

# **YALLOURN YEAR BY YEAR 1927**



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'....

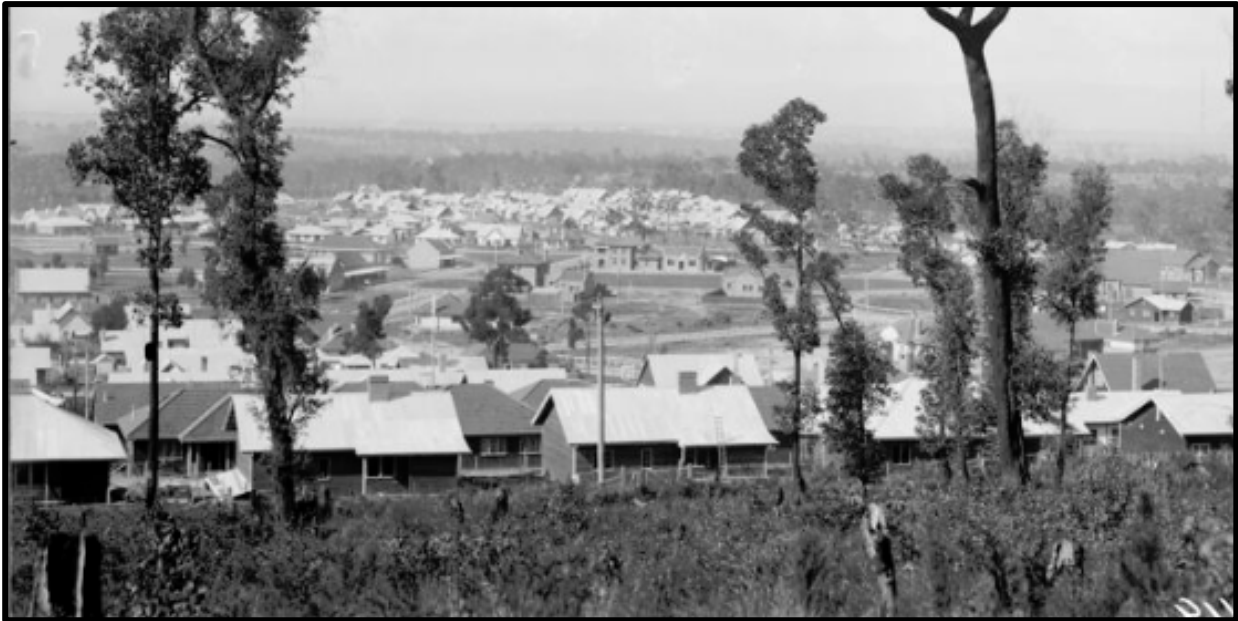
*"Yallourn was swallowed by the coal mine it was built to serve" ...  
'The Herald Sun' May 2016.*

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 1927, includes a photograph of the township in those early years; and in the words of Banjo Paterson... "the vision splendid"



# 1927



- **JANUARY:** In the summer of 1927, it was reported that labourers working along the Latrobe River killed up to 15 snakes ( all black ) a day. In one paddock, over a five week period, 85 snakes were killed. An extract of the article can be found below.

## BY THE WAY

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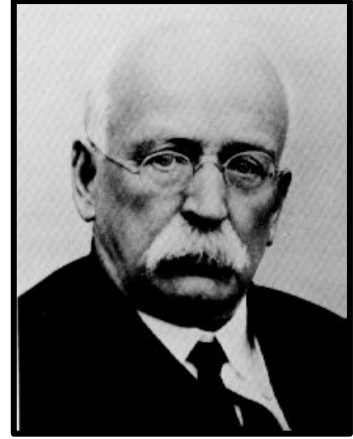
**Great Snakes**

**R**EMOVING an earth conveyor across a paddock fronting the Latrobe River at Yallourn (Vic.) workmen killed up to 15 snakes a day (all black). A record was established with 85 in one paddock in five weeks.—  
O.P.

1927- 85 SNAKES IN ONE Paddock

Source: 'Smith's Weekly' Saturday 1 January 1927 Page: 17

- **FEBRUARY:** At the Annual General Meeting of the Yallourn Horticultural Society, Mr D. Elliott was elected President and Mr S.M. Watson took the role of secretary. In March that same year, the Society held its third Autumn Show in the fire brigade hall and the major prize winners were: V. Smith (champion dahlia), H. Martin (champion carnation) and A.J. Ryan won the prize for the most outstanding gladioli. Gardens were a key part in the planning of Yallourn as the town was based upon the concepts of the 'Garden City' (such as could be found in the beautiful English towns of Hertfordshire Welwyn and Letchworth). Ebenezer Howard's (shown above) ideas regarding town planning provided an excellent model for the SEC to follow; and, in time, the gardens of Yallourn gained a reputation far and wide for their beauty and maintenance.



The planning of Yallourn was undertaken by Mr Alfred Romeo La Gerche, the SEC's Chief Architect in conjunction with Mr William Gower. Mr Gower is an 'unsung hero' in the story of Yallourn; and those readers who wish to know more about this inspiring architect can follow this link

[https://www.builtheritage.com.au/dua\\_gower.html](https://www.builtheritage.com.au/dua_gower.html)

A series of photographs about the beautiful parks and surrounds of Yallourn can be found on this website.

- **MARCH:** A newspaper, specifically published with Yallourn residents in mind, titled 'The Electric Spark' hit the streets in October 1926; and by March 1927 had gained quite a standing throughout Gippsland as a 'bright little' publication. 'The Spark' was published every Thursday but despite its promising start, the paper closed down in 1928. 'The Live Wire', which was founded in 1925, became Yallourn's foremost newspaper in the years that followed.



- **APRIL:** When Yallourn Football Club played Traralgon, in a pre-season practice match in 1927, it created a degree excitement around the town. Furthermore, the fact that a special train was organized from Traralgon to convey supporters to the game indicated the level of support for local football in that era.
- **MAY:** Mr Boehm, Manager of the Commission's Works at Yallourn, left on a special mission to Germany to investigate coal products and technology. Mr Boehm was a dynamic personality and the number of Yallourn organizations in which he was associated was awe-inspiring. An article regarding Mr Boehm can be found on this website.

**YALLOURN BRIQUETTES.**

**Mr. Boehm's Inquiries.**

**New Machinery Bought.**

LONDON, May 14.

Mr. Boehm, an engineer at the briquetting works of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria, who is returning from Germany after having completed his investigations regarding briquetting, will leave for Melbourne on the Mooltan from Marseilles. He informed

'The Argus' May 16<sup>th</sup> 1927. Page: 13

- **JUNE:** The Yallourn Glee and Madrigal Society gave a Grand Choral Concert in the Morwell Mechanics Hall. As an indication of the society's flair and public acceptance, the following year, the YG &MS performed at the Prince Regent Theatre in Sale; and it is documented that the recital was aired by radio station 3AR.

**Choral Concert**

**By Yallourn Glee & Madrigal Society**

**Assisted by Leading Soloists.**

**Morwell Mechanics' Hall**

**Thursday, 2nd June**

In aid of Morwell Recreation Ground

--ADMISSION 2 --

Seats may be booked at Mr Evans at 6d extra.

-- Sweets for Sale. --

(Mrs) E. M. DOLPHIN ) Joint  
(Mrs) M. O'DONOGHUE ) Hon. Secs

- **JULY:** Despite the desperate attempts of his fellow workers, Mr W. Grace, died as the result of a landslide at the Yallourn mine. Mr Grace was 44 years of age and was described in one newspaper as a 'trucker.' The news of Mr Grace's demise resonated across the nation and stories were published in numerous interstate newspapers.
- **AUGUST:** Master George Abel, of Yallourn, applied to the Victorian Amateur Cyclists Union to form a cycling (i.e. racing) club at Yallourn. George, who was described in the 'Sporting Globes' column 'Open Road', as a 'youthful but keen enthusiast' was a boy of initiative and one could say that he set the 'wheels in motion' for riding at Yallourn.

In later years, Yallourn Cycling Club produced some outstanding riders; and several photographs of well-known riders of the club can be found on this website.



- **SEPTEMBER:** The Government Tourist Bureau organized specially conducted tours to the town of Yallourn. The day trip from the city included train travel, a tour of the town and the provision of meals and refreshments.



**Visitors arriving at Yallourn by steam train**

- **OCTOBER:** The Yallourn Angling Club was formed; and thirty dedicated anglers were listed on the organization's books within 'next to no time.' With the Latrobe River nearby, a fishing club was eagerly embraced by local anglers; and, by November, there were some thirty members. One of the first scheduled gatherings of the club was a competition in late November. Mr V. Smith won the first prize for the 'heaviest catch' and Mr H. L. Roberts took out the 'largest basket' award on that day.

The prizes for fishing in those days were substantial. It is known that, the prize at the Morwell Anglers' Club meeting in November that year was a Rolex wrist watch. A Rolex in those days was worth some £5 (five pounds) which is equivalent to about \$ 400.00 today.





Early days along the banks of the Latrobe River at Yallourn

Yallourn also made the news when the 'The Argus' reported, on October 7<sup>th</sup>, that flooding had occurred at the works area at Yallourn. The extract reported that the damage was relatively minor.



Another view of the Yallourn in 1927 –flooding at the SEC works area.

- **NOVEMBER:** Sweltering spring days made the news that month; and on November 11<sup>th</sup>, Yallourn recorded a temperature of 96°F at 3.00pm. In his book 'Welcome to Little Europe: Displaced Persons and the North Camp', Josef Sestokas described life in the tent camps at Yallourn on a 'hellishly hot day.' How those workers/ labourers lived in tents and coped with the blistering heat of an Australian summer is another story.



The workers' tents at the West Camp, Yallourn, and the stacks from the power station can be seen in the distance

- **DECEMBER:**

## HOTEL FOR YALLOURN

The establishment of a hotel at Yallourn was quite a saga; and to 'cut a long story short', in December 1928, the Licensing Court granted a Victualler (i.e. a trader in alcoholic beverages) Licence to George Dickson-Brown to operate the Yallourn Hotel. The hotel opened almost year later (October 1<sup>st</sup> 1928).

The building and fittings were imposing; and the hotel set new standards for the hospitality industry in country Victoria. Mr Dickson-Brown was the licensee of the hotel for thirty-three years. It is documented that during Mr Dixon-Brown's time as Licensee that the hotel registered the highest sales of beer across Victoria. Photographs of the Yallourn Hotel can be found on this website

# YALLOURN HOTEL

## Objections Overruled

The Licensing Court on Friday granted a victualler's licence for the Yallourn Hotel to George Dickson Brown, of South Melbourne. The fee for the first year will be £75, and the building is to be called the Yallourn Hotel.

When the proceedings opened Mr Dixon Harder (instructed by Pavey, Wilson and Cohen), who appeared for Brown, said that a fresh lease to be given to Brown had been approved by the Governor-in-Council. He produced this as evidence of the assurance that whatever was necessary to put Brown into proper possession would be done.

He withdrew the application made for a rehearing of the application on the decision being announced.

There was no appearance on behalf of the objectors.

### The Objections

Giving the decision of the court, the chairman (Mr Barr) said that owing to the rescission by the Full Court of the conditional certificate for a victualler's licence granted to the State Electricity Commissioners, this application for a licence for the same site had been remitted by order of the Supreme Court to the Licensing Court for reconsideration.

Source: 'Weekly Times' December 31<sup>st</sup> 1927. Page: 14

### CAN YOU ADD TO 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 memorabilia or photographs related to this article. Thank you for your help in building the history file of the Virtual Yallourn website.

The above item was prepared for the Virtual Yallourn website by Roger Spaul and Julie George in the hope of fostering further interest in the history of Yallourn.