
The first South Australian race meeting was held on New Year's Day in 1838, and although successful, it was not repeated until the following August. The second meeting was as successful as the first and prompted the formation of the Turf Club of South Australia on 28 August, 1838.

The Turf Club was the first of several short lived organisations, with the first South Australian Jockey Club (S.A.J.C.) being established in January, 1856. The S.A.J.C. conducted meetings for several years, but financial difficulties led to its dissolution in June, 1861. It was replaced with a committee which was commissioned to draw up a constitution for a new club. The committee also accepted the responsibility of running further race meetings, these being held at the Thebarton race course. However, financial difficulties continued to plague the organisation and it ceased operations altogether in 1868.

In July 1873, another meeting of interested persons established another S.A.J.C. Once again the club ran into difficulties, primarily through a lack of organisation. In 1874, Sir Thomas Elder initiated moves which resulted in the formation of the S.A.J.C. Company whose purpose was to establish a race course at Morphettville. This goal achieved, the S.A.J.C. signed a lease for the use of the course, but owners of the Thebarton course continued to operate in opposition, causing problems for the club in its new location.

The introduction of the totaliser in 1879 proved to be a successful move on the part of the S.A.J.C., and the financial situation improved. However, the repeal of the Totaliser Act in 1884, which made all forms of betting illegal, proved disastrous for the club. It again disbanded only to resurface in 1889 when the use of the totaliser was again legalised.

The collapse of the S.A.J.C. in 1884 did have long term benefits. With the cessation of racing at Morphettville, the course was sold, and eventually the ownership ended up in the hands of the S.A.J.C. committee. For the first time the club owned its own course, and this appears to have been a turning point in the fortunes of the organisation.

Government legislation again threatened the club's existence, when in 1933 off-course bookmakers and betting shops were legalised through licenses issued through the Betting Control Board. This action, together with radio broadcasts of races, caused a dramatic fall in attendance figures. The war-time ban on racing imposed by Premier Playford in 1942 therefore had relatively little effect. The end of the war saw the amendment of the Lottery and Gaming Act which closed all betting shops in the metropolitan areas, and the fortunes of the S.A.J.C. again rose.

The introduction of the Totaliser Agency Board (TAB) in 1967 saw the re-introduction of legalised off-course betting yet again. The TAB is composed of members of racing bodies and the government, with profits being distributed according to a formula established by the Board. Thus the S.A.J.C. is not threatened as previously, being in a position to contribute to policy decision and share in the profits.

(From *The History and Growth of the South Australian Jockey Club*, 1955.)

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- Photographs of race meetings held by the S.A.J.C.
at Morphettville Race Course. 1
1879-1977. 3 cm.
- Programme of the first day of the Adelaide Races. 2
1851. 1 item.
[Programme for 4 November 1851 printed on silk. Formerly A957].
- Programmes of meetings held by the S.A.J.C., each printed on a card. 3
1838-1867. 49 cards.
[Formerly V1115].