

# **YALLOURN**

## **YEAR BY YEAR**

### **1931**



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 township of Yallourn 'took root, 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 events in the life of the town and its industries have been chronicled. The monthly activities, shown in each year, are not necessarily the most momentous occasions but simply attempt to show the many varied and interesting happenings that made the local (and sometimes national) news in that era.

The walk down 'Memory Lane' (not to be confused with Meadow Lane which ran off Latrobe Avenue) begins in the year of 1925 when the plans for the Yallourn Project were well underway and the 'garden town' of Yallourn was creating interest far and wide.



# 1931

**JANUARY:** Enrolments for the Herald's 'Free Learn to Swim' campaign commenced across Victoria on January 17<sup>th</sup> 1931. Mr McNeil of the West Camp at Yallourn was the designated contact person for those interested in joining the program, which included daily lessons. Mr McNeil was the Honorary Secretary of the Yallourn Swimming Club at that time.

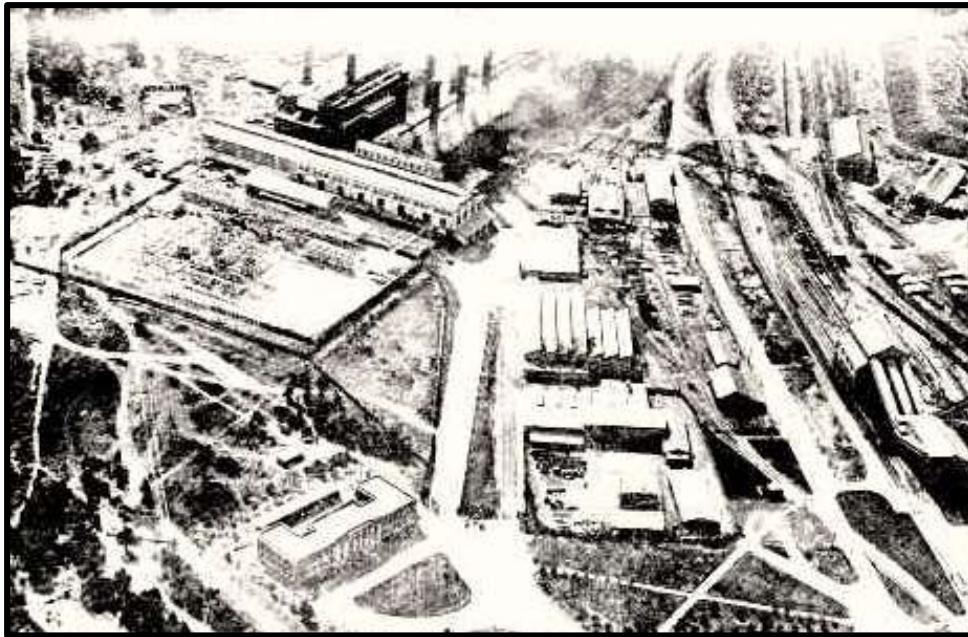
<b>TEACHING VICTORIA TO SWIM</b>	
<b>WHERE TO ENROL IN HERALD FREE CLASSES</b>	
<b>Non-Swimmers Should Join Up Now</b>	
<small>Swanton, Shire Hall, and Swimming Club see notices. Row.—Amateur Swimming and Life Saving Club; hon. secretary, A. D. Peary, The Pool, High Street, or 8 Highway Grove, Kew. Willem-Agateur Swimming and Life Saving Club (North Kew); hon. secretary, John Allan, 48 (Sunder Street), Row, Ed. Kilmer—Council, Shire Secretary, P. F. Egan, Town Hall, Swimming Club; hon. sec.</small>	

**FEBRUARY:** According to the Melbourne 'Age', a branch of the Housewives' Association was formed at Yallourn sometime in February 1931. The inaugural office bearers were:- President: Mrs. Bennett, Vice-presidents: Mesdames Meens and Lucas, Hon. Treasurer: Mrs. Morton; and Mrs. A. Wilson was listed as the Secretary. One the of major issues of the 'Association', at that time, was the high cost of school text books.

<b>HIGH PRICE OF SCHOOL BOOKS.</b>
<b>Complaints by Mothers.</b>

**MARCH:** In March 1931, it was discovered that three of the 12 main boilers at the Yallourn Power Station were inoperable because of serious design defects. The boilers, which were manufactured in Castlemaine, cost some £250,000 (pounds) to be installed. The issue received extensive exposure in the newspapers of the day as auxiliary stations were necessary to maintain electricity supplies across Victoria.

<b>Yallourn Plant</b>
<b>Failure of Main Boilers</b>
<small>MELBOURNE, March 6. Technical and executive officers of the State Electricity Commission are deeply concerned about the failure of three main boilers at the Yallourn</small>



A view of Yallourn from the air in 1931: This image was one of a montage of aerial photographs of the Yallourn project in progress in 1931. The page banner was entitled: 'Impressive Pictures from the Air of the Electricity Commission's Works at Yallourn.' Such and aerial photo would have created wide public interest and shown the extent of the works being undertaken at Yallourn. The other photos on the page were the coal mine, the township, and the briquette factory.

Source: 'The Weekly Times' October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1931, Page: 32

**APRIL** Three workers at the Yallourn Briquette Factory sustained serious burns as a result of 'blow back' of flames from an open furnace door. The injured men were transported to the Yallourn Hospital for treatment.



Source: 'The Argus' April 11<sup>th</sup> 1931. Page: 19



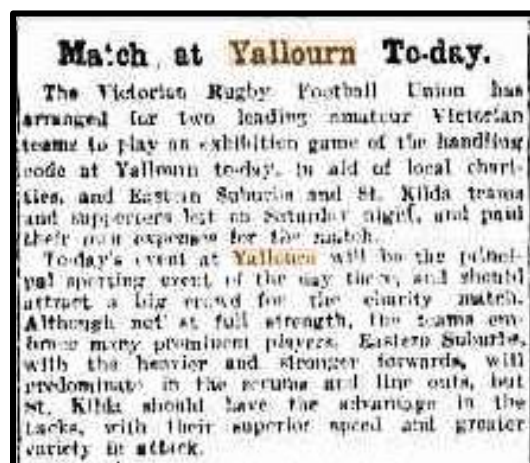
**MAY:** Wedding photographs in newspapers in that era seemed to capture the interest of the readers; and bride Dorothy Dixon, of Yallourn, was featured in the 'Australasian' newspaper in April that year. The caption text stated...

*"Mrs. R. A. Stewart (Miss Dorothy Derwent Dixon) with her bridesmaids, Miss Marceline Dixon and Miss Winifred Kent Hughes. Derwent and June Stewart are the small attendants. Mrs. Stewart is the elder daughter of Mr. and Mrs. R. D. Dixon, of Yallourn (V.), and her marriage to Mr. Randall Alexander Stewart, youngest son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Stewart, of Hawthorn (V.), took place at St. John's Church, Toorak (V.), on March 26. Photograph as shown below."*



Source: 'The Australasian' April 11<sup>th</sup> 1931 Page: 10

**JUNE:** An exhibition Rugby Union match was organized to be played at Yallourn on the King's Birthday (8th June). The participating amateur teams were St Kilda and Eastern Suburbs; and the proceeds from that game were donated to local charities.



**JULY:** Following numerous complaints, Mr Moncur (M.L.A for Walhalla) raised the thorny issue of excessive rental charges for the tenants of houses at Yallourn.

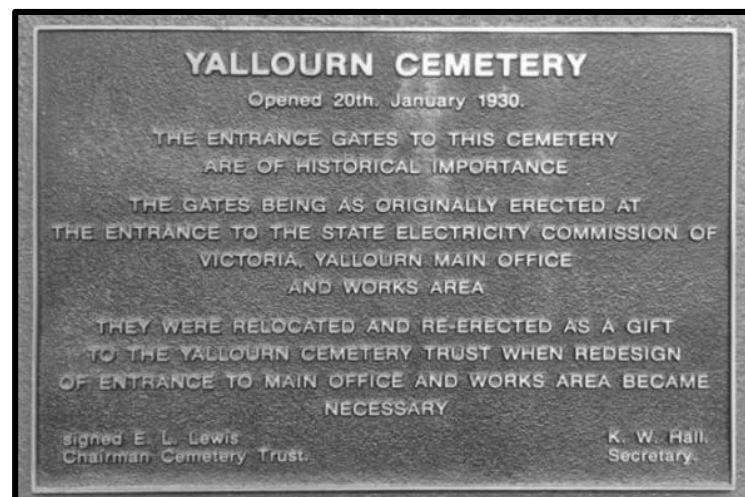


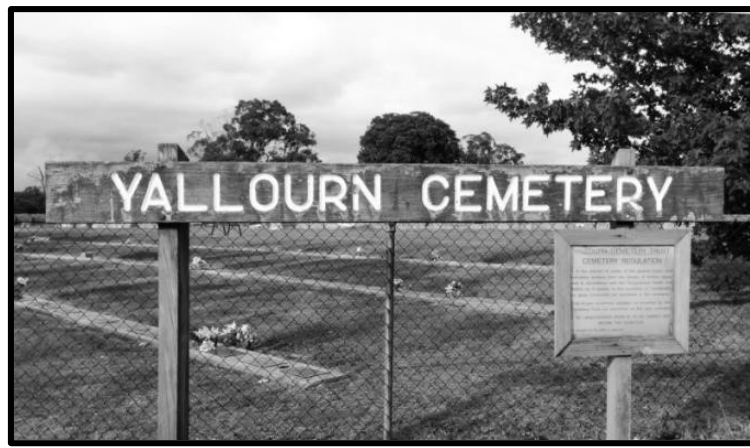
William Anderson Moncur (born 1886) was a member of the Country Party and was a MP from 1927-1945. Mr Moncur, a school teacher in earlier times, enlisted into the Army and served with the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion during World War: 1. He was well known in the district; and his regular comments provided some insight into the concerns of the town during those years.



**William Moncur M.L.A (Country Party) served as the Member for Walhalla from 1927 until 1945. The seat of Walhalla was abolished in 1945.**

**AUGUST:** The Governor-in-Council appointed the following local residents as Trustees of the Yallourn Public Cemetery (located at the Haunted Hills. Princes Highway): E. Dann, P. Harry, W. Collier, J. Culhane, B. Drummond, P. Owen, J. Cullen, Reverend Simpson and S. Watson.





The month of August was also marked by a special visit to Yallourn by more than 400 schoolgirls. The students travelled from Melbourne by special train; and the excursion was sponsored by the State Electricity Commission in conjunction with the Victorian Tourist Bureau. Such group visitations, to Yallourn, were common; and were seen as not only educational but assisted in promoting and endorsing the Yallourn project.



**Caption: SCHOOLGIRLS VISIT YALLOURN-** The marvels of the State Electricity enterprise will form the subject of essays in the near future by 420 schoolgirls who visited Yallourn by special train yesterday. The party was in charge of Miss Olive Norman, of the Tourist Bureau. Source: 'The Argus' August 26<sup>th</sup> 1931. Page: 5

**SEPTEMBER:** The Yallourn Debating Club clashed with the Morwell Debating Club in September 1931 to argue the case: 'Should India Have Self Government?' The team members of the Yallourn DC were: Messrs Dixon, Alston and Potts. Debating appears to have been a keen pursuit in the region as Moe, Trafalgar and Traralgon had also formed such teams.

## DEBATING COMPETITION

A challenge to a debate has been issued by Yallourn Debating Club to a team from Morwell, and has been accepted. Subject of Debate is "Should India have Self Government."

Morwell having accepted the challenge have the choice of sides and have chosen the affirmative which is a difficult one. The Morwell team is as follows: Mr Pearson, Mr Minor and Rev. Edwards.

The debate will take place at Yallourn, in the second week of September and a return visit to Morwell at a later date.

It is the intention to present a shield in the Debating Competition which will comprise teams from Yallourn, Trafalgar, Moe, Morwell and Traralgon.

The Yallourn team is a strong one: Mr K. D. Dixon, Mr Alston and Mr Potts.

Source: 'Morwell Advertiser' September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1931, Page: 8

The other news in Yallourn that month was the football club's convincing victory over Trafalgar in the 1931 Central Gippsland FL Grand Final. The scores were: Yallourn: 11.8 (74) defeated Trafalgar: 6.6 (42). Following that game, the CGFA announced the combined team to play against the Gippsland FL for the prestigious 'Pears Shield.' Yallourn's stars Alan Hutton, Peter O'Neill, Les White, Ern Davies and Jimmy Milne were selected for the big clash.

The 1931 YFC Presentation Night also makes interesting reading as shown in the extract below from the 'Weekly Times' ...

## Yallourn Trophies Presented

Trophies were handed to players in the premier Yallourn team by the president of the Central Gippsland Association, Mr Allard Pettit, at a wind-up function. The Dickson-Brown Cup and pennant were handed to the skipper, "Peggy" O'Neill. For his services during the season he was presented with a mounted football.

Other trophies were handed to Alan Hutton and E. Davies, best players in grand final; leading goal kicker, Bert Crawford; most improved player, Keith Shepherd; most consistent, E. Davies; regular attendance at training, Stan Comber and A. Pratt (29 out of 35 practices); best player in game against Maffra, A. Pratt. The trophy for training was the gift of Mrs Brewer, wife of the club president.

**OCTOBER:** The foremost figure in the story of Yallourn, Sir John Monash, died on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1931. The sad news echoed far and wide around the nation; and 'The Age' reported Sir John's passing as shown below...

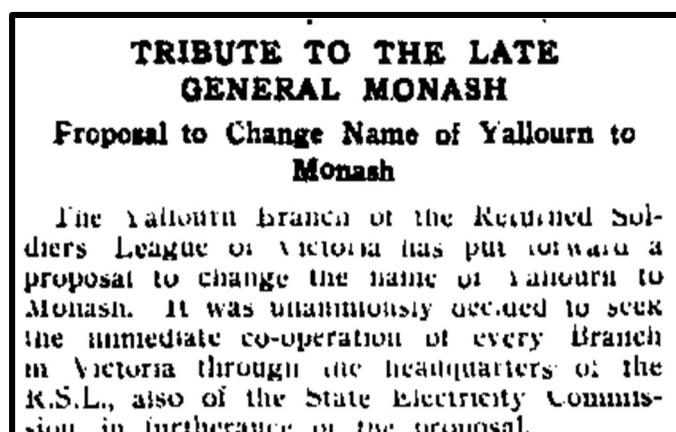
*"Sir John Monash, leader of the A.I.F. in the Great War, and subsequently Chairman of the State Electricity Commission, died yesterday morning at his home, "Iona," St. George's-road, Toorak. Death took place at 10.55 a.m. from pneumonia, supervening on the acute heart attack by which he was overcome last week. He was 66 years of age and had been in failing health for some months. News of Sir John Monash's death was received with profound sorrow by the whole community, by whom he was regarded as a great military leader, a distinguished citizen and a kindly man. Flags were flown half-mast on public and commercial buildings throughout the city, and an offer was promptly made by the Commonwealth Government, through the Defence department, for a State funeral..."*

The Sydney edition of the 'Labor Daily' carried the headline as shown...



Source: 'The Labor Daily' October 9<sup>th</sup> 1931 Page: 5

Following the death of Sir John Monash on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1931, the Yallourn Branch of the R.S.L. vigorously canvassed changing the name of 'Yallourn' to 'Monash.' The campaign gathered wide support throughout Victoria; however, the proposal was ultimately shelved because another town named 'Monash' existed in the Riverland district of South Australia.



Source: 'Construction and Real Estate Journal' October 21<sup>st</sup> 1931. Page: 4





**From 1918: This famous photograph shows John Monash being knighted by King George V on August 12<sup>th</sup> in 1918 at Chateau de Bertangles In France.**



**Title & Caption: Sir John Monash, funeral procession / Photo 1931 Monash, Sir John; Australian engineer and commander-in-chief; son of Prussian-Jewish immigrants; 27.6.1865 Melbourne – 8.10.1931 ibid. Funeral procession for Australia's military leader John Monash on October 11, 1931 in Melbourne, St. Kilda Road. Source: 'akg' images**

**NOVEMBER:** In November, the Yallourn Briquette Factory produced its one millionth ton of briquettes. The factory came into operation in November 1924 and operated until 1970 (and was demolished in June 1975).



The Yallourn Briquette Factory-Source National Library of Australia

**DECEMBER:** A sports carnival was a major attraction at Yallourn in December 1931. It was held at the Yallourn Oval; and there were various events and sideshows as seen in the extract below. The results of the proceedings (as published the following week) indicated that there were such activities as pony and trotting races, bicycle sprints, motor bike derbies and wood chopping contests. **Note:** Cusko's sideshows are explained below.

The newspaper report stated that, although it was an enjoyable outing, the substantial amount of dust raised, during the horse and motor bike races, marred the 'atmosphere' of the day. The sideshows were said to be well patronized as were the publican's booth and refreshment stalls sited at the oval.

## Sports Carnival

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**YALLOURN OVAL :**  
**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5.**

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All arrangements are well in hand for the above. Record entries guarantee keen competition.

The proprietors of many large side-shows, including Cusko's Performing Circus, Jobson (the Vocto King), Talking Sea Lion, Merry-go-rounds, etc., have booked ground space.

Amalgamated Wireless has the contract for broadcasting events and racing results.

Dirt-track motor-cycle racing will be the feature of the day, and fine weather only is required to make the carnival a bumper success.



Readers may be inquisitive about Cusko's circus which featured at the Yallourn Oval that day. The above advertisement was found in a Queensland newspaper in May 1938. Documentation shows that William Henderson (aka Bill Cusko) was a renowned animal trainer who, in time, managed his own successful touring company.

It is believed that Cusko's circus acts operated from approx. 1910-1950's; and a further search indicated that the circus travelled far and wide across Australia and also visited New Zealand.



In December 1931, a bushfire threatened the South Camp at Yallourn. According to 'The Daily News' (a newspaper published in Perth), on December 31<sup>st</sup>, the blaze was brought under control by the firefighters; and thankfully, there were no losses of life in the fire.

### **CAN YOU ADD TO THE HISTORY OF YALLOURN?**

The above item was prepared for the Virtual Yallourn website by Roger Spaul and Julie George in the hope of fostering further interest in 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. Please contact Julie if you have memorabilia or photographs related to the above.

Thank you help in building the history file of Virtual Yallourn.