

1956 - 'LITTLE OLYMPICS' CARNIVAL AT THE YALLOURN OVAL



Julie posted this photograph on the Virtual Yallourn website in October 2010; and the coloured banners, summer dress styles, massive crowd and the tree lined background suggest that the photograph was probably taken at the Little Olympics at Yallourn in 1956.

The following extracts from metropolitan newspapers will give younger readers some background understanding of the 'Little Olympics'; and the lengths to which the Yallourn Amateur Athletic Club went to in making the event such a resounding success.

26 nations in 'Little Olympics' at Yallourn

MORWELL, Thursday:
At least 26 countries will compete in Victoria's "Little Olympics" at Yallourn on December 2.

Countries entered so far

are Greece, Argentina, Belgium, Ceylon, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Liberia, Malaya, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Singapore, Uruguay, Venezuela, Nationalist China, Burma and Yugoslavia.

Russia, Italy, France, Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Austria have asked Yallourn Amateur Athletic Club to extend the closing date for entries.

Italy is considering sending its entire team of 40.

Competitors include George Kerr (Jamaica), and the Spence twins, Mel and Mal.

Barry Donath, Ridgeway, and Stevens and Ron Blackney will be there for Australia.

**MR. BLAKENEY WILL BE
MINISTER TO CAMBODIA**

Only a dream two years ago, now...

YALLOURN TO GET LITTLE GAMES

MORWELL, Monday: The little Olympic Games are coming to Yallourn, the little country town which is the heart of Victoria's power and light.

What seemed a dream two years ago is coming true on December 2.

Local amateur athletic club members are frequent visitors these days to Olympic Village, calling on managers of world teams and inviting entries for a Yallourn athletics meeting the day after this section of the Games finishes at Melbourne.

Harry Hopman will officially open the Yallourn Games.

Managers of the visiting Games teams have still to select their teams, and Yallourn will know later this week who will take part in the Little Olympics.

Promises have been given from Russia, Italy, Greece, and entries have been made by Liberia, Burma, India, England, Australia, the Argentine, Uruguay, and Nationalist China.

A crowd of more than 20,000 is expected at the Yallourn meeting, which has the support of the whole town.

A special train will run from Melbourne for athletes, managers, and visitors.

Woman faces killing count

MELBOURNE, Monday: Daisy Fernandez, a 41-year-old, colored woman, was today charged in Madras Police Court with having murdered a plantation laborer Edgar Ambrose, at Paritich near Madras, last Saturday. Police said they had taken possession of a bloodstained shirt and knife.

\$50,368 for aged homes

CANBERRA, Monday: Grants totalling £14,308 to help build homes for the aged were announced today by Mr. Robertson, Social Service Minister.

Grants to Victorian organizations are: £5,704 to the Central Methodist Mission, Melbourne, to help build two new wings for the men's hospital, Arden St., North Melbourne; £2,417 to Melbourne City Mission to help build another wing at the Judge-Buck Memorial Home for Aged Persons, Eltham.

Potato prices falling

Potato prices fell by about 2½ a cwt. and from 1d. to 1d. a lb. at Melbourne market yesterday.

This followed a big increase in supplies from Victorian growing districts.

Wholesale price of new potatoes from local district growers fell by about 2½ lb from 6½-10½ to 2½ a cwt., equivalent to a range of 2½ to 2½ a lb.

New potatoes from Western Australia and Queensland were about 10½ to 12½ lower at 2½ a bag, equivalent to 2½ a ton.

Retail prices for new potatoes in city and suburbs were quoted at from 5d. to 10d. a lb., compared with from 1½ to 2½ a lb. during recent peak season.

**BURNETT'S
WHITE OAT**

Source: 'The Argus' November 20th 1956, page 7

THE TEXT TO THE ABOVE ARTICLE

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Olympians at Yallourn

YALLOURN, Sunday. — Twelve thousand spectators saw Yallourn's 'Little Olym. pics' today.

Many Games athletes competed on Yallourn oval, which not long ago was a swamp.

Results

MEN'S 100 METRES. — Lizenko (France), 1; S. Butt (Pakistan), 2; A. Khatiq (Pakistan), 3. Time: 10.6.
WOMEN'S 100 METRES. — Picado (France), 1; Cap de Villa (France), 2; Henry (France), 11.0.
MEN'S 200 METRES. — Madlik (Czechoslovakia), 1; Khatiq (Pakistan), 2; Butt (Pakistan), 3. 21.7.
WOMEN'S 200 METRES. — Fluchot (France), 1; Henry (France), 2. 25.4.
MEN'S 800 METRES. — Djian (France), 1; Harichandra (Malaya), 2; G. Johnson (Liberia), 3. 1:36.7.
MEN'S 1500 METRES. — Papavasiliou (Greece), 1; E. Depasins (Greece), 2. 4:7.8.
MEN'S 4 x 100 METRES RELAY. — Pakistan, 1; Poland, 2; Czechoslovakia, 3. 42 sec.
MEN'S 3000 METRES WALK (Handicap). — A. Johnson (Brit.), 1; D. Kenna (Aust.), 2; J. Smyth (Aust.), 3.
MEN'S POLE VAULT. — G. Roubanis (Greece), 1; Z. Waspy (Poland), 2; Z. Janiszewsky (Poland), 3.
MEN'S HIGH JUMP. — J. Leresal (Kenya), 1; Fournier (France), 2; G. Bayonda (Philippines), 3. 6 ft. 3 in.
WOMEN'S HIGH JUMP. — Voborilova (Czech.), 1; Martova (Czech.), 2. 5 ft. 2 in.
MEN'S DISCUS. — Dako Radicevic (Yugo.), 1; G. Kriss (Argentina), 2; T. Trut (Poland), 3. 159 ft. 8 3/4 in.
WOMEN'S DISCUS. — Merova (Czech.), 1; Voborilova (Czech.), 2. 161 ft. 2 in.
MEN'S SHOT PUT. — Meconi (Italy), 1; G. Thakankas (Greece), 2; Thomas (France), 3. 55 ft. 8 in.

Source: 'The Age' December 3rd 1956. Page: 6

NOTE The above comment regarding the arena being a swamp 'not long ago' was 'not entirely' accurate as the arena/oval was established by the Yallourn Oval Trust in 1926. Furthermore, when Len Hutton's MCC touring team played against a Gippsland XI, at Yallourn in February 1955, the Yallourn Oval was described as the best country ground ...

"The English cricketers, visiting pressmen and commentators, Australian and international, had nothing but praise for the Yallourn Oval, which they described as the best country ground they have ever seen on tour." 'Morwell Advertiser.'



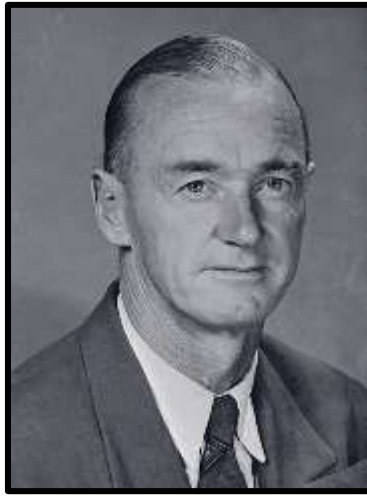
George Roubanis of Greece won the pole vault at Yallourn in 1956. George was born in 1929 in Thessalonica. He competed at three Olympic Games; and was named the '1956 Greek Athlete of the Year.' At the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games, he won a bronze medal in the pole vault, as he cleared 4.50 m (a Greek record at the time). Source: Wikipedia



Rene Djian of France won the Men's 800 metre race at Yallourn in 1956. René (born in 1927) was a French middle-distance runner who competed in the 800 metres at the 1952 Summer Olympics and also at the 1956 Summer Olympics. Source: Wikipedia



Stepanka Mertová (born in 1930) was a Czech athlete who competed in the women's discus throw at the 1956 Summer Olympics and the 1960 Summer Olympics. Stepanka won the discus throw event at Yallourn in 1956. Source: Olympedia website.



One of Australia's most celebrated sports stars Harry Hopman. Harry officially opened the Little Olympics at Yallourn in 1956.

THE FOLLOWING EXTRACTS REGARDING THE LITTLE OLYMPICS CARNIVAL AT YALLOURN IN 1956, HAVE BEEN POSTED ON THE VIRTUAL YALLOURN WEBSITE.

"The 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games were a catalyst to a greater emphasis in athletics in school sports programs and local clubs (e.g. Yallourn Amateur Athletics Club which was formed in 1951). Younger readers may not be aware that, in 1956, Yallourn hosted a 'Mini Olympics' and it was imposing sporting spectacle. It is documented that some thirteen thousand people visited Yallourn to watch the program of events which included numerous international Olympians..." Source: Virtual Yallourn website January 22nd. 2018.

"Vic, Barry, Betty and Lois also were members of the Yallourn Amateur Athletic Club (formed in 1951). One of the biggest days in the town's sporting history was in 1956 when the club hosted a major athletic carnival, sometimes known as the 'Mini Olympics,' at the Yallourn Oval. International athletes, who were in Melbourne for the Olympic Games, travelled to Yallourn that weekend and participated in the special program of track and field events. As President of the YAAC, Vic Gust played a key role in the organization of the events and Lois was very proud of her father and her family and, of course, the town that day." Source: Lois Gust – Virtual Yallourn website July 1st 2014



Lois Gust and her father, Vic.

"...I understand that my dad (Bill) was always very involved with the community and athletics in Yallourn, and I believe ran marathons, and was a very fit man. After the 1956 Olympics had been on in Melbourne, some of the athletes wanted to stay back for a bit of a holiday, whatever.

So some enterprising types from the Yallourn Amateur Athletic Club, invited a number of Olympic athletes to attend a "mini-Olympics" in Yallourn organised by the YAAC, so they all came down on the/a train, and I believe it was a great success, both for the athletes who had a great experience and were welcomed in to a "multicultural" community, but also for the organisers, who no doubt would have been told "it's not possible/ you'll never pull it off", etc. etc. I am not sure what role my father played, if any, but certainly my dad had always been a 'possibilitarian!' Source: Tony Titulaer - Virtual Yallourn website-March 21st 2014.

Note: Bill Titulaer can be seen in the front row of the photograph below.



Yallourn Athletic Club 1951-52

Back Row: B. Kennewell, R. Jacobs, B. Brewer, J. Brace, G. Knight, B. Naylor

Front Row: L. Matthews, W. Titulaer, W. Tunaley, G. Loveless, R. Kennewell, C. Kirwood, B. Stevenson ...Mascot D. Loveless

The 1956 Little Olympics Carnival was a most prestigious event in the town's history and further photographs or cuttings of that historic day Yallourn would be warmly received by Julie. Thank you.

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