enthusiastic answer: “We’ll do it tomorrow.”

But it was not as easy as all that, and the club was not formed by the following day. Their “tomorrow,” however was not far off. Keeness soon overcame the obstacles.

THE OPEN SHOW

Credit for getting over many of the early difficulties must go to Capt. Peter Wolfe-Taylor, who organised the first open show.

It is from this show that the money comes to keep the Riding Club actively working. Up to the present, no hired labour has been used in getting the show organised. All the work has been done by members.

This proud boast will not hold water for much longer, however, for the show has got so big that, this year, people will have to be employed.

The rise to fame of the Sevenoaks Horse Show has been amazing. From small beginnings, it has come to be recognised as one of the best town shows in the country.

The work involved in getting the show organised each year is immense, and plans have to be laid almost a year in advance.

Aim of the organisers is to make the show better and better, and this year they have added two new classes. One is a leading rein class for children and the other is a preliminary round for the national Foxhunter Trophy.

When Miss Waters first formulated her plans, she could not have been as ambitious as the club's recent achievements can now justify.

Among the well known people who have given lectures and tuition to the members are Mr. Schmit-Jensen, the late Capt. Tony Collins, Mr. Sam Marsh, Count Robert Orssich, Colonel, the Hon. Guy Cubbitt, Mrs. V. D. S. Williams, and Colonel Hance.

With all these big names, officials find that prospective members are apt to be put off, because they think that, to join the club, they have to be expert riders.

“But this is not so,” emphatically states joint secretary, Mr. David Sells. “We really do cater for everyone from the most inexperienced rider. And we can supply literally everything – except the horse.”

Acknowledged to be one of the hardest working members in the club's cause is the chairman, Mr. L. Harris of Knockholt.

The Harris family have a lot to do with the success of the Sevenoaks club, for besides Mr. Harris, there is his daughter, Leonie, one of its most accomplished horsewomen.

She has achieved many notable successes. In the Pony Club inter-branch competition, she came second in 1952 and sixth last year, against the top Pony Club riders in Great Britain.

EMINENT MOUNTS

Although there are no nationally known horses in the club, there are many good ones. Among these is Bright Prospect, owned by Miss C. Kendall, of Benenden. This horse has won events at all the leading shows in the country.

Another well known horse is Mr. J. Newby's Silver Gap, a point-to-point winner at Ightham earlier this year.

The club has always been lucky in having as president people intimately concerned with horses. First man to hold this office was the late Lord Mildmay. After his death the post was filled by Mr. Peter Cazalet.

To these two men, the club owes a lot of thanks for they have always given help when it was needed.

But it is not only those mentioned that have made the club "the best." A lot of the credit goes to the members who go to make as enthusiastic a club as one could wish to find.



MEMBERS OF SEVENOAKS RIDING CLUB who attended a course under the direction of Colonel Hance, at Redlands.