

YALLOURN YEAR BY YEAR 1934



The first sod in the Victorian Government's ambitious scheme, to generate electricity at Yallourn, was turned more than a century ago (sometime around 1920); 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 history series for the Virtual Yallourn website, various events in the life of the town and its industries have been chronicled. The monthly activities, shown in each year, are not necessarily the most momentous occasions but simply attempt to show the many varied and interesting happenings that made the local (and sometimes national) news in that era.

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 for the Yallourn Project were well underway and the 'garden town' of Yallourn was creating interest far and wide. This article relates to **1934**.



1934

JANUARY: New Year celebrations in Yallourn “...1934 was received with a hearty welcome...” Source: ‘Morwell Advertiser’ January 4th 1934. Page: 9

The New Year of 1934 received a hearty welcome as with the sounding of the Power House whistle, the ringing of St. John's Church bell, the sounding of the fire alarm and the singing of "Auld Lang Syne" by enthusiasts, who had awaited up to receive him at 12 midnight, he immediately started out to put up what is hoped by all will be a record year.

Sir Robert Gibson (born 1863), the Chairman of the Commonwealth Bank, died in South Yarra on 1st of January 1934. Very few people would appreciate Sir Robert's association with the town of Yallourn but, in earlier years, he was Victoria's representative on the Central Coal Board (1916); and, as a member of the SEC, since its founding in 1919, Robert Gibson was vitally concerned with the progress of the Yallourn project...

“He was a member of the State Electricity Commission from its inception and despite the pressure of other duties, public and private; he watched closely the development of Yallourn in which he had great confidence. His experience on the Coal Board during the war had led him to appreciate the need for making Victorian industries independent of possible industrial troubles in another State, and that he regarded as one of the chief functions of Yallourn...” Source: ‘The Argus’ January 2nd 1934. Page: 7



In an effort to raise funds for improved swimming facilities in Yallourn, a competition entitled 'Swimming Club Queen Carnival' was conducted throughout the summer months. The following extract, from the newspaper in January 1934, showed the progressive voting for the Four Queens (Briquette Factory, Township and Store, Coal Supply and the Power Station).

In the Swimming Club Queen Carnival the following are the votes recorded for the various Queens :—
Queen of the Briquetting—3740.
Queen of the Township and Store—3699.
Queen of the Coal Supply—3840.
Queen of the Power Station—882.
Support your Queen and help the Committee to provide up-to-date bathing facilities for the town.

The eventual winner of the Yallourn Swimming Club Carnival Queen was Win Drummond. Win was one of four Drummond girls; the others being Anne, Dorothy, Kitty and Margaret. This photo of the entrants was published in 'Yallourn Was' and shows Win wearing the Carnival Queen's crown.

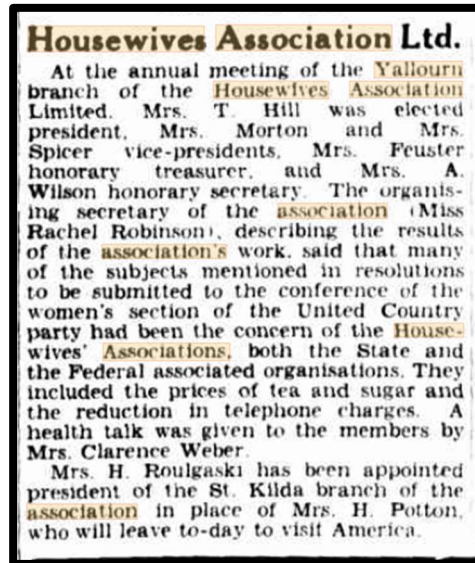


Caption text: Miss Winnie Drummond, Yallourn Swimming Club Carnival Queen Winner 1934. Source: 'Yallourn Was' Page: 73.

Win Drummond and her family were actively involved in many of Yallourn's organizations. Win was also an enthusiastic member of the tennis and golf clubs; and was a regular contributor/correspondent for 'The Live Wire.' In the early years, the Drummond family lived in Green Street. In 1942, Win married Phil Ashmead from Wangaratta. Phil was a sportsman of outstanding ability and represented Yallourn in golf, football, cricket and badminton. Their children Neil and Joan were both born at Yallourn.

In other news from January 1934, Sister Pilgrim of the Nursing Staff at the Yallourn Hospital retired because of ill health. Although it is more than likely that Sister Pilgrim served with the legendary Matron Madge Allan (who arrived in Yallourn in 1927), little is known about Sister Pilgrim; and any reader who can assist with further information (and perhaps a photograph) about her time at Yallourn would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

FEBRUARY: The AGM of the Yallourn Branch of the Housewives Association was held in February; and Mmes Hill, Morton, Spicer, Feuster (perhaps meant to be Fewster) and Wilson were elected as office bearers of the association for 1934.



Source: The Argus February 15th 1934 Page: 12.



Although this photograph is difficult to verify, it is most probably Mrs Alice Wilson who was the first Guider (i.e. leader) of the Yallourn Girl Guides. It is known that the photograph was taken on August 15th 1925 at an Arbour Day celebration at the Yallourn School. Source: 'Virtual Yallourn' website.

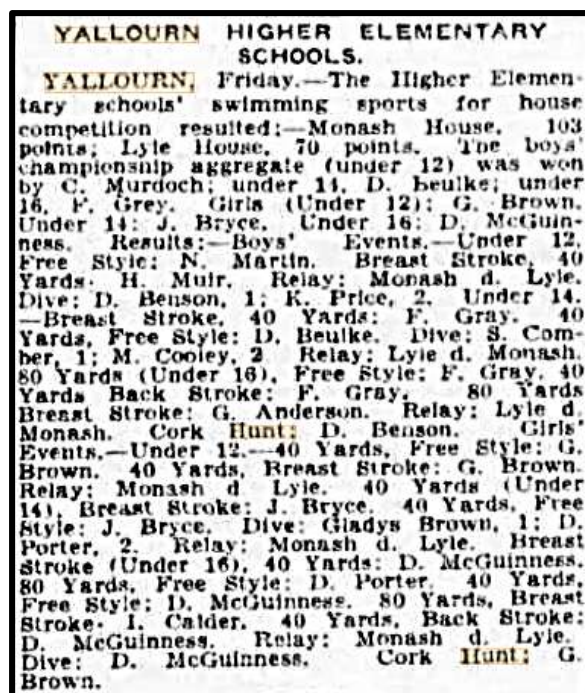
Mrs Alice Wilson, as mentioned above, was a dynamo in the township in that era; and she was a leading light in many of the Yallourn's organizations.

In 1931, Alice made the news when she was part of a deputation that met with Sir John Monash to discuss a range of problems pertaining to the town and the living conditions for women and families. Alice, who had arrived from England in 1924, was instrumental in forming the Housewives Association in 1931; and her name featured regularly in the local newspapers of that time.

As mentioned previously on this website, Alice Wilson was the first leader of in the Yallourn Girl Guides (see above).

MARCH: The Yallourn Higher Elementary School's swimming sports took place on Friday March 9th 1934 at the Latrobe River. It appears, that in those days, there was a two house system in the school; and Monash House won the sports with 103 points and Lyle amassed 70 points.

The article has significant historical value as it lists the winners of the various swimming events; and, in turn, provides some insight into the names of families that lived in Yallourn and surrounding district. The results have been reprinted with minimal change(s) to font size, spacing and bullet points to help readers enjoy the article. (My apologies for any incorrect spelling of family names in transcribing from the original newspaper item-Roger)



Source: 'The Age' March 10th 1934. Page 18

THE RESULTS

Monash House: 103 points. Lyle House: 70 points.

The boys' championship:-

- Under 12: C. Murdoch.
- Under 14: D. Beulke.
- Under 10: F Grey.

The girls' championship:-

- Under 12: G. Brown.
- Under 14: J. Bryce.
- Under 16: D. McGuinness.

Results: Boys' Events: Under 12. Free Style: N. Martin. Breast Stroke: 40 Yards H. Muir. Relay: Monash defeated Lyle. Dive: D. Benson 1st and K. Price 2nd.

Under 14. Breast Stroke: 40 Yards: F. Grey. 40 Yards Free Style: D. Beulke. Dive: S. Comber 1st and M. Cooley 2nd.

Under: 14 Relay: Lyle defeated Monash. 80 Yards (Under 10). Free Style: F. Grey. 40 Yards Back Stroke: F. Grey. 80, Yards Breast Stroke: G. Anderson.

Relay: Lyle defeated Monash. Cork Hunt: D. Benson.

Girls Events: Under 12. 40 Yards, Free Style: L. Brown. 40 Yards, Breast Stroke: G. Brown. Relay: Monash defeated Lyle.

Under: 14 40 yards Breast Stroke: J. Bryce. 40 Yards, Free Style: J. Bryce.

Dive: Gladys Brown 1st and D. Porter, 2nd. Relay: Monash defeated Lyle.

Under 16 Breast Stroke 40 Yards: D. McGuinness. 80 Yards, Free Style: D. Porter. 40 Yards. Free Style: D. McGuinness. 80 Yards, Breast Stroke: I. Calder. 40 Yards, Backstroke: D. McGuinness. Relay: Monash defeated Lyle.

Dive: D. McGuinness. Cork Hunt: G. Brown.



This is probably the section of the Latrobe River where the Higher Elementary School swimming sports were held in March 1934. It is recorded, in several texts that the town pool in Lake Avenue was not in use until December 1936. Yallourn Swimming Club stalwart, Hugh Graham, wrote that the floods in 1934 washed away Yallourn's first pool. The severe floods to which Mr Graham referred occurred in early December that year (see the entry for December in this article). Source: Virtual Yallourn website.

NOTE: The houses at the Yallourn Higher Elementary School were Monash and Lyle. While there is little need to explain the logic regarding the naming of Monash House, younger readers may not know that Lyle House was named in honour of Sir Thomas Lyle. Thomas Lyle was one of the first SEC Commissioners (the others being Sir John Monash, Sir Robert Gibson and Hon. George Swinburne). Briefly, Thomas (1860-1944) was an eminent physicist and radiologist; and it is recorded that he was a pioneer in the use of X-rays in medical practice. He was knighted in 1922; and served as a SEC commissioner until 1937.

APRIL: One of the quiet achievers in the story of Yallourn, Dr Hyman Herman, made the front page news of the 'Melbourne Herald' (the 24th April 1934) when it was announced that he was nominated as the Victorian representative on a national committee that was investigating the possibility of extracting oil and petroleum from coal.

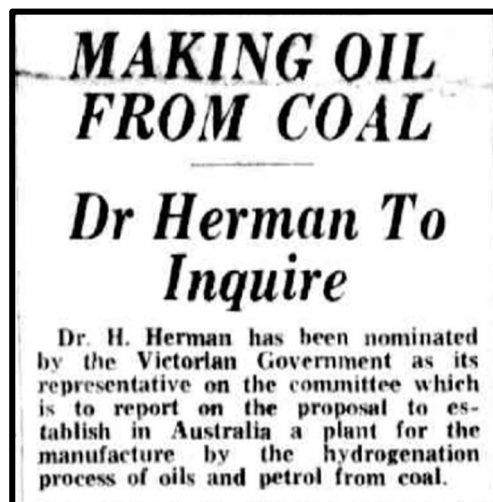
Dr Hyman Herman (1875-1962) was a geologist, engineer and a dominant force in the establishment and on-going success of the SECV. In some references he

was once described as the 'Father of Yallourn.' For example 'The Argus' newspaper, in announcing his retirement from the SECV, stated...

"Dr Hyman Herman, director of briquetting and research for the State Electricity Commission, retired yesterday. Dr Herman was known as the "father of Yallourn..." August 17th 1940, Page: 4.

Dr Herman was appointed to the position of Chairman of the State Advisory Committee on Coal and Electricity in 1917...

"...he became chairman of a State advisory committee on coal and electricity, which included Herbert Harper and William Stone. Their report became the blueprint for the future power and brown coal industry in Victoria. It envisaged three major operations: open-cut mining in the La Trobe valley; the establishment of a large power-station and briquetting factories (at what was to become Yallourn) and State-wide distribution of electricity." Source: 'ABD' Vol: 9 1983.



Source: 'The Herald' April 24th 1934 Page: 1

MAY: Across the life of the town of Yallourn, a long list of dignitaries and luminaries visited Yallourn; and in May 1934, a distinguished Melbourne University lecturer (later diplomat) W. D. Forsyth, M.A. visited Yallourn to deliver a series of history lectures to the Workers Educational Association.

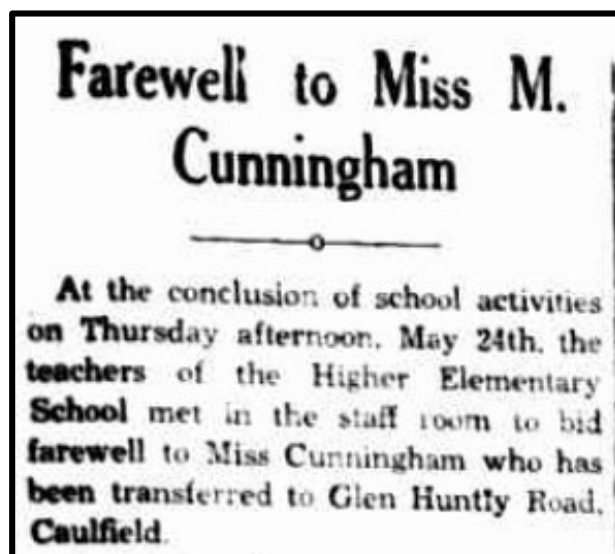
The lectures were held at the Yallourn Fire Brigade Hall.; there were eight topics in the series including: 'Roman and Greek Empires', 'The British Empire', 'The Settlement of Australia', 'The Dawn of the Modern Age', and 'Japan, Australia and the Pacific.'

Mr Forsyth was admired by many for his zeal in delivering the W.E.A addresses as part of his work with Melbourne University Extension lectures According to one text, Mr Forsyth was 'one of Australia's most distinguished diplomats and a man of pragmatic vision'; and a measure of his capability being that he was appointed to be the Ambassador to Lebanon in 1967.

From what can be gathered from reading the newspapers of that time, it seems that Yallourn's legendary doctor, Dr James Moore Andrew, played a major part in organizing the W.E.A lectures in Yallourn during that era.



The eminent William Douglass Forsyth, who delivered a series of history lectures at the Workers Educational Association at the Yallourn Fire Brigade Hall in 1934. In a stunning diplomatic career, Mr Forsyth became the Ambassador to Vietnam in 1959-61; and he was also appointed as the Ambassador to Lebanon in 1967. Source: 'Canberra Times' February 7th 1976. Page: 6

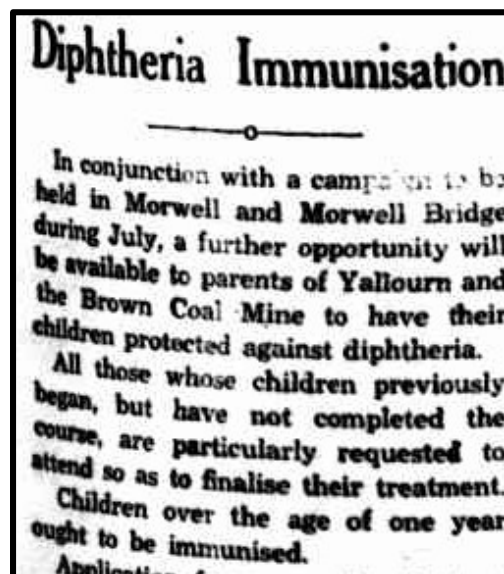


Source: 'Morwell Advertiser' May 31st 1934. Page: 9. the photograph is of Grade VI at YEHS in 1932. Miss Cunningham is perhaps on the right in the above image however it is yet to be confirmed; and any assistance would be appreciated. Thank you.

In other news from May 1934, Miss Marge Cunningham was farewelled from the Yallourn Higher Elementary School on her departure to take a new position at Caulfield. The Head-teacher Mr Abrahams referred to Miss Cunningham as '*a tower of strength*' during her time at Yallourn. Miss Cunningham's position on staff was taken by Miss Ross (who, according to one source, was formerly at the Lakes Entrance State School No: 2672).

In an article by Mrs. Win Ashmead, as posted on the Virtual Yallourn website in 2013, the staff at the school, during her time, included Miss Marie Rigby, Mrs Edith Sagar and Miss Cunningham... "*...whom we all loved.*"

JUNE: A campaign to vaccinate local children against diphtheria was well underway in June 1934. Children over the age of one year in Morwell Bridge, Morwell, Brown Coal Mine and Yallourn were encouraged to be inoculated. Application/consent forms, for those children to be included in the program were available from the Head Teachers at the local schools or at the Health Centre. Source: 'Morwell Advertiser' June 28th 1934 Page: 9



Definition of diphtheria: Diphtheria is caused by the spread of a bacterium. When a person catches diphtheria, the bacteria release a toxin, or poison, into the person's body. The toxin infects the upper airways, and sometimes the skin, causing a membrane to grow across the windpipe. This makes it hard to breathe and if the membrane completely blocks the windpipe can lead to suffocation and death. The heart and nervous system can also be damaged. Source: Australian Government website- 'health .gov.au'

While diphtheria is rare in modernity, in the period 1926-1935, there were more than 4000 deaths caused by diphtheria (i.e. in Australia). It was reported that in 1930, the Yallourn State School was closed because of an outbreak of mild cases of diphtheria. The 'Shepparton Advertiser' carried a page one story about a diphtheria epidemic in the Shire of Rodney in March 1934.

JULY: The Yallourn Football Club received widespread publicity when the team featured in a full page spread in the 'Weekly Times' in July that year. Yallourn had played (and defeated) Yarram; and photographs of the two teams were published (in the July 21st edition).

While the photograph below is time-worn and indistinct, the most historical aspect of discovering the image was that the names of the Yallourn players, in that game were listed in the article (as shown). Many readers will know these former stars and personalities of the township ...

The details of the game were: Yallourn 15.17 (107) defeated Yarram 12.4(76). Goal kickers for Yallourn: Turner 6, Crawford 3, Irwin 2, Smith 2, Franklin and Godfrey 1
Best players for Yallourn: O'Neill, Hutton, Irwin, Knight, Franklin, Smith



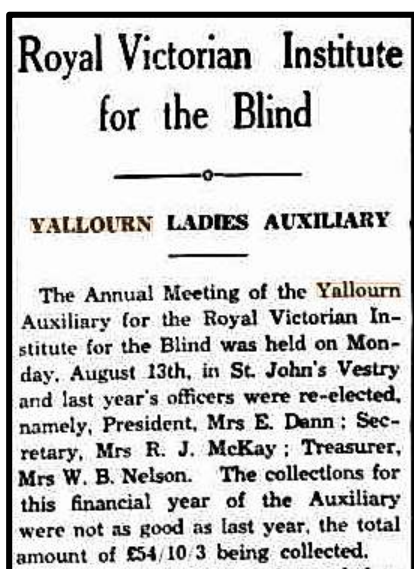
Back Row: T. Godfrey, E. Franklin, A. Hutton, H. Crawford, J. Turner, I. Williams, L. Kiernan, T. Knight

Centre: J. Piggott, K. Williams, V. Irwin, P. O'Neill (Captain), P. Palmer (Vice-capt.), E. Waterhouse, E. Harry

Front: T. McKay, C. Benson, H. Graham, H. Smith

AUGUST: The AGM of the Yallourn Branch for the Royal Institute for the Blind was held at St John's Church in August. Mrs Dann, Mrs Mackay and Mrs Nelson were elected as office bearers for the following twelve months.

Other active members (official donations collectors) of the Yallourn Branch in that era were: Mesdames J. M. Andrew, P. Armstrong, W. F. Connolly, E. Dann, E. Erikson, S. Fullard, G. Elliott, T. Hill, P. Harry, H. Heinecke, R. A. Hunt, W. Jamieson, J. Lucas, R. J. McKay, F. B. Meens, D. H. Milner, H. Parkinson, K. Patterson, A. S. Padfield, W. B. Nelson, H. Lynch, Miss P. Grant and Mr J. Lucas.



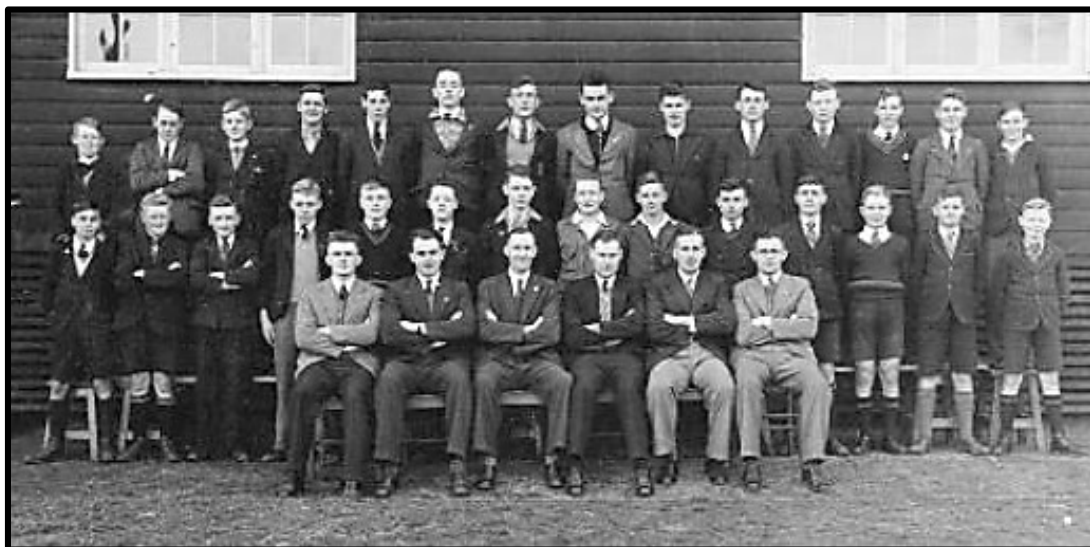
Source of the above extract: 'Morwell Advertiser' August 23rd 1934 Page: 9

The photograph is of Mrs Andrew who was an energetic member of the Yallourn Branch of the Royal institute for the Blind and played a key role in so many of the town's activities.

SEPTEMBER: The biggest news for the people of the district in September was the announcement, by the Minister of Education (then known as the Minister of Public Instruction in that era) Mr John Pennington (shown below), that a new school building would be constructed at the Yallourn Technical School. The facilities/conditions at the school at that time (i.e. 1934) were described as 'crude' as seen in the extract below...



Source: 'Morwell Advertiser' September 13th 1934. Page: 9



This is a photograph of the staff and students of Yallourn Technical School in 1934-35. The original classroom at Narracan Avenue can be seen. Source: Virtual Yallourn

OCTOBER: October 1934 was marked with a visit to Yallourn by the Duke of Gloucester. From the photographs of the occasion, it appears that a sizeable crowd gathered to welcome the Duke; and his tour of Yallourn received wide coverage in the metropolitan (also interstate-see below) newspapers.

"At Yallourn His Royal Highness was given a short reception by the State Electricity Commission and was driven around the vast open cut past the huge

clanking coal dredges and great lines of silently moving automatic bucket trains.
Source: 'The Adelaide Advertiser' October 29th 1934 Page: 15.

Note: The Duke of Gloucester (1900-1974), also known as Prince Henry, was the third son of King George V and Queen Mary.

Royal Visit to Yallourn

OCTOBER 27th, 1934

Preparations are now well in hand for the reception of our Royal Visitor next Saturday and, we hope, the final last minute alterations to the program have been received from the State Director.

The Royal Visitor will leave Morwell at 1.45 p.m. for Yallourn. About 20 cars are to be available at Morwell, to transport all visitors attached to the Royal party.

The Town Square will be the best place to get anything more than a flying view of the Duke, for he will pause for a short ten minutes in his rapid inspection of the works, to meet and be welcomed by the Chairman and



Source: 'Morwell Advertiser' October 25th 1934. Page: 9. The photograph of the Duke of Gloucester was sourced from the State Library of Victoria (Reference: 10381/68054). Other photos of the Duke's tour in 1934 can be found at this link to Museums Victoria <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/1755346>



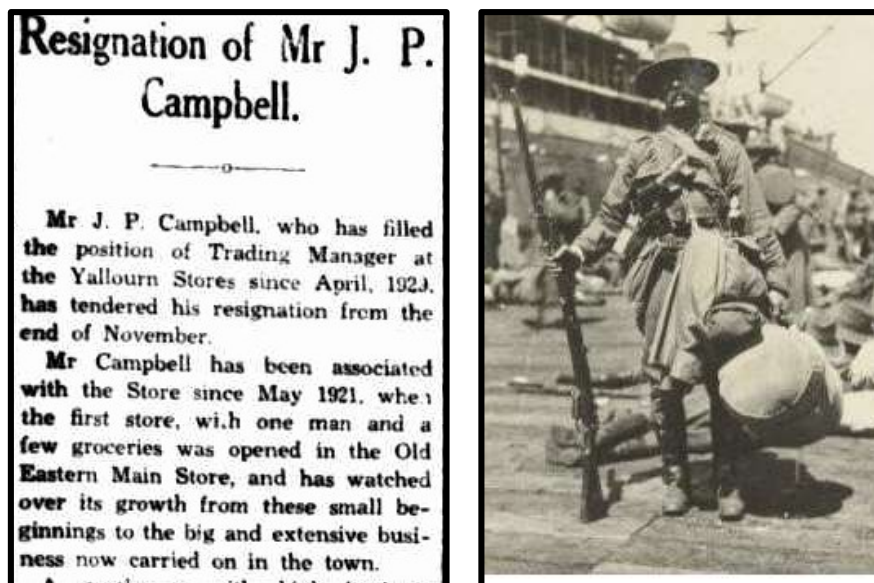
Caption text: On his return journey from Canberra to Melbourne, the Duke of Gloucester was enthusiastically received in many country towns along the route...The Duke of Gloucester at Yallourn, standing in front of the memorial to Sir John Monash. Source: 'The Age' October 29th 1934. Page: 11

NOVEMBER : The 'Morwell Advertiser' (29th November 1934) carried the news that James Pinkerton Campbell had tendered his resignation as the Trading

Manager of the Yallourn Stores in November. J.P. Campbell was an incredible character in the history of Yallourn; and a person who deserves eternal credit for what he contributed to the community.

Among the many things in which he was involved in Yallourn, was as the Editor of the 'Live Wire' for some years. J.P. Campbell was also regarded as one of the nation's foremost photographers; and was appointed as the official photographer with the AWRS while serving in Egypt...

"...Wounded at Gallipoli, Campbell recovered and remained in the Middle East. A professional photographer before the war, he was later made an honorary lieutenant and appointed an official photographer with the Australian War Records Section (AWRS) in Egypt. Source: AWM website.



The above photograph of James Pinkerton Campbell was taken during World War: 1 and shows him embarking for overseas military service with the 8th Light Horse Regiment. Source: Virtual Yallourn website.

A comprehensive article regarding the life and times of J.P. Campbell can be found on this website.

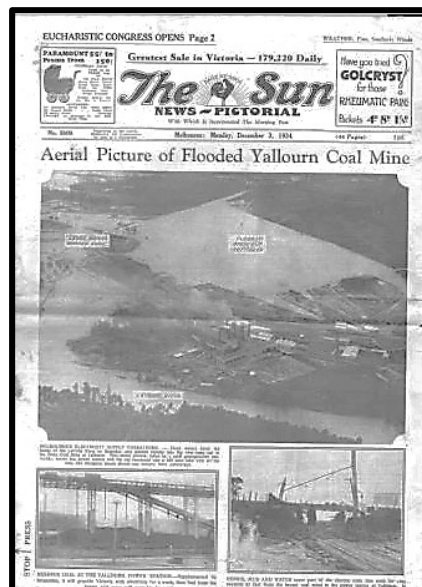
DECEMBER: The biggest issue at Yallourn in December (and indeed for the year) was the flooding of the mine and its consequences for the town and indeed the State. The following is part of the graphic account of the natural disaster written by Edgar Scott, the former Principal of the Yallourn Technical School, who described the deluge on December 2nd 1934 when 275 mm of rain fell in the district...

"A natural disaster of great practical and economic impact, and of historical interest, occurred at Yallourn in December 1934. In brief, the event was the flooding of the Open Cut, and its being put out of production thereby for one year. In more detail the sequence of events was as follows:

Commencing at 7.30am on Thursday 2 Dec 1934, from leaden clouds appearing as just several feet above the chimney tops, heavy rain fell and continued until later than mid-night on Friday.

The character of the rain was unusual; not violent noisy, bouncy, big drops, as often occur during thunderstorms; but much more like the shower in a modern bathroom, closely pitched continuously flowing fine jets, the audible result being a muffled unceasing roar, and the practical result being the deposition of 1100 points – now 275 mm – in and nearby Yallourn.

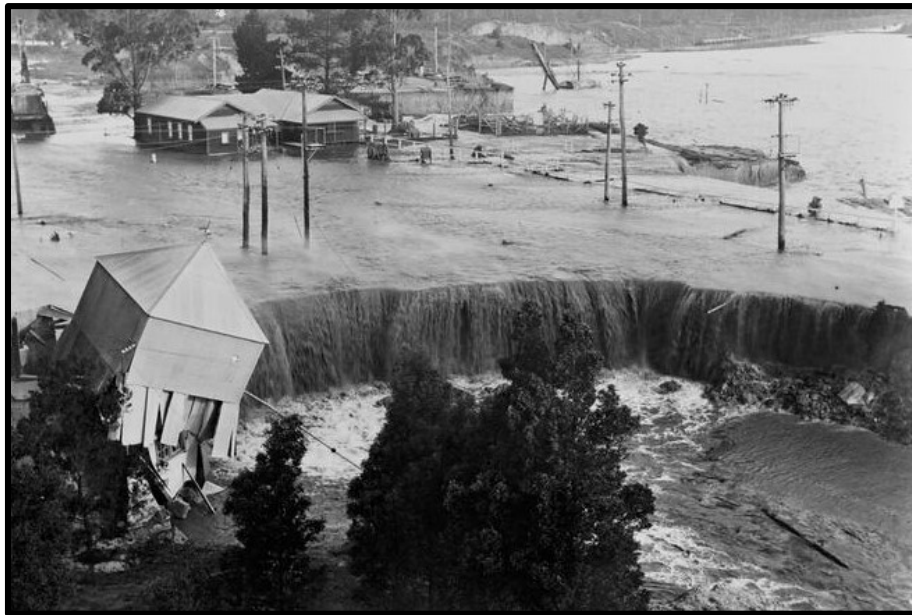
What was more important was that more than three times that amount fell in the catchment area of the Yarra and Gippsland Rivers systems.” Source: Edgar Scott (Principal of Yallourn Tech College from 50s-70s) - sent in by his daughter, Jenny-Virtual Yallourn



Yallourn grabbed front page news in 'The Sun' in December with a series of photographs of the extent of the damage caused by flooding at Yallourn. The aerial photograph illustrated the extent of the impact of the inundation. Source: Virtual Yallourn website.



Caption: Three Towns Feared Destroyed DAMAGE AT YALLOURN ESTIMATED AT £250,000. A picture taken yesterday by a staff photographer, showing one of the partially submerged dredges in the flooded open cut at Yallourn. The damage at this undertaking has been estimated at £250,000, representing the havoc caused at the open cut, and the wrecking of the Latrobe River Weir. Source: 'The Herald' December 2nd 1934. Page: 4



Title: A building teeters on the edge of the coal mine as flood waters surge into the open cut, Yallourn, 1934. Source: Museums Victoria

While the flood waters in the Open Cut dominated the news, one young girl from Yallourn, Olive Armstrong, featured in The Argus' newspaper's special page for children called 'Fun Family' (see below).

In those days, it was very exciting for children to see their names in print. In 1934, 'The Argus' appeared to allocate an entire page of its Saturday edition in publishing children's short stories, letters from pen-friends, sketches, poems and riddles.



Other youngsters from Yallourn to have their names printed in 'The Argus' included: Nola Cook, Thelma Cook and Peter Parkinson. While on the topic of the names of Yallourn children/families being featured in newspapers, Peter Black of Railway Avenue Yallourn, won a major prize in 'The Argus' photo competition in 1933. Peter's photograph was one of more than 1200 entries lodged that year.

CAN YOU ADD TO THE HISTORY OF YALLOURN?

The above item was researched and written by Roger Spaul and presented and posted by Julie George, for the Virtual Yallourn website, in April 2023.

It is hoped that readers may be able to add additional information regarding an event or a person mentioned in the above items. Please contact Julie if you have memorabilia or photographs related to the history of Yallourn.

Thank you for your help in building the history files of Virtual Yallourn.