

IMAGES OF YALLOURN

YALLOURN WOMEN'S CRICKET TEAM FIND SUCCESS AT THE COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP IN MELBOURNE

1939



Caption: Gathered round the wicketkeeper, members of the Yallourn women's cricket team listening to instructions for their match against Essendon yesterday, at Albert Park.

Source: 'The Age' January 31st 1939. Page: 6

BACKGROUND TO THE FORMATION OF THE YALLOURN WOMEN'S CRICKET TEAM

An aspect of the sporting life of the town of Yallourn, which should be placed on permanent record, was the stunning success of the Yallourn Women's Cricket XI in the late 1930's. The following article is an attempt to encapsulate the team's accomplishments for future generations to read and appreciate.

It is known that the first women's cricket matches in Australia can be traced back to 1874 at Bendigo...

"More than 50 years ago a women's cricket match, claimed to be the first ever played in Australia, was contested on the Lower Reserve. Bendigo, as an adjunct to the Easter Fair. George Mackay, in his book. 'The Annals of Bendigo', writes... "A women's cricket match was played on April 1. 1874. One side was attired in red Garibaldi jackets and sailor hats, and the other side in blue Garibaldi jackets and sailor hats." Source: 'The Herald' November 9th 1935 Page: 38

The Victorian Ladies Cricket Association was formed in 1904. In the inaugural year of that association, more than twenty teams were affiliated in the competition; and according to one source

"Due to World War I the association was disbanded in 1916 and re-formed socially in 1930 as "The Pioneers," (Pioneer Victorian Ladies Cricket Association). The formation of the Women's Cricket Association in England was in 1926; and 1931 was the Foundation

Year of the Australian Women's Cricket Council, which changed its name to Women's Cricket Australia and now comes under the banner of Cricket Australia.” Source: ‘CV Pioneers History’ Website

1937 – WOMEN’S CRICKET AT YALLOURN

One of the earliest references to a women’s/girls’ cricket match at Yallourn was uncovered in ‘The Herald’ in December 1937. Games of cricket between women may have been played in Yallourn in earlier years but it was difficult to verify. The headline of the article is shown below and a copy of the accompanying text is also reprinted.



Source: ‘The Herald’ December 2nd 1937. Page:40

The text to the above headline is as follows (apologies for any errors in transcription as several of the original paragraphs were difficult to decipher)

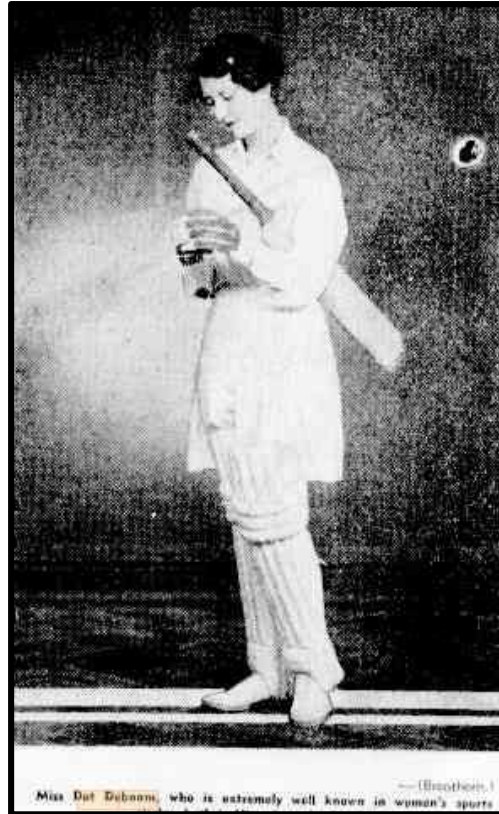
“YALLOURN CRICKETERS ARE KEEN: *Girl cricketers in Yallourn are better than the average first year player in the Victorian Women's Cricket Association, according to Miss Dot Mummery Debnam who visited the district during the week. It was the first visit of a Victorian official to Yallourn; and Miss Dot Debnam batted for both sides in a special 12-a-side game. Players were selected from the three Yallourn Association teams, Waratahs, Yallourn Ladies and Blue Birds (Brown Coal Mine).*

Players who impressed Miss Debnam included Lorna Gore, who is only 14 and one of the best all-rounders in the district competitions. She bowls a medium pace ball and has a good defensive batting style. Yallourn’s fast bowler, Una Welfare, was not available for the match, but Phyl Crane, secretary of the Yallourn Association, and Dorothy Cooper, medium pace bowlers, also slow bowler, Winifred Paice, were outstanding in the match. Elvie Whitmore, who has scored 70 this season, and Lillian Pickard, 50, the best batswomen in Yallourn.

Mrs Jackson, who was associated with Miss Debnam in a partnership in Saturday s match, made 27. Miss Debnam says she is a hard player to dismiss. Another 14-year-old player Muriel Spriggs made 38 not out in a recent competition match. Fielding was also keen. Marie Kennedy, Masie McKay and Valerie Ireland being particularly outstanding, while the wicket-keeping of Lyle Nicholl, Ella Thomson and Gladys Cahill is a feature of the three teams in the association.

Hats and eye-shades are worn by Yallourn girls in preference to caps, and their uniform is a silk frock with divided skirt. After the match, Miss Debnam gave a lecture to 40 players. Yallourn will send a strong representative team to the V.W.C.A. Country Week fixture at Christmas."

A RARE PHOTOGRAPH OF MISS DOT DEBNAM WHO PLAYED IN A WOMEN'S CRICKET MATCH AT YALLOURN IN 1937.

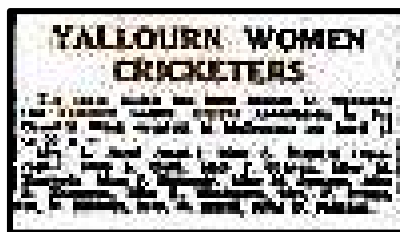


Caption text: Miss Dot Debnam, who is extremely well known in women's sports circles, both in Victoria and other states. Source: 'The Age' August 21st 1937 Page: 2

1938 SEASON- BUILDING THE TEAM & A HANDSOME REPUTATION

According to the 'The Argus', the Women's Cricket Country Week in 1938 was the first of its kind in Victoria. During that week, Yallourn played in several games which included matches against combined teams from Ballarat and Geelong. The matches were played on the ovals adjacent to the St Kilda Cricket Ground.

The Yallourn Women's XI performed creditably during the inaugural series; and won its way through to the Grand Final against Ballarat. Unfortunately, the extract of the match review was difficult to read; but it seems that Ballarat (with a score of 82 runs) took the honours in 'the decider' by sixteen runs. Players to perform well for Yallourn included Mesdames Gore, Crane, Whitmore and Nicholl.



Text: YALLOURN WOMEN CRICKETERS: The team which has been chosen to represent the Yallourn Ladies' Cricket Association, in the Country Week carnival in Melbourne, on April 16 to 20 is: Mrs. L. Nicholl (Capt.). Miss L. Pickard (Vice Capt.), Miss L. Acre, Miss J. Craven, Miss M. Kennedy, Mrs J. Kennedy, Miss M. Spriggs, Miss E. Thomson, Miss E. Whitmore, Mrs P. Evans, Mrs N. Hibbert, Mrs A. Cahill and Mrs. O. Jackson. Source: 'The Argus' March 30th 1938. Page: 23



Caption text: GIRL CRICKETERS at St Kilda today. Miss D. Williams (Ballarat) in action against Yallourn. The wicketkeeper is Miss L. Nicholl. Source: 'Herald' 19th 1938 Page: 24.



Caption text: Some members of Yallourn cricket team, who are taking part in the series of matches for country and city teams, at St. Kilda during the Easter holidays. Source: 'The Age' April 18th 1938 Page: 4.

The following extracts, regarding Yallourn's women cricketers, were found in newspapers published in 1938. The match between a Victorian country team and a metropolitan combine included Yallourn stars Evie Whitmore, L. Pickard, Phyl Crane, M. Kennedy and L. Nicholl.

Country Team To Meet City Girls Strong

By PAT. JARRETT

A well-balanced team of country girl cricketers, capable of extending the combined metropolitan eleven, has been chosen for the final match of the women's "Country Week" tournament at St. Kilda tomorrow.

THE team is: V. Hill (Ballarat, captain), D. Saxby (Geelong, vice-captain), E. Whitmore, L. Pickard, P. Crane, M. Kennedy (Yallourn), L. Jenkins, E. Atken, D. Williams (Ballarat), B. Leadbeater, V. Dunbar, and K. Kennedy, 12th (Geelong).
Elvie Whitmore, who is a sister of the Yallourn captain (Mrs Nicoll), Phyl Crane, and L. Pickard are among the best all-rounders in the side, V. Hill, a left-hand bowler, and Lydia Jenkins, fast bowler, both from Ballarat, should be prominent in the attack, Ina Leadbeater, from Geelong, has been chosen as wicket-keeper.

Source: 'The Herald' April 19th 1938 - Page 24

Girl Cricketers Meet

Girl cricketers at a meeting last night decided to recommend to the Country Week committee that Country Week competitions be held in the first week in April. Mrs. Hibbert (president), and Mrs. Crane (honorary secretary), of the Yallourn Women's Cricket Club, were present.

It was suggested that £50 which had been given by the English Women's Cricket Association, to improve women's cricket in Australia, be equally divided among the States.

That they favour wearing caps instead of hats, as suggested by the Australian Association, was the decision of Victorians last night after considerable discussion.

As soon as the cricket season is over, girl cricketers plan to play baseball, and discussed forming an association last night.

Source: The Argus February 25th 1938, Page: 17

COUNTRY GIRLS' CRICKET SERIES

City Teams Included

By Pat Jarrett

JUNIOR girl cricketers—15 years and under—and a combined Metropolitan eleven comprising players who have not gained selection in interstate teams, are included in the draw for "Country Week" matches at Easter against visiting teams from Ballarat, Geelong and Yallourn.

St. Kilda and Merlynston teams will also be invited to compete.

The full programme and draw for the tournament is:—

April 15, teams arrive; April 16, Ballarat v. Geelong, Yallourn v. St. Kilda; April 17, free; April 18, Yallourn v. Ballarat, Geelong v. Merlynston, conference Country and V.W.C.A. officials, 8 p.m.; April 19, Geelong v. Yallourn, Ballarat v. combined Metropolitan junior team, farewell dinner and presentation of country premiership badges, 7 p.m.; April 20, Combined Country v Combined Metropolitan.

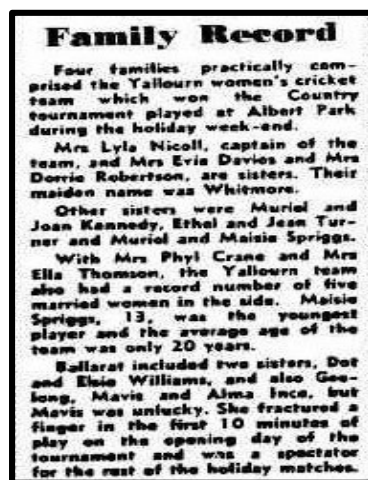
Efforts are being made to secure two grounds at Hawthorn or Albert Park for the tournament, which is the first of its kind to be conducted by the Victorian Women's Cricket Association.

Source: 'The Herald' April 7th 1938 Page: 53

1939 - WINNERS AT THE COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP

According to results as published in 'The Herald', the Yallourn XI won the 1939 championship; and the same newspaper carried an article about the success of the Yallourn team on February 2nd 1939. The report mentioned some the players of Yallourn including: Mrs Lyle Nicholl, Mrs Evie Davies, Mrs Dorrie Robertson, the Kennedy sisters (Muriel and Joan), the Turner sisters (Ethel and Jean), the Spriggs sisters (Muriel and Maisie), Phyl Crane and Ella Thomson.

It is also known, via scoresheets and a photograph (see below), that Alice Powell not only represented Yallourn but starred with the ball. The age of the players varied considerably; and, as can be seen in the extract below, Maisie Spriggs was just thirteen years of age when she played cricket with Yallourn.



The above scorecard is from the match between Geelong and Yallourn which was played at Middle Park. Alicia Powell and Evie Davies starred with the ball and proved to be match winners for Yallourn with their accurate bowling.

In the two innings of the Geelong team, Alicia and Evie captured a total of 13 wickets. This report was featured in the 'Sporting Globe' on January 28th 1939.



Caption Text: "COUNTRY WOMEN'S CRICKET -Miss D. Saxby batting for Geelong against Yallourn at Albert Park on Saturday. Miss L. Nicholl is the wicket-keeper." Source: 'The Argus' January 30th 1939. Page: 3



Caption text: One of the most successful bowlers in the Country tournament matches during the holiday weekend, Alice Powell of Yallourn, in three matches including an unofficial match against Essendon took a total of 14 wickets for 68 runs. Source: 'The Herald' February 2nd 1939 Page: 34





Unfortunately, the above two photographs of Yallourn players, at the 1939 Country Championship, are murky and indistinct; however, the caption states that the top photo is of Evie Davies; and the player below is Mrs Lyle Nicholl the Yallourn wicketkeeper. Source: 'The Herald' January 28th 1939 Page: 32'

THE INTERSTATE CRICKET CARNIVAL OF 1940

Important news in women's cricket was announced in December 1939. As shown in the cutting below, despite earlier doubts of the carnival proceeding, because of the conflagration in Europe, it was decided that womens' teams from Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia would travel to Melbourne to participate in the interstate cricket carnival February 1940. It is unclear if any Yallourn players were selected in the Victorian squad for that series.



Text: Following advice from Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia that they will send teams, the women's interstate cricket carnival games will be played at Melbourne from February 3-9 as scheduled. Official approval of the carnival, following the decision of the executive to defer it until after the war, is expected to be given at tomorrow night's special council meeting of the Victorian Women's Association. Victoria's eleven will, be chosen early in January. Source: 'The Sporting Globe' December 13th 1939. Page: 8

CAN YOU HELP BUILD THE HISTORY OF YALLOURN?



The Victorian Women's Cricket 2nd XI. Source: Bradman Museum Trust

This rarely seen photograph, of the Victorian Women's Cricket XI, was taken sometime in the 1930's; and there is a possibility that players from the Yallourn team were members of the above squad. Perhaps there is a reader who can provide further information about: (i) The year in which the photograph was taken and (ii) The names of any women from Yallourn Women's Cricket XI.

Other stories and photographs about cricket in Yallourn can be found on this website by simply typing the word 'cricket' into the search field, at the top right hand corner of the screen, and press 'Enter' on your keyboard.

This article was researched and written by Roger Spaul and presented and posted by Julie George for Virtual Yallourn in February 2022.