

The Rifle Club a 100 years on

By PETER LYONS

On May 25, 1885, the Hamilton Rifle Club offered trophies and prize money valued at 51 pounds (about \$102) for its first ever Queen's Birthday prize shoot.

And on Saturday, just one 100 years and a day later, the club will hold its centenary Queen's Birthday shoot with prize money and trophies valued at \$1050.

The club still has the original poster advertising the inaugural shoot and it contains some fascinating information.

For instance, one of the biggest prizes of the day was a Morocco leather bound History of England, valued at two pounds five shillings.

Other interesting items were a hand sewing machine valued at three pounds 10 shillings and Sac suit to measure, costing four pounds 10 shillings.

The major prize was a tea and coffee service valued at six pounds.

But some of the more interesting items appeared in the list for those who finished down the order — 17th placegetter received a prize in the main event.

Two sucking pigs were provided and it stipulated they could be "dead or alive". They were valued at 10 shillings each.

One lucky shooter won a fancy vest, made to measure and valued at two pounds and there was also a "handsome smoking cap" offered.

Other prizes varied from an American axe, to two bottles of Irish whisky, six tins of assorted fish, a pair of racing spurs and a Meerschaum pipe.

Comparing the respective values of some of the prizes compared to present day prices indications are the 1885 figures had increased some 40 fold by 1984, making the first shoot a pretty big affair.

the rifle club, which was formed in 1884, has now had three different ranges. The first was at Mt Pierrepoint, the second at Mt Balmbridge and the current range — which has been burnt out and rebuilt twice — is on the Muddy Creek flat, off Mt Napier Rd south of the city.



The Hamilton Rifle Club has designed and made special cloth badges, illustrated above, to mark the centenary Queen's Birthday shoot.

The present range was opened in 1911.

Club records show that in 1915, when those wishing to join the army had to have experience at musketry, practice was organised by the then club captain, Mr Albert White.

The club conducted prize meetings on a regular basis from 1927 to 1937.

It then went into recess during the second world war and later lost its range — in 1945 — though a bushfire.

It was out of action until rebuilt in 1948.

The No 10 Rifle Union conducted a two day prize meeting at the range on Easter Saturday and Monday with the Hamilton club holding its shoot on the Tuesday.

This arrangement continued until 1964 when the Hamilton club held its final prize shoot.

In October 1964 the No 10 Rifle Union became the No 13 Western District Rifle Union and in 1970 was renamed the No 13 Western District Rifle. And this association still conducts the annual Australia Day shoot at Hamilton.

Like all clubs which survive that many years, the club has had its share of ups and downs.

Possibly its strongest period was between the two world wars when it had up to 32 members.

However, its most successful competitive period was in the 1960s when it reigned supreme in coached teams matches throughout Victoria.