

The History of the Yallourn Soccer Club

EPISODE 2 1920 - 1930

SOME "NEED TO KNOWS" CONCERNING HISTORICAL SOCCER IN VICTORIA

1. Competition Structure

The competition structure of soccer in Victoria was based on the European experience and this was to be expected as the early administrators of the game were migrants. The basic competition was the "League Championship" a home and away competition, the premier team was the one that finished on top of the league with the most points (and better goal difference if teams finished on the same number of points). There was no final four and finals matches as played in Australian Rules competitions. There were other competitions through the season of equal import, these were "cup" or "shield" competitions that had great status. A team not going well in the league competition may have a dream run in cup or shield competition¹.

There could be a number of cup and shield competitions available in the one League, for instance in the Wonthaggi League, teams entered into the Hospital Cup, Taberners' Cup and Dockerty Cup, as well as their bread and butter League title.

In addition, there was the annual "international series". This was where national teams were drawn up from players of the various nationalities participating in the league. For instance, in the Latrobe Valley during the 1950's the international teams playing in this Sunday competition were Australia, England, Scotland, Holland, Malta, Italy and "the rest of Europe".

Finally there were the interleague competitions usually played at the end of the season (an early trophy was the Carrick Cup and later the Federation Cup was introduced).

2. The Wonthaggi & District Soccer Association

This Association was a major influence in the development of soccer in Gippsland from the establishment of the Wonthaggi coal mines in 1909 until the late 1930's and Yallourn teams had involvement with this league over many years, so it gets prominent mention in this history.

The Association was well organised with a referees' panel and disciplinary board.²

¹Consider the English FA Cup competition with Wigan Athletic winning the Cup Final against Manchester City 1-0 and yet their league performance was such that they were relegated from the English Premier League (1st Division) to the English Championship League (2nd Division) for 2013-2014 season.

²The records of the Association are held by the Wonthaggi Historical Society

3. The Dockerty Cup

The magnificent Dockerty Cup with both the Wonthaggi Magpies and Morwell



Falcons names inscribed is admired by the author.

A study of this nature could not avoid the involvement in a review of this competition. Harry Dockerty donated the cup for competition among senior teams in Victoria on the basis of a knock-out competition, a replication of the English FA cup competition. It was first played for in 1909 and by 1927 country teams had entered the competition.

From a historian's point of view, as the draw was published in the metropolitan newspapers, country teams could be tracked through the various rounds of the Cup. From time to time, match reports were also included in the press.

As two Gippsland teams were winners of the cup, Wonthaggi Magpies in 1931 and Morwell Falcons in 1994 and the Yallourn Soccer Club was an early participant in the competition, it has relevance to this story.

When Wonthaggi Magpies won the Cup in 1931 it carried the title "Champions of Victoria".

The last time the Dockerty Cup was contested was in 2004 and Green Gully Cavaliers were the winners.

4. Promotion and Relegation Leagues

Yallourn Soccer Club, up until 1947, didn't play in leagues that were multi-divisional and consequently they played in stand-alone leagues. However, from 1947 when admitted into the Victorian Metropolitan League(s) of the Victorian Amateur Soccer Football Association (VASFA) they played in promotion and relegation leagues.

This system meant that league games had a purpose right throughout the season. If you were in the top half of the league table, you were fighting for promotion; in the bottom half, you were fighting to avoid relegation. It also meant each year there were fresh teams in each league division. In Yallourn's experience, most divisions numbered 10 or 12 teams with 2 up and 2 down each season giving 33% or 44% new teams in each division per season.. life was never dull in the VASFA.

5. Soccer's International Structure Played Out in Victoria and Gippsland

Yallourn and other Gippsland soccer teams were not backward in tapping into the international structure of soccer. Of course the migrant was the lifeblood of many Gippsland teams but specific efforts to attract overseas support or players is evident.

Yallourn specifically sought by advertisement in overseas local newspapers, players to migrate to the Latrobe Valley and play for Yallourn. For instance, Tom Evans recruited a player(s) for Yallourn whilst overseas in Britain in the 1970's.

The Wonthaggi Magpies tried to establish ties with Glasgow Celtic and Newcastle United in the 1920's and Morwell Falcons had excellent overseas contacts with European soccer organisations, both for coaching and playing staffs during their time of prominence.

6. Where the game was played in Yallourn

In these formative years, the matches were played in two locations. First was the "Eastern Oval", a location adjacent to the camp, east of the power station, on land that previously was Saviges' farm. At a later stage, particularly in the early 1930's, at the Briquette factory oval.

The move to the Yallourn ovals was not achieved until 1936.

THE FOUNDING OF THE YALLOURN SOCCER CLUB

There is some confusion over the date of the first game of soccer at Yallourn³. The Yallourn Soccer Club claims its beginning was in 1923, however, Alex Jaensch who was the analytical chemist on site between 1921 to 1924⁴, claims that during his time there, he didn't see an organised soccer match (or an Australian Rules game for that matter). He claims that the conditions at the works area limited sporting activity because of the lack of

³There is further conjecture on the first soccer club established in the Central Gippsland area, as a photograph discovered in the archives of the Centre for Gippsland Studies at Monash University, Churchill, depicts the Mirboo North Soccer Club that appear to be dressed circa pre-First World War.

⁴Conversation with Alex Jaensch, 20 October 1993.

suitable facilities, however he did not discount that unofficial "paddock games" could have been organised.

However Prue Mc Goldrick in her work "Yallourn Was" records a communication from W H "Bill" Langford:

"W Langford founded the first Yallourn Soccer Club with Don Milner its first president. This club played only one match and that was at Albert Park oval, Melbourne, where they were defeated. The club foundered for want of opposing teams, nearest was the Wonthaggi Coalminers Club⁵"

This would appear to be before 1925 and could substantiate the claim for a 1923 beginning and as the game was played at Albert Park, Melbourne it would be in keeping with Alex Jaensch's observation that he never saw an organised game at Yallourn during the period he was employed there.

The first documented evidence appears in the first edition of the "Live Wire" in 1925⁶. The Live Wire was established as an information sheet to advise residents of the commodities available for sale at the Commission's General Store. This was the first free broadsheet published in Victoria⁷ and gradually became a weekly paper, inclined to pursue the management line, however it was also an excellent reflection of community activity and sentiment. The 1925 soccer scene saw two teams in the town, Yallourn⁸ and Yallourn Thistle⁹, both participating in the Wonthaggi cup competitions. The fact that two teams existed indicates a strong migrant presence among the construction workers. The Yallourn Thistle was probably associated with the "Caledonian Society" that had been organised in the town¹⁰. In the first round of the Dr Webb Cup, Yallourn Thistle defeated the Wonthaggi State Mine one goal to nil on the Eastern Oval¹¹, the first playing field in the works area. Yallourn travelled to Wonthaggi and defeated Celtic two goals to one¹².

⁵Mc Goldrick P., "**Yallourn Was...**", Gippsland Printers, Morwell, 1984, p22

Prue Mc Goldrick records, " much of what follows is taken from letters to the author written by W.H.Langford in early 1983. It is supported by information from an article. Retirement of W.H.Langford, Morwell Advertiser, April 9, 1962."

⁶**The Live Wire**(Yallourn), 17 September 1925, p2.

⁷McGoldrick P., "**Yallourn Was...**", Gippsland Printers, Morwell, 1984, p79.

⁸This team may also have been known as the Yallourn "Rose" having a "Geordie" composition. Yallourn Rose was referred to in an article, "Past Soccer Personalities No.1. - Bluey Mellon", **The Live Wire**, 8 September 1948, p3.

⁹This team may also have known as the first "Brown Coal Mine " soccer team as many of the players lived there and were of Scottish birth. See: Ringin K, **The Old Brown Coal Mine**, LV Printers, Traralgon, 1986, pp131-132.

¹⁰Mosely, Op cit., pp120-121.

¹¹This Eastern Oval is not to be confused with No.5 oval adjacent the Eastern Road Hostel that was used in the 1950's and 60's.

The Eastern Oval was located to the east of the power station adjacent Saviges' farm house. It was in this area that the first construction office and workshops were built.

¹²**Live Wire** (Yallourn), 17 September 1925, p2.

This article also states that there were eight teams in this competition, 5 from Wonthaggi, 2 from Yallourn and 1 from Korumburra.



The Wonthaggi Caledonians Circa 1925-26

The Yallourn teams had mixed fortunes with their Wonthaggi counterparts in the next round in October. The Scottish derby, Yallourn Thistle versus Wonthaggi Caledonians saw the Thistle win two goals to one, but Yallourn could not contain the Wonthaggi Magpies, losing four goals to one¹³. The Live Wire scribe went on to describe the circumstance,

"Yallourn Thistle met the Wonthaggi Caledonians at Wonthaggi and defeated them 2 goals to nil, Jewett kicked one goal and an opposing back player accidentally gave them the other. Yallourn Thistle and Wonthaggi Magpies now play-off for the beautiful silver cup presented by Dr Webb of Wonthaggi"¹⁴.

The final saw the Magpies prevail over the Yallourn Thistle and carry off Dr Webb's cup.

¹³Live Wire (Yallourn), 15 October 1925, p2.

¹⁴Live Wire (Yallourn), 15 October 1925, p2.



**The Wonthaggi Magpies "as tough as teak" circa 1925-26
(Most were miners at the Wonthaggi coalfields)**

In September a team from Yallourn also travelled in the easterly direction for a charity match at Sale, the large sum of nine pounds was taken at the gate and was given to the Sale Hospital¹⁵.

THE NORTH GIPPSLAND LEAGUE

The 1925 report of a soccer match between Yallourn and a team from Sale¹⁶ came as a surprise, there is little current-day knowledge of the establishment of the game in the Sale area of Gippsland so early this century. Further surprises followed in subsequent 1926 editions of the Live Wire,

"At a meeting of delegates held at Maffra the "North Gippsland Soccer League" was formed, comprising Glenmaggie, Maffra, Sale and Yallourn Clubs. The fixture card is being arranged by the Yallourn Club.

Office-bearers: President; W Boax (Glenmaggie); Vice-president, W.Hudson (Sale): Secretary, W. Searle (Sale); Treasurer, W. Hill (Maffra)."¹⁷

¹⁵Live Wire (Yallourn), 24 September 1925, p4.

¹⁶The Live Wire, Op cit., p4.

¹⁷The Live Wire (Yallourn), 27 May 1926, p3.

The formation of a rural soccer league may, on initial examination, be considered unique¹⁸, but as Mosely points out, for this same period in New South Wales, 68 country towns supported soccer teams¹⁹. This area in North Gippsland is the Glenmaggie, Maffra and Sale triangle, which at that time, and as it still is today, an area heavily dependent on farming and pastoral activity for survival.

Continued investigation of the local newspapers, the "Heyfield Herald", "Gippsland Times" (Sale), "Sale Mercury", and the "Maffra Spectator", highlighted the years 1923, 1924 and 1925, as years where there was a vigorous soccer league in this part of Gippsland. The other areas that supported teams were Nambrok, and further to the east, teams from Stratford, Bairnsdale and Fernbank²⁰ and from the north-west Cowwarr. There was even mention of a player coming from Seaspray to play.²¹

From indications in both the Maffra Spectator and Heyfield Herald, it was apparent that a substantial involvement by migrants contracted for farm labour in that area or workers constructing the Glenmaggie Weir and the Macallister River irrigation system were responsible.

The ethnic composition of the teams was described in newspaper articles. The Nambrok team was reported as comprising of immigrants²². In 1924 the Cowwarr Soccer Team was reported in one article as "Pommies", "English lads", "The duties of umpire were carried out by a new arrival from the Old Country" and "the Londoners". The English origin of this team seems fairly well documented²³.

The European factor in the origin of these migrants is further reinforced by the Kemp's history of the Maffra Shire where the sugar beet industry is a source of migrant employment,

"In February 1925 it was reported that many Italians and Maltese and other southern Europeans arrived in the district and obtained employment in the beet industry."²⁴

Although European migration was established in the area, an examination of soccer team sheets that appeared in all local newspapers, points to an exclusive anglo-celtic participation in soccer throughout Gippsland in this post World War 1 period.

¹⁸ This uniqueness was only apparent to the uninitiated. Historian Roy Hay had made the point of Victorian country soccer development in his contribution to "Ethnicity and Soccer in Australia". Hay R., "British Football, Wogball, or the World Game? Towards a Social History of Victorian Soccer", in O'Hara J. (ed), **Ethnicity and Soccer in Australia**, ASSH Studies in Sports History No.10, 1994, p51.

¹⁹Mosely, Op cit., p118.

²⁰**The Maffra Spectator**, 25 June 1925, p3.

²¹**The Maffra Spectator**, 23 July 1925, p3.

²²**The Heyfield Herald**, 13 August 1925, P2.

The article states, "A team of immigrants from Nambrok met the Sale United Soccer Club at Sale on Saturday and were defeated by 9 goals to nil. It was the Nambrok teams first game together."

²³**The Heyfield Herald**, 10 July 1924, P3.

²⁴Kemp D., **Maffra, The History of the Shire to 1975**, James Young & Sons, Bairnsdale, 1975, p 41.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 1920's

The 1925-1926 seasons had mixed fortunes for the Yallourn teams, it did however provide a stage for one of the greatest migrant soccer player (including those National League players that took the field for Gippsland Falcons) to play for a Gippsland club. The player concerned was English International, J R Elvey²⁵, who played for Yallourn against Sale. More later.

The other highlight was the visit of HMS Renown to Warragul.

TROUBLE AT WONTHAGGI

The 1926 soccer season progressed to the point where the Yallourn side was undefeated and the winners of the inaugural North Gippsland Soccer Association premiership²⁶. The same cannot be said for the Yallourn Thistle, they had sought solace in the westerly direction and had applied to join the Wonthaggi and District Soccer Association. The Thistle had been granted admission at a meeting of the Association on the 3rd April²⁷. This meeting had been marked by acrimonious debate, abusive behaviour and a walk-out by Celtic and Caledonian delegates over a matter of ground usage involving "mine host" Taberner and his ground²⁸. Association Chairman, Mr Doyle was involved in the acrimony that lasted a number of weeks²⁹ with further walk-outs by club delegates. The Yallourn Thistle were scheduled to play a round of the Dr Webb Cup on the 19th June at Yallourn. Their opponents would be the victors of the Wonthaggi Magpies - Wonthaggi Caledonians encounter. However at an Association meeting of the 30th May³⁰ a motion was passed requesting the secretary write to the Yallourn Thistle protesting the postponing of "their league games". At the next meeting³¹ serious charges were laid against the Thistle by Wonthaggi Celtic. They claimed the points for the cancellation of the game against the Thistle as well as financial compensation of seven pounds eighteen shillings. They won the points but not the money. This prompted a motion,

"that question of rearranging of fixtures lie on the table until secretary write to Yallourn finding out if they intend to fulfil their league program, a definite answer to be sent by them as to whether they intend to do so, - carried"

If this was not enough, Referee Gibson reported to the Association that he was citing two players of the Thistle, namely Carmichael and Irvine, for, "ungentlemanly conduct on the field of play" at a game at Yallourn against the Wonthaggi Magpies. The secretary was

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²⁶ **Live Wire** (Yallourn), 11 September 1926, p2.

²⁷ Minutes of the Wonthaggi and District Soccer Association, 3 April 1926, , Wonthaggi Historical Society

²⁸ Mr Taberner had made a paddock across the road from his hotel available to the Association for a soccer pitch. He also enabled the Magpies to build a "hut" in a laneway behind the hotel.

²⁹ Minutes of the Wonthaggi and District Soccer Association, 10 April 1926, Wonthaggi Historical Society.

³⁰ Minutes of the Wonthaggi and District Soccer Association, 30 May 1926, Wonthaggi Historical Society.

³¹ Minutes of the Wonthaggi and District Soccer Association, June 1926, Wonthaggi Historical Society

requested to, "write for the players' defence before dealing with the same³²". At the Association meeting of the 3rd July³³ the matter was resolved, with Irvine suspended for eight weeks and Carmichael having no action taken. On the 28 August³⁴ the Association received a letter from the Yallourn Thistle tendering their resignation from the Association. This was not automatically accepted and exercised the Association's deliberations during meetings well into 1927³⁵, but the Thistle had disbanded. Yallourn on the other hand, by virtue of their success in North Gippsland, were being included in the Dr Webb Cup, but they in turn ran into a snag with their scheduled game with the Wonthaggi Magpies. A motion on the Magpies books of the general meeting of the 15 August³⁶ says it all.

"moved by W Coe seconded by F Pease that secretary write to Yallourn stating that we cannot raise a team to travel on the 28 August owing to players being crook."

Their state of health may have been a reflection of the treatment they received the last time they had visited Yallourn.³⁷

THE VISIT OF HMS RENOWN AND SOCCER'S INTERNATIONALISM

Reported soccer activity was hard to find for the next six years at Yallourn. The game disappeared from the media completely except for a couple of notable examples. Early in 1927, Victoria was graced by the visit of their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York (the future George VI). They journeyed to Australia on the battleship Renown. Victorian soccer officials became aware that H.M.S. Renown had its own soccer team and from the response from the various leagues and associations called for participation in the rural hosting³⁸ and entertainment that became part of the visit. At their meeting on the 20 March 1927³⁹, the Wonthaggi and District Soccer Association considered the matter of playing a game against Renown at Wonthaggi. This was due to the unavailability of a suitable ground in Melbourne for a game on the 23rd April and the Victorian Association had considered that Wonthaggi was a suitable venue⁴⁰. The secretary was instructed to write to the Association's representatives in Melbourne to follow the matter up. The reply was tabled at the meeting of the 26th March,

"Letters from representatives were read on the Renown visit to Wonthaggi and it was moved by Dan Mc Donald and sec by H Hynd that secretary write back to the

³²Op cit., Minutes, June 1926.

³³Minutes of the Wonthaggi and District Soccer Association, 3 July 1926, Wonthaggi Historical Society.

³⁴Minutes of the Wonthaggi and District Soccer Association, 28 August 1926, Wonthaggi Historical Society.

³⁵Minutes of the Wonthaggi and District Soccer Association, 19 February 1927, Wonthaggi Historical Society.

³⁶Minutes of the Wonthaggi Magpies, 15 August 1926, Wonthaggi Historical Society

³⁷Referee of the particular match in question, Mr Jack Gibson, in later reminisces, claimed he was, "chased out of the town". From an undated newspaper article, Wonthaggi Historical Society

³⁸The hosting was co-ordinated by the Victorian State Premier's office.

³⁹Minutes of the Wonthaggi and District Soccer association, 20 March 1927, Wonthaggi Historical Society

⁴⁰**Sporting Globe** (Melbourne), 6 April 1927, p8.

representatives stating that the 25 April is a pay Saturday and that it would suit us⁴¹."

The future discussion on this matter at the Association meeting of the 31st March was directed to ensuring players representing the Association be "signed-on" players⁴².

It was obvious, with moves afoot in Melbourne, that the 25 April would be out of the question. Sir John Monash had organised a massive ANZAC day march, twenty five to thirty thousand returned men were to march and it was estimated half a million Melbournians watched as the Duke of York took the salute⁴³. Led by their band, the Renown's crew marched as well.

AN UNAUTHORISED ASSOCIATION

This was not the only problem with Renown's visit, the visit highlighted the schism that had occurred in 1927 in Victorian soccer. There had been a desire to curtail the movement of players from one team to another at the end of each season (or during the currency of the playing season) by forming district teams in the hope that player mobility would be limited and this, in turn, would give a chance for clubs to build their strength. This proposal was not supported by the Victorian Association and so a break-away association known as the "Melbourne and District Association" was formed. The confusing thing about the whole structure was naming of the Victorian Association sponsored league as the "Metropolitan Soccer Football Association". The significant feature of this split as far as Renown was concerned was that it was scheduled to play a Royal Australian Navy side based on the "Navy" team that played in the break-away league, as pointed out in the Sporting Globe, **"If the navy team from Crib Point had been connected with an organisation affiliated to the Victorian Association all would have been well, but seeing they have allied themselves with the Melbourne and District Association, who at present moment, have not been accepted by the powers that be, the position is uncertain.**

The Royal Navy and the Royal Marines Association are affiliated with the English Association and the question is whether the former includes all countries where the Navy may be found. If that be so, then only the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Association have power to take a decision on the matter. If on the other hand, Navy teams outside Britain are expected to affiliate with the National Association where they are domiciled, this game may involve no end of trouble for Renown when it returns to its home port⁴⁴."

Association president Harry Dockerty smoothed the troubled waters and the game took place on the 29th April as a curtain-raiser to the Richmond versus Melbourne Australian Rules match on the MCG. The result was a two goal draw.

⁴¹Minutes of the Wonthaggi and District Soccer Association, 26 March 1927, Wonthaggi Historical Society.

⁴²Minutes of the Wonthaggi and District Soccer Association, 31 March 1927, Wonthaggi Historical Society.

⁴³Serle, Op cit., p470.

⁴⁴**Sporting Globe** (Melbourne), 13 April 1927, p6

WARRAGUL'S AND YALLOURN'S INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL SOCCER

Other moves were being made to have the Renown's ships company entertained in Gippsland. On the initiative of Hugh Copeland⁴⁵ the secretary of the Warragul Progress Association, arrangements were made for "200 Petty Officers and sailors from H.M.S. Renown with their band" to be feted in Warragul on the 3rd May. T.H. Stuart the Education Department's District School Inspector informed the Head Teacher of the Warragul State School that the school could be closed for the day with the proviso,

"In connexion with the forthcoming visit of sailors from the "Renown" to Warragul on Tuesday, 3rd May, you are hereby informed that, provided pupils and teachers take part in the welcome, schools may be closed for the day.

It is suggested that children be stationed at an appropriate point, to give the visitors a rousing welcome to the town.⁴⁶"

The forthcoming visit to Warragul and that the Renown soccer team would play Yallourn was announced in the Live Wire on the 28 April and the announcement gave a clue to the extent of soccer health in the town,

"Twenty two players have been selected to play a practice match on the oval next Saturday⁴⁷."

In all probability, this was the residual playing strength from the two teams of 1926. It also is an indication that sufficient players were still in the town to form a sizeable team, and yet there was a dearth of press reports about their activity. On the 3rd May a party of 200 crew members from Renown went to Warragul for a sports day, were given a civic reception, and they played Yallourn at soccer for the Renown Cup. The local scribe reported on the game a fortnight later,

"The Yallourn Soccer team which played against the H.M.S. Renown team at Warragul comprised T Carmichael (Capt.) W Fife, A Carmichael, W Jennings, A Aiken, J Sloan, T Oddy, W Milne, Cochran, Gilbert, Madison.

Yallourn were defeated by two goals to nil though behind the centre line the play was very even⁴⁸."

The Electric Spark, a recently arrived commercial competitor to the Live Wire, added W Jowett, E Dewey and L Law as reserves to this list⁴⁹.

One significant member of this team that was to guide the fortunes of soccer in the Latrobe Valley over a lifetime was Tom Oddy.

⁴⁵Copeland H., memorandum to the secretary of the Shire of Warragul, 20 April 1927, Warragul Historical Society.

⁴⁶Stuart T. H., memorandum to Warragul State School Head Master, 22 April 1927, Warragul Historical Society.

⁴⁷**The Live Wire** (Yallourn), 28 April 1927, p1.

⁴⁸**Live Wire** (Yallourn), 19 May 1927, p4.

⁴⁹**The Electric Spark** (Yallourn), 5 May 1927, p3.

JR ELVEY THE UNKNOWN PROFESSIONAL



J R Elvey, Luton Town, Bolton Wanderers, Arsenal, England and Yallourn

At times, research into historical matters uncovers some unexpected "nuggets" none more so to find the Yallourn Soccer Club had an English professional playing for them in 1926 when they were in the North Gippsland League. The Sale newspaper - The Gippsland Mercury - in a match report⁵⁰ during the 1926 season, describes in glowing terms the skills and performance of this player. Noting that he had transferred from Luton Town to Bolton Wanderers (English Football Association Clubs) for 2500.0.0 English pounds, a sizeable amount in the early 1920's. It would appear that he played one season for the Yallourn club.

He could be nominated for the "unknown soldier" of soccer, in recognition of the professional and the consummate application of his skills, transferred halfway around the world from their place of gestation and development. He might face the contest in his declining years with a subsequent lack of fitness, be surrounded by players that are in awe of his skills, controlling the ball on a surface which is the habitat of the rabbit or the cloven

⁵⁰The Gippsland Mercury (Sale), August 1926

hoof of the sheep (with memories of the manicured playing fields of his birth), no roaring stands to salute his deft body swerve, only the "get rid of it" from a lonely voice on the touch line. This is the story of one such professional, John Richard Elvey, one of Australian soccer's "unknown professionals".

John Richard Elvey was born in 1893 at Leagrave, Bedfordshire, England⁵¹, he was introduced to Association Football as a schoolboy at the Dunstable Road school, graduating to the local team, Luton Clarence. During this period he was of sufficient talent to be selected and captain of the Bedfordshire County Eleven and represented the Southern Counties against London. At the age of 20 years, his professional career commenced with Luton Town in the 1913/14 season⁵². The first world war was an interruption to his career, but at the conclusion he was found playing a season for Millwall in the London Combination. He returned to Luton for the 1919/20 season playing a standard of football that had him under notice from the England selectors. He was called up to participate in a number of trial games with a view that the Football Association would tour South Africa in the northern summer of 1920.

The first of these trial games⁵³ was held on the 7th February 1920. Elvey was selected for the South v England and on the 25th February for England v the North. In this latter game, he came under notice for his good play at left back. He was playing with and against the great icons of English football, Buchan (Sunderland), Ducat (Aston Villa), Quantrill (Derby County), Fazackerley (Sheffield United) and Chedgzoy (Everton) to name a few. On the 20th April the Football Association⁵⁴ announced the squad for South Africa:

Goal: H.Gough (Sheffield United); **Backs:** E.Longworth (Liverpool); J.R.Elvey (Luton Town); C.J.Treasure (Bristol City); **Half Backs:** J.Bamber (Liverpool); W.Voisey (Millwall); T.C.Burn (London Caledonians); J.Woodhouse (Brighton & Hove Albion); W.Sage (Tottenham Hotspur); **Forwards:** R. Turnbull (Bradford); W.H.Harvey (Sheffield Wednesday); D.Mercer (Hull City); J.Smith (Bolton Wanderers); S.Fazackerly (Sheffield United); R.Sloley (Corinthians); A.R.Hawes (Norwich City); A.S.Davies (Swindon Town); W.Woodcock (Manchester United).

The team sailed for South Africa on Friday the 7th May 1920. Their record⁵⁵ on tour was impressive:-

29th May,	England 3 v Western Province Colonials 0
12th June,	England 3 v Transvaal 1
16th June,	England 3 v Natal 0
26th June,	England 3 v Johannesburg 0
30th June,	England 5 v Griqualand West 1

⁵¹Victorian Death certificate #26539/70

⁵²Correspondence with Roger Wash, Historian Luton Town F.C., 1994.

⁵³**The Times** (London), 3rd February and 26th February 1920.

⁵⁴**The Times** (London), 20th April 1920.

⁵⁵The results have been garnered from "**The Times**" (London) editions between the 30th May 1920 to the 30th July 1920.

7th July, England 6 v Port Elizabeth 0
10th July, England 9 v East London 0
17th July, England 9 v South Africa 1 (Test Match, Cape Town).

The English team for the Test Match was⁵⁶:- **Goal**: H.Gough (Sheffield United): **Backs**: E.Longworth (Liverpool); J.R.Elvey (Luton Town): **Half Backs**: J.Bamber (Liverpool); J.H.Hilditch (Manchester United) W.Voisey (Millwall): **Forwards**: R.Turnbull (Bradford); D.Mercer (Hull City); J.Smith (Bolton Wanderers); S.Fazackerly (Sheffield United); A.S.Davies (Swindon Town).

The team headed for home on the 23rd July and shortly after, Elvey was transferred from Luton to Bolton Wanderers⁵⁷ for a record fee of 2,500 pounds⁵⁸. His career with Bolton was short lived for on his third appearance for Bolton against Manchester United, he broke his leg and damaged his knee⁵⁹. He managed 8 games with Bolton, playing his last in April of 1922. Negotiations during the close season saw Arsenal⁶⁰ pay 500 pounds for his transfer where his only league game was against Preston North End on the 14th April 1923 and his last appearance in those famous colours was a friendly match against Wycombe Wanderers on the 5th May 1923⁶¹. His career was dramatically affected by his injured knee and it troubled him for the rest of his life.

The Elvey family were in the building trade around Luton and "J.R" was no exception having been trained as a bricklayer. Members of the family had migrated to Australia in the early twenties and had encouraged him to join them in Australia, this he did in 1924 with his wife Dorothe⁶². He appears next on the scene in 1925 at the Yallourn power project in the Latrobe Valley where he was engaged as a bricklayer in the construction of the boilers in the 'A' Power Station. It is with the Yallourn Soccer Club that we gain a glimpse of the professional resurrected.

The Yallourn Club had been founded on the British migrants employed on this huge undertaking which was under the leadership of General Sir John Monash. In 1925 the club had agreed to join the North Gippsland Soccer Association, consisting of Maffra, Glenmaggie and Sale United Soccer Clubs. The league was a tight contest with Yallourn and Sale standing out as the top teams. On the 13th August, Yallourn visited Sale to play in what was to be the decider for the League championship and J.R. Elvey was in the

⁵⁶**The Times** (London), 19th July 1920.

⁵⁷Young P.M., **Bolton Wanderers**, Stanley Paul, London, 1961, p101.

⁵⁸His value today, bearing in mind that this was a record for Bolton at the time, and he was an English International left back, would be in the order of Aust \$15-20,000,000. arguably one of the most expensive player ever to play for a Victorian soccer club. Only surpassed by Mark Viduka after his transfer to Glasgow Celtic. Elvey had the distinction to be featured on a "cigarette card" a collectable of the time.

⁵⁹Correspondence, Simon Marland, Bolton Wanderers Football & Athletic Co. Ltd., 1st March 1994.

⁶⁰As a matter of conjecture, why was Arsenal interested in Elvey? It may have come about that they had already played against him when Elvey was playing for Millwall in the London Combination in 1918-1919 for Arsenal was a member of this 10 team league. Apparently they were willing to take a risk with his injured knee.

⁶¹Correspondence, Iain Cook, Museum Curator, Arsenal Football Club PLC, 19th March 1994.

⁶²Information from a series of interviews and correspondence with J.R.Elvey's daughter Mrs Dorothe Syversten.

Yallourn team.

The game was played on the Sale Turf Club Hotel enclosure (paddock) a far cry from Highbury, Burden Park or Old Trafford as the Sale "Gippsland Mercury" scribe wrote,

"Though the soccer match on Saturday afternoon at the Turf Hotel enclosure terminated in a win for the visitors, Sale made a brilliant effort and had the opportunity of testing their skill and form against a first class team.⁶³"



The Sale United team 1925-26 that played the day JR Elvey was playing for Yallourn

Back Row: Burrell (referee), Alcock, McIntyre (captain), Hobson (vice captain), Fulton, Bone, Lawson, Jepson, Baker, Johns.

Front Row: Frain, Archer, Bell, Harris, Shill, Searle

The match report was replete with reference to Elvey's professional skill,

"During the next attack by the visitors, a fine exhibition of footwork was displayed by Elvey (Yallourn) who, though attacked by McIntyre and Frain, and went to the ground in a collision with these players, got to his feet and still kept on to the ball in professional style. A penalty was awarded Yallourn resulting from a Sale foul in the penalty area, and Elvey scored a goal⁶⁴."

⁶³ Gippsland Mercury, Op cit.

⁶⁴ Gippsland Mercury, Op cit.

The game was a 5-1 victory for Yallourn, Elvey received fulsome praised for his efforts, **"The best players for the visitors were Elvey, McGregor, Dewey and House. Their consistency and systematic method of passing was splendid, and enabled them to win the day. Elvey's footwork was superb, and his technique showed himself a professional, for we are informed that he is an ex-Bolton Wanderers player (one of England's leading first Division teams) and was bought by that club from Luton from the sum of 3,500 pounds⁶⁵."**



(Getty Images)

Bolton 1922, from left back: Trainer, JR Elvey, J Jones, F Hinton, J Seddon, W Jennings

Front: WJ Rowley, A Donaldson, WE Herbert, F Roberts, Joe Smith, TM Buchan. The crowd in the background is spectacular.

From there, Elvey went off the pages of the local media and the sport a whole, his knee made sure of that, he led a rather nomadic life looking for work through Victoria and NSW, finally settling in Maryborough, Victoria. His only child, a daughter was born in 1929. He died in 9th November 1970 at Brighton Victoria, his wife gave away his memorabilia, medals, English cap.⁶⁶.

On the 13th August 1925 on a muddy paddock at a Victorian country town of Sale, to a

⁶⁵Gippsland Mercury, Op cit.

⁶⁶Syvertsen, Op cit.

small band of on-lookers and players, he played as if he still had the English shirt on his back. Unknown to the on-lookers, but known to the Luton faithful from the, "Luton News Football Handbook 1919/20" as a,

"The popular right full back might have signed for one of the hundred best clubs in the country and would have received a warm welcome anywhere"

"A sedate steady fellow..."

"His physique is far from robust, but his play has all the qualities which go to make the best defender: courage, steadiness and judgement"⁶⁷.

The vision of this muddy rough paddock beside the Turf Club Hotel at Sale on cold wintry Gippsland afternoon, with a player having the renown and reputation of an English international, playing by what all accounts, would be his last competitive game. Having such a promising career struck down with a debilitating injury, long before knee reconstructions were in vogue, probably with his knee strapped-up with an elastic bandage. And yet still able to draw the epitaphs of "superb", "professional" and "crack player" which is a tribute to his professionalism and love of the game. A good enough reason for nominating J.R.Elvey of Luton Town, Bolton Wanderers, Arsenal, England and Yallourn as representative of the unknown professionals⁶⁸.

NEXT EPISODE WILL CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF THE WONTHAGGI MAGPIES AND THE RISE OF THE BROWN COAL MINE (YALLOURN NORTH) AS A POWER IN GIPPSLAND SOCCER

⁶⁷Wash, Op cit.

⁶⁸Yallourn Soccer Club fielded two other professionals in the 1951-53 period, Leslie Barrett and Albert Watford-ex Lincoln City, England.