

Monash Croquet Club 1999-2014

The Monash Croquet Club was established in March 1999 with experienced VCA croquet players living in the city of Monash and is now the seventh largest in Victoria. Incorporation was financed with \$5.00 membership fees and the Model Rules adopted as the Constitution.

In July, a two year probationary lease was secured for a disused hockey field at Electra Reserve in Ashwood with sharing of the pavilion with the Dog and Doberman Obedience Club. The low rental and court maintenance helped financially. Mallets were borrowed from VCA and secondhand equipment purchased with \$100 loans from some members who were later reimbursed from a Vic Grant. Until completion of a Multipurpose Building in 2010, except for the construction period, the Club functioned from a small kitchen/store area and hired halls for AGMs and other functions. Gazebos, umbrellas and chairs are still required for courtside comfort. Equipment was transported on converted golf buggies and shopping jeeps, down a rough track to two small courts situated on the flattest part of the playing field. Now a concrete path and trolleys facilitate transportation.

By the first "Come and Try" in October, the original group had dwindled and enthusiastic newcomers were recruited. Coaching was assisted with visits to sympathetic clubs and some sessions arranged with top coaches. Members endured the difficulties and had fun, learning croquet with relaxed recreational games in a warm and friendly club atmosphere. Weather permitting, a break was enjoyed with "a cuppa under the gum trees." Nowadays members enjoy a cuppa in a spacious modern dining area with a great outlook.

In 2001, Monash City Council granted a permanent lease and added the first of two large Santa Ana courts. The formation of a Pennant team encouraged better court maintenance and Royal Blue became the club colour. Gateball was played but short-lived and Association remained the club's game of choice until overtaken by Golf croquet. The Club's participation in Pennant ended in 2006. However, the Annual Association Tournament continues and a handful of members still play socially.

With participation in Golf Shield since 2004, ongoing coaching and referee training, the club's general standard of play has improved. John van der Touw's progression from Shield to world status has been highly commendable as have the Club's two premierships and three runners-up wins in Shield. In 2007, an Annual Golf Croquet Tournament was introduced and Monash won the Regional Bear Cup Challenge from Kew, holders for six years.

The Club's Community activities have a good track record in the ACTIVE Monash Club of the Year Award. Shortlisted in 2005 and 2012, the Club won in 2009.

Increasing membership, fundraising, grants and sponsorship have maintained the club's financial viability. Significant fundraisers have been Hamper Raffles at the Annual Christmas Luncheon, a substitute for Opening Day since 2000; a Fashion Parade and Luncheon in 2001 raised over \$1000 for installation of disused bus shelters and later, annual Opportunity Shop duty continually raised substantial funds.

The Club has enjoyed strong support from its members in both organizing and attending popular club luncheons and twilight BBQs which are regularly highlighted in *Monash Matters*, the Club's monthly newsletter.

Reen Hancorne is the Club's founder and only life member. In 2011, her contributions were honoured with the annual "Reen Hancorne Trophy" for beginners, one of several intraclub competitions.

Good Council ground maintenance has transformed parkland into playable courts. Limited irrigation, poor drainage and irregular contours present challenges which most players accept graciously in the true spirit and love of the game. The Club, in a delightful setting, is a great source of recreational enjoyment, friendship and promotion of croquet.

As George Latham, VCA secretary, wrote in 2006 - "Monash Croquet Club is one of Croquet's biggest successes."