

# YALLOURN YEAR BY YEAR

## 1926



The first sod in the Victorian Government's ambitious scheme, to establish a power generation plant at Yallourn, was turned almost a century ago (1921); and for the next six decades, the township of Yallourn 'took root, bloomed, withered and died'....

*"Yallourn was swallowed by the coal mine it was built to serve"...*  
*'The Herald Sun' May 2016.*

In this series for the Virtual Yallourn website, the monthly activities, shown in each year, are not necessarily momentous occasions in the town's history but are simply an attempt to (i) highlight the personalities of the town and (ii) list the myriad of events that made the local (and often national) news.

The walk down 'Memory Lane' (not to be confused with Meadow Lane which ran off Latrobe Avenue) begins in the year of 1925 when the plans of the SEC were well underway; and the unique 'garden town' of Yallourn was taking shape and creating interest far and wide. This article, regarding the year 1926, includes a famous photograph of Sir John Monash holding a lump of brown coal at the mine site at Yallourn.

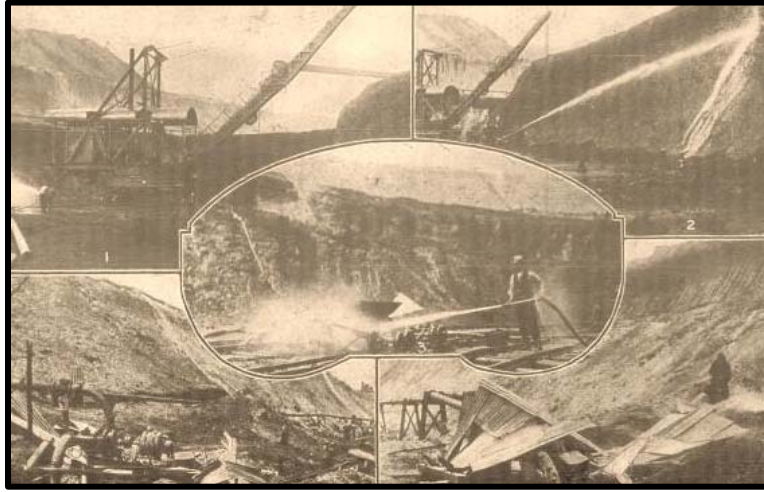


# 1926



*The force and the source: Monash in 1926, aged 60, holds a lump of brown coal at the Yallourn site, two years after electricity began to flow. Only someone with Monash's vision, political skills and drive could have built such a successful industry from scratch.*

- **JANUARY:** The Yallourn Fire Brigade participated at the Eastern Districts Fire Brigade Carnival at Chelsea. The history of the Yallourn brigade makes interesting reading; and the comments by the Captain of the Brigade, Mr C.S. Fenner, in 1924 highlighted the commitment of the volunteers in providing such an essential service for the burgeoning township of Yallourn.  
Well-known family names in the Yallourn Fire Brigade during those times included: Wiggins, Tate, Wyatt, White, Webb, Culhane, Fraser, Folletti, Greville, Given, Stewart, O' Bearn, Foreman and Chatham. Other articles and photos of the Yallourn Brigade can be found on this website.
- **FEBRUARY:** February 1926 underscored the importance of the volunteer fire brigade, as mentioned above. During that month, the settlement of Yallourn was threatened by wild bushfires; and hundreds of SEC workers, from the town and camps, were called out to fight the conflagration. There was extensive damage to property but fortunately, there was no loss of life.

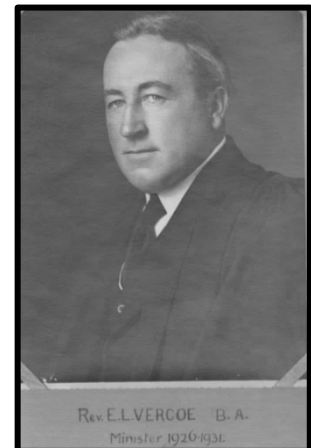


This montage of photographs showing aspects of the fires in Yallourn in February 1926 was published in 'The Australasian' newspaper on February 27<sup>th</sup> on Page: 72.

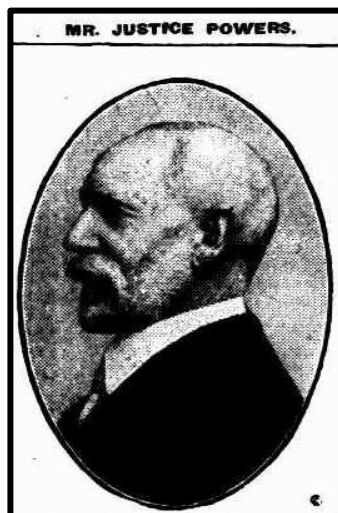
- **MARCH:** Yallourn was in the news across the nation when Reverend Edward Leslie Vercoe (of Yallourn) was appointed, by the Methodist Conference, to a newly created and most prestigious position in the Australian Capital Territory.

Rev. Vercoe's background story was compelling. He was a former blacksmith, gold miner and later saw action with the 4<sup>th</sup> Australian Artillery Brigade during World War: 1.

Following his arrival at Yallourn in 1923, Rev. Vercoe lived at the Eastern Camp; and it is documented that he conducted his religious services in camps, homes and schools. Rev. Vercoe was 'no shrinking violet' when it came to physical labour and the Moe Historical Society published an amusing tale about his 'day on the shovel' at the Yallourn works.

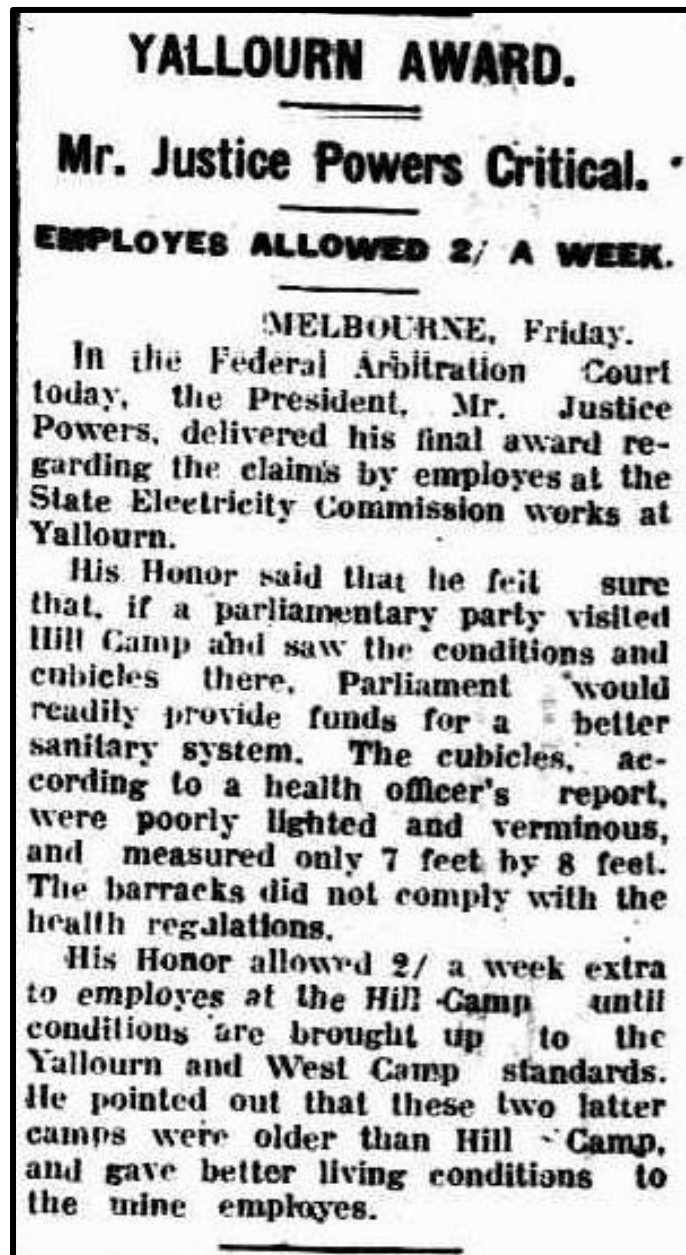


- **APRIL:** Mr Justice Powers (shown below) began his investigations into the sanitary conditions at the Hill Camp at Yallourn.



The hearings received extensive coverage throughout Victoria; and at one point in the proceedings, the workers' shacks were described as 'verminous.' In summary, it is enough to say the standards and conditions for most workers in the camp, were simply 'frightful.'

The extract below was taken from the 'Recorder' May 1<sup>st</sup> 1926. Page: 1



- **MAY:** A Yallourn musical group known as the 'Yallourn Flotilla' received glowing praise for its fine performance at a Jazz Ball, which was held at the Traralgon Mechanics Hall.
- **JUNE:** The new conveyor belt, for loading and unloading coal at the Brown Coal Mine, was the 'centre of discussions' when it began operations at the pit. The new belt could load 36 rail tracks with some 575 tons of coal in one eight-hour shift.

- **JULY:** Abattoirs were being constructed at Yallourn by the Electricity Commission to ensure the provision of fresh meat for the township and camps. A story regarding the Yallourn abattoirs and butchery can be found on this website.

## Yallourn Butchery

TRARALGON SLAUGHTER YARDS  
TO BE LEASED.

The Electricity Commission intend to supply Yallourn with meat. Abattoirs are being erected at Yallourn, but pending their erection, they have secured (through Theo. B. Little & Co. (Traralgon) Pty., Ltd.), a lease of the slaughter yards previously used by Mr Webb, butcher, Traralgon, and owned by Mr W. McKenzie. Supplies of stock have also been purchased through the firm. Operations will commence forthwith, and a shop opened at Yallourn.

Source: 'Morwell Advertiser' July 9<sup>th</sup> 1926 Page: 2

- **AUGUST:** A meeting of interested local women explored the possibility of forming a Yallourn Branch of the Mothers' Union. The meeting was held at the Church of England. The Mothers' Union was originally formed in England in the 1880's; and the first Australian meeting of the Union was held in 1892 in Cullenswood, Tasmania.

### Mothers' Union at Yallourn.

An interesting meeting was held at the Church of England, Yallourn, last week, when a branch of the Mother's Union was formed. A member from the central council was asked to attend, and in the hall there was an excellent attendance of mothers. Among them were more than twenty from overseas, who were familiar with the work of the Mothers' Union. One of these had had the privilege of visiting the new Mary Sarguer House, in Tinton-street, Westminster, which is named after the founder of the Mothers' Union, and was formally opened by Princess Mary in 1925. An address was given on the objects of the union, and afternoon tea was served at the close of the business meeting.

- **SEPTEMBER:** Yallourn Football Club won a successive premiership when it overcame Trafalgar in the Central Gippsland Association Grand Final. Former Collingwood star, Jim Lawn, coached Yallourn that season. The final score was Yallourn 9.9 (63) defeated Trafalgar 8.6 (54). The match was played at Warragul and the gate receipts were £112 (pounds). The following week, Jim Lawn led a Central Gippsland combined team in a clash against the VFA at Warragul.

Other Yallourn players selected in that team were: Greenwood, Rusden and Page. Unfortunately, the archives of YFC make little mention of Jim Lawn but he was a fine footballer with an impressive VFL career with the Magpies (35 games and 37 goals).



**Jim Lawn who starred with YFC in 1926**  
**Source: 'Forever Collingwood' website.**

- **OCTOBER:** The Yallourn Thistle Society held a 'braw Scots Night' (including a fancy dress parade) in the Parish Hall. Mr Shaw played the bagpipes; and some of the family names mentioned in attendance included: Kennedy, Clyde, Jennings, Perman and Burford. The Yallourn Flotilla Band provided the music; and Mr Henderson was publicly thanked for his role in making the occasion so enjoyable.  
(Note: The word 'braw' is Scottish and means 'fine' or 'pleasant').



- **NOVEMBER:** The vital role played by the Yallourn Power Station, in improving rural infrastructure, was highlighted again when the small town of Newry (near Maffra) was connected to the electricity grid. Street lighting and power for the Newry Butter Factory and the town's General Store were a cause for great celebration. The supply of electricity to small towns kept the development of the Yallourn power station in the news; and the advent of electricity in the 'bush' was greeted with considerable excitement.



- **DECEMBER:** News from Yallourn in 'The Age' reported that three-year-old, Leslie Cain, from Morwell Bridge, was kicked by a horse. Leslie's jaw was seriously fractured and the unfortunate boy was on the 'medical danger list' for some time.



Source: 'The Age' 21st December 1926. Page: 10

### CAN YOU ADD TO THE HISTORY OF YALLOURN?

The above item was prepared for the Virtual Yallourn website by Roger Spaul and Julie George to foster further interest in the history of Yallourn. It is hoped that readers may be able to add additional information regarding an event or a person mentioned in the above articles.

Please contact Julie if you have comments, memorabilia or photographs related to the above. Thank you for your help in building the history file of Virtual Yallourn.