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NOV/DEC 2021, ISSUE 19

# Ride On!

*RDA Victoria Update E-Newsletter*



A new instalment of the monthly newsletter to keep you 'in the know' about all things RDAV.

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# From The President

I would first like to wish everyone a happy Christmas and that the new year brings you everything you wish for. Hopefully all our centres will be up and running next year and we will settle into a more normal routine. It will be great to see all our riders back in the saddle and experiencing the joy of riding and being with horses. It will be important for all of us to take time to enjoy our horses and our RDAV community. We deserve it after the year we have had.

RDAV conducted a strategic planning session earlier this year, that some of you attended. The strategic plan will be presented at the AGM. One of the recommendations that came out of the session is the reintroduction of regional coaches to assist the state coaches. It is hoped this will give greater support to the regional centres as well as giving the regional centres a conduit by which they can communicate more directly with the state coaches and the board. I think this will be a great step forward, by taking a step back.

I am looking forward to 2022 as we work together to present a great program for all our riders. A challenge will be for us to meet the demands for our service, which we are often unable to fulfill. I hope you all enjoy the holiday season with your families and friends.

Please feel free to email or phone me if you want to discuss anything

Di Collins  
Interim President, RDA Victoria





# Passing of RDA Life Member Wendy Maplestone

We were so very sad to learn that one of our founding RDA Life Members, Wendy Maplestone, had passed away.

Wendy was an RDA Victoria pioneer, working with Michael Field and Betty Wood to establish the RDA movement in Australia. Wendy was one of the first RDA Victoria representatives to RDA Australia. She was integral to setting up many Centres in Victoria and incredibly generous with her time, knowledge and ongoing donations. She was awarded an A.M. in 1988 for her services to the RDA Organisation.

We will miss her greatly. Our very best wishes go to her family, her fellow RDA Life Members, her friends and to those she mentored and learnt from her wealth of knowledge.

VALE Wendy.



## A Note from Pat Fiskén, Founding Member, RDA Ballarat

Back in August, RDAV received a lovely note from Pat Fiskén, Founding Member of RDA Ballarat. With the passing of Wendy Mapleston, we thought, with Pat's blessing, it would be especially timely to publish her note here:

"Pat Fiskén here, have my 92nd birthday coming up this month must nearly be one of the last "old timers" around.

I received from RDAV in 2018 --A Certificate of Appreciation for 40 years Volunteer Service acknowledging my role "as one of the founding members of RDA Ballarat in 1978". In actual fact I was THE founding member and I had begun RDA the year before in 1977, with the kindness of Bill and Marie Rinaldi who lent me their Riding School ponies and the use of their property, plus the necessary saddlery etc. I had great help from Ballarat Pony club friends Helen Muir and Barbara Gilbert (Cowles).

Olive Blair a well known horsewoman was an early helper, a gruff kind country woman, she took over the saddlery and many tasks regarding the horses and hosted us back at her house nearby where we took our lunch.

Wendy Maplestone was my mentor and had me go to Melbourne to visit the adult riding RDA at the then Police Mounted Horse Barracks and then out to her group to take part in the lessons she ran. I remember her strict orders to stay beside the rider ALWAYS-- which command meant me having to jump over the crossed wooden bars of the poles. The leader unaware she was NOT leading over the centre of the jump. A good learning curve regarding Leading!

Wendy made sure I attended many workshops—mostly in Melbourne—she was a Physiotherapist and dedicated to the ways in which horse riding could help children with various physical problems. Adults as well, some, who had never had any help (this was a long time ago). There was much to learn as a Coach and/or helper. 1978 we formed an official Ballarat Group with the usual committee structure and registered with RDAV as required.

Are you aware that Bill Rinaldi died not so long ago –what was wonderful was he and Marie, both were awarded O.A.M.S, not just for the wonderful help they gave us for 40 + years, trucking in their ponies carefully selected to suit our needs, but taking those ponies to many fundraising events in and around Ballarat.

Ballarat Hospice helped arrange their trip to Government house so they could receive their Honours. Bill died soon after and with hundreds of others we, Ballarat RDA, attended his funeral.

The Rinaldi ponies/horses are there waiting for this pandemic to move out of the way so they can, like us, get back "on the job".

- Pat Fiskén

# RDA Daylesford "proud as punch"

This year International Day of People with Disabilities was the 3rd December - it fell on Daylesford's riding day and so we invited community organizations who had supported us to come and see what we did. The feedback was that they were super-impressed and, despite funding us at times, had not really understood what we did.

The theme for this year's IDPWD was "Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities towards an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 world" - a mouthful indeed. But we were excited to get a text to say Noah Barlow (age 11) was unable to attend the session because ehe had just been named school captain for 2022 at his local primary school. Some of you might remember Noah - his photo is on the front cover of the 2019 RDAV Annual Report. Noah was stoked and so were we - especially his team of Wendy, Sally, Lainey and Profit, who heard him practice his campaign speech whilst riding a few weeks before. So Noah was demonstrating the Leadership theme, as do our riders Graeme Downie and Lainey Curr (who is also our RDA Daylesford vice president ) both of whom also show leadership in the community as members of the Hepburn Shire Disability Advisory Committee.

RDA is proud of them all - putting their hands up for leadership roles!



Noah Barlow



## An interview with Meg Glenn Wade

Date: 29/10/2021

During our 50th year anniversary we look back and reflect on some the amazing people who have been involved with RDA Victoria along the way.

One of these people is Meg Wade, an equestrian from as far back as she can remember. Meg is legendary in the horse



world. Among some of her many accolades she is the four times winner of the famous southern hemisphere 160km endurance ride, the Tom Quilty Gold Cup, a ten time Australian Endurance Rider of the Year, a three time team bronze medallist at the World Championships, a fourth individual placegetter at the 2002 World Championships and FEI Against All Odds Award winner in 2011

I was lucky enough to be able to speak with Meg by telephone and, as I explained to her, being a Brit and a show jumper in my earlier days, I know very little about endurance riding!

Interviewer: "What got you into riding horses?"

Meg: "I grew up on a small farm west of Sydney and horses were always a part of it. I went to pony club, did some camp drafting and was lucky enough to be taught by John Faye, a very good show jumper. The highest I ever jumped was 5ft, it was HUGE! I even did a bit of showing, so I had the chance to explore many different aspects of equestrian in my younger years."

In my very early twenties, I discovered long distance cross country skiing. The races would be between 80 – 100kms. It required high levels of fitness."

Meg then discovered the sport of kayaking. "I entered the single kayak Murray marathon which was a 400km race. These sports taught me how to train myself to peak fitness for endurance racing."

At this point Meg's husband Chris joined her, bearing fresh coffee. In her late 20's Meg moved back to the family farm to help her mother after the sad passing of her father. It was during this time, when holding a horse for a vet to do its teeth, she learned about an endurance race on horseback. Meg had never heard of endurance riding before. The vet explained that it was a 100 mile ride being held west of Sydney. Three months after hearing of this, Meg completed her first ever 40km ride. Meg could ride well and she had the experience of training for long distance sports, so it was not long before she jumped in the deep end and took on an 80km ride!

Interviewer: "How long would an 80km ride take?"



Meg: "It depends on the terrain. I have completed one in 3hrs & 20mins. I think I won that one actually! But they can take over six hours.

After the 80km, I jumped even further into the deep end and took on the 160km ride. I LOVED it! and everything I had learned in the past led me to this point."

Interviewer: "You have been competing all around the world?"

Meg: "Yes, and while competing I met my husband Chris." You could hear the emotion as Meg spoke about Chris. She recomposed, "he was on a VERY good looking grey stallion"

Interviewer: "So it was the horse that attracted you before the man? Haha!"

Meg: "Well he wasn't bad either 😊"

Interviewer – "So how long ago was it that you met? "

Meg: "I can't remember, a long time, Chris when was it?" Meg and Chris both decided on

1988 as neither could remember accurately.

Interviewer: "And he still brings you coffee! There is clearly some magic there 😊. So, we have found out who the man is who has your heart, what about a horse, is there one special horse in your heart?"

Meg: "Not just one no, there have been so many special ones. I breed horses now and we have twenty-seven foals due this year. Mostly Arabians, but also part-breds and Anglo Arabs. These horses are bred for endurance. Their genetics have been carefully selected to breed horses with steady low heart rates."

Interviewer: "What happened back in 2009 when you had your accident?"

Meg's voice broke a little as she began to recount the events of 12 April 2009.

Meg: "I was on the last leg of the competition, a 120km ride at Tumbarumba. I had just passed the check point when one of the officials spotted my horse without a rider. I was found on the ground, and I have no memory this, but I had a very bad head injury. Luckily one of the of the ground jury, Dr Patricia Mackay, rushed to my aid. Trish and I have remained good friends to this day.

A breathing tube was inserted and a helicopter was called for. I was airlifted to Canberra hospital. I was in an induced coma to start with. When I woke up I was talking but I had post traumatic amnesia so I can't remember anything about that time. PTA that lasts for 7 days is classed as severe, mine lasted for 3 months! As I got better there was talk of me moving to a rehab facility as I couldn't walk.



They wanted to send me to a hospital in Sydney but my family had heard that the Epworth in Melbourne was the best in Australia. Unbeknownst to me, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum from the UAE stepped in and covered my medical bills as it was not covered by TAC”

“I was in the Epworth for 9 months and it was there, as part of their rehab program, that they suggested I go to RDA. I was introduced to RDA Bundoora. It was the most amazing place and all the volunteers were so wonderful. I would go there once a week. It was a very happy place for me.”



Interviewer: “Do you still ride Meg?”

Meg: “No, not anymore. I am sixty now with a brain injury and I had amazing success before. I do not need to ride anymore. I am still very involved with horses though. We are taking eight horses out to an endurance competition next month. Four of them will be doing the 80km and the other four will be competing in the 40km. We have a great team of staff and people who have been riding for us for many years.”

Interviewer: “Do you still get that buzz even though you are not competing yourself?”

Meg: “Yes..... but it’s totally different.”



Interviewer: "One last question, if someone was thinking of going to RDA and wasn't quite sure, what would you say to them?"

Meg: "DO IT!"



# Update from RDA Peninsula

It's been a sad year at RDAP. Not only have we been shut down because of the pandemic, we have also lost three of our stalwart volunteers to retirement.

We bid farewell this year to Carmel who moved to sunny QLD. Carmel was the RDAP president for many years as well as being in charge of horse welfare. When we lost our grounds in Merricks, Carmel found Amandiri and organised sheds, tradesmen and working bees to establish the property to the beautiful grounds we now have that we are all so proud of. Carmel found new horses for our riders, trained them and was always available when there were problems. Sick horses went to Carmel's private property where they were brought back to health with more love and care than seemed possible. And the horses that sadly could not recover went to their next life with Carmel beside them guiding the way. One of Carmel's last jobs as president was to find loving forever homes for our horses at the start of the pandemic, not an easy task to rehome horses, but as always, Carmel got the job done. Once RDAP could ride again Carmel found four new horses ready to go for our riders. We will miss Carmel and will always remember how much she contributed to RDAP – we hope QLD appreciates her as much as we did.

Also retiring after 7 years is our Treasurer Sue P. The role of treasurer is always one of the most difficult committee positions to fill - it seems no-one likes to do paperwork. The role of treasurer is also one of the most important roles in the centre. Sue worked hard to keep the money coming in so the centre could look after our horses at the best level possible. The RDAP horses are well fed, teeth checked, new rugs, new equipment and received regular massages. There was also always money available for vet bills and farrier when required. This level of care was all possible because Sue took on the mundane task of raising rider invoices each month, and making sure all the bills were paid on time. Thank you Sue, we really appreciate all the work you did in the background to keep the centre running.

Also retiring as maintenance manager is Paul, although luckily for us he will continue to be on the committee. Most of us complain about having to mow our front yards, but Paul has maintained the grounds at RDAP for over 13 years. Paul could often be seen whipper snipping and mowing, getting rid of noxious weeds and making sure everything was safe for our volunteers and riders. Often Paul would come to RDA with the intention of mowing, but seeing that we were short of volunteers he would instead help our riders, and come back another day to do the mowing. Thank you Paul for all you have done in the background to keep RDAP looking so beautiful and safe. I am very glad you will still be on the committee as your love for the centre and its horses and riders is unapparelled.

We have been lucky enough to find wonderful volunteers to fill these spots and we look forward to hopefully returning to riding again in the new year.



# RDAV & Child Safe

RDA Victoria have been working with the Commission of Children and Young People to keep our organisation up to date with being a Child Safe organisation. Our web site has been updated with information and resources to assist Centres in meeting compliance requirements with the seven Child Safe standards and current legislation.

The link to our Child Safe page can be found here: <https://www.rdav.asn.au/child-safe-resources/#:~:text=Child%20Safe%20Overview,a%20safe%20and%20happy%20experience.&text=Strategies%20to%20identify%20and%20reduce,participation%20and%20empowerment%20of%20children>.

To further assist with keeping Centres up to date, we will be running Child Safe Zoom and face to face information sessions in January and February 2022. Information about these sessions will be publicised in our newsletter, on social media and via email to our Centres and coaches.

These sessions will assist with meeting current legislative requirements and help with the transition to the eleven new Standards which will come into force 1 July 2022. More information can be found here: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/news/new-child-safe-standards-start-in-victoria-on-1-july-2022-to-better-protect-children/>

RDA Victoria are committed to making our organisation a safe and friendly place for children and adults and are dedicated to ensuring high standards of service.



# Spring Racing Comes to RDA Daylesford

The Spring Racing Carnival was celebrated at Daylesford RDA in November. It was our third week back after months of lockdown and riders and volunteers made the most of Melbourne Cup Week participating in the Daylesford Cup and Fashions on the Arena.

Riders in each session could participate in four races designed to test and demonstrate various equestrian skills. Results are included below with Lainey the undisputed champion in Slowest without stopping (which demonstrates riders' control of their horse). Other races were bending, timed obstacles and the highlight, the hotly contested Daylesford Cup. Leroy and Jordon (two of the horses) showed their experience in the Advanced bending race, knowing that a turn for home usually meant "go"! Riders were evenly matched in their session times and all showed great skills, including those who were back for the first time after lockdown.

In the Daylesford Cup riders have to carry a cup of water over a 50m distance, with the winner being the rider who finishes fastest and spills the least water.

Each session finished with Fashions on the Arena. Millinery was the order of the day with Myr (advanced), Billie (intermediate) and Isobella (beginner) winning Best Hat for riders. Liesl was successful in the Best Volunteer Hat category with Wendy a worthy runner-up.



It was a fun day, perfect weather and everyone was excited to see the return of 3 more riders, having emerged from lockdown and now fully vaccinated.

## Daylesford RDA Spring Racing Carnival Results

### Slowest without stopping

Beginners: 1. Mackenzie, 2. Isobella, 3. Noah, 4. Spencer (stopped))

Intermediate: 1. Billie 2. Lil, 3. Annie

Advanced: 1. Lainey, 2. Adam, 3. Myr

### Bending

Beginners: 1. Isobella, 2. Spencer, 3. Mackenzie, 4. Noah

Intermediate: 1. Lil, 2. Annie 3. Billie

Advanced: 1. Myr, 2. Adam, 3. Lainey

### Obstacle Race:

Beginners: 1. Isobella = 2. Spencer & Mackenzie 3. Noah

Intermediate: 1. Lil, 2. Annie, 3. Billie

Advanced: 1. Lainey, 2. Adam, 3. Myr

### Daylesford Cup

Beginners: = 1. Isobella, Mackenzie, Noah 2. Spencer

Intermediate: 1. Lil, 2. Annie, 3. Billie

Advanced: 1. Adam, 2. Lainey, 3. Myr



# RDA Shepparton Article

An article from Shepparton News featuring RDA Shepparton's long time Volunteer Frank O'Meara

## He loves to help out FRANK, 90, STILL ENJOYS VOLUNTEERING AT RIDING FOR THE DISABLED ASSOCIATION

By Rosa Ritchie

The joy of helping a nervous young rider find their confidence never grows old for Frank O'Meara, 90, who has been volunteering at Shepparton Riding for the Disabled Association for 25 years.

Mr O'Meara wasn't ready to stop working when he retired from farming in 1996 and, having previously supported RDA by loaning horses and donating hay bales, the next step was to offer his time.

Sharing his lifelong love of horses at RDA helped Mr O'Meara adjust to a new phase of life and he feels he has gained just as much as he has given over the years.

"Probably the most rewarding thing is when you put a kid on a horse and they're scared, and then in a couple of weeks they just open up — as soon as they see the horse they smile and they love getting on," he said.

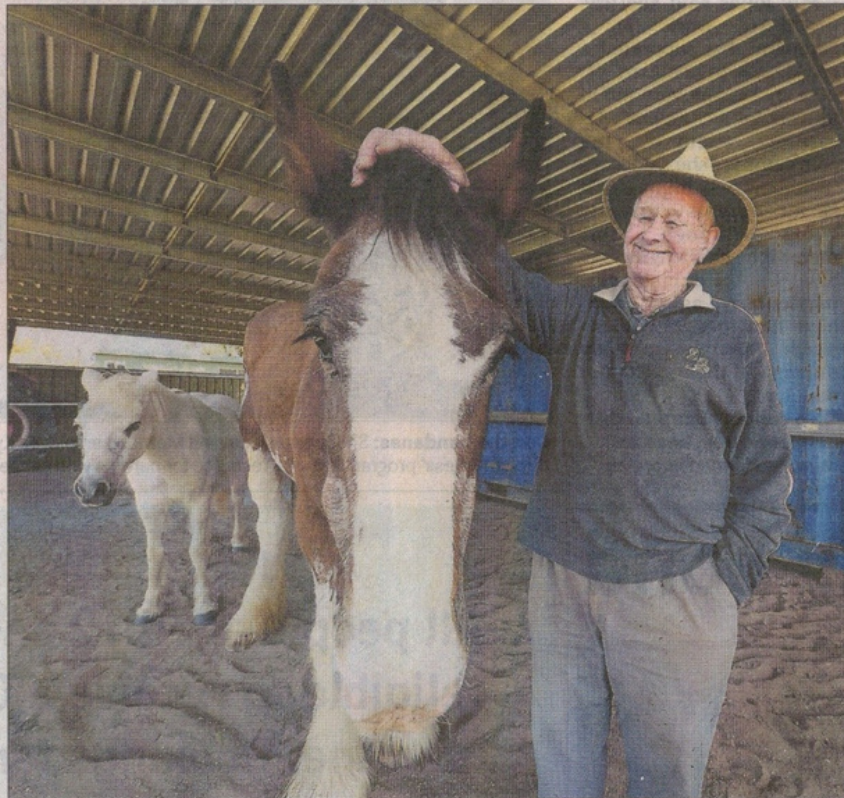
"I think it's been more beneficial for me, adjusting from the farm life, to come down here."

Mr O'Meara doesn't consider RDA riders to be lacking ability — they just do things differently.

Some have no hesitation mounting the challenge, others take a few weeks to warm up to the idea.

When he recalls the hundreds of people he's met over decades of volunteering, a boy called Michael is the first to come to mind.

Instead of sitting in a saddle, it was more



**Star attraction:** Molly the Clydesdale has a lot of fans at Shepparton RDA, according to Frank O'Meara.

comfortable for Michael to lie on his stomach on a bareback horse covered with a rug, while resting his head on the rump and his feet up near the shoulders.

"To see the way he adapted was really just marvellous," Mr O'Meara said.

"He got to the point where he was saying when to go and when to stop.

"Unfortunately, a few

years later he died... He was one who really was special."

Riding or simply spending time around horses can have therapeutic benefits, physically and psychologically.

The movement of a horse strengthens muscles throughout a rider's body.

"Every muscle in your body works while horse riding," Mr O'Meara said.

In some cases, riding has led to increased mobility for riders with physical handicaps, according to RDA Victoria.

A stock horse named Socks was the most outstanding RDA steed in Mr O'Meara's view — he lived to 36 and was "sound as a bell".

"He was the one horse above all the others," he said.

"I liked them all, but Socks was just special. He was such

a lovely horse."

Mr O'Meara is still the first person to arrive at the horse sheds most days.

"I've always come early to catch the horses, harness and groom them," he said.

Although he's no longer leading horses for riders, he's not short of hands-on jobs — Mr O'Meara helps out in the garden, gets the heaters started in winter and fills the urn before morning tea.

He had to pass on the responsibility of dressing up as Santa at Christmas years ago, after his face became too familiar to the children.

Surveying the RDA facilities at Wanganui Rd, Mr O'Meara could tell you the story behind every fence, shed, rose bush or piece of tack on-site — who donated what, how long it's been there and why it exists.

The amenities were bare bones in the early years.

"We didn't have the facilities then like we've got now, nothing like it," Mr O'Meara said.

Today RDA Shepparton boasts an accessible toilet block, a proper kitchen, more fencing and shelter for the horses and, most recently, a picnic bench which Mr O'Meara and the Katandra West and District Men's Shed helped arrange.

Last year RDA could only run two rides and this year there have been fewer than 10.

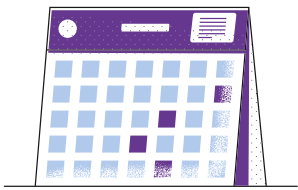
Mr O'Meara looks forward to seeing riders take the reins again and, as a RDA life member, he'll keep volunteering as long as possible.

Source: Shepparton News, written by Rosa Ritchie.

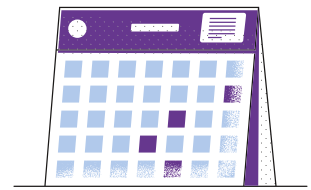
# Training Updates

## Training Ideas Wanted

The Training & Competition Committee meet bi-monthly and are looking for training ideas, so please forward any ideas to:  
[events@rdav.asn.au](mailto:events@rdav.asn.au)



## Event Calendar



**We have some exciting events planned for 2022 - to be advised in the new year!**



RDA Victoria is supported by the Victorian State Government

RDA Victoria Patron The Honourable Linda Dessau A.M., Governor of Victoria

If you have anything you would like to share with our community please email [events@rdav.asn.au](mailto:events@rdav.asn.au)  
Remember to like us on Facebook and to check in for further updates and information!



RDA Victoria - Riding for the Disabled Association of Victoria