FROM THE NEWSPAPERS

A TROTTING HORSE NAMED 'YALLOURN'

Over the past few years, serious efforts have been made to unearth the background information surrounding a trotting horse named 'Yallourn.'

Newspaper articles indicate that *Yallourn* raced between 1948 and 1953. Following substantial research and with the kind help of various people associated with Harness Racing Australia, the following facts regarding the pacer, named *Yallourn*, have been established:-

- **Yallourn**, a bay colt, was foaled in 1944. The naming of the foal remains a puzzle; and it may have been a 'play on words' or, simply, a well-liked place name (which is common in naming horses).
- Yallourn's Sire was Lawn Derby (Australian bred-1930-pictured below) and the Dam was Wiluna (Australian bred -1932). Lawn Derby was hailed in the late 1930's as Australia's coming champion...'beautiful to behold, and in full flight, his gliding action could be likened to something on the wing.' Source: Harnessbred: 'Free Legged Marvels' website.





- The breeder's name was listed as Mr Les Hay of Cobram, Victoria... "the breeder's name is L H (Les) HAY, Victoria; and it appears he maintained ownership of the horse over the years-as his name is listed in the 'ads' for Yallourn as a sire in 1952 and again in 1958." Source: Kathy Gebert of Harness Racing Australia.
- It is possible to trace the pedigree of *Yallourn* through six generations of horses, to about the 1880's. Readers interested in the bloodline of *Yallourn* may like to visit: https://classicfamilies.net/
- It is known that in the races which *Yallourn* won (see below) the owner was listed as Mr R.W. Stewart.



Mr Stewart -The Owner of Yallourn

- In the registered races that **Yallourn** won, the trainer was Jack Baron Junior (see below). His father, Jack Senior, was a prominent horse dealer in the 1930's.
- Unfortunately, there are no photographs available to indicate the colours worn by the drivers of *Yallourn*. However, according to a renowned historian, Mr John Peck, harness racing historian, the colours worn by Jack Baron Junior in *Yallourn*'s winning events were: a red bodied shirt with a white sash/ white sleeves and red cap; and perhaps looked something like this:-

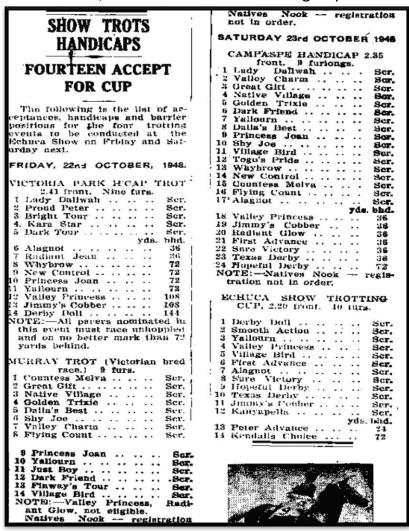


Source: Gibson Saddlers Limited (UK) Website

Note: The colours worn by the various drivers of *Yallourn*, in the seasons in which the pacer raced, may have varied.

The newspaper trotting guides, of those years, showed that *Yallourn* was entered in country and city (i.e. Melbourne Showgrounds) meetings on a regular basis in the years 1950-53; and met with a modicum of success during his years of racing. Using the information, as found in the newspapers of that time and the archives of John Peck, *Yallourn* raced at the following tracks in the period 1948-53:- Geelong, Warragul, Melbourne Showgrounds, Woodend, Ararat, Terang, Ballarat, Healesville and also at Shepparton.

The earliest evidence of *Yallourn* in trotting races can be found in 1948. An article in the 'Riverine Herald' indicated that *Yallourn* was accepted into four races at the Echuca Show in October of that year (see below). On that weekend at Echuca, *Yallourn* started in the Victoria Park Handicap (9 furlongs), the Murray Trot (9 furlongs) ,the Campaspe Handicap (9 furlongs) and, the main attaction of the weekend, the Echuca Show Trotting Cup.



Source: Riverine Herald Saturday 16 October 1948, page 4

In the Second Heat of the Victoria Handicap (as shown above), *Yallourn* (driven by Mr. Hay), despite breaking at the start, finished second. Radiant Jean won the heat with Whybrow coming third.

Source: The Riverine Herald October 23rd 1948 Page: 1

At the same meeting, *Yallourn*, driven by Mr. Bourke (probably T.J. Bourke), finished second in the first heat of the Campaspe Handicap but was well beaten in the final by Dark Friend (driven by the Gordon Rothacker). The brief race report stated that *Yallourn* was: 'left at the start.'

On February 12th 1949, *Yallourn* started in the Maldon Handicap at the Melbourne Showgrounds. The race was over a distance of 1½ miles and, in a field of fourteen, *Yallourn* finished last. The reinsman that night seems to have been L. Hay.

In October 1949, *Yallourn* won the 'Chemists Of Shepparton' Handicap Trot with prize money of £25.00 (pounds). L. Hay was the driver again; and *Yallourn*'s victory was summarized in the 'Shepparton Advertiser' (October 22nd 1949 - Page: 5).

Guesswork often proves to be a folly in research but there is every chance that the above win, at the Shepparton Show, may have been **Yallourn**'s first taste of victory.

'The Argus' newspaper's column entitled 'Handy Trots Guide' was valuable in gleaning further information about the racing history of the trotter. It is known

that **Yallourn** started in the following races (these are a selected from a list of races)...

- Flinders Handicap (1st Division) Warragul January 1949.
- Barwon Handicap -10 furlongs Geelong January 1949.
- Blackstone Open Stakes -12½ furlongs Showgrounds April 1951.
- Bungaree Handicap Ballarat June 1951.
- Glebe Handicap 13½ furlongs Showgrounds December 1951.
- Altona Handicap 11 furlongs Showgrounds -1951.
- Hartwell Handicap 12½ furlongs Showgrounds February 1952
- Morang Handicap 14 furlongs Showgrounds March 1952.
- Northern Handicap 11 furlongs Showgrounds March 1952.
- Lucknow Handicap 12½ furlongs Showgrounds March 1952.
- Dempster Handicap 12½ furlongs Showgounds March 1952.
- Cameron Handicap 11 furlongs Ararat April 1952.
- Allison Handicap 14 furlongs Showgrounds April 1952.
- Logan Handicap -12½ furlongs Warragul April 1952.

In 1950, *Yallourn* entered two races at the opening of the Geelong trotting season. *Yallourn* (driven by L. Hay) finished second in the Breakwater Stakes (Race: 1); but failed to complete the distance in the Barwon Handicap (Race: 4). No further details regarding *Yallourn*'s ill-luck in that race were given.

One notable performance was in February 1952 when *Yallourn*, driven by J. Barron Jnr., finished second in the McKenzie Handicap at Healesville. 'Kelvin Valley', driven by Gordon Rothacker, was first past the post after eleven furlongs. To finish second behind such an eminent driver as Gordon Rothacker was, in itself, meritorious for Jack Barron and his horse *Yallourn*...

"... (Rothacker won a record 14 Melbourne drivers' premierships between 1949 and 1973 as well as capturing 10 Melbourne trainers' premierships between 1953 and 1976. He was the first reinsman to land 500 winners on Melbourne tracks....Awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday honours of 1972 for his services to trotting..." Source: punters.com.au website

According to a well-known sports journalist of that era, Bill Healy, *Yallourn* had won at least one race at the Showgounds track in that trotting season. Bill was probably referring to *Yallourn*'s win in an Encourage Handicap in late 1951.



Source: Sporting Globe December 29th 1951 Page 8

Note: For younger readers: One furlong is 220 yards (i.e. 1/8 of a mile) or approximately 200 metres.

One of the most prestigious events in which *Yallourn* started was the Festival Gala Stakes (11 furlongs). It was Race:2 on the program of the Centenary Trotting Carnival in April 1951. (The carnival was a three night extravanganza of trotting from Wednesday, April 18th through to Saturday, April 21st).

The prize money for events was regularly mentioned in the press. For example, it is known that the purse for the Blackstone Handicap in 1951 (as shown above), in which *Yallourn* started, was £300 (pounds). The prize was equivalent to \$15,000.00 dollars today. It was difficult to ascertain the total prize money won by *Yallourn* during his life on the track; but the table below lists the prize money that *Yallourn* received for his four wins in the period 1950-52.

By charting the information forwarded by John Peck, it was possible to tabulate a summary of *Yallourn*'s career and major wins as shown below:-

SUMMARY OF YALLOURN'S CAREER

SEASON	STARTS	WINS	SECOND	THIRD	FOURTH
1948-49	3	0	0	0	1
1949-50	NIL	-	-	-	-
1950-51	11	3	1	1	0
1951-52	21	1	1	2	7
CAREER	35	4	2	3	8
TOTAL					

Source: John Peck, Harness Racing Historian

SUMMARY OF YALLOURN'S FOUR WINS

WIN	SEASON	TRACK	RACE	PRIZE
NO				MONEY
1	1950-51	Ararat	Laidlaw Open Stakes	£60
2	1950-51	Ararat	Rutter handicap	£60
3	1950-51	Terang	Meadow Stakes	£50
4	1951-52	Showgrounds	Encourage	£300

Source: John Peck, Harness Racing Historian

Note: The above tables do not mention *Yallourn*'s win in the 'Chemists Of Shepparton' Handicap Trot in October 1949 because it was an 'unofficial/ unregistered event.'

The starting price(s) in a race are useful guides to a particular horse's recent form and/or improvement. In the 1951 Altona Handicap, *Yallourn*'s 'last starting' price was given as 25/1. From reading the available form guides of those years, it appears that *Yallourn* was seldom tipped to win at the scheduled meetings throughout Victoria.

It is impossible to discover the names of all drivers of *Yallourn*, but it is known Les Hay, George Gath and Jack Barron Junior, a leading trotting driver, seems to have been the principal reinsmen of *Yallourn* in the period 1951-52.

For example, in the Lucknow Handicap, which was Race: 4 on the card at the Melbourne Showground track on Saturday 29st March 1952, J. Barron Jnr. was listed as the 'reinsman' ...



Source: The Agus 29th March 1952 Page 12

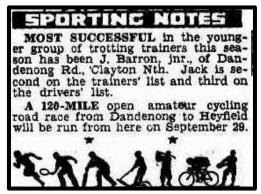
The result, as carried in a later newspaper, shows that Sir Wonga won the race while **Yallourn** finished fourth.

A photograph of Jack Barron Jnr. was published in the 'The Herald' on November 9th 1949. He is shown here walking with Mr Stewart.



Harness racing archives indicate that Jack Barron Jnr. also became a successful trainer; and it is known that he lived in Clayton North as mentioned in the following press cutting (below). Jack Barron Jnr died in 1966 at the age of 44 years. His son, Bruce, became a noted driver-trainer in later years. It seems that harness racing was part of the Barron family's DNA.

Note: For those readers who enjoy the sport of harness racing, an engrossing story about Jack Barron Senior can be found in a publication called the 'Australian Trotting Register' (September-1967).



Source: 'Dandenong Journal Wednesday 9 May 1951, page 9

In April 1952, *Yallourn* was accepted into the Cameron Handicap at the Showgrounds with prize money set at £280.00 (pounds). The driver that night was one of the well-known Gath brothers (probably George). In a disappointing display, *Yallourn* struggled in a field of eleven and came in last.

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GIL DON ser	- 1	3	3	3	3	Allen		2.1515
BERT'S LUCK 12y	9	4	5	5	i	Whyte		2.15
Gallant Walls 12y	11	ti	10	8	5	Wilson		2.151
Lawnsin scr	7	5	4	2	6	Donoghue		2.16
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Source: 'Sporting Globe' April 23rd 1952 Page: 7



In the September 1952, an issue of the 'Australian Trotting Record' carried an advertisement which offered some insight about *Yallourn* standing at stud (often known as stud service). Mr L. Hay of Cobram (also see above) was listed as the contact person; and part of the wording in the notice was as follows...

To stand this season at Cobram, Victoria YALLOURN

By Lawn Derby from Wiluna, she by imported Louis Direct.

A winner at the Melbourne Showgrounds and in the country, *Yallourn* has proved its ability to sire early.....The remainder of *Yallourn*'s stock has now been broken and there is every possiblity that the winners from his (*Yallourn*) only group of foals will be 100%.

FEE: FIFTEEN GUINEAS

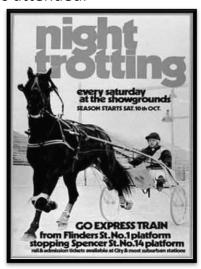
Further particulars from L. Hay Cobram Victoria. Telephone 551

During his time at stud, Yallourn sired more than 30 foals ...

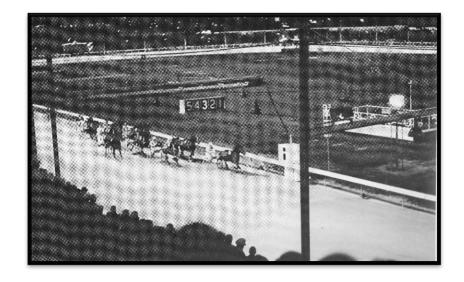
"Harness Racing Australia has 33 progenies on our database; however, this might not be the fully foal crop. Not all mares were registered for the Stud Book at this time, so some foals might have been born that weren't notified, or, didn't race...We know that of the 33 on our files, 10 were winners -.." Source: Kathy Gebert Harness Racing Australia archives

Foals sired by *Yallourn* that eventually went on to win races at various levels included: Crepe Suzette (1948), Yuki (1953), Agoorab (1954), Transformer (1956), Touch Flare (1959), Placebo (1957), Murray Lass (1957), Electric Moko (1959), Bearii Special (1959) and Sea Drift (1960). Other known foals were: Essesee (1959) and Waaia Go in 1963.

Younger readers may be interested to know that night trotting throughout Australia became very popular in the post war years and people flocked to city and country tracks to witness the exciting spectacle of night racing. At the opening night of the Melbourne Showgrounds track in November 1947, a crowd of 20,000 trotting devotees attended.



Source: wwwontronics.com



Source: www.harnessbred.com
The Melbourne Showgrounds Trotting Track
where Yallourn, the pacer often raced from the 1948-mid 1950's.

Furthermore, in 1947 'The Argus' reported that a crowd of more than 25,000 attended the meeting at the Showground. Night-time racing was a boon to the sport; and around the nation, attendances at the night trotting meetings regularly broke records.

In 1948, the popularity of trotting in Melbourne was underlined by an average weekly attendance of 23,000 people; and the last night of the night trotting season that year saw 33,045 fans pass through the gates at the Showgrounds.

RECORD CROWD AT TROTS

A record crowd of 25,084 attended the night trots on Saturday. attendance higher than that at the previous meeting, and exceeded the figures for the opening night by Dunne, expressed the opinion that, with fine weather, attendances continue to grow. Stakes absorbed the same amount will be given next Saturday. For the big meet-January 10, however, on £3,000 will be given away. Principal race on Saturday the Christmas Cup, of £1 and a trophy, which was preted to Mr S. Aggett, owner Aggett, owner of the winner, by Mr Cain, former Premier.

Source: 'The Argus' December 29th 1947 page 20.

One can only now wonder what the punters thought of the horse with such an unusual 'place name.' (Note: Yallourn is an aboriginal word which means: 'brown fire').

Night trotting was very popular at Warragul in the early 1950's and it would be interesting to know how many people from the township of Yallourn travelled 'up the highway' to Warragul to watch its namesake go 'through its paces.'



Source: The Age January 5th 1949 Page: 12.

Mr. Kyle Galley who takes great pride and pleasure in researching and recording the history of harness racing at the Warragul track was most obliging in providing information about *Yallourn*. In response to several questions about *Yallourn*'s performances, Kyle wrote...

"I have had a look back through the old trotting year books for Yallourn and found records only for one 12-month period of racing in the 1950s...where Yallourn raced for the full season for some wins and placings as a six-year-old.... I do have gaps in results from about 1956 to 1960 so the horse may have raced later in that time too." Source: Kyle Galley-Warragul HRC.

Additionally, Kyle made mention of ...

"There was often a Yallourn Handicap or Hernes Oak Handicap run at the Warragul trots in the days before sponsors came into racing."

ANOTHER STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME: TROTTING AT YALLOURN

Readers of the Virtual Yallourn website may be surprised to know that in the period 1931-1935, at least five unregistered trotting races were held at Yallourn. The venue of the races in 1931 was near the brickworks and in December 1932 the races were held at the 'new' Oval.

The newspapers of that time also indicated that the Yallourn sports carnivals often included trotting. It is known that a Yallourn Trotting Association was formed in June 1931; and Mr J.M Bridge (the first General Superintendent in 1923) was a driving force behind the sport of trotting at Yallourn.

Note: A story regarding trotting in the township Yallourn will be written and forwarded to Julie for posting at a later date.

IN APPRECIATION FOR ASSISTANCE WITH THIS STORY

As mentioned at the beginning, this article has taken quite a long time to bring to completion. What a started out as a simple query several years ago became an investigation of some proportion.

There is no certainty that all aspects of *Yallourn*'s trotting career have been brought to light in this story but it is hoped that readers who, enjoy sporting history, may continue the search.

This has been a difficult story to write and throughout my research, I have endeavoured to crosscheck my findings for veracity but I would welcome any corrections and amendments that can clarify the track career of the pacer *Yallourn*.

In trying to establish the background of the horse named *Yallourn*, numerous trotting clubs (e.g. Echuca, Warragul, Bendigo) and historians were contacted.

The Virtual Yallourn website would like to thank the following people associated with the sport of harness racing for their kind assistance in researching and writing this story: John Peck, Kathy Gebert, Kyle Galley, Dean Baring, Michael Taylor and Flora Robson.

- Harness racing historian, John Peck is to be sincerely thanked for his information about *Yallourn*'s pedigree, trotting races in the township of Yallourn in the 1930's, wins/ placings of *Yallourn* and facts about the bloodlines of various horses. Without John's contribution, this article, the racing history of *Yallourn*, would be clouded.
- Kathy Gebert of Harness Racing Australia was most helpful in resolving the issues regarding trainers, Sire and Dam of *Yallourn*. The time that Kathy gave to helping with historical data about *Yallourn*'s progeny was considerable. 'Thank you' to Kathy for her generosity in assisting with this story.
- Kyle Galley, who is regarded as an 'unofficial historian' of Warragul Harness Racing Club, went to a great deal of trouble in fossicking through his archives to assist in the writing of this article. His love of the history of WHRC and his enthusiasm for the sport of trotting is apparent and is to be commended
- Dean, Michael and Flora were not only helpful but also most obliging in assisting in researching the above article.

CAN YOU HELP WITH A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE PACER YALLOURN?

The most elusive aspect in this study of **Yallourn**, was to uncover a photograph of the pacer. It is a long shot, as they say in racing, but perhaps there is a reader

of this website who, by some chance, may possess a photo of *Yallourn*. If so, Julie would be very pleased to post such a photo on this website. Thank you.

Sadly, the township and the pacer, named *Yallourn* are now both gone but hopefully their stories will endure and interest the coming generations. As Eduardo Galeano (1940-2015) once said...

'History never really says goodbye. History says, 'See you later.'



This story is part of an on-going project regarding the history of the township of Yallourn. The story was researched and written by Roger Spaull; and posted and presented by Julie George for the Virtual Yallourn website in July 2018.

The above information was drawn from various documents, newspaper articles, harness racing websites, and data provided by trotting historians as listed above.