

### **What an Achievement!!**

From time to time a rider/horse combination comes along which seems to stand out above the rest. One such combination is 11 year old Amy McMaugh and her pony Ballantrae Hoopla (Ballantrae Golden Syrup x Connemara Park Hilda) from Ellerslie, near Mortlake in South-west Victoria.

The McMaughs purchased Hoopla, or 'Biscuit' as she is more commonly known, as a 5 year old who had just been broken in. The pony had earlier been purchased from the Hamilton Horse Sales where she had been sent along with a number of other Connemaras.

It took a couple of years for young Amy to grow into her new pony, but this year they have become a formidable partnership and have taken to the eventing and showjumping circuits with incredible success.

Amy and Hoopla began the 2005 Wannon Zone eventing season with a win at the second event, Heywood ODE. This was followed by wins at Warrnambool ODE, the Combined ODE and Emu Creek ODE.

Other major successes include the PCAV Official Horse Trials 2 day event at Werribee which included the best from Victoria; Amy and Hoopla came first overall. At Mount Gambier they entered an Under 14 years 4-bar competition coming equal first, jumping a height of 1.15 meters.

Recently at the Warrnambool Show, they went double clear at 90 cm and double clear at the Open Junior Jump starting at 85 cm. They picked up numerous ribbons in the Pony Club ring and finished the day as overall winner of the Working Hunter competition. An amazing effort considering they had never previously done working hunter.

Amy and Hoopla will begin the 2006 eventing season at Grade 3 level, having been almost unbeatable at Grade 4. With Hoopla being such a great all-round pony they should have another successful year.

We often speak about the versatility of the Connemara pony and the best way of promoting the breed. You can't get much better advertising than Ballantrae Hoopla and her talented young rider, Amy McMaugh.

As a footnote to the above article, there are a number of Connemaras out and about doing their bit to promote the breed in the South-west of Victoria and these will be featured in future articles.

PS: Connemara Park Hilda is still alive and well and living at 'Green Hills'. Is she, at 32 years of age, the last surviving pony from Connemara Park stud??