

YALLOURN YEAR BY YEAR 1928



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 unique township of Yallourn 'took root, prospered, 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 years in the life of the Yallourn have been researched and posted on the website. The monthly events, listed below, attempt to highlight some of the stories, about the township and its residents that made local and national news during 1928.



1928

JANUARY: Radio station 3LO aired a 30 minute program entitled 'The Yallourn Power Station' on 4th January 1928. Mr C.T. Briggs presented the program. 3LO (now known as 774 AM) commenced transmission in 1924. The 'LO' call sign referred to 'local'; and it was the second radio station to commence transmission in Melbourne (the first being 3AR).

The station's first program featured Dame Nellie Melba and was relayed from His Majesty's Theatre. The radio program, about Yallourn, underlined the importance of the SEC's project to the people of Victoria.



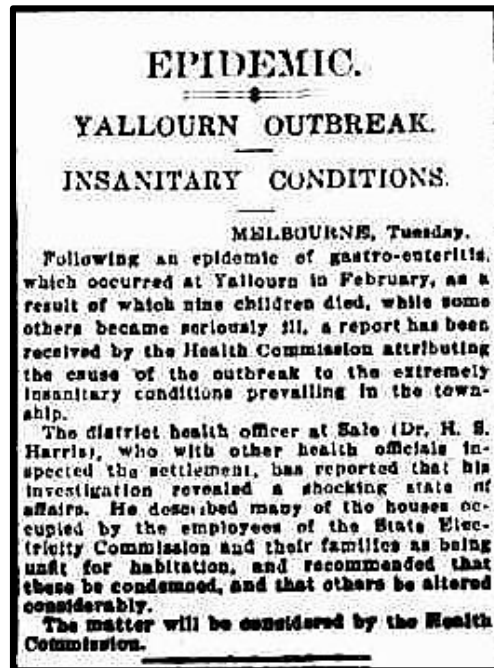
FEBRUARY:



Caption: TIRELESS ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVE... One of the new German electric locomotives at Yallourn. It will haul 80 tons of coal at a time to the power-house, delivering 4,000 tons a day. Source: 'The Argus' February 13th 1928. Page: 13.

In February 1928, a wild fire broke out close to the Yallourn township and it imperilled the railway station until finally brought under control. On the same day, a terrifying fire also raged near Violet Town. In 1928, Sir John Monash publically commended the Yallourn Brigade following its performances at the State Fire Brigades Demonstration at Geelong. 'Practise makes perfect'; and the Yallourn Fire Brigade would face some severe tests in the years ahead.

MARCH: Five infants succumbed to an epidemic at the Yallourn settlement in March that year. The outbreak was thought to be gastric-enteritis but subsequent reports feared meningitis.



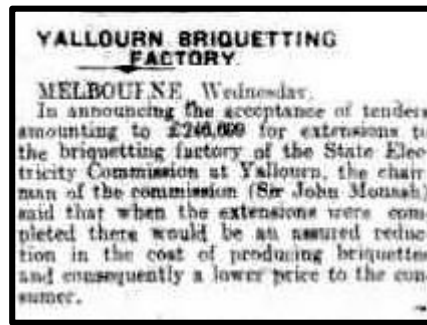
1928- Source: Sydney Morning Herald Wednesday 2 May 1928. Page: 19

Dr J.M. Andrew, Yallourn's distinguished Medical Officer, who arrived in Yallourn in 1926, worked tirelessly during the above crisis. A story, regarding Dr Andrew (shown below) and the epidemic can be found on this website.



APRIL: Yallourn was 'invaded' by motor car enthusiasts/tourists anxious to see the work being undertaken at the power station and the surrounding area. The number of visitations to the town in April 1928 was said to have created new tourism records for the region.

MAY:



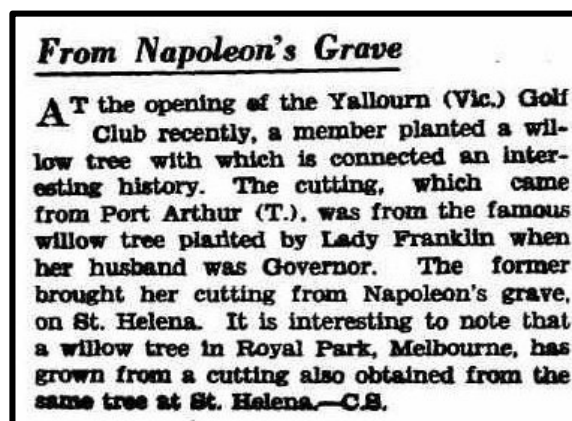
YALLOURN BRIQUETTING FACTORY: MELBOURNE Wednesday. In announcing the acceptance of tenders, amounting to £246,699 for extensions to the briquetting factory of the State Electricity Commission at Yallourn, the chairman of the commission (Sir John Monash) said that when the extensions were completed there would be an assured reduction in the cost of producing briquettes and consequently a lower price to the consumer. Source: 'Register' (Adelaide) May 31st 1928. Page: 11

Also in May 1928, the plans for a new Technical School at Yallourn were announced. The Victorian Education Department appointed Mr. D. Lyon, formerly of the Gordon Technical School (Geelong), to begin the task of organizing the new school.

JUNE: At the official opening of the Yallourn Golf Club, a cutting from a willow tree was planted to commemorate the new sporting facility for local residents. A little known fact, regarding the tree at the Yallourn Golf Club, was that the willow cutting had been taken from a tree planted at Port Arthur by Lady Jane Franklin, the wife of the Tasmanian Governor, John Franklin.

The tree's direct connection with Napoleon Bonaparte's grave is a fascinating aspect of Yallourn's early history....

"YALLOURN. Monday-At the opening of Yallourn Golf Club a member planted willow tree, which has quite an interesting history. The cutting, which came from Port Arthur (T), was from the famous willow tree planted by Lady Franklin when her husband was Governor. Lady Franklin, in turn having brought her cutting from Napoleon's grave on St. Helena"
'The Age' June 19th 1928. Page: 12.



Source: 'The World News' (Sydney) 'July 4th 1928. Page: Page 12



A rare photograph from 1928. This scene is believed to have been the opening ceremony of the first Golf Club House at Yallourn on June 9th 1928. Original source: Unknown.

JULY: A brave young mother, Mrs Stevens, rushed into her burning home to rescue her child at the West Camp at Yallourn. With her hair ablaze, Mrs Stevens carried her baby to safety through a window. A story about Mrs Stevens and her heroic actions can be found on this website.



Source: 'West Gippsland Gazette.' July 10th 1928. Page: 4

AUGUST:



This aerial photograph, of the township of Yallourn, was taken in 1928; and was one of several photos of the works being undertaken at Yallourn. The photographic feature was part of 'The Weekly Times' newspaper which was published on August 18th 1928.

At a meeting of the West Camp Sports Committee in August 1928, the following gentlemen were appointed as office bearers: Mr. D. Hunt (President), Mr G. McGuinness (Treasurer) and Mr S. Greenwood and Mr R. Williamson shared the role of Secretary.



An early photo of the West Camp at Yallourn. The bushland and hills provide the backdrop to the camp. Source: Part of the Yallourn collection held at the State Library of Victoria.

The most pressing items, discussed at the meeting, were the need for a cricket pitch and a tennis court. Mr. R.D. Dixon (Assistant General Superintendent) gave those in attendance an assurance that the required materials, for the 'new' sports facilities, would be funded by the Commission. History shows that the above meeting, in 1928, was a catalyst for the rapid development of other sporting facilities for the people of Yallourn.



Mr.R.D. Dixon – A driving force in the establishment of the Yallourn township.

SEPTEMBER: History repeated itself when Yallourn defeated Trafalgar in the 1928 CGFA Grand Final. The match was played at Warragul and the final score was: Yallourn 10.15 (75) defeated Trafalgar 6.9 (45). In the match review, the Yallourn 'lads' were described as a 'fine lot' and rightly deserving of the premiership flag.

The best players for Yallourn that day were listed as: Hutton, Whitmore, O'Neil, Culph, Lawrence, Stott, Brooks and Palmer.

Readers may be interested to know that the teams in the CGFA in 1928 were: Yallourn, Trafalgar, Yarragon, Drouin, Warragul, Nar Nar Goon, Moe and Iona (a small settlement nine kilometres from Bunyip).

Note: Yallourn had also defeated Trafalgar in the 1926 Grand Final.



Stan Comber - One of the stalwarts of YFC in those early years.

OCTOBER: In the 1928 Federal Elections, there were three polling booths organized for the voters of Yallourn. They were located at: (i) Fire Brigade Hall (ii) Brown Coal Mine Hall and (iii) West Camp Recreation Hall No: 2.

The Yallourn Subdivision, in the Federal Electorate of Gippsland, had almost 2000 voters on the rolls.

Thomas Paterson (Country Party), who was born in Aston, near Birmingham (UK), was the Federal Member for Gippsland in that era. Mr Paterson held the seat from 1922 until 1943.



Thomas Paterson was the Federal Member for Gippsland from 1922 until 1943. Thomas was the deputy leader of the Country Party from 1929-1937; and also served as acting leader for a short period in 1933.

NOVEMBER: The 'Barrier Miner' (Broken Hill) carried the following story regarding the local support given to a widow, Mrs Mathews (and her eight children) following the death of her husband at Yallourn in November 1928...



“WORKMEN ASSIST - DEAD MATE'S FAMILY- Melbourne, Monday. When a workman at Yallourn died several months ago, leaving a wife and eight children, his fellow-workers thought of a practical way to help the family. A special appeal was lodged, and the money put into a trust. Every weekend volunteers assisted to build a store and home on the Prince's Highway at Morwell Bridge. The result is that the widow, Mrs. Mathews, is now set up in a comfortable business. The block of land on which the store was erected was given by a worker who had bought it with his savings.”
November 28th 1928 Page: 2

DECEMBER: Dr. Jacob Henke, a Swiss scientist, visited Yallourn and inspected the coal mine as part of his study tour into the potential use(s) of brown coal. Dr. Henke was regarded as an expert in the field of coal and shale distillation; and, in one report, Dr Henke said that the brown coal deposits at Yallourn were superior to those in Germany.

However, he went on to say that there were some substantial differences in the technical processes at Yallourn...

“... While Australia lets the by-products of its coal go up in smoke, in Germany distillation provides a dozen commodities, from paraffin wax to benzene. Dr. Henke drives his car on motor spirit made from brown coal. Source: ‘Gippsland Times’ 20th December 1928. Page 6.



Dr Jacob Henke – a noted Swiss scientist who toured the mine at Yallourn in December 1928. Source of this photograph: ‘West Australian’ 31st October 1928. Page: 18

Also in December 1928, a small news item in the 'Melbourne Herald' stated that hundreds of workers from Yallourn, were taking leave (i.e stood down) and were heading to various 'holiday destinations' during the Christmas period that year.

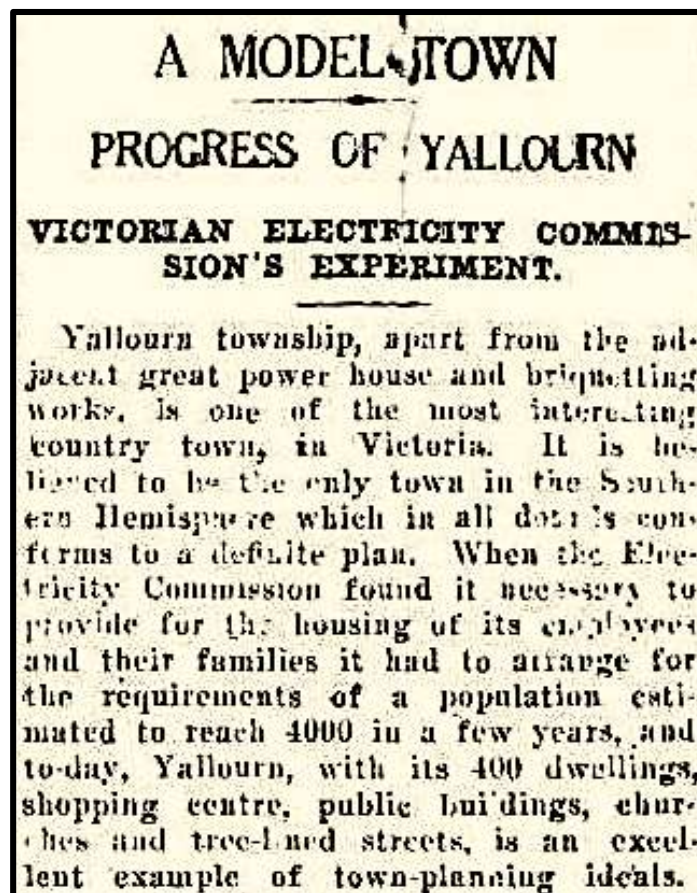


Caption: HUNDREDS OF MEN LEAVE YALLOURN FOR HOLIDAYS

YALLOURN, Saturday - Several hundred men are leaving the State Electricity Commission's undertaking on the holidays. Only those men on essential services, maintaining the load to Melbourne, will work through the holidays. The briquetting factory will close down for a fortnight. Daily the number of unemployed is increasing.

Source: 'Herald' December 22nd 1928. Page: 12.

Yallourn again hit the news in December 1928 when a substantial story, regarding the SEC's 'model town', was published in Grafton's newspaper called the 'Daily Examiner.' Only a part of the entire article is shown below...



Source: 'The Daily Examiner' (Grafton NSW) December 29th 1928. Page: 2

The photograph below was taken in December 1928; and shows the final stages of construction of the Yallourn Hospital. The Yallourn Hospital was opened by Sir John Monash on the 13th January 1929.



**December 1928 at the Yallourn Hospital construction site.
Source: State Library of Victoria. Reference: H2009.18/248.**

CAN YOU ADD TO THE HISTORY OF YALLOURN?

It is hoped that readers may be able to add additional information regarding an event or a person mentioned in the articles for 1928. Please contact Julie if you have memorabilia or photographs related to the above. Thank you for your help in building the history file of Virtual Yallourn.

The above article was prepared for the Virtual Yallourn website by Julie George and Roger Spull in the hope of fostering further interest in the history of Yallourn.