

Flying around the boards - the bicycle velodromes of Sydney



John W. Ross

Cover photographs:

- Sydney Sports Arena, Surry Hills, 1940 (Sam Hood, State Library of New South Wales)

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Foreword

Penny farthing bicycles were first imported into Australia in the 1870s, spawning bicycle clubs in Melbourne and Adelaide. The English cyclists Charles Bennett and Charles Wood arrived at about the same time and set up a small store in Sydney, where they sold Raleigh and Rover penny farthings. Imported bicycles were expensive, but when safety bikes (the first modern bikes) arrived in the 1890s, many shearers and other itinerant workers managed to acquire them and cycle the outback in search of work.

Bicycle racing became popular in the 1880s, leading to the formation of the Cyclists' Union to look after amateurs and the League of Wheelmen to manage the emerging professionals. These two groups organised bicycle racing carnivals for many years until being superseded by modern cycling organisations. The first cycling tracks were constructed at the Sydney Cricket Ground and the Sydney Sports Ground in Moore Park, although the popularity of other sports eventually forced cycling out of these venues.

Bennett and Wood began to manufacture Speedwell bicycles in 1899, and received valuable publicity from patronage by the champion cyclists Cecil Walker and Dunc Gray. At about the same time, the young Melbourne cyclist Tom Finnigan used his race winnings to establish Malvern Star Cycles. In 1921 he sold the business to Bruce Small, who formed a long and successful association with the great Hubert Opperman.

America was the El Dorado for professional cyclists from World War I to the end of the 1920s, where spectator numbers and prize money exceeded all other sports. The top Australian cyclists revelled in this bonanza, such as Frank Corrie, Cecil Walker, Alf Goulet, Alf Grenda and Bob Spears. Eventually, Americans became irked that these Aussie riders were taking home the winnings from almost all of their races.

Before World War I, cinder and bitumen cycling tracks were constructed around ovals at Hurstville, Ashfield and Manly. But it was not until 1928 that a timber velodrome of international standard was built at Canterbury. It was expected at the time that more would soon follow, and in the end Sydney hosted three other timber velodromes, in Ashfield (built in 1935), Surry Hills (built in 1937) and Bass Hill (built in 1999, and the only survivor). Most of the other cycle tracks, some of them only used for a few years, were in sports ovals. Henson Park in Marrickville, reclaimed from a disused brick pit in the 1930s, was probably the most important one, as it was the home of the energetic Dulwich Hill and Marrickville Cycling Clubs.

Professional track cycling began to struggle with crowd attendance and prize money during the 1930s economic depression and World War II, but the final blow to its popularity was the availability of cheaper automobiles in the 1950s. From this time, cycling lost its appeal as commuter transport and was essentially relegated to an activity for young people or for recreation.

The huge crowds that enthusiastically cheered the heroes of the track in the 1920s and early 1930s turned to other mass-appeal sports in the modern era, such as football and cricket. The focus of world interest in cycling after World War II moved to Europe, where large crowds still support the major races, and the top cyclists are feted as superstars. Despite the relative lack of support at home, Australian track and road cyclists have continued to achieve great things in the Olympics and world championships. An encouraging sign for the future of local cycling is that sales of bicycles have outnumbered cars in Australia for several years.

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Early days to World War I – a new sport on two wheels

Acknowledgement of country

The author acknowledges the Eora and Dharug nations upon whose ancestral lands Sydney is now located. He would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past, present and emerging, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands.

Early bicycles

The velocipede becomes a penny farthing bicycle

A velocipede is a human-powered vehicle with one or more wheels. The term was probably invented by Karl von Drais for the French translation of the advertising leaflet for his version of the earliest usable two-wheeled vehicle, which he developed in 1817. Versions varying from one to four (and occasionally five) wheels were manufactured up to 1880, and some models were propelled by a hand-operated lever.

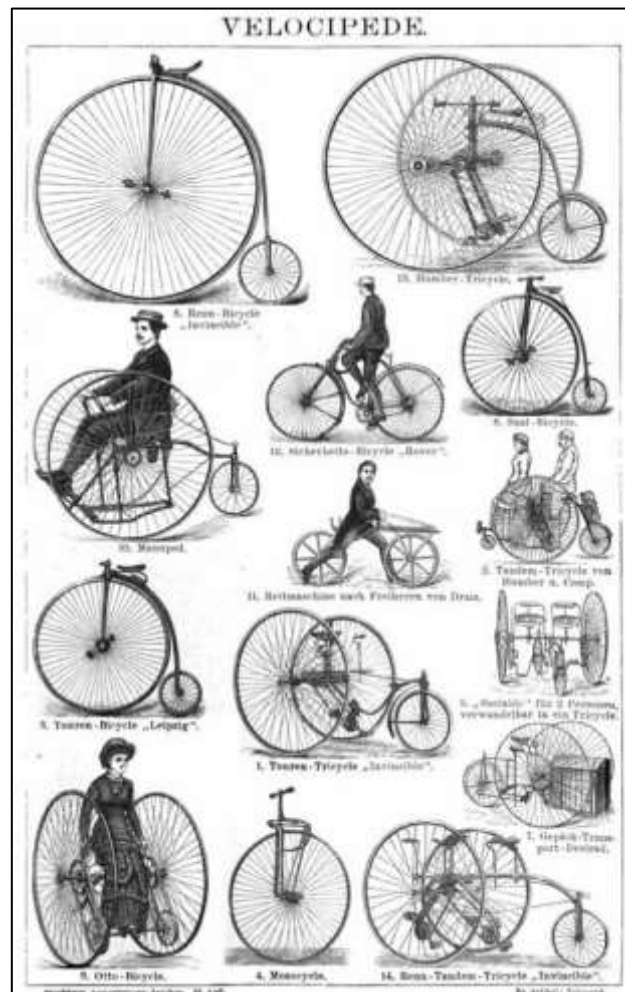


Figure 1 The range of velocipedes (Wikipedia)

The velocipede was the forerunner of the modern bicycle that was propelled by pedals attached to the front axle by cranks, before the invention of geared chains that powered the rear axle. However,

it was almost forty years before the term velocipede came into common usage with the launch of the first pedal-equipped bicycle in France in the 1860s. The French design was known as the boneshaker due to its construction entirely of wood. Cycling over the cobblestone roads of the day gave the rider an extremely uncomfortable ride.

Advances in metallurgy in the 1870s led to the first all-metal velocipedes. The first real bicycle was built in Paris in 1869 by Eugene Meyer, who patented a wire-spoked tension wheel with individually adjustable spokes. The front wheel became larger and larger to permit increased speed, and solid rubber tyres and long spokes produced a much smoother ride than its predecessor. In 1870, James Starley of Coventry refined the design by adding tangent spokes and a mounting step, calling his patented bicycle the Ariel. Starley is now considered to be the father of the bicycle industry.



Figure 2 Starley's penny farthing, 1883 (London Science Museum)

While young men were risking their necks perched on high wheels, ladies and the more dignified gentlemen (doctors, clergymen and other worthies) preferred the less risky tricycle. Many of the innovations for the tricycle eventually found their way into the automobile, such as rack and pinion steering, the differential (which allows two wheels on the same axle to rotate at different speeds when turning) and band brakes (the forerunner to drum brakes).

The safety bicycle

A safety bicycle was invented in the early 1880s as an alternative to the penny farthing. The most obvious design change was that both wheels were about the same size. A similar speed to the high wheel bicycles was made possible via chain-driven gear trains as well as greater comfort through pneumatic tyres. The new style was marketed as "safety bicycles" because (compared to the penny farthings) they had a reduced risk of falling off and a lower height to fall from. The pedals powered the rear wheel, keeping the rider's feet safely away from the front wheel.

The first bicycle to be called a safety bicycle was designed by the English engineer Harry John Lawson in 1878¹. From 1879, a chain drive transferred the power from the pedal axle located between the two wheels to the rear wheel. But the safety bicycle did not catch on for some years, probably due to its higher cost, weight and complexity compared to the penny farthing.

The penny farthing retained its popularity into the 1880s because, while it was tricky to mount and dismount as well as unstable and uncomfortable to ride and could easily put the rider in hospital when he fell off, it was reasonably cheap, light and had few parts to wear out or break.



Figure 3 Rover safety bicycle 1885 (London Science Museum)

In 1885, John Kemp Starley of Coventry (a nephew of James Starley) produced the first commercially successful safety bicycle which he named the Rover. Its diamond-shaped frame and chain drive to the rear wheel was much lower to the ground and so changed the experience of riding. His design made the bicycle a universal mode of transport and established a basic form that has changed remarkably little since then. By the early 1890s, the penny farthing had become obsolete.

Bicycle manufacturing in England was concentrated in the cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Nottingham, using mass-production techniques that had been applied to the manufacture of textiles, clocks, watches and handguns. By the outbreak of World War I, Britain was a world leader in bicycle exports².

Many of the bicycle manufacturers went on to establish notable motor vehicle factories. A famous example is William Morris (later Lord Nuffield), manufacturer of automobiles such as the MG sports car range, the Morris Minor, the Mini Minor and (more infamously) the Leyland P76 in Australia. He began his working life repairing and assembling bicycles as a teenager in Oxford before progressing to motorcycles and then automobiles.

Arrival and racing in Australia

James Starley's Ariel penny farthings were first imported into Australia in the 1870s, prompting the establishment of the Melbourne Bicycle Club in 1878 and a club in South Australia in 1881. This model boasted ball bearings, solid rubber tyres and hollow frames that reduced the weight and made the ride much smoother.

Englishmen Charles Bennett and Charles Wood were penny farthing enthusiasts who rode in club races before migrating to Sydney in the 1870s. In 1882 they opened a small store in Clarence Street.

Bennett and Wood Ltd sold imported Rover and Raleigh high wheelers. The pair was also instrumental in forming the Cyclists' Union of New South Wales. Bennett's profile in the sport was lifted when he became the New South Wales and intercolonial champion in 1883 and 1885³.

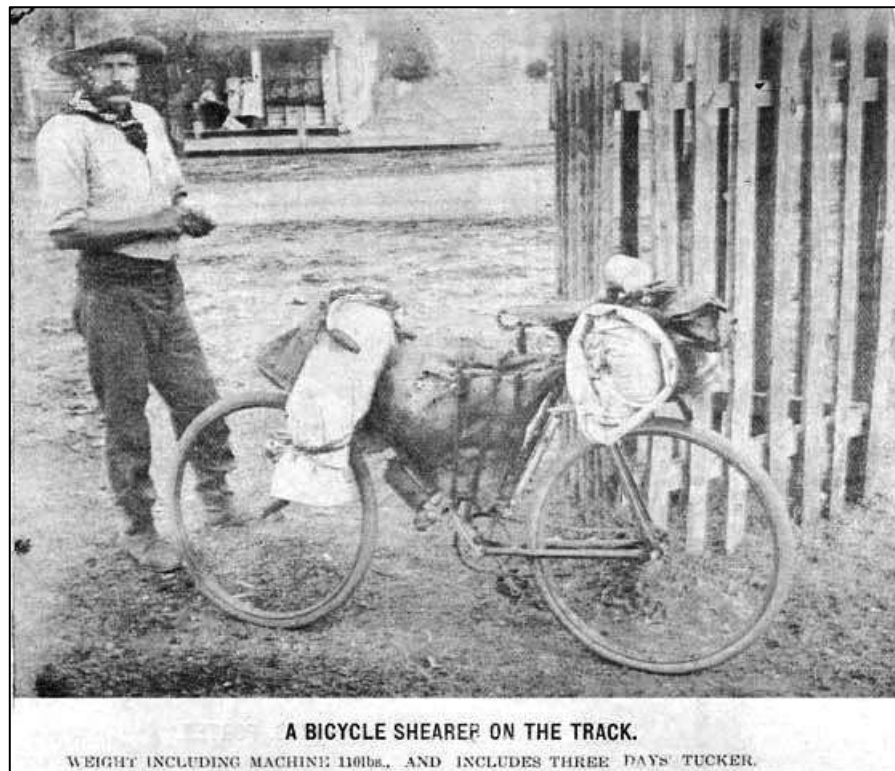


Figure 4 Cycling shearer (Velo Aficionado website)

But imported bikes were expensive and remained a status symbol - one newspaper in the 1890s claimed a cheap model would cost a rural worker five weeks' wages. But wandering swagmen managed to acquire them, and by the 1890s, long distance cycling was a means of transport for many sheep shearers and other agricultural workers pursuing itinerant work. The bicycle and swag travelled much of the country's dusty dirt roads long before automobiles. But cycling was mainly practised as an endurance sport or out of necessity.

Bicycle racing became popular, with the Austral Wheel Race beginning in 1887. The first Melbourne to Warrnambool Classic was held in October 1895, eight years before the more famous Tour de France.

Cycling organisations

The New South Wales Cyclists' Union

In August 1883, a meeting of interested cyclists decided to form a Bicycle Union, to be called the New South Wales Cyclists' Union. The rules of the English Bicycle Union were adopted, with only the modifications necessary for adaptation to the colony. The clubs represented were the Sydney, Suburban, Wanderers, Balmain, Redfern, Burwood and Goulburn Bicycle Clubs. It was agreed that the objectives of the Union would be:

- To secure fair and equitable administration of justice regarding the rights of cyclists on the roads.
- To watch the course of legislative proposals in Parliament and elsewhere affecting the interests of the cycling public and to make representations as the occasion demanded.
- To secure from the railway authorities a modification of the present tariff for the carriage of bicycles, tricycles and other velocipedes and greater security in their conveyance.
- To frame definitions and recommend rules for bicycle and tricycle racing, and to arrange for annual amateur championship race meetings⁴.

One of the Union's main functions was to organise amateur racing throughout the State. The inaugural race meeting was in December 1883 at the Royal Agricultural Society's grounds in Moore Park, where a program of eleven races was held⁵.

The League of New South Wales Wheelmen

A couple of years after the formation of the Cyclists' Union (which represented amateur cyclists), there was much discussion in the press about the definition of amateur cycling⁶. In 1886, professional cyclists competed in a race at the Exhibition Building in Prince Alfred Park, and by then tension had arisen between amateur and professional race meetings⁷.

In January 1887, the Cyclists' Union organised an England vs Australia race meeting at the Association Cricket Ground in Moore Park, where chosen Australian amateurs raced the English professionals. The prize was £100 or a trophy of that value if an amateur won⁸. By January 1891, there was pressure on the Union to offer cash prizes instead of trophies, which the Melbourne Bicycle Club had started doing. But the Union's committee passed a resolution to oppose the idea, and notified the Victorian Cyclists' Union of this decision⁹.

Finally in September 1893, a meeting was held among those wishing to form a league to further the interests of professional cycle racing (also called cash racing) at Quong Tart's rooms in King Street, Sydney. It was decided to amalgamate the Austral and Speedwell Clubs under the name of the League of New South Wales Wheelmen (also referred to as the New South Wales League of Wheelmen). The politician Thomas Hassall MLA was elected President¹⁰.

A national championship of professional cyclists was held at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre in June 1895, authorised by the League of Victorian Wheelmen, the League of New South Wales Wheelmen, the Cyclists' Association of South Australia and the League of Tasmanian Wheelmen. Races for the championships of Victoria and Australia were held¹¹. From this time, the New South Wales League of Wheelmen was actively organising professional race meetings throughout the State.

The amateur Union and professional League normally kept their race meetings apart (although the history of the Sydney velodromes shows that there was some competition between the two organisations for scarce venues). At the fifteenth annual meeting of the New South Wales Cyclists' Union at Quong Tart's rooms in the city in March 1898, the members expressed regret that the executive had agreed to an amateur race being conducted at a recent professional carnival run by the League of Wheelmen¹².

The League of Wheelmen was still active in 1992 when it was mentioned in Federal parliament during an Appropriation debate¹³. However, the New South Wales League of Wheelmen and the New South Wales Cyclists' Union are not mentioned in the list of New South Wales Cycling Clubs in the Clubs of Australia website¹⁴, so they have been superseded by other organisations in the modern world of Australian cycling. AusCycling is currently the national governing body for cycling in Australia, representing the interests of its affiliated cycling clubs and its members¹⁵.

Metropolitan Professional Cyclists' Association

This organisation was formed in February 1929¹⁶ by members of the powerful Parramatta Cycling Club as a breakaway organisation for professional cyclists. The members objected to the League of Wheelmen's action in granting a monopoly on professional racing in and around Sydney to Velodromes Ltd for seven years¹⁷. The Parramatta Club also objected to being unrepresented on the League's council. The name was changed to the Metropolitan Cycle Club in October 1929, which planned to hold races at the Sydney Sports Ground¹⁸.

New South Wales Professional Cyclists' Union

This short-lived organisation was established in 1936 as another breakaway from the League of Wheelmen¹⁹. Its members conducted weekly cycling events at Wentworth Park until 1937²⁰. It was not reported to be active after this time.

The first cycling tracks

The Association Ground (now Sydney Cricket Ground) (1896-1920)

Address: Driver Avenue, Moore Park.

In 1851, part of Sydney Common to the south of Victoria Barracks was granted to the British Army for use as a garden and cricket ground for the soldiers. Over the next couple of years, the teams from Victoria Barracks combined into a more permanent organisation and called themselves the Garrison Club. When the ground was opened for the first recorded match in 1854 against the Royal Victoria Club, it was known as the Garrison Ground²¹. When the British Army withdrew from Victoria Barracks in 1870 (and the colony began to manage its own defence), the Garrison Ground became known as the Military and Civil Ground.

The Albert Cricket Ground opened in Redfern in 1864²². This was the first serious cricket field in the colony, and was the home of the greatest bowler of the day, Fred "The Demon" Spofforth. The New South Wales Cricket Association staged matches there, but the ground was established as a money-making business, and the Association was not happy with the high fees charged to anyone who used it. From the 1870s, the Association preferred to use the Military and Civil Ground and soon took over its administration. The trustees renamed the ground the Association Ground in the early 1880s.

Until this time, bicycle racing in Sydney had been conducted on roads. The first record of racing at the Association Ground was in May 1892 when a syndicate of Melbourne cyclists secured the venue for a professional race meeting. This was intended to introduce professional cycling to Sydney, having been run in Melbourne for some years²³. The meeting was called the International Bicycle and Athletic Carnival, and the main event was the Association Wheel Race of two miles²⁴.

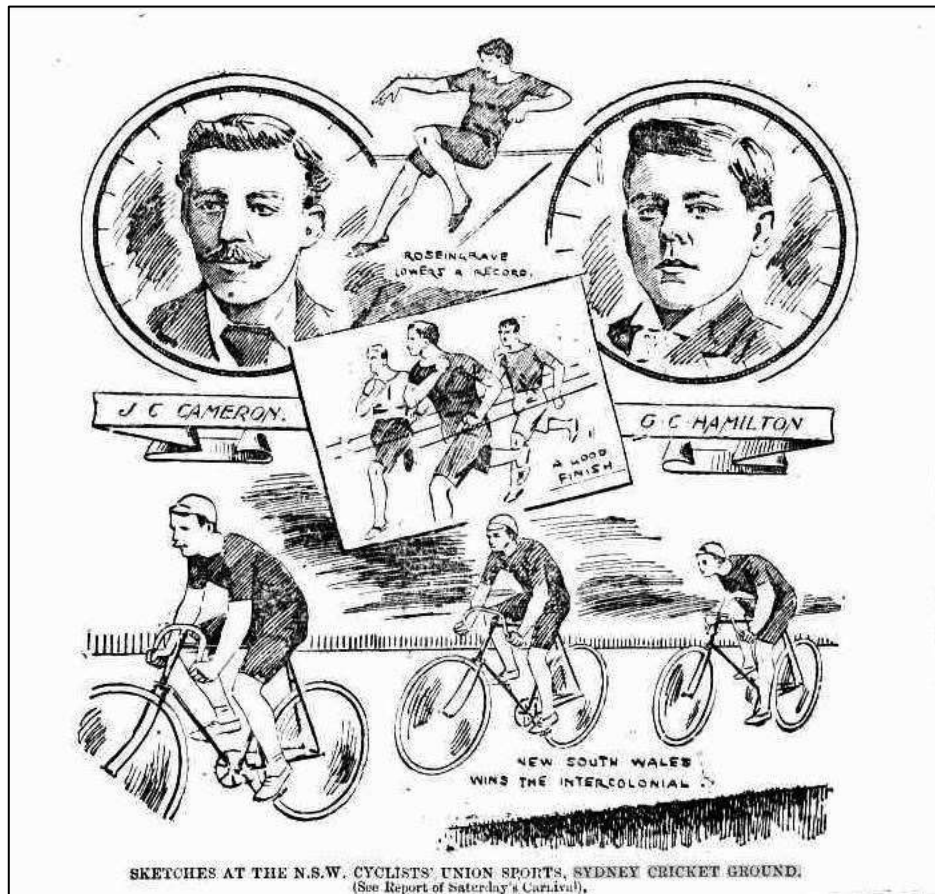


Figure 5 SCG cycling carnival, 1896 (*Australian Star* 14 December 1896)

In September that year, the Sydney Bicycle Club held the eleventh annual amateur cycling championship meeting at the ground. Some 3,000 spectators attended despite a rainy day, including the Governor, the Earl of Jersey. The grass track was recorded as “heavy and sloppy, so times were not fast and spills were numerous”²⁵. In 1894, the ground was renamed the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG). By 1896, track bicycle racing was growing in popularity, and an event at the ground in October was advertised as a “monster cycling race meeting”, featuring athletics and amateur cycling²⁶.

In late 1896, a cement cycling track was installed at a cost of £1,300. It was reportedly the fastest track in the country, and the new grandstands and pavilions were confidently expected to make it the finest sports ground in the world²⁷. The Secretary for Lands, Joseph Carruthers, told Parliament that the track would encroach slightly into the cricket playing field, but would not interfere with the games²⁸. The banked cycle track and ladies’ pavilion were opened in December 1896 with an amateur championship carnival²⁹.

Meanwhile, cricket continued as the dominant sport at the ground, and in April 1898 Victor Trumper scored 158 not out and M. A. Noble scored 140 for Paddington³⁰. The good form of these batting

stars continued into the next season when Trumper scored 113 and M. A. Noble 267 not out for Paddington against Eastern Suburbs³¹.

In December 1898, the cyclists were illuminated by new-fangled electric lighting when the first Electric Light Cycling Carnival entertained some 13,000 spectators with a “series of exciting races and sensational finishes”³². The races were professional and were run by the New South Wales League of Wheelmen³³.

But a sign that cycling at the SCG would be squeezed between the major summer and winter sports came in June 1911 when the first rugby league match was played between New Zealand and a New South Wales team³⁴ that most probably included the great Dally Messenger, who was then at his peak. Then in June 1920, the ground became a giant sardine tin when 65,000 rugby league fans watched England play Sydney in a game that resulted in complaints of overcrowding³⁵, but which must have persuaded the trustees that the cycling track was getting in the way of expanding the spectator area to meet the demand.

In October that year, the cycling track was demolished at a cost of £1,600 (more than it cost to build it in 1896, not counting inflation). It was pointed out at the time that the nearby Sports Ground had recently improved its cycling track and removed the cricket pitch, illustrating opposite attitudes to the value of cycling versus cricket by the trustees of the respective grounds³⁶. While the SCG did not support cycling into its most popular era that began in the 1920s, the concrete track laid down in 1896 was the first purpose-built cycle racing venue in Sydney, so can be regarded as the forerunner of the velodromes that produced the world-class cyclists of later decades.

The Sydney Sports Ground (now Sydney Football Stadium) (1903-1930, 1937-1955)

Address: Moore Park Road and Driver Avenue, Moore Park.

After Victoria Barracks opened in Paddington in 1846, a military rifle range was established in Sydney Common in 1852 to provide musket practice for the troops. The range was just south of present-day Moore Park Road and the direction of firing was from present-day Anzac Parade towards the hilly eastern end of the area. After widening the range in 1862, the facility (by then called the Paddington Rifle Range or Paddington Butts) was opened to civilian recreational shooters. It was closed in 1890, partly because it had outgrown its size and partly because stray bullets were landing among Centennial Park workers during its construction.

After lobbying from the New South Wales Rugby Union, the Government decided in May 1896 to use six acres of the former rifle range as a recreation ground for schools during the week and for rugby and other sports during the weekends. In addition, the area east of a new road (now Driver Avenue) would be a military drill and exercise ground. The higher land next to Centennial Park would be used for public institutions, and eventually became part of the Royal Agricultural Society Showgrounds³⁷.

But progress was slow, and it was not until March 1901 that trustees were appointed to the proposed sports ground. The bodies represented were the New South Wales Amateur Athletic Association, the New South Wales Cyclists' Union, the New South Wales League of Wheelmen, and the two school athletic associations (the New South Wales Rugby Union was not mentioned). By May 1902, a cycling track had been formed, 25 feet wide with four laps to the mile³⁸. To speed things

up, 25 members of the New South Wales League of Wheelmen participated in a working bee to move large amounts of soil to build up the banked cycling track³⁹.



Figure 6 Cyclists' working bee, 1902 (*Australian Town & Country Journal*, 24 May 1902)

The track was ready for training rides in August⁴⁰, and the New South Wales League of Wheelmen ran some impromptu races to test out the new surface⁴¹. The cyclists were satisfied with the new track, although it would be very rough until the top layer of asphalt was laid⁴². The new Sports Ground was formally opened in November 1902 by Edward O'Sullivan, Minister for Works and President of the New South Wales League of Wheelmen⁴³, and the next month a new lighting system for bicycle racing was trialled⁴⁴.

The asphalt surface was laid in 1903 and in October the New South Wales Governor, Sir Harry Rawson, officially opened the new cycling track with a program of races. There was seating for 6,000 spectators and standing room for some 20,000 more. The track was oblong-shaped with two straights and two well-banked ends⁴⁵.

Motorcycle racing was reportedly held at the Sports Ground from 1907, run by the Pioneer Club⁴⁶. In 1920, the cricket pitch was removed from the field and the cycle track was improved⁴⁷. Cycling and motorcycle racing continued through the 1920s until the new Canterbury velodrome was opened at the end of 1928⁴⁸. From this time, most professional cyclists preferred the fast wooden track at Canterbury, and the Sports Ground was used less and less.



Figure 7 Sydney Sports Ground Speedway (Vintage Speedway website)

However, some cycling was still conducted at Moore Park, in particular by the breakaway group called the Professional Cyclists' Association. This group objected to the contract recently awarded to Velodromes Ltd by the New South Wales League of Wheelmen to monopolise all professional racing in and around Sydney for seven years. The amateur New South Wales Cyclists' Union also refused to race at the Sports Ground if any professionals also raced⁴⁹. A multi-sports carnival run by Australian Sports Ltd at the Sports Ground in November 1929 featured athletics, cycling, whippet racing over hurdles and on the flat, and a women's association football match. Fifty powerful floodlights lit the track⁵⁰.

But the cycle racing at the Sports Ground in 1929 triggered another war in cycling circles, as the League of Wheelmen threatened to disqualify any professional cyclist who raced at the Moore Park track⁵¹. Several cyclists were fined and disqualified the next month⁵². These cycling squabbles were reportedly bad for attendances at race carnivals (so perhaps not all publicity is good publicity), and the members of the breakaway association (who were all from the Parramatta area) returned to their local park for racing after the Sports Ground meetings fizzled out⁵³. After falling into disuse, the cycle track was torn up in October 1930, making room for an additional 16,000 spectators at the ground⁵⁴.

However, cycling wasn't quite finished at the Sports Ground: in September 1937 a four-lane dirt speedway track was constructed by Empire Speedways Ltd. This was said to be an improvement on the three-lane track at the nearby Showground, which the English motorbike riders found too narrow⁵⁵. Cycling was included in sports programs for some years, starting with a truly eclectic range of events arranged by the Sporting Broadcasters' Association that featured cycle races with cash prizes, foot running, fox terrier derby, ladies' sack race, mile walking contest, pony derby, beauty parade and many other novelty events⁵⁶.



Figure 8 Sydney Sports Ground, 1937 (Wikipedia)

Despite the vaudevillian flavour of the opening event, it was reported the next month that serious cycle racing was being held at the new track by both the New South Wales Cyclists' Union and the New South Wales League of Wheelmen⁵⁷. But it was intended for motorcycle racing (meaning that it was not well banked at the ends), so it was not conducive to fast cycle racing times⁵⁸.

The Australian Cycling Championships were held at the Sports Ground in March 1955, including Lionel Cox, the best sprinter of the day. This was used as a guide for the chances of competitors at

the following year's Olympics⁵⁹. The last speedway meeting was also held the same month, and the track was closed later in 1955⁶⁰.

Hurstville Oval (1911-present day)

Address: 30 Dora Street, Hurstville.

Hurstville is a suburb located about 16 km south of the city. The first mention of Hurstville Oval in the press was in December 1901 when a spectator was fatally struck by lightning while watching a cricket match there⁶¹. The Hurstville Bicycle Club was first mentioned in January 1906 when the first of a regular series of road races took place⁶². Unfamiliarity with the sport may have been the cause of it being variously called the Bicycle Club, Cycling Club or Cycle Club in different newspapers reports.

In October 1908, a group of interested cyclists established a district cycling club, which was also called the Hurstville Bicycle Club⁶³. The next year, members of the bicycle club suggested to Hurstville Council that it could profit from racing and training fees if a bicycle track was laid in the Park. The Council passed this idea to the Park Committee, but nothing came of it at the time⁶⁴. Local cricketers from the Hurstville area held a meeting to consider forming a district club for St George⁶⁵. This move followed approval by the Council to form a better wicket at the Hurstville Oval, which was opened in October 1911, heralding the arrival of the St George district into grade cricket⁶⁶.

Meanwhile, the Hurstville Bicycle Club was participating in track racing carnivals, but had to travel into the centre of Sydney to compete at the Sydney Sports Ground at Moore Park⁶⁷. Only this venue and the adjacent Sydney Cricket Ground had cycling tracks at this time. This situation continued until April 1921 when the St George District League Cycling Club was established and held its inaugural road race in Hurstville⁶⁸. Cycle racing was reported in February 1924 during an athletics meeting at Hurstville Oval, but this must have been on grass⁶⁹.

Soon after this, the St George Amateur Cycle Club began to lobby the Hurstville Council to construct a banked cycle track in Hurstville Oval, pointing to the rapidly increasing popularity of the sport in the district. The Cycle Club, in conjunction with the St George Amateur Athletic Club, was holding weekly sports meetings at the oval, as the Council had installed a lighting system, with up to a thousand spectators attending. The Cycle Club planned to hold a big carnival to pay for the track. The Council agreed to construct a cycling track as soon as funds were available⁷⁰.

By this time, track cycling was also being conducted at the Sydney Sports Ground, Manly Oval and Pratten Park (Ashfield), illustrating the rapid growth of cycling as a sport in Sydney⁷¹. In September 1924, the Hurstville Council's engineer submitted a proposal for a cycle track at the oval. The Council asked the St George Amateur Cycle Club what financial and other assistance it would give the Council in carrying out the work. A banked cinder track would probably be formed, as the Club thought that an asphalt one was not necessary at that time⁷².

By February 1926, the cycling track had still not commenced, and the St George Cycle Club informed Council that due to the dangerous state of the grass cycling track at the oval, they have stopped racing there and reverted to the Sydney Sports Ground⁷³. In October, as the new summer cycling season was approaching, the Cycle Club asked the council if it could get a move one with building

the cycle track so it could be used that season. The Council gave their perennial reply, which was that work would commence as soon as funds were available⁷⁴.

Construction of the track finally commenced in December 1926 when the electric light poles and wires were moved further back and the workers moved in⁷⁵. The St George Amateur Cycle Club conducted the first carnival on the new track in January 1927⁷⁶. In February 1928, the *St George Call* claimed that Hurstville Oval held the finest dirt track in the State⁷⁷, and the Amateur State Championship trials for the Metropolitan Area were held on the track that month⁷⁸.

In September 1933, the Hurstville Council discussed sealing the cycle track with bitumen. The St George Cycling Club agreed to pay half the cost with an £80 deposit, the balance to be paid at a rate of £25 per annum from gate proceeds. The cycling club also wanted to control access to the track, but the Council would not agree to this⁷⁹. The club also paid Hurstville Council half the cost of lighting and fencing⁸⁰. The bitumen track opened in October 1934 with a racing carnival⁸¹. *The Daily Telegraph* pointed out that while professional cyclists raced at Canterbury Velodrome, amateurs raced at Hurstville Oval. The improved track surface attracted top riders, such as the Empire Games riders Dunc Gray and Horrie Pethybridge⁸².



Figure 9 Hurstville Oval cycling track, 1948

Hurstville Oval remained a top class track through the 1950s. In April 1952, Lionel Cox defeated Roy Moore in the New South Wales 1000 metre sprint championship during a cycling and athletics carnival that was a fundraiser to send Cox and the women's relay athletes to the Helsinki Olympic Games⁸³. In January 1953, the New South Wales track cycling championships were held at Hurstville⁸⁴.

The cycling track was resurfaced in 1988, said to be a well-overdue renovation⁸⁵. But the surface gradually deteriorated until 2011 when it was reported that the Council planned to demolish the track to make way for more sports, in particular Australian Rules football, which required a larger oval⁸⁶. In the end, the loss of the cycling facility was averted by funding from a New South Wales Government sports grant provided to the St George Cycling Club and also to Cycling New South Wales. The club President Phill Bates said that it took the amalgamation of the former Kogarah City

and Hurstville City Council to bring this about. The surface was rehabilitated with an asphalt overlay⁸⁷.

Apart from track cycling, Hurstville Oval has hosted other popular sports in its time. The St George Cricket Club has used Hurstville Oval as their home ground since 1921 when the club joined the Sydney district cricket competition. Don Bradman was a member of the club from 1926 to 1933 and played numerous games at the ground. The St George Dragons Rugby League Club used the ground from 1921 to 1924 before moving to Earl Park in 1925, then moving back to Hurstville Oval from 1940 to 1949. They then moved to Kogarah Oval. The St George Rugby Union Football Club used Hurstville Oval from 1928 to 1939 then from 1950 to 1988.

Pratten Park (1912-1941)

Address: 40 Arthur Street, Ashfield.

Ashfield is a suburb located about eight kilometres west of central Sydney. In 1906, the Ashfield District Football Club requested the Ashfield Council for a football ground, and as a first step the Council purchased the undeveloped land known as Beckett's Paddock. Then in 1911, Council resumed the adjoining land owned by the Trustees of the Hall Estate. These two parcels of land became Pratten Park. A remaining portion of the Hall Estate was sold to Council in 1923, completing the current extent of the park⁸⁸. It was named after Herbert Edward Pratten (1865-1928), Ashfield Council Alderman from 1905 to 1912 and Mayor from 1909 to 1911. The establishment of the park was largely due to his efforts.

Before long, the park became the home of a wide variety of sports. The first was cricket when the Burwood Cricket Club leased the oval at a nominal rental in May 1911. Tennis courts and a bowling green were being planned, while a large existing residence in the ground, known as Thirning Villa, would be used as a clubhouse⁸⁹. A few months later, a number of tennis players from Summer Hill, Ashfield and Croydon joined forces as the Western Suburbs Lawn Tennis Association in order to foster and develop tennis in the western suburbs. Construction of four large grass courts was commenced so that play could begin the following winter, when teams would be entered in district matches⁹⁰.



Figure 10 Rugby League at Pratten Park, 1912 (*The Sun*, 23 August 1912)

In early 1912, both the local rugby union and rugby league representatives applied to Ashfield Council to use Pratten Park for matches. The council engineer said that the ground would not be

ready until the following year, although it could be used for training⁹¹. Despite this concern, the first match between Western Suburbs and Annandale was played in August that year⁹². The lawn tennis courts were ready for the 1912 winter season, and two more courts were planned⁹³.

In May 1912, it was reported that a cinder bicycle track was being constructed at Pratten Park, to be completed near the end of the year when the Ashfield Cycling Club would hold a series of carnivals on it. A cycling track was also planned for nearby St Luke's Oval (now called Concord Oval or Waratah Stadium), where the Western Suburbs Magpies rugby league club had played since 1911⁹⁴.

Pratten Park was officially opened in September 1912 by Lord Chelmsford, the Governor of New South Wales. *The Sun's* report on the opening highlighted the transformation of the site by writing that "Seven acres of land that was a cow paddock with a big ditch running through it is now a levelled turf surface, a splendid arena, and one of the most up-to-date bicycle tracks in suburban Sydney"⁹⁵. Professional cycling races were soon being conducted on the new track by the Ashfield League Club (which was affiliated with the New South Wales League of Wheelmen)⁹⁶.

Electric lighting was installed at the end of 1912 in time for the Ashfield and Burwood League Bicycle Clubs to hold combined meetings in January⁹⁷. But while the local cricket club was happy with the terms of their rent, the local cycling club⁹⁸ and the Parkes Harriers athletic club decided to withdraw their participation due to the high charge imposed by Ashfield Council (33% of gross takings with a minimum of £10). The disgruntled runners said this was too much, considering there was no spectator accommodation and insufficient changing room for competitors⁹⁹.

By early 1913, the cycling¹⁰⁰ and athletic clubs¹⁰¹ had resolved their rental issues with the council and were holding meetings on their respective tracks in the park. The existing sportspeople were soon to be joined by lawn bowlers from the newly-formed South Ashfield Bowling Club, just as soon as eight bowling rinks could be built¹⁰². Meanwhile, in 1915 the Western Suburbs Magpies were forced off Pratten Park by unacceptable terms imposed by the Council, and returned to St Luke's Oval for a few years¹⁰³.

World War I affected the local sports as it did throughout the nation after large numbers of young men enlisted, so the two football codes had to co-operate in sharing players¹⁰⁴. In February 1915, Major Buchanan of the Western Suburbs Rifle Reserve requested the use of Pratten Park for military training during the evening and for the storage of rifles. About 150 Ashfield residents had formed a rifle club and wanted to start drilling as soon as possible¹⁰⁵.

The Ashfield Cycling Club wound down its activities until the end of the war, but in March 1919 it was resuscitated by a successful membership drive and planned to resume meetings again in April¹⁰⁶. The track was renovated and banked by another foot, making it ready for use by June¹⁰⁷. A post-war cycling boom was widely expected, and crowds of over 3,000 were attending the Pratten Park meetings on Saturdays¹⁰⁸. Through the 1920s, Pratten Park continued to be used for cycling each week, often with other sports such as motorcycling and athletics at the same meeting¹⁰⁹. Following the opening of the Canterbury Velodrome in early 1929, the professional cyclists from the Ashfield area preferred to race at the new venue, leaving Pratten Park to the amateurs¹¹⁰.

In October 1930, the increased popularity of motorcycle racing resulted in a new dirt track being opened at Pratten Park under the management of Autodrome Super Speedway Ltd¹¹¹. The track

became known as the Ashfield Autodrome (Sydney), a circular quarter-mile track banked up to three feet¹¹². The illuminated track was used for night-time speedway racing until ratepayers started complaining about the excessive noise and late finishes¹¹³.

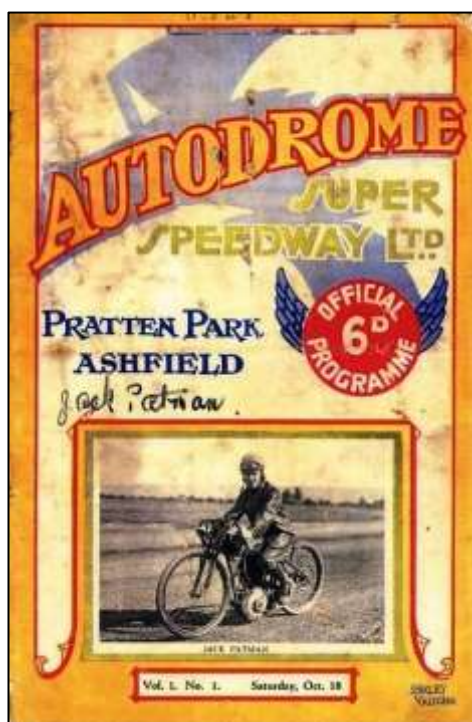


Figure 11 Pratten Park Speedway, 1930 (Speedway History website)

The Pratten Park Speedway continued operating for a few months. The competitors all seemed to have nicknames such as “Cinderella” Moore, “Whirlwind” Webb, “Cowboy” Hughes, “Smoko” Healy (“The Pride of Enmore”) and “Ollie” Tucker (“The Spirit of Campsie”)¹¹⁴. Then, at the height of the Great Depression in January 1931, Autodrome Super Speedway Ltd went into liquidation¹¹⁵ and was wound up voluntarily¹¹⁶.

Motorcycle racing may have bitten the dust but cycling had not, and in October 1931 the Dulwich Hill and Enfield-Burwood clubs recommenced racing on the track¹¹⁷. In October 1935, in response to the boom in track cycling, a new timber track was opened at Pratten Park. It was constructed by Rex Ley, who had recently rebuilt the Canterbury Velodrome track¹¹⁸. The new track attracted some big names for training, such as the Olympic and British Empire Games champion Dunc Gray, Horrie Pethybridge and Robert Porter¹¹⁹.

The track was officially opened for racing in November by Lord Mayor William Grainger¹²⁰. It was in frequent use until its gradual deterioration by late 1940, by which time the amateur clubs regarded it as unsafe for racing¹²¹. Some repairs were carried out to replace dangerous planks and to improve the lighting, and by November the track was back in use¹²². However, the track’s days were numbered, and in November 1941 it was dismantled. News reports said that the track had become a danger and an eyesore, and that footballers risked injury by being tackled onto the boards at the ends of the field¹²³.

Pratten Park is still the home ground of the Western Suburbs District Cricket Club. The club's website points out that it has produced more Test cricketers than any other club in Australia. Notable cricketers who played for the club were: Warren Bardsley (debut 1904), Arthur Chipperfield (debut 1934), Alan Davidson (debut 1953), Bob Simpson (debut 1957), Gary Gilmore (debut 1973), Dirk Wellham (debut 1981), Greg Matthews (debut 1983), Adam Gilchrist (debut 1999), Michael Clarke (debut 2004), Mitchell Starc (debut 2011)¹²⁴.

A news article on the big-hitting Alan Davidson's ninetieth birthday in 2019 mentioned that when he was batting at Pratten Park, he frequently hit the ball so far over the northern boundary that the nervous lawn bowlers at that end were known to shelter in the bar whenever he was at the crease¹²⁵.



Figure 12 Davis Cup at Pratten Park, 1939 (State Library of NSW)

The Western Suburbs Lawn Tennis Association can also boast a number of famous former players, including Harry Hopman and Jack Crawford. The club is one of Sydney's most historic tennis clubs, and in the 1920s and 1930s was at the centre of the Australian tennis circuit¹²⁶. The 1939 Davis Cup, won by Australia in Haverford, Pennsylvania, was photographed at Pratten Park with the team on their return home. The players were Adrian Quist, John Bromwich and Jack Crawford, and the captain was Harry Hopman¹²⁷.

Early bicycle manufacturers

Speedwell

Speedwell was a brand of bicycles manufactured by Bennett and Wood Ltd, a company established in Sydney by Charles W. Bennett and Charles R. Wood. Bennett and Wood were accomplished penny-farthing enthusiasts and racers in England¹²⁸ before migrating to Sydney in the 1870s and opening a bicycle shop¹²⁹. Bennett was the New South Wales champion in 1883 and 1885. He had been a member of the Speedwell bicycle club in England prior to arriving in Australia, and for a while raced as a member of that club.

The business opened in 1882 in humble premises in Clarence Street in a single-fronted two-storey warehouse. Initially they imported and sold Rover and Raleigh bicycles¹³⁰, but soon commenced local

production. The partnership ended in 1897, and Bennett assumed ownership of the company¹³¹. Bennett and Wood Ltd has also been associated with the motorcycle trade since 1898 when the company imported the first motorcycles to Australia. Over the years, a wide variety of models have been imported from many overseas sources¹³².



Figure 13 Speedwell poster, 1940s

When safety bicycles were becoming popular, Bennet was one of the first in Australia to offer them to the public. The business grew to the extent that a four-storey building was erected at 397 George Street. In 1899, Royal Speedwell bicycles were advertised, manufactured by the Rover Co Ltd¹³³. In January 1901, Bennett and Wood Ltd moved to new premises at 53 and 55 Market Street. Due to the expanding business they moved again to a large building on the corner of Pitt and Bathurst Streets in 1908. By 1911, the company was advertising itself as the largest bicycle manufacturer in Australasia¹³⁴.

Speedwell always supported bicycle racing in Australia, sponsoring races and donating Royal Speedwells to race winners. In 1924, Speedwell bikes were exhibited at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley and were awarded Wembley Medals, the only bicycles given that honour¹³⁵. The company continued to expand after World War I, building a large new factory in Redfern in 1951¹³⁶. By the late 1950s, Bennett and Wood, like the Repco Cycle Company, saw the growth in motor vehicle use as a means to further develop their business and had become predominantly a motor trade distribution firm.

But by the mid-1960s, the downturn in bicycle sales had taken its toll, and in 1965 the Speedwell brand was sold to General Accessories (the owners of Malvern Star from 1958). Bicycle building was phased out from about 1970 in favour of cheaper imported components. Two of the most notable Speedwell cyclists were nine-time world champion Cecil Walker¹³⁷ and Olympic gold medalist Dunc Gray¹³⁸.

Malvern Star

After the young cyclist Tom Finnigan won the lucrative 1898 Austral Wheel Race, he used his winnings to establish a bicycle business in 1902. Finnigan began in a small shop at 58 Glenferrie Road in the Melbourne suburb of Malvern, and from 1903 was manufacturing bicycles under the brand name Malvern Star. Finnigan introduced the logo of a six-pointed star which matched a tattoo on his forearm, and was soon one of the leaders of the bicycle industry¹³⁹.



Figure 14 Tom Finnigan (Aussie Velos website)

But Finnigan suffered from failing health and retired in 1920. Bruce Small bought the business, and in 1925 moved the headquarters to Prahran. Small expanded the business with a vengeance, growing from 13 employees in 1925 to 100 by 1933. In January 1940, the new Five Star models were publicised by Hubert Opperman at the last major endurance ride of his illustrious career at the Sydney Sports Arena (in 1940), in which he broke many State, national and world records. By that time, Malvern Star was the largest bicycle manufacturer in the southern hemisphere with thousands of bikes built each year¹⁴⁰.

During World War II, bicycle parts became scarce, so Malvern Star started making its own. Defence contracts helped grow the business, and at its peak after the war the company had 115 stores with 1000 employees. In 1958, Bruce Small sold Malvern Star to Electronic Industries and then in 1970 to the Dutch multinational Philips, which then sold it to the British manufacturer Raleigh in 1980. Australian bicycle manufacture ended in 1987, but most Malvern Stars were being imported after 1970. Australian ownership returned in 1992 under Pacific Brands¹⁴¹, but after struggling with low profitability, the business was finally sold to New Zealand's Sheppard Cycles in 2011¹⁴².

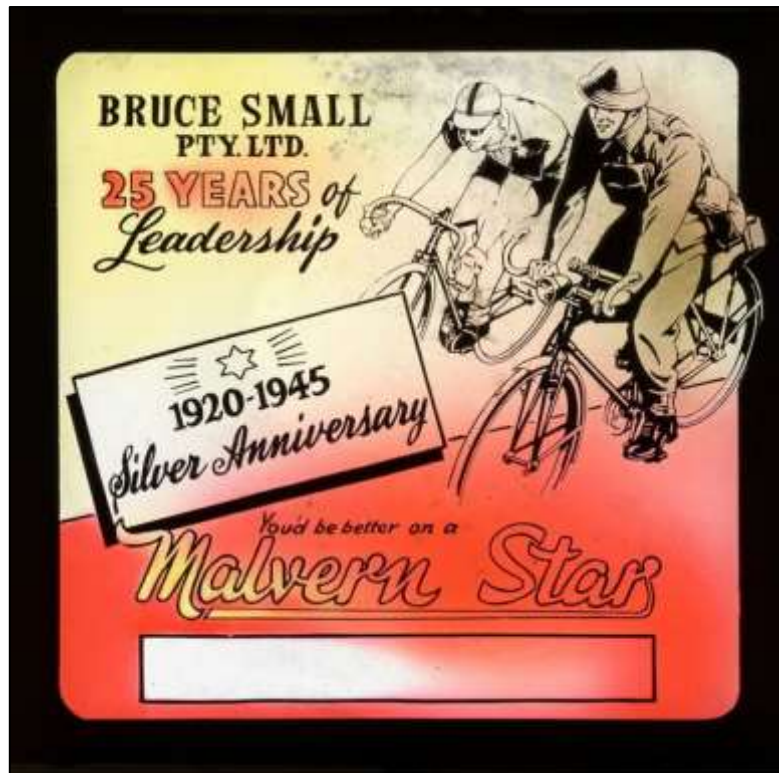


Figure 15 Malvern Star advert, 1945 (WA Historical Cycle Club)

Pioneering cycling promoter

Hugh McIntosh

Hugh Donald McIntosh (1876-1942) was an Australian theatrical entrepreneur, sporting promoter and newspaper proprietor. He was born in Surry Hills, at the time a ramshackle suburb with a largely Irish immigrant population. By the age of 26, he was the owner of a catering company, then in a typically audacious leap, he embarked on sports promotion. He had been an erratic racing cyclist in 1901-02, and in July 1903 was elected general secretary of the New South Wales League of Wheelmen¹⁴³.



Figure 16 Hugh McIntosh (National Library of Australia)

Having gained control of professional cycling's governing body, McIntosh teamed up with two enterprising young journalists, George Wynne and Percy Hunter, to launch a venture called Summer Nights Amusements, starting in October 1903¹⁴⁴. Their first production was the inaugural Sydney 1000, a one-mile handicap race with a world record first place purse of £750 (and £1,000 total prize money, giving the event its name). With that kind of money on offer, Australia's best cyclists were lining up to enter.



Figure 17 Marshall Taylor (*Herald Bulletin* website)

McIntosh also paid £1,200 to bring out the world's best cyclist, Marshall "Major" Taylor to Sydney for the race. African-American Taylor was only the second black world champion in any sport. The race was a major financial success, and McIntosh, who played the race card with shameless enthusiasm to promote the event, had found a formula he would recycle many times¹⁴⁵.

In May 1907, McIntosh announced his retirement from the position of secretary of the League of Wheelmen to devote more time to his large catering business. During his tenure as secretary he did a great deal for the sport of cycling, having instigated the Bathurst to Sydney road race, the fifty mile championship and other annual events¹⁴⁶. Despite the renewed interest in his catering business, McIntosh sold the company a few months later to Sargents Ltd¹⁴⁷, in order to pursue his next venture.

This began with the hurried construction of the large open-air Sydney Stadium at Rushcutters Bay to promote boxing matches. He staged a hugely successful world heavyweight title fight between Jack Johnson and Tommy Burns¹⁴⁸. He toured the film of the fight around the world with even more success. In August 1912, he bought Harry Rickard's Tivoli theatre chain and embarked on a new career as a vaudeville producer, and sold his stadium interest in December. In May 1916, he bought a controlling interest in the *Sunday Times* newspaper, which became the main advertising medium for his theatres.

In August 1923, he leased Lord Kitchener's former mansion near Canterbury in England, then divided his time between England and Australia. But by the mid-1920s his finances were sliding into disorder. He sold the *Sunday Times* in 1927 after it was losing money and he was heavily indebted to the company. Returning to theatrical production, he bought the Tivoli Theatre in 1928, but debts forced the company into liquidation, and bankruptcy proceedings commenced in December 1930. Attempts at restarting former ventures came to nothing¹⁴⁹.

In August 1935, he opened the Black and White Milk Bar in Fleet Street, London¹⁵⁰. Its success led to an optimistic scheme for a chain of 500 milk bars¹⁵¹. In September 1936, McIntosh was the promoter of a six-day cycle race at the Empire Pool and Sports Arena (now known as Wembley Arena)¹⁵². The race featured twelve international teams with prizes totalling £5,000¹⁵³. A newspaper article the following month mentioned that it was the first event of its type in England¹⁵⁴.



Figure 18 Six-day race at Wembley, 1936 (www.sixday.org.uk)

By February 1937, McIntosh's milk bar venture had become a profitable fad, with 69 milk bars in London and over 300 throughout the United Kingdom. The milk bar boom was credited with increasing milk consumption in the UK by 2,250,000 gallons since its inception in 1935¹⁵⁵. But the business foundered by November 1938, and McIntosh admitted that he expanded too fast with insufficient capital¹⁵⁶. He was penniless when he died in London in February 1942¹⁵⁷.

Early cyclists

Tom Finnigan (professional from 1898)

Tom Finnigan was born in 1872 in Gisborne, Victoria. At the age of twelve, he rode an old wooden boneshaker bicycle to school, which was reputedly so noisy the other boys always knew when he was arriving. After moving to Melbourne, his first club was the Victory Cycling Club. He later joined the Albert Park Cycling Club, trained hard for a few seasons, and started to be successful. He was employed as a mechanic at the Canadian bicycle company Massey Harris Bicycle Depot.



Figure 19 Austral Wheel Race finish, 1898 (Cycling Tips website)

He secured a racing bike to enter the 1898 Austral Wheel Race, the oldest track cycling race in the world, which started in 1887 as a handicap race. Finnigan won by half a length in front of 30,000 spectators. His first prize was 240 sovereigns, which enabled him to set up his own bike shop in Glenferrie Road, Malvern, in 1902. He secured the endorsement of Australian champion cyclist Don Kirkham who was breaking world records at the time. In 1920, due to ill health he sold Malvern Star to the 24-year old Bruce Small for £1,125¹⁵⁸.

Frank Corry (professional 1911-1928)

Francis Patrick (Frank) Corry was born in Bathurst in 1889¹⁵⁹. He began his working life as a printer's devil (apprentice) at the *Bathurst Advocate*, where he would borrow the editor's bicycle and learned to ride when the editor was busy composing the Saturday morning leader. He was soon hooked on cycling and hired a bike at 2/6 an afternoon, winning two eleven-mile road races on it¹⁶⁰. He began to work as a junior reporter, but after winning the famous Austral Wheel Race in 1910¹⁶¹, he abandoned journalism to devote himself to professional cycling.



Figure 20 Sydney six-day race, 1913 (*Sunday Times*, 5 January 1913)

In January 1913, Corry and his partner Reg McNamara won a six-day race in Sydney¹⁶². By 1914 he had joined McNamara and other Australian cycling stars in the United States, racing in a six-day event at Madison Square Garden in New York¹⁶³. After a few months in America, Corry realised he was not fast enough to be a top sprinter and that only the best riders earned good money, so he decided to try his hand at motor-paced racing¹⁶⁴.

This was a fast and furious event in which a cyclist rode as quickly as possible and as closely as possible behind a speeding motorcycle, sometimes at sixty miles per hour, around a steeply-banked velodrome for up to ten miles. The motorbikes were often fitted with a rear frame to prevent the bicycles running into the back wheel, and Corry modified his bike by reversing the front forks (so they were angled backwards), using a smaller front wheel (24" at the front and 27" at the back) and a very high gear¹⁶⁵. The cyclists wore a steel helmet, and usually leather clothing for protection in high-speed crashes. Corry found that he had a real talent for this nerve-racking brand of racing, and became one of the world's best motor-paced cyclists.

In 1915, Frank Corry was placed second in a Miss-and-Out (elimination) race at the Newark Velodrome in New Jersey¹⁶⁶ and won a half-hour motor-paced race at Toronto, Canada¹⁶⁷. In 1916,

he wrote to a friend in Bathurst to say that cycle racing was still going strongly in America and he was doing fairly well. He predicted that he would probably return to Australia after World War I, because an American promoter planned to take a group of riders there to run a series of six-day races¹⁶⁸.



Figure 21 Frank Corry, 1924 (*The Mail*, 2 February 1924)

By the end of 1916, it was reported that “Australian cyclists were practically the whole show in America” at the time. In two events in October, Australians won every event on the programme: Alf Grenda and Alf Goulet won a 25-mile teams’ race with Reg McNamara and Bob Spears second, and McNamara and Spears defeated compatriots Goulet and Grenda in a 100 km teams’ race. Spears defeated the great American Frank Kramer seven times that season, proving he was the world’s fastest sprinter¹⁶⁹. Reports from Bob Spears and Frank Corry mentioned that American cycling fans were becoming annoyed that their own riders were being squeezed out of the major prize money by a bunch of upstart Australians!

Corry was also doing very well in the gruelling six-day races, winning the prestigious Boston Six-Day Race in January 1918 with his American partner Edward Madden. By then, he was reportedly finding success in “sprints, unpaced events, paced races and anything else that comes along”, winning a 24-hour motor-paced race at Madison Square Garden with the Swiss rider Oscar Egg¹⁷⁰. When the war ended, Corry and Bob Spears travelled to the Continent in June 1919 to compete in the inaugural six-day race in Belgium. Corry and his French partner Georges Seres finished fourth, but Corry won many of the special prizes for lap sprints during the race¹⁷¹. The next month, Spears and Corry teamed up to win a 100-mile race in Brussels¹⁷².

At the end of 1919, Corry and other Australians finally returned home to race under contract to Carnivals Ltd, a new syndicate formed to promote the coming season¹⁷³. The first event was a six-day race at the Sydney Sports Ground: Corry and Grenda represented the American team (by then both had taken out American citizenship)¹⁷⁴. Corry had been an American since about 1917, as shown by his US World War I Draft Registration Card which lists his residence as Newark New Jersey and his calling as professional cyclist¹⁷⁵.

The Australian stars returned to the lucrative American circuit in April 1920¹⁷⁶. For the next few years, Corry and other professional cyclists followed the track cycling circuit around the world, racing in Australia during the southern summer and returning to American or Europe by April. The

Americans were mystified by the dominance of the Aussies, but they noticed that while their own cyclists took the winter off and rested, the Australians hardly ever stopped racing, so they were at peak fitness and race toughness all the time, giving them an edge over the Americans.

By 1923, Corry was branching out to cycling administration in America, something that he took on full time at home after retiring from racing. He acted as the cyclists' representative on the Board of Appeals of the National Cycling Association¹⁷⁷.



Figure 22 Cyclists and promoters, 1923 (*Sporting Globe*, 21 November 1923)

At the end of 1923, cycle racing returned to the Sydney Sports Ground when Corry and other Australians returned for a series of carnivals in Sydney, promoted by Jack Campbell and Jim Du Frocq. But the local cyclists were no match for Corry in his specialty of motor-paced racing, and he was evidently unhappy with the insufficient amount of racing and the prizemoney offered by the promoters. In January 1924, he announced that he intended to break his contract and race in Melbourne for much larger sums of money under the promoter Charles Lynham. In particular, he was promised a motor-paced race or two with the rising Victorian star Hubert Opperman¹⁷⁸.

This breakaway action by Corry caused a huge controversy - he was suspended by the New South Wales League of Wheelmen¹⁷⁹, the Sydney promoters lawyered up and issued an injunction to stop him riding in Melbourne¹⁸⁰. The Melbourne promoter returned legal fire to stop the League's suspension being acted upon¹⁸¹. Unfazed by the frenzy of litigation he had created, Corry rode in a four-mile motor-paced race in Melbourne against W. Smith from Western Australia and Horace Horder¹⁸².

The much-anticipated match-up with Opperman in February 1924 was nothing if not theatrical: when the first race was due to begin at the Melbourne velodrome, the two motorbikes were driven out to the starting line. But only Opperman was on the track when the race started. But to the great surprise and amusement of the large crowd, Corry suddenly climbed over the fence, jumped on his bike and set off in pursuit of the disappearing Oppy, to the rousing cheers of the excited fans. Unfortunately, the track was still wet from recent rain, and after Opperman skidded twice, the referee called the race off before the finish¹⁸³.

The upshot of this lawyers-at-ten-paces saga was that Corry arrived at a settlement with the New South Wales League of Wheelmen under which he could fulfil his cycling engagements in Australia. It was agreed in the Equity Court that he would apply for the injunction to be dissolved and pay the costs of the proceedings. The injunction was then dissolved and all was forgiven¹⁸⁴. The episode probably showed that Frank Corry was not afraid of bucking the system if he thought he had a case (or a shot at a bigger bag of money).

The rivalry between Corry and Opperman was reignited in 1925 when another series of motor-paced races was arranged by Melbourne Carnivals Ltd at the Melbourne Motordrome. In a triumph of experience over youth, the 37-year old Corry defeated the 22-year old Opperman by three heats to two. Corry won the final heat over 10 miles in front of 30,000 spectators, despite finishing with a flat tyre. He took home the stake of £1,000 for his efforts¹⁸⁵. Corry's final racing triumph was winning his second Austral Wheel Race in March 1925, off 160 yards in front of up to 30,000 fans at the Melbourne Motordrome. His first Austral victory had been fifteen years earlier¹⁸⁶.

Returning to the northern hemisphere for the 1925 season, Corry only rode occasionally in America, but had some success in Germany¹⁸⁷. By 1926, he was in Australia and spending his spare time coaching cyclists and motorcyclists in the art of motor-paced racing¹⁸⁸. But in 1927, he triggered another war in cycling circles when he took part in an exhibition ride on the Melbourne Motordrome track in defiance of a warning by the Victorian League of Wheelmen¹⁸⁹. The current battle was between rival promoters at the Melbourne Motordrome and the Melbourne Exhibition track¹⁹⁰.

By 1927, Frank Corry had turned his attention to the lack of timber velodromes in Australia, which he planned to alleviate by constructing one himself. In August, he announced that he hoped to have a sports palace completed by the end of the year, preferably located within ten minutes of Central Station and catering for several sports¹⁹¹. But it was not until October 1928 that he had found a site, on part of the Canterbury Sports Ground, and was able to commence construction. The track would be eight laps to a mile, banked at 48 degrees at the ends and 17 degrees on the straights. There would be seating for 8,500 spectators¹⁹².



Figure 23 Motor-paced cycling, Canterbury c1931 (Canterbury Council)

The company promoting the new velodrome was established as Velodromes Ltd with a capital of £50,000. Corry was listed as a company director, and was appointed the track manager¹⁹³. A milestone in Australian cycling was an agreement for amateurs (sanctioned by the New South Wales Cyclists' Union) and professionals (under the New South Wales League of Wheelmen) to appear together on the same programme, but not to mix in the same races. The amateur body was probably influenced by the need to prepare its cyclists for the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, which would almost certainly be on a similar track¹⁹⁴.

Nine months after opening the Canterbury Velodrome, Corry opened a second board track, the Brisbane Velodrome in Fortitude Valley¹⁹⁵. He continued in his role as the Canterbury track manager for some years¹⁹⁶. In 1934, he acted as the New South Wales League of Wheelmen's representative at League Appeals Board hearings into cyclists¹⁹⁷.

The Canterbury velodrome closed in 1937, to be replaced by the Sydney Sports Arena velodrome in Surry Hills. It was reported in 1943 that Bob Spears and Frank Corry were joint managers of this track, and would be coaching cyclists there¹⁹⁸. They promoted carnivals at the track¹⁹⁹, and in 1944 they also promoted carnivals at Lidcombe Oval²⁰⁰. In late 1944, Corry announced he would send an agent to Europe when World War II ended to bring riders out to Australia. Bob Spears was the likely candidate for this, as he raced in Europe for ten years and spoke fluent French. Corry predicted a boom in world cycling after the war²⁰¹.

A curious incident in 1945 demonstrated both Frank Corry's extensive international experience, the hazards of track cycling and possibly his devil-may-care attitude to them. At one point, he suffered a bout of toothache and went to his dentist, who told him that, firstly there were no teeth where it was sore, and secondly his mouth showed no sign of an abscess. Still in pain, he visited his doctor, who ordered an x-ray. This revealed a shadowy object resembling a tack, high up in a gum. After a local anaesthetic, a pair of tweezers extracted a large splinter, apparently a legacy of his track cycling days.

The wood was identified as Canadian spruce, the type used in the Madison Square Garden velodrome in New York, where he remembered crashing and sliding a long way on the wooden track some 25 years earlier. He said the fall left him looking like a pin cushion, but he just removed the most painful splinters so that he could still ride and left the rest. He recalled that several splinters had since worked their way out over the years in "boils and other unexpected places".

Previous splinters that had been analysed ranged from Oregon pine to Canadian redwood, Swedish cedar, Bangkok irrawaddy and Australian jarrah. He was impressed by the jarrah splinter, which was as tough as the day he picked it up 22 years earlier, proving to him that Australian woods were the world's best (because they produced the most durable splinters!)²⁰².

In 1948, still keen to build more velodromes, Corry proposed to the Sydney Council that he had the financial backing to demolish the decrepit Exhibition Building in Prince Alfred Park and rebuild it as a multi-sports complex²⁰³. But the council had other proposals to consider (such as a government sports centre), and in any case there was a shortage of building materials in the immediate post-war era. In the end the council pulled the building down itself and replaced it with an open-air swimming pool and ice skating rink.

Frank Corry died in Sydney in 1964. His long career as a cyclist and then as a coach and manager stretched from the early days of the sport at the beginning of the twentieth century through the heyday of track cycling in the 1920s and 1930s, and into the post-war 1940s. He recognised early on that he would not become a top-class sprinter, but found his niche in endurance racing such as six-day events and the hectic world of motor-paced races. He was willing to go against the system to get what he wanted, but was also willing to work inside the system to benefit his fellow cyclists. After retirement from racing, his vast worldwide experience made him a successful builder and manager of velodromes in his home country.

Between the World Wars – the golden era of track cycling

America – the El Dorado of cycling

Until Babe Ruth came along in the 1920s, the best paid sportsman in the United States was the national professional cycling champion Frank Kramer. He was the American sprint champion from 1901 to 1916, and for a decade made double the salary of Ty Cobb, the American Baseball League batting champion for the previous five years, whose salary in 1911 was \$10,000. When Kramer began his career in 1896, baseball was the only sport that rivalled cycling as a spectator sport. There were as many professional cyclists in the USA at that time as there were major league baseball players in the 1980s.

First prize in the world professional sprint title in Newark in 1920 was \$200, enough to buy two of the football teams (that eventually formed the National Football League) went on sale for \$100 each. The great Alf Goulet remembered that in 1925 he was paid \$10,000 to ride in a six-day race at Madison Square Garden (the Super Bowl of bike racing). By comparison, the New York Giants football franchise was then worth \$500. Attendances were always high in those days, and in a six-day race in December 1927 at Madison Square Garden, the *New York Times* reported that an estimated 150,000 spectators passed through the turnstiles.



Figure 24 Madison Square Garden six-day race, 1908 (Wikimedia)

Cycling enjoyed golden years through the 1920s, but the sport started a downward spiral after the stock market crash in 1929 and the subsequent Great Depression. Cycle tracks in many cities went out of business through the 1930s, and the outbreak of World War II effectively ended American professional cycling. After the war, the focus of the sport shifted away from America to Europe. But cycling made a comeback in the USA with Greg LeMond's Tour de France wins in 1986 and 1989. LeMond complained at the time that it was hardly reported in the USA when he won a world

championship in 1983, but that his first Tour de France win seemed to spark the American imagination, for some reason²⁰⁴.

Asphalt and boards – the rise of the velodromes

Manly Oval (1924-1946)

Address: Sydney Road, Manly.

The early Manly settler and landowner Henry Gilbert Smith sold half his land to Thomas Adrian in 1880 and the other half to Thomas Rowe in 1882. In 1883, at the request of local residents, the Crown purchased Adrian's land, and in 1884 purchased Rowe's land. By this means, all the land now known as Ivanhoe Park was owned by the Crown, to be used as a public amenity for the people of New South Wales. The Government proclaimed the area a park in September 1887, calling it Manly Park, and in November 1887, Manly Council was vested with the trusteeship of the park.

In November 1888, Premier Henry Parkes gave a speech at Ivanhoe Park in which he floated his concept of federation for the Australian colonies. This address preceded the more famous Tenterfield Oration in October 1889 in which he formally called for the federation of the six colonies into one Commonwealth of Australia. Though the Tenterfield Oration is considered the start of the process that led to Federation twelve years later, the idea was tested the year before on the residents of Manly. When ownership of Ivanhoe Park passed into public hands in 1884, construction of a proper oval began in earnest. The area was drained, levelled and landscaped. A simple cricket wicket was laid down, to be replaced in 1894 by a turf wicket²⁰⁵.

The Manly Bicycle Club held annual race meetings in Ivanhoe Park from 1887²⁰⁶, then in 1888²⁰⁷ and 1889²⁰⁸. Bicycle handicap races were then reported in June 1903²⁰⁹. These races were held on grass, before any cycling track was constructed. Meanwhile, cricket had become established in Manly Oval, and in January 1906, the great Victor Trumper scored 124 runs in an hour for Paddington, belting the hapless Middle Harbour bowlers for 20 fours, two fives and one six²¹⁰.

A tragic incident occurred during a representative rugby match at Manly Oval in Jun 1922 when the 23-year old Robert Elliott Shute fell heavily from a tackle and died of a cerebral haemorrhage²¹¹. Shute had served in the Field Artillery of the AIF during World War I, and on his return commenced engineering studies at Sydney University. His memory is perpetuated in the Shute Memorial Shield which is awarded each season to the premiership team in the Sydney first grade rugby competition²¹².

In 1923, plans and specifications were drawn up for a cycling track at Manly Oval²¹³. The track was ready for competition in October 1924 when the Manly Bicycle Club held a cycling meeting to welcome home the Manly Olympic representatives. It was reported that "the track has been top-dressed with Bulli soil and will have a very fast surface"²¹⁴. Cycling carnivals were held regularly for some years on the track, often combining with motorcycling and boxing²¹⁵. In October 1927, it was mentioned in the sport newspaper *Arrow* that first-class professional cyclists were supporting the carnivals with their participation²¹⁶.

One of the fads of the day made an appearance at the Manly Oval track in the form of goat racing. A recent meeting at the oval attracted 6,000 spectators, reportedly attracted by the spectacle of eight goats trotting around the track pulling a small cart operated by children dressed as jockeys. The

Manly goat owners claimed that their animals were faster than any ring-ins from Queensland. The in-demand billy goats were off to an appearance in Goulburn after the night's racing²¹⁷.



Figure 25 Goat racing at Manly Oval, 1928 (Manly Library)

Wood chopping was another sport that seemed to go with track cycling in the 1920s, and was part of carnivals at Manly Oval in 1928²¹⁸. But the 1928-1929 summer season was the last at the Manly Oval track. The final event reported was a championship meeting of the Manly and Northern Suburbs Amateur Cycling Club in February 1929²¹⁹.

Presumably track cycling suffered from the severe economic depression of the early 1930s, as did all leisure activities. The only other cycling event recorded at the track was a one-off Bridge Carnival in March 1932 featuring Dunc Gray and Stan Steen. This event was a celebration of the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge the same month²²⁰. The cycling track then fell into disuse for many years until the Manly Council finally decided to remove it in July 1946 as part of a ground improvement project²²¹.

The Manly Oval cycling track was only used for about five years before interest dwindled. But it was the only purpose-built track north of the Harbour, and benefitted from an attractive village green setting in one of the most popular visitor and holiday locations in Sydney.

Canterbury Velodrome (1928-1937)

Address: Charles Street, Canterbury.

The Canterbury Sports Ground was first mentioned in the press in 1923 as a new venue for the various football codes²²² and was also being advertised as a venue for cricket²²³. In October 1928, the professional cyclist Frank Corry announced he was constructing Sydney's first wooden velodrome track on part of the site, at a cost of £11,000. The velodrome would occupy about two acres of the 8.5 acre sports ground site, and would accommodate 12,000 fans when completed²²⁴. The following month, the company promoting the new track at Canterbury was officially registered as Velodromes Ltd with a capital of £50,000.

Corry was listed as a director of the company, and was appointed the track manager²²⁵. Corry's far-sighted initiative was an exciting development for Sydney track cyclists, as it would mean they could

acquire experience on the type of track they would encounter in America, and it would be more attractive to overseas cyclists thinking of travelling to Australia.

In the new velodrome, amateurs and professionals would appear on the same programme for the first time, but would not mix in the same race. The Cyclists' Union was probably persuaded of this unprecedented move by the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics almost certainly using a board track, on which our cyclists need practice beforehand. The two bodies would have separate dressing rooms, offices for their secretaries and would select their own referees²²⁶.

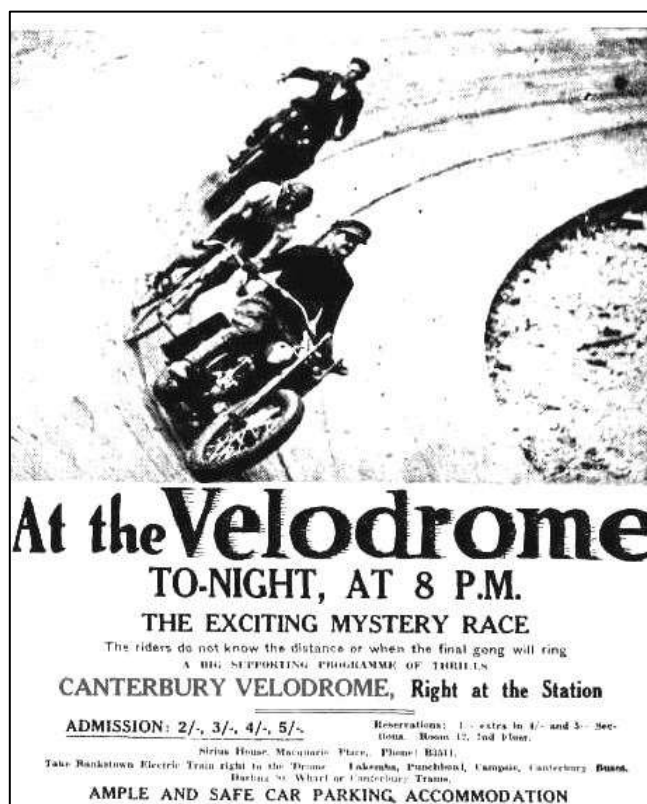


Figure 26 Opening of Canterbury Velodrome, 1928 (*The Sun*, 26 December 1928)

The Canterbury Velodrome opened in December 1928 with over 8,000 fans in attendance. Frank Corry established the track record for three miles in an exhibition of motor-paced riding. Olympians Dunc Gray and Jack Standen staged a match race, won by Standen by two heats to one. Arc lights illuminated the track brilliantly and an innovative system of loud speakers carried the announcer's voice to every part of the ground²²⁷.

In January 1929, the 1928 Olympic cyclist Jack Standen turned professional by signing a contract to race at the Canterbury velodrome²²⁸. He said he wanted to compete against the top riders such as Cecil Walker and Reg McNamara, and could not do that as an amateur. His first professional appearance was in the Grand Prize, a half-mile scratch race at Canterbury²²⁹.

A major split in professional cycling was caused by the decision of the New South Wales League of Wheelmen to grant Velodromes Ltd a monopoly within 30 miles of Sydney over the staging of all professional carnivals for seven years. Some Parramatta club members formed a breakaway Metropolitan Professional Cyclists' Association in response to this²³⁰. This dispute was evidently resolved later in the year²³¹.

By August 1930, the velodrome company was losing money during the economic depression. The Melbourne-based owner John Wren decided not to open the velodrome, but two other promoters arranged to take over the track, provided an agreement could be reached between riders and the New South Wales League of Wheelmen to reduce overhead expenses - in particular the prize money and officials' expenses²³². In January 1934, the Sydney cyclist Don Blackman was competing in a race at the velodrome when he skidded several yards on the boards, suffering over 200 splinter wounds. Although many were removed immediately, it took up to a week to extract the rest²³³. This incident may have influenced the decision later that year to redesign the track to make it safer for cyclists.



Figure 27 Canterbury Velodrome, c1931 (Canterbury Bankstown Council)

In October 1934, the Canterbury-Earlwood Amateur Cycling Club arranged for a ten-year sublease of the track from the present lessee, Charles Lynham. The club carried out the work of replacing the track with 100,000 feet of 2x1" oregon boards, laid at right angles to the track to try and reduce splinters. The banking was increased (reportedly to a vertiginous 55 degrees) and the problematic bumps entering the straights were removed²³⁴. It was expected that the steeper turns would increase the track speed considerably²³⁵.

The track then measured exactly one furlong long (220 yards) on the pole line, which would permit riders to establish certified records. In the past, the track was a few yards short of the standard distance, and all previous records set on the old track were cancelled. The times established on the opening night would stand as records until broken²³⁶.

Despite the newly-laid track, the racing season of 1934-35 heralded disagreements between the promoter of the Canterbury Velodrome and the two cycling organisations (the New South Wales Cyclists' Union and the New South Wales League of Wheelmen), although these two were not united

either. The main point of contention was that the New South Wales Cyclists' Union claimed it should have overseen the replacement of the board track and the organisation of riders and races for the season, and not the Canterbury-Earlwood club. On the other hand, the League's main complaint was that the promoter offered a limit of 25% of the gross gate takings as prizemoney, which was deemed to be insufficient²³⁷.



Figure 28 Canterbury Velodrome, 1930s (Bicycles Network Australia)

It was mentioned that after a slump in cycling during the last few years of the economic depression, there were signs of a revival²³⁸. In December 1934, an unprecedented four Sydney cycling tracks were in use for amateur racing: Pratten Park (Ashfield), Henson Park (Marrickville), Hurstville Oval and the Canterbury Velodrome. This illustrated the recent growth in amateur cycling²³⁹. In early 1935, cyclists shared the billing at the Canterbury Velodrome with a rodeo troupe: American cowboys and cowgirls, Cherokee Indians and a Russian Cossack troupe were among the performers²⁴⁰.

Then in October 1935, the promoters of the Canterbury Velodrome ran afoul of the *Sunday Observance Act* (dating back to 1780, in the time of King George III) when some 6,000 spectators were admitted on a Sunday, mostly by purchase of a program rather than admission tickets (which were specifically banned by the Act). The promoter was taken to court, not by the church, but by William Harrop, Secretary of the Australian Theatrical Employees' Association, which was against anything that required its members to work on Sunday²⁴¹.

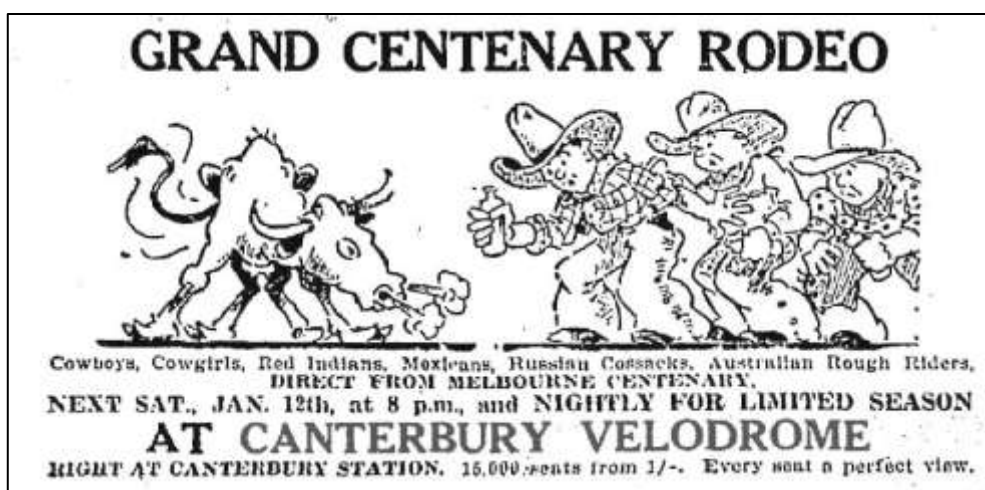


Figure 29 Rodeo at Canterbury Velodrome, 1935 (*Referee*, 10 January 1935)

Justice Stephen decided that the sale of programmes to gain admittance to a cycling carnival amounted to selling tickets, so the promoter was found guilty and fined. After scratching his head to find another workaround, the enterprising promoter came up with the idea of firstly erecting a large sign declaring “Admission Free”, and secondly selling optional bags of peanuts outside the ground for 6d (which coincided with the admission price) which could be exchanged for programmes once inside the velodrome. Only amateurs would race, for trophies²⁴².

Rex Ley, the secretary of the Canterbury carnivals, complained to anyone who would listen that it was legal to charge admission on Sundays to baths, sailing races, picnic grounds, enclosed beaches and other places of entertainment, but it was an offence at a cycling carnival²⁴³. Mr Ley also suggested that the admission strategy needed some fine tuning, because apparently some people did not like peanuts and wouldn’t buy them. So the next week he planned to alter the bill of fare to try selling a bag of mixed sweets, or chocolates and peanuts together or even milk shakes – whatever was the most popular²⁴⁴. The *Referee* newspaper reported that new tracks were opening at Trumper Park and Wentworth Park, but that it had not been announced if admission would be by “peanut, lolly or watermelon”²⁴⁵.

The promoter at the velodrome took a creative approach to juvenile delinquency one night: two youths started a quarrel and were on a verge of fisticuffs when the officials invited them to settle their differences on the track with a quick four-lap scratch race. At the finish they were both so exhausted all they could do was shake hands and stagger back to the stands²⁴⁶.

At the end of 1936, Canterbury Council called for tenders to redevelop the whole of the Canterbury Sports Ground as a golf course, timber yard or nursery²⁴⁷. Cycling carnivals continued until October 1937, after which the track was closed²⁴⁸. In November 1937, the velodrome was sold to Sports Arena Ltd and demolished, transferring most of the boards to Riley Street in Surry Hills to construct a new velodrome there²⁴⁹.

After its closure, it was pointed out that the track had been a good one, but was badly located in the suburbs, so that it was never a great success commercially²⁵⁰. Frank Corry did say in 1927 that he wanted to build a velodrome much closer to the centre of Sydney²⁵¹, and he may have regretted having to settle for the more distant suburb of Canterbury.

Bankstown Oval (1931-1938)

Address: Bankstown War Memorial Park (now Bankstown Oval), Chapel Road, Bankstown.

The Bankstown War Memorial Park was first mentioned in the press in April 1930 when a food relief depot was opened in the park for unemployed men during the severe economic depression²⁵². In December 1931, a programme of amateur races was held by the Lidcombe-Auburn Cycling Club at a new cinder cycle track at the park, watched by 3,000 spectators²⁵³. The following year, the Bankstown District Cycle Club was conducting night meetings at the track²⁵⁴. From early 1933, the park was called the Bankstown Memorial Park²⁵⁵.

In September 1935, the track was opened to professional cyclists by the New South Wales League of Wheelmen, allowing the track manager Mr R. McLeod to promote professional events at the park. The Bankstown track was used in conjunction with the recently-opened Lidcombe Oval cycle track to provide racing for more of the League's many members²⁵⁶.

By September 1937, there were plans to seal the cycle track by covering it with bitumen²⁵⁷. It was reported that the Olympic cyclist Dunc Gray would race on the track during a gymkhana the following month²⁵⁸. The track was bitumenised by January 1938, and was officially opened with a carnival in February²⁵⁹. From March 1938, a series of Sunday carnivals was held in the park, which was now called Bankstown Oval²⁶⁰. Major cyclists such as Grant Pye and the American Harris Horder raced there²⁶¹.

An article in *The Daily Telegraph* in April 1938 reported on the rapid growth of Sunday sport in recent times, writing that every Sunday throughout winter some 90,000 people in Sydney played or watched a sport, representing 10% of Sydney's population. Of these, about 65,000 were spectators. Junior Rugby League headed the list with about 50,000 total audience, followed by professional cycling (called a comparatively recent innovation), which was watched every weekend by 10,000 people.

The growth in popularity in Sunday track cycling dated from about the opening of the Sydney Sports Arena in Surry Hills about four months earlier, where Sunday night carnivals attracted up to 9,000 people, more than the long-established Saturday night carnivals. Bankstown Oval had been holding Sunday afternoon carnivals for only about a month, and attendances were already at 1,000 and growing every week²⁶².

Despite this growing popularity, there was no more cycling reported at the Bankstown Oval track after the 1938 winter season. The cycling track seemed to fill a need for professional cycling in the western suburbs for a few years in the 1930s, but other suburban tracks, such as Lidcombe Oval, Wiley Park and Pratten Park may have had advantages over Bankstown, leading to its decline in 1938.

Henson Park, Marrickville (1933-late 1960s)

Address: 22 Centennial Street, Marrickville.

Standsure Brick Works

Thomas Daley constructed the Standsure Brick Works in Sydney Road Marrickville, and in May 1882 began to advertise bricks for sale to builders in the local area²⁶³. The company did well in the great building decade of the 1880s in Sydney, and in July 1887 Daley raised £15,000 in capital to erect an additional plant. The seven-acre property reportedly contained the finest quality shale and clay for bricks and pottery, and was expected to last over fifty years²⁶⁴.

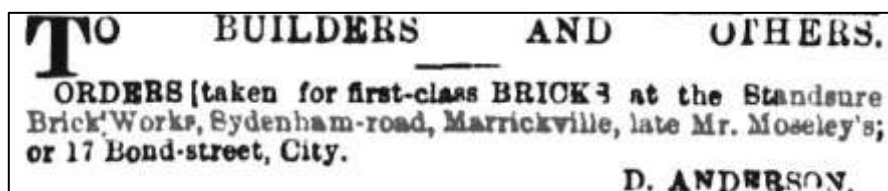


Figure 30 Standsure Brick Works first advert, 1882 (*Daily Telegraph*, 02 May 1882)

But the clay pit began to fill with rainwater, even while it was being actively mined, and in 1889 an eleven-year old boy drowned while trying to retrieve an egg from the water. This was the first of many drownings there²⁶⁵. A new kiln was installed in July 1891, when 100,000 bricks were being turned out each week²⁶⁶. The brickworks were advertised for sale in March 1894 including the clay, kilns and machinery²⁶⁷. But it was apparently not sold, as Thomas Daley remained its owner for many more years.

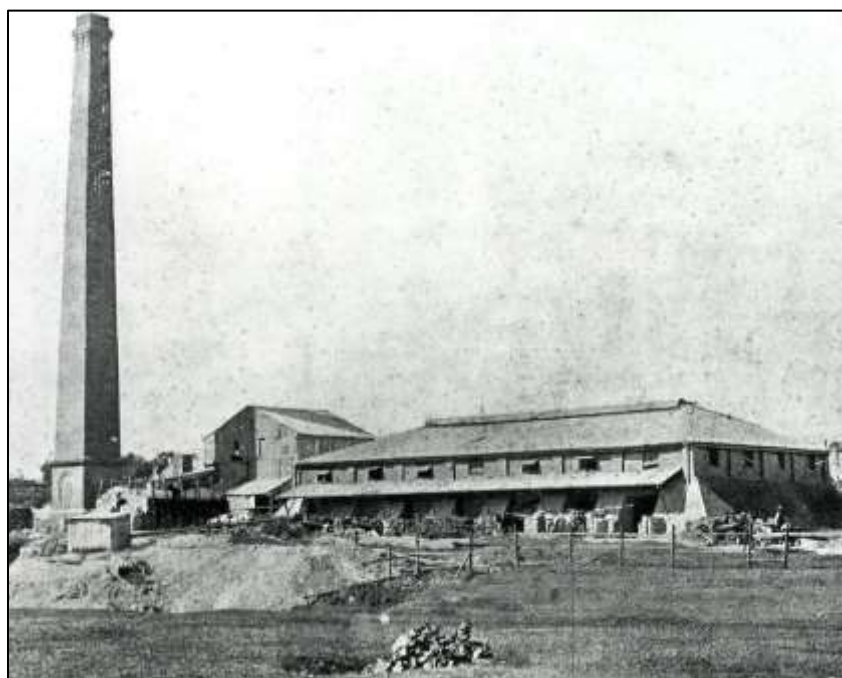


Figure 31 Standsure Brick Works, 1922 (Marrickville Library)

Meanwhile the poorly-fenced site remained a deadly magnet for the local boys, and two more drowned in October 1905²⁶⁸. Not long afterwards, a police constable died of pneumonia after he caught a chill dragging for the bodies of the two boys in the water hole²⁶⁹. The brickworks continued to operate until May 1923, as shown by frequent advertisements for the sale of bricks²⁷⁰.

By this time, the many deaths of young boys in the brick pits of the inner suburbs was becoming a widespread concern, and the St Peter's branch of the ALP suggested that the councils should combine to employ a watchman to supervise waterholes in abandoned brick pits. The Marrickville Council purchased Daley's site in 1923 as it was becoming a danger to the public. But the council did not immediately do anything with their newly-acquired death-trap, and In March 1925, two brothers drowned in what was by then called Daley's Waterhole²⁷¹ and another boy in June 1925²⁷².



Figure 32 Daley's Waterhole, 1922 (Marrickville History Services)

Henson Park

By 1928, the Council had decided to turn the site into a public recreational reserve. It was being referred to as Henson Park from this time²⁷³. The Council finally took action to fill in the waterhole and convert the site into a park in 1930 using State Government-approved finance under the unemployment relief scheme²⁷⁴. These schemes were common during the Great Depression of the 1930s to keep men working when unemployment was very high. An initial gang of fifty men began the very large task of filling in forty years of clay mining at Henson Park, and more groups of fifty relieved them periodically²⁷⁵.

By October 1932, a local cycling club agreed to spend £250 on a lighting system for the new cycle track around the oval²⁷⁶. The Dulwich Hill and Marrickville amateur cycling clubs contested a combined three hour teams' race at the new Henson Park track in February 1933 in the first reported cycling event at the venue²⁷⁷.

The sporting newspaper *Referee* reported that the Marrickville cyclists were so keen to make use of the new Henson Park track that they did not wait for the official equipment to conduct races. In the early days, bike races were begun by the starter banging a brick against a kerosene tin. Then with one lap to go, the "bell lap" was indicated by another tin with a hole in the top through which a string attached to several stones was rattled inside the tin. Finally when the winner crossed the line, the judge gave the "bell" a swift kick to end the race.

The *Referee* reporter noted that the facilities may not have seemed serious, but the racing itself was very serious, and the best cyclists turned out at the track to support the sport during a difficult time. There was no accommodation for spectators when the park opened, but a popular way to get some shade was to purchase an ice cream from one of the many vendors and shelter under his canopy for a while (as long as the ice cream lasted, anyway). Whatever the future held for Henson Park, the Marrickville Council had enabled hundreds of unemployed men to earn an honest shilling during the course of its construction²⁷⁸.



Figure 33 Henson Park cycling, 1936 (Marrickville Library)

While track cycling was underway at Henson Park, a number of other sports were also establishing themselves at the new oval. In April 1933, the New South Wales Baseball Association announced that first-grade matches would be played there in the coming winter season²⁷⁹. The novel sport of vigoro also commenced at the park at the same time. This is a form of cricket played with tennis rackets that was designed for women, and was popular in Sydney in the 1930s under the management of the New South Wales Women's Vigoro Association. Some of the local teams that played at Henson Park were the Dulwich Hill Scottish, the Kogarah Bluebirds, the Marrickville Wahines²⁸⁰, the Carrs Park Midgets and the Marrickville Jolly Girls²⁸¹.

Cricket commenced at Henson Park in September 1933 when the North Sydney cricket team played a match against the Marrickville Cricket Club. It was Don Bradman's first game for North Sydney, but on this occasion his bowling (4 wickets for 17) was better than his batting (24 runs)²⁸². Two weeks later, a charity match at Henson Park caused a near-riot when about 10,000 hero-worshipping schoolboys mobbed Test batsman Stan McCabe when he went out to bat. Later in the match, the opposing captain Don Bradman was escorted to the wicket by two burly policemen, but they were no match for the enthusiastic boys who again rushed onto the unfenced oval, eagerly waving autograph books at the Don²⁸³.

In September 1934, the cycling track was resurfaced with bitumen and the banking increased to allow greater speed²⁸⁴. Henson Park was controversially selected for the track cycling events at the 1938 British Empire Games (controversial because the brand new Sydney Sports Arena was available and was a more modern timber velodrome)²⁸⁵. Current and past Empire Games representatives rode in a special pre-games handicap in January 1938, including Stan Steen, Dunc Gray, Don Blackman and Robert Porter²⁸⁶.

THE GAMES PROGRAMME			
The full schedule of events and venues of the Games is:—			
Sat., Feb. 5 ..	{ Opening ceremony Athletics Swimming	Afternoon.. Sydney Cricket Ground Evening.... North Sydney Pool	
Mon., Feb. 7..	Boxing, wrestling	Evening.... Rushcutter's Bay Stadium	
Tues., Feb. 8..	Cycling	Evening.... Henson Park, Marrickville	
Wed., Feb. 9..	{ Diving Rowing Swimming	Afternoon.. North Sydney Pool Afternoon.. Nepean River Evening.... North Sydney Pool	
Thurs., Feb. 10	Athletics Boxing, wrestling	Afternoon.. Sydney Cricket Ground Evening.... Rushcutter's Bay Stadium	
Fri., Feb. 11..	Swimming	Evening.... North Sydney Pool	
Sat., Feb. 12...	Athletics Cycling	Afternoon.. Sydney Cricket Ground Evening.... Henson Park, Marrickville	
The Cycling Venue may be changed from Henson Park			

Figure 34 1938 Empire Games schedule (*Referee*, 4 November 1937)

The Empire Games Council decided that as the track cycling program would conclude the Games, the closing ceremony would also be held at Henson Park²⁸⁷. Australian cyclists were successful at the Games in February: the 1000-metre time trial was won by Robert Porter of the Enfield-Burwood club, with the Victorian rider Tasman Johnson second and Dunc Gray fifth²⁸⁸. Dunc Gray won the 1000 metre sprint with Porter second²⁸⁹.

Home of the Jets

Henson Park has also had a long history of involvement with football. The Newtown Rugby League Club was one of the foundation clubs in 1908 and played its early games at Metters Sports Ground, Erskineville. Later, Newtown (affectionately known as the Blue Bags because of its jersey colour) moved across the road to Erskineville Oval and then to Marrickville Oval. The club moved to Henson Park for the 1936 season²⁹⁰. It was mentioned at the time that the very spacious ground was larger than the Sydney Cricket Ground, and would hold an estimated 80,000 spectators²⁹¹. But it was all standing area, as there was no grandstand and no seating in the outer area. The New South Wales Rugby League requested Marrickville Council to remedy the lack of spectator accommodation, and by the end of 1936 the Council was calling for tenders to construct a grandstand and outer fencing of the venue²⁹².

Newtown played at Henson Park for many years, changing their nickname in 1973 to the Jets, apparently a reference to the many low-flying planes roaring overhead towards Mascot Airport during the games. The club struggled financially from the 1970s, partly because of demographic

changes which saw the rugby league fan base move out to the western suburbs. The club was ejected from the first division in 1983 and left Henson Park before returning in 2001. The Newtown Jets now play in the New South Wales Cup²⁹³.

Due to pressure from the rugby league club to install television-grade lighting towers (whose recommended location was in the cycling track), the track was removed in the late 1960s²⁹⁴ and replaced by a grass running track, which is now used in local school athletics carnivals. However, in compensation for the loss to the cycling community, the Marrickville Council assisted the Dulwich Hill Cycling Club to find a new venue by providing land that would be suited to a steep-sided concrete velodrome in Ross Street, Camperdown²⁹⁵.

Today, Henson Park also hosts matches in the AFL Women's league, with the Sydney Swans and the Greater Western Sydney Giants using the oval for a number of games each season. The park has the advantage of a natural bowl shape due to its origin as a reclaimed brick pit. It also has the unusual feature of car parking inside the ground, where early arrivals can watch the games from their car seat (drive-in football?). The Henson Park cycling track played its part in the history of Sydney track cycling for much longer than many better-equipped velodromes, and probably benefited from having the very energetic Dulwich Hill and Marrickville cycling clubs in the locality.

Wiley Park Velodrome (1935-c1979)

Address: Corner of Canterbury and King George's Roads, Lakemba.

The first mention of "Wiley's Park" in the press was in February 1930 when a scouting rally was held and football was played two months later²⁹⁶. In October 1935, a cinder cycle track was installed in the park²⁹⁷. A cycling carnival marked the official opening of the track in February 1936. Most of the Canterbury Council aldermen took part in a bike race at the opening, including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor²⁹⁸.

In February 1937, some of the top riders appeared at Wiley Park when Aries Van Vliet, the Dutch cycling champion, raced Dunc Gray and Stan Steen²⁹⁹. During the same month the Lakemba Amateur Cycling Club offered to promote carnivals to raise funds to help pay for the dirt track to be properly graded and sealed with bitumen³⁰⁰. This was completed in late 1937³⁰¹.



Figure 35 Wiley Park Velodrome, 1975 (Velo Aficionado website)

The Wiley Park track continued in use to the 1970s and was the venue for many major titles. In March 1974 the Australian Cycling Championships were held there³⁰², and the State cycling titles in March 1977³⁰³. But in 1976, the State Government announced that the widening of Canterbury and King Georges Roads meant the cycling track would have to be demolished in three years' time. The Parramatta-Holroyd Amateur Cycling Club wanted an Olympic-standard cycling track constructed at Holroyd in its place, but the Holroyd Council said that suitable land was unavailable in its area³⁰⁴.

The Wiley Park track was demolished in about 1979, but the Canterbury Council replaced it with a new velodrome at Waterworth Park, Earlwood. The Wiley Park velodrome had served the local cycling community well for a long time, in an era when cycling was very popular. The Sydney cyclist Jack Walsh won several national track championships in the 1940s. He opened a popular bike shop in nearby Punchbowl soon after returning home from World War II, closing it only in 2008 due to poor health³⁰⁵.

Lidcombe Oval Velodrome (1935-present)

Address: Church Street, Lidcombe.

Lidcombe is a suburb located about fifteen kilometres west of the Sydney central business district. Lidcombe Oval in Wyatt Park was officially opened by Jack Lang, the Member for Auburn and New South Wales Opposition Leader³⁰⁶. The knockabout character of the area was demonstrated at a rugby league practice match played at the official opening between Western Suburbs and North Sydney. Days of heavy rain had left the ground heavily waterlogged, and at the end of the game the mud-encrusted players, loth to see the referee escape with a comparatively clean strip, carried him to a large muddy pool at one end of the ground and dropped him into it, to the great amusement of the crowd³⁰⁷.

A cricket pitch was constructed, and in August 1933 the Cumberland Cricket Club played a team of international players to celebrate the acquisition of a five-year lease on the ground. The all-star side included Alan Kippax, Bert Oldfield and Jack Gregory. But the locals had the great Test all-rounder Bill O'Reilly on their side, and he took three wickets and later hit a six off the first ball he received³⁰⁸.



Figure 36 Lidcombe Oval cycling, 1935 (Cumberland City Library)

In November 1933, several local amateur and professional cyclists met with Lidcombe Council aldermen to discuss a proposal for a cycle track at the oval³⁰⁹. By March 1934, the Council announced that a sealed cycle track would be constructed as an unemployment relief scheme project, at an estimated cost of £100³¹⁰. The champion track cyclists Grant Pye (from Lidcombe) and Len Rogers (from Auburn) were from the local area.

The track was ready for racing by October 1934, but lighting for night races had not yet been installed³¹¹. The new track was so popular that in January 1935 the council received a number of competing requests for its use by the New South Wales League of Wheelmen, while the Lidcombe and Berala cycling clubs claimed priority as local clubs. The council told them all to get together and sort it out themselves. Meanwhile the council applied to the Local Government Department for a grant of £1,000 to illuminate the track (note that this was ten times the cost of the building the track itself – unemployed manpower was obviously much cheaper than high-tech lighting equipment)³¹².

A few months later, a complaint about Sunday cycling carnivals at the track was lodged by the Parramatta District Conference Executive (Churches of Christ) in a letter to Lidcombe Council, claiming desecration of the Lord's Day³¹³. But the protesting prelates could not hold back the increasing tide of Sunday entertainment, and the carnivals continued (as they did elsewhere).



Figure 37 Lidcombe Oval today (Cumberland City Council)

In 1947, Lidcombe Oval became the home of Lidcombe-Auburn Cycle Club, which still uses the track in summer for training and racing³¹⁴. Then in 2015, the Neo Cycling Club began to use the track. Neo was originally a junior cyclists' club, but quickly became the largest junior cycling club in Australia. The club opened its membership to adults in 2020, and quickly attracted more cyclists than any other Sydney club.

Today, Lidcombe Oval is one the three remaining outdoor cycle velodromes in Sydney (the other two being Hurstville Oval and the Canterbury Velodrome at Earlwood). A fourth outdoor velodrome at Merrylands is mainly used for training nowadays. From 1967 to 1989 the oval was the home of the Western Suburbs Rugby League team (after which they moved to Campbelltown Oval), and today is the home of the Auburn Warriors Junior Rugby League Football Club³¹⁵.

Trumper Park, Paddington (1936-1937)

Address: Glenmore Road and Hampden Street, Paddington.

The park now known as Trumper Park was created from a reclaimed swamp and opened in June 1897 as Hampden Park (named after Viscount Hampden, Governor of New South Wales, 1895-1899). In addition to a roasted bullock, an attractive program of Victorian-era sports was provided, including a football match in fancy costumes, greasy pole climbing, catching a pig with a greasy tail, maypole dancing and a merry-go-round - certainly no shortage of amusement for the 3,000 assembled locals and dignitaries³¹⁶. The football match resulted in a scoreless draw, with any attacking play presumably hampered by the extravagant costumes³¹⁷.

The park's opening celebration in 1897 was also referred to as the "record reign demonstration", since Queen Victoria had reigned for sixty years from June 1837, while her grandfather and previous (British) record holder George III ruled for just over 59 years³¹⁸. Fourteen acres were gazetted by the Governor for the eponymous Hampden Park³¹⁹ and the Paddington Council soon enclosed it with a picket fence in preparation for cricket matches at the end of 1897³²⁰.

The Paddington second-grade cricket team began to use the park in January 1898³²¹. The very strong first-grade team was the reigning premiership winner: Victor Trumper and M. A. Noble batted at three and four respectively and seemed to make most of their runs. The first grade team used the Sydney Cricket Ground as their home ground³²². Trumper's dominance was on display at an intercolonial match between New South Wales and Tasmania at the SCG. Tasmania was bundled out for 130, and New South Wales eventually made 839, with Trumper scoring 292 not out³²³.



Figure 38 Cycling at Trumper Park, 1936 (City of Sydney Archives)

The first grade team began to use Hampden Park from November 1898 in a match against Glebe³²⁴. A pavilion was erected in January 1903³²⁵. Other sports were also establishing themselves in the

park: baseball was played from April 1903³²⁶, and first grade rugby began the following month³²⁷. Australian Rules football was also played at Hampden Park in June 1903³²⁸.

The park was renamed Trumper Park in February 1931³²⁹, in honour of the local cricketing legend Victor Trumper, who died in 1915 at the age of 37. In a fast-scoring charity match at the oval for the Mayor of Paddington's Relief Fund, the New South Wales All Stars scored at two runs a minute against the local Paddington side, with Bradman hammering 66, Stan McCabe 107 and Alan Kippax 91³³⁰.



Figure 39 Victor Trumper, c1905 (George Beldam)

In 1936, Paddington Council responded to the recent popularity of cycling by constructing a grass cycling track inside the boundary of the oval. The track opened in April with a program of events run by the Eastern Suburbs Amateur Cycling Club, at which Dunc Gray appeared³³¹. As the event was on a Sunday, no admission was charged, but a collection was taken which went towards the Mayor of Paddington's Distress Fund³³².

There were no cycling tracks in the eastern suburbs following the closure of the Sydney Sports Ground track in 1930 (until a new first speedway track was constructed in 1937 and shared by cyclists). So the eastern suburbs track cyclists were starved of a local track to train and race on until the Trumper Park track was built. Weekly carnivals were held on the track through the winter of 1936³³³. Some of the top cyclists were attracted to the track, and in July 1936 Stan Steen defeated Stan Parsons in a challenge match during an Eastern Suburbs Amateur Cycling Club carnival³³⁴.

The Paddington Council caused a stir later that year by announcing that it had decided to construct a more permanent sealed cycling track in place of the current grass track. But the Australian National Football League (Australian Rules) opposed the plan, claiming it would spoil the ground for their use. The Council believed that more cycling groups would use an improved track and it would recoup the money it had lost in recent years³³⁵. The Council pointed out that it received little income from

football and other sports played at the ground, and as the cost of maintaining the park was high, it felt justified in planning to lease the park for cycling³³⁶.

However, Trumper Park belonged to the State Government and was only administered by Paddington Council, and in September 1936 the Minister for Lands refused the Council's request to build a sealed track³³⁷. The last reported cycling carnival held at Trumper Park by the Eastern Suburbs Amateur Cycling Club was in September 1937³³⁸. After this, the local cyclists moved to the Sydney Sports Ground when the motorcycle speedway track opened in 1937³³⁹. And when the new velodrome opened at the Sydney Sports Arena, the eastern suburbs track cyclists moved to this venue from early 1938³⁴⁰.

Trumper Park Oval's main sporting significance has been its long association with Australian Rules football since 1903, which predated the establishment of rugby league by five years. All the Sydney Australian Football League grand finals (except one) between 1952 and 1977 were played at the venue, and some of the greats of the game have played there including Jack Dyer (for Richmond vs New South Wales, 1946) and Keith Miller (for Sydney Naval). Today the University of Technology Sydney Australian Football Club is based at the ground.

The park's role in Sydney's track cycling history was that it briefly filled a gap for a track cycling venue in the eastern suburbs in the mid-1930s, but when the Council was prevented from upgrading from grass to a more durable surface in 1936, and new sealed tracks opened at the Sydney Sports Ground and the Sydney Sports Arena, Trumper Park's days as a cycling venue were numbered.

Wentworth Park, Glebe (1936-1938)

Address: Wentworth Park Road, Glebe.

Wentworth Park began as a creek and swamp which was known by the 1830s as Blackwattle Cove Swamp. Noxious industries flourished, such as abattoirs and boiling-down works. Filling in the swamp began in 1876³⁴¹, and in July 1878 the *Sydney Mail* reported that "the malodorous locality known as the Blackwattle Swamp is about to make a fresh start to life as Wentworth Park"³⁴². By 1882, ovals, lawns, paths, a lake and other facilities were completed, and the park was named after the notable politician William Charles Wentworth³⁴³.

The oval set aside for cricket was very large at 6.25 acres, with a white painted rail all around. Cricket occupied pride of place, with rugby union forced to play on the unfenced expanses of the park until 1900. The lake was removed in 1910 when funds to maintain the park dwindled.

The years from 1890 to 1920 were the heyday for local sporting clubs playing regularly at Wentworth Park. In the acrimonious debate about amateurism versus professionalism, the park was crucial to establishing rugby league in 1908 as it struggled to obtain grounds when most ovals were already dedicated to rugby union in winter. Growing discontent among rugby union players had led to a schism in the sport, resulting in the formation in 1907 of the New South Wales Rugby Football League (NSWRFL), which promised players compensation for time lost through injury and travelling expenses. Until then, the New South Wales Rugby Union raked in large gate takings every season, but the players saw none of it. The issue was essentially a class struggle, as the poorer players were most affected by unpaid time off work, and the conservative press representing the more affluent middle class mounted ferocious attacks on the new league.

Soccer gained the use of the ground in winter from 1920 to 1924 due to their willingness to pay more than the NSWRL. But the league regained the ground in 1925 and used it until the Glebe Rugby League team was eliminated from the competition in 1932. This ended Rugby League's association with Wentworth Park.



Figure 40 Wentworth Park midget car racing, 1935 (Vintage Speedway website)

The local Glebe District Cricket Club contained the Australian Test players Albert “Tibby” Cotter, Warren Bardsley and Bert Oldfield. The club played their home games at Wentworth Park from 1893. A great attraction was always the visit of the Paddington team to Wentworth Park, when spectators would flock to see memorable encounters between Paddington’s star batsman Victor Trumper and the blistering pace of Tibby Cotter. The Glebe District Cricket Club played its last game at Wentworth Park in the 1922-23 season, after which it moved to a new home at Jubilee Oval³⁴⁴.

In August 1926, the trustees of Wentworth Park requested Minister for Lands, Peter Loughlin, to establish a motor speedway inside the oval³⁴⁵. But the Minister refused the request, apparently because part of the playground would have to be acquired to form the speedway, and there was an acute shortage of local parks and children’s facilities at the time³⁴⁶. But by April 1928, Messrs Hollis and Wood were constructing a cinder track for motorcycle and car racing, which was intended to replace the track at the Royal Agricultural Society Ground³⁴⁷. Thomas Hollis had been granted a lease to conduct speedway racing together with other novelty events until 1932³⁴⁸.

When the original motorcycle racing lease ended in 1932, the National Coursing Association was keen to secure an elusive greyhound racing licence to operate at Wentworth Park³⁴⁹. Then in August 1933, the Australian Greyhound Club applied for a non-proprietary licence at Wentworth Park³⁵⁰. But a licence for the dogs was not granted at the time, and in August 1933, the Trustees of Wentworth Park notified the New South Wales League of Wheelmen that a well-banked bicycle track would be constructed, to be ready for the next track season³⁵¹. However, the cyclists did not get a dedicated track, the motorcycle racing continued³⁵² and midget car racing commenced in October 1935³⁵³.

Bicycle racing eventually commenced on the speedway track at Wentworth Park in February 1936, when the New South Wales Cyclists’ Union gave permission for the Public Service Amateur Cycling Club to race at Wentworth Park on Sunday evenings³⁵⁴. Top riders were soon competing in amateur carnivals there, including the Empire Games representative Horrie Pethybridge³⁵⁵.

In July 1936, the breakaway Professional Cyclists' Association held a carnival in front of a record crowd at Wentworth Park. A novel event was a tug of war between ten cyclists and ten axemen (the skinny cyclists defeated the burly axe-wielders)³⁵⁶. The next month, a combined wood-chopping and cycling carnival was held. It was advertised that two star cyclists (Jack Fitzgerald and Keith Oliver) would attempt to cover half a mile before two leading axemen (Mannie McCarthy and Leo Appo) could cut through two 12" logs³⁵⁷.

By January 1937, the split between professional cyclists was healed when the New South Wales League of Wheelmen conducted open cycling carnivals at Wentworth Park. In the multi-faceted events in vogue at the time, professional foot races and vaudeville supplemented the night's entertainment³⁵⁸. The next month, a fifty-mile teams' cycling race was conducted, won by Hubert Opperman and Len Rogers³⁵⁹.

By mid-1937 Wentworth Park was in a bad state of disrepair, and the Sydney Town Clerk said it would take a lot of money to beautify it³⁶⁰. Despite this, cycling continued on the cinder track with carnivals run by the Wentworth Park Cycle Club in front of 15,000 spectators³⁶¹. The last reported bicycle event was in March 1938 when the League of Wheelmen held a charity carnival³⁶².

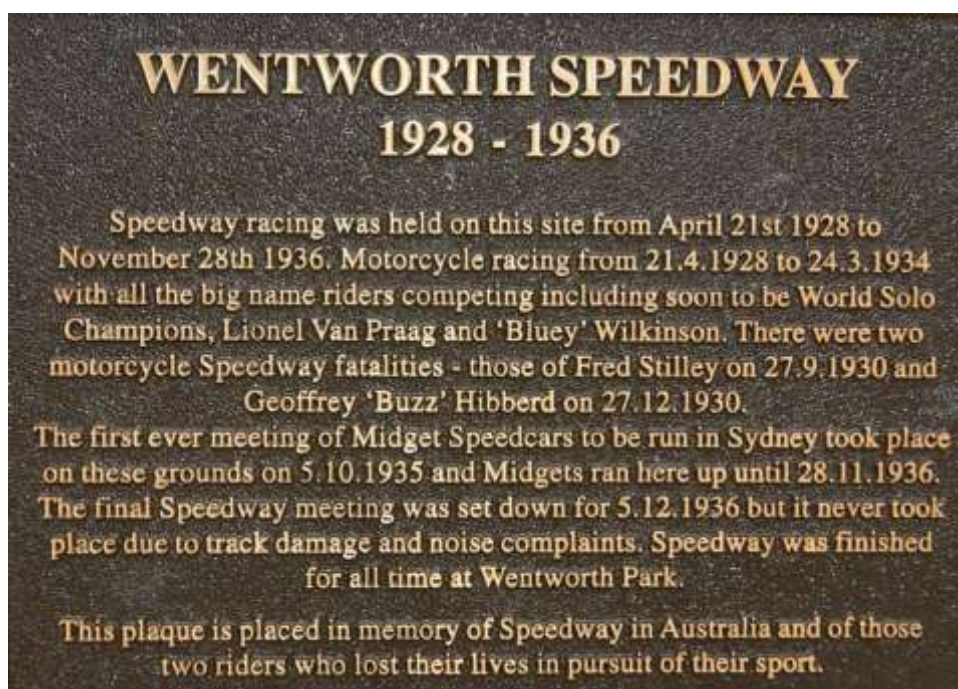


Figure 41 Wentworth Park Speedway plaque

In July 1938, Chief Secretary George Gollan finally issued a greyhound racing licence for a syndicate based at Wentworth Park³⁶³, and in 1939 the Wentworth Park trustees granted the National Coursing Association (NCA) a lease of the central area of the park. The former motorcycling track was converted for greyhound racing, and totalisator betting facilities were installed. The opening meeting was in October 1939, when 24,000 attended, a record for a greyhound meeting in the Southern Hemisphere³⁶⁴.

But not long afterwards, Wentworth Park was commandeered by the American military as an army camp while the remainder of the park was taken over for wool stores. Greyhound racing continued at Harold Park during World War II with the NCA sharing the greyhound meetings with the New

South Wales Trotting Club (the owners of Harold Park). The wartime buildings were dismantled in the 1950s and the park was returned to recreational use³⁶⁵. Greyhound racing is still conducted at Wentworth Park.

Wentworth Park was only briefly used for bicycle racing in the 1930s, but it was popular enough to have its own cycling club and for the breakaway Professional Cyclists' Association to make use of it during their short-lived separation from the League of Wheelmen. But the cinder track was designed for speedway racing, and only lasted as long as the cars and motorbikes were racing there. The conversion for greyhound racing in 1939 with its soft flat track and associated tin hare machinery meant the end of cycling at Wentworth Park.

Sydney Sports Arena, Surry Hills (1937-1948)

Address: 535-553 Riley Street, Surry Hills.

Goodlet and Smith Pottery

Goodlet and Smith Ltd began to advertise its pottery in Riley Street (to the north of Goodlet Street) in January 1866³⁶⁶. They were soon producing drain pipes, bends, junctions³⁶⁷, chimney pots, fire bricks and garden tiles³⁶⁸. Apart from Riley Street, the company manufactured a wide range of home building materials from other sites: 483 George Street near Bathurst Street (the head office), a Saw and Moulding Works in Erskine Street and at 7 Parramatta Road near the Railway Bridge³⁶⁹.



Figure 42 Goodlet & Smith Pottery, 1871 (State Library of NSW)

In 1869, John Goodlet travelled to England to purchase new equipment. He was entrepreneurial in his use of new technology, new processes, and the development of new products. The company had a reputation for producing high quality produce. After this equipment upgrade, the production of machine-pressed bricks commenced in 1872³⁷⁰. By 1875, the Riley Street site could not cope with the increased demand for bricks, so a brickmaking factory was opened in Waterloo³⁷¹, leaving the Surry Hills site to concentrate on pipe and terracotta production.

The company survived the 1890s economic depression, partly by forming a public company with limited liability in 1890 called Goodlet and Smith Pty Ltd. This proved to be a stroke of genius (or Divine Providence, as the devout John Goodlet would call it) that protected his and the company's

assets during the financial crisis and eventually allowed him to expand into the new century. Goodlet managed to avoid laying off the skilled staff who would be needed when the economy recovered by cutting all salaries by 10% in May 1892.

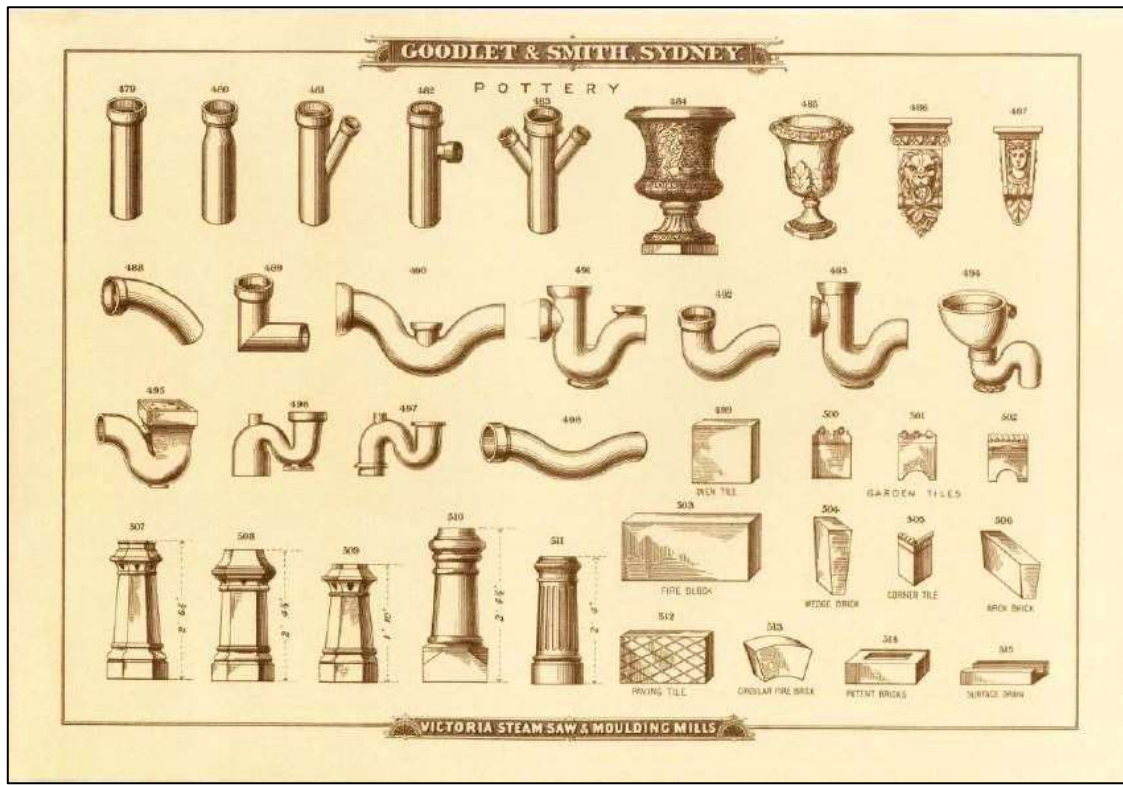


Figure 43 Goodlet & Smith pottery design sheet (Cooper Thesis)

The Sydney Council resumed various portions of land around Riley Street over the years (in 1892, 1904 and 1915), and the Belvoir Street Resumption of 1915 took most of the pottery's land. This left it insufficient space to continue the business, and the pottery was forced to close³⁷². Sale of the building materials from the gradual demolition of the brickworks buildings began in September 1915³⁷³ and in February 1916 the old chimney stack was the last structure to be pulled down. After this, the shale pit was filled in³⁷⁴ and the site was then ready for the next generation of industries.

Corner of Riley and Goodlet Streets

In April 1920, the boilermakers Waugh and Josephson Ltd erected a factory on the Riley and Goodlet Street corner of the former pottery³⁷⁵. This company had previously operated in Goulburn Street on the corner of Brisbane Street, Surry Hills³⁷⁶. Some of the factory's products that were advertised in regional newspapers were the Alfa-Laval cream separator, the New KLG Milking Machines and the Crossley oil engine³⁷⁷. In October 1926, the boiler shop closed and was advertised for sale as factory allotments³⁷⁸.

In 1930, J. C. Williamson Theatres Ltd established a machinery and fittings store in the building on Riley and Goodlet Street (555-571 Riley Street)³⁷⁹. In about 1973, the company moved to 252-284 Riley Street, Surry Hills³⁸⁰. After J. C. Williamson moved out, Yellow Cabs of Australia Pty Ltd occupied the building at 84-106 Goodlet Street near Riley Street³⁸¹.


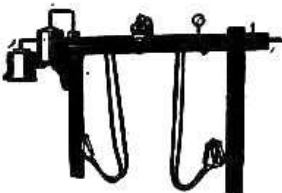
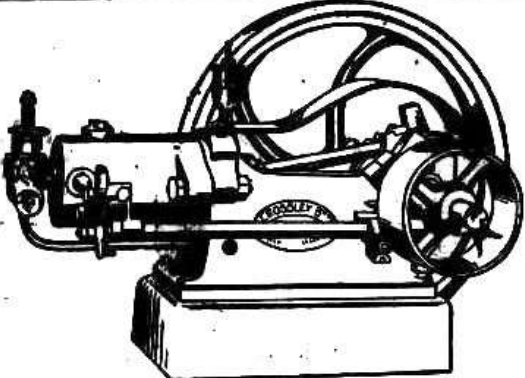
<p>"Alfa-Laval" Cream Separators</p>  <p>SALES EXCEED TWO MILLIONS</p> <p>OPERATED BY HAND STEAM-TURBINE OR ANY KIND OF POWER</p> <p>"ALFA-LAVAL" Separator. Hand Power, High Stand.</p>	<p>L. K. G. Milking Machines</p> <p>With Improved Automatic Milk Deliverer and Releaser</p>  <p>Also supplied with single or Double Buckets</p> <p>Possessing many valuable improvements</p> <p>The most perfect Milking Machine of the Day</p>
 <p>"Crossley" Oil Engine</p> <p>THE IDEAL ENGINE FOR THE MAN ON THE LAND</p> <p>Waugh & Josephson, Engineers and Boilermakers RILEY and GOODLET STREETS, SYDNEY</p>	

Figure 44 Waugh & Josephson products, 1920 (*Mudgee Guardian*, 6 May 1920)

Sydney Sports Arena

Meanwhile, the greater part of the former Goodlet and Smith pottery remained unoccupied. In 1934, Frank Corry discussed with the Sydney Council the purchase a block of land bounded by Campbell, Goulburn, Riley Streets and a proposed street to be used as a sports arena (part of the Brisbane Street Resumption)³⁸². Corry offered the council £45,000 for the site, but in the end the council decided to auction the land³⁸³.

Corry was managing the Canterbury Velodrome at the time, and it is not clear whether he intended to build a new velodrome or simply replace the Canterbury track, as it was becoming apparent that Canterbury was too far from the centre of Sydney for most cyclists, and the Henson Park track had opened in Marrickville, much closer to the city.

In June 1937, the promoter Rufe Naylor announced plans for a proposed Sydney Sports Arena in Surry Hills. It would be a 6.5 laps (to the mile) board cycle track with a 100 yard cinder running path, an eight laps to the mile running track, a cinder tennis court and a boxing ring. The elevated wooden public seating would accommodate 20,000 people, including 8,000 under cover. It was planned to run mixed programmes of foot racing, cycling and other athletic events on two evenings a week

throughout the summer. The big events for the season would probably include a £1,000 six-day cycle race, a Sydney Wheel race and a marathon race³⁸⁴.

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ATHLETICS:

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QUARTER MILE FOOT RACE	£15
ONE MILE WALK	£10

Watch "Referee" for further details

Figure 45 Sydney Sports Arena opening, 1937 (*Referee*, 16 September 1937)

In November 1937, the Canterbury Velodrome was purchased by Sports Arena Ltd, demolished, and most of the boards were transferred to Riley Street to construct a new velodrome there³⁸⁵. The gala opening of the arena was in December 1937³⁸⁶. It was promoted as the Madison Square Garden of Australia³⁸⁷.

Another of the periodic disputes between amateurs and professionals arose soon after the new track was opened, when James Eve, Secretary of the Empire Games Committee, issued an edict that amateur cyclists selected for the Empire Games (in February 1938) must not appear at the Sydney Sports Arena, because the meetings there were professionally controlled. But the New South Wales Cyclists' Union, who looked after the affairs of amateur riders, considered that the Empire Games Committee had no control over who rode where. In the end, Don Blackman was the only cyclist in the Empire Games team who rode at the Sports Arena. He raced brilliantly and did much to publicise the Games events³⁸⁸.

In March 1938, boxing and wrestling were added to the Arena's program³⁸⁹, and in May a wood chopping competition was held³⁹⁰. By the middle of the year, a roof was being erected over the arena, to be completed by the end of November³⁹¹. A major cycling event that was held at the end of

1938 was a six-day race, running from Christmas night (Sunday night) to New Year's Eve (Saturday night). International cyclists such as Charles Rampelberg of France and Gino Bambagiotti of Italy appeared³⁹². Fourteen teams competed in the race³⁹³, which was won by Len Rogers of New South Wales and Joe Parmley of Victoria³⁹⁴.

An unexpected problem for the future of Sunday carnivals at the Sports Arena was that the new roof brought the venue under the provisions of the *Theatres and Public Halls Act*, according to the Chief Secretary's Department in April 1939. This law prevented places of public entertainment from holding events on Sundays or Good Friday if an admission was charged. Additionally, a licence would be required before each meeting could be held³⁹⁵.



Figure 46 Sydney Sports Arena 6-day race, 1939 (*Referee*, 5 January 1939)

The Arena's owners claimed that since the track was not 100% covered but had a large hole in the roof, it didn't qualify as a public hall. The Easter carnival went ahead at the risk of incurring a fine while the ruling was clarified³⁹⁶, but a program of Sunday winter carnivals was cancelled³⁹⁷ and only boxing continued on weekdays³⁹⁸. Another six-day race was held in October 1939, featuring twelve teams from America, France, New Zealand and four Australian States³⁹⁹. The race was won by Joe Buckley and Stan Parsons, covering 2,036 miles, with Len Rogers and Hilton Bloomfield second⁴⁰⁰.

Then in January 1940, Hubert Opperman established a new 24-hour unpaced world record at the Arena, covering 489 miles and 596 yards. During the ride, he established records for 50 miles, 100 miles, 300 miles and 400 miles⁴⁰¹. During the ride, he set out to break one world record, but broke 22 world records and 36 Australian records⁴⁰². Many of these records were not broken for decades.

This was effectively the end of Opperman's cycling career, as he enlisted in the RAAF in August 1940 and on returning to civilian life in 1945 he drifted into retirement from the sport⁴⁰³.

By the end of 1940, many of the sports other than cycling were losing public interest: boxing, athletics, tennis and basketball⁴⁰⁴. Then in August 1941, Reg Swinbourne, Secretary of the New South Wales Cyclists' Union, announced that amateur cyclists wouldn't compete at the Sports Arena during the coming track season. He said that the steeply-banked board track was a bit too difficult for amateurs, who would continue to race at Henson Park, Wiley Park and Hurstville Oval⁴⁰⁵.

By the end of 1941, the promoters were having trouble raising enough money to pay the professional cyclists⁴⁰⁶. Some winners were owed money from the previous carnival and took shares to the value of the money owed to them⁴⁰⁷. Radio station 2UE announced that from February 1942 it would conduct live broadcasts of the Saturday night carnivals. Since greyhound racing was no longer permitted at night time, cycling would provide good evening entertainment for listeners. The station found that due to the wartime brown-out in Sydney at the time, many people stayed home at night and listened to the radio⁴⁰⁸.

Towards the end of World War II, station 2KY was also broadcasting bicycle races from the Sports Arena in Saturday nights⁴⁰⁹. When the war ended, sports venues such as the Sydney Sports Ground were floodlit for night-time racing for the first time in five years, when the Boys' Town Committee staged a varied programme of cycling, trotting and athletics⁴¹⁰. But Coal Commissioner Mr N. R. Mighell issued a warning to public venues that some power restrictions were still in force, and that the country's capacity to ensure supplies of electricity and gas were dependent on compliance with these restrictions for the time being⁴¹¹.

By the end of 1946, the Sports Arena was holding events with a wide variety of entertainment, such as cycling, motor-paced racing, wrestling, boxing and roller speedway skating⁴¹². In December 1946, an endurance roller skating event was conducted, starting at Goulburn at 5:15am and racing to Sydney, finishing with a one mile sprint around the cycling track at the Sydney Sports Arena. Operating in teams of two, each person would skate for a few miles while the other rested in the accompanying cars⁴¹³. The race was won by "Tich" Liprini (the five mile title holder) and Olga Hughes (Australian women's skating champion), who arrived at 8:30 pm⁴¹⁴.

Larke Hoskins and Co Ltd

Bicycle racing continued at the Sports Arena until July 1948, when it was reported that a newly-formed syndicate had bought the track and was looking for somewhere suitable to re-erect it⁴¹⁵. The site was sold for £30,000 to Larke Hoskins and Co Ltd, to be converted into a motor car assembly plant⁴¹⁶. The company was in need of additional premises to accommodate the increased volume of motor vehicles arriving from Britain after the Australian Government requested the British Government to supply more vehicles to help solve the post-war vehicle shortage⁴¹⁷.

Larke Hoskins used the site for car and truck assembly until the 1970s⁴¹⁸. After this, the site was unused until a New South Wales Housing Commission apartment block known as The Pottery was constructed at 31 Belvoir Street. These apartments provide permanent low-cost rental accommodation for low income earners, pensioners and the disabled⁴¹⁹.

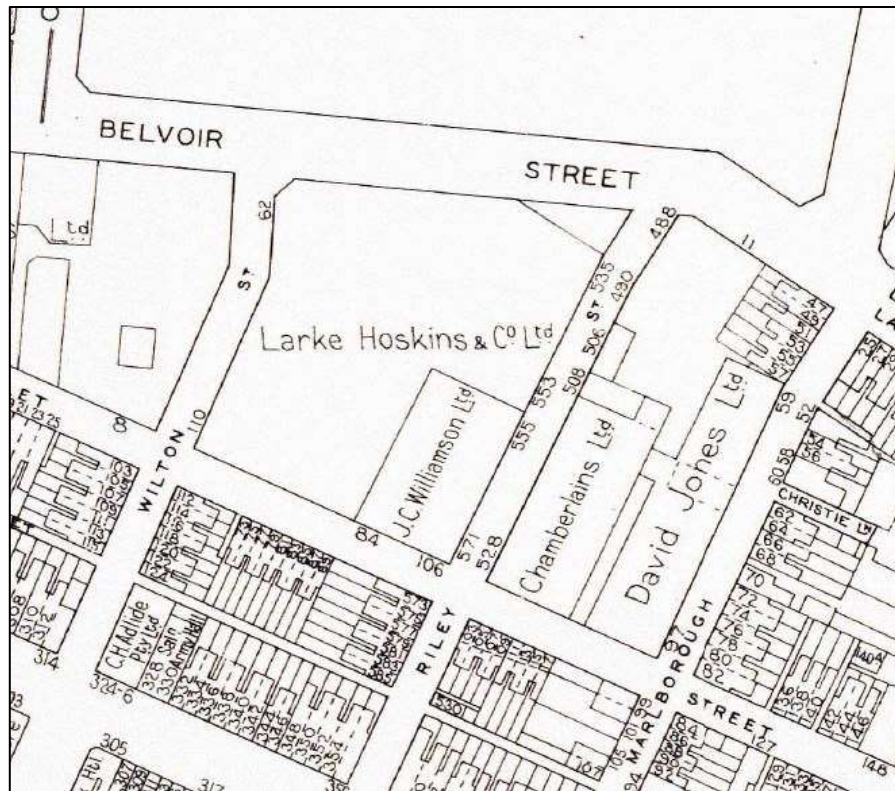


Figure 47 Larke Hoskin site, 1972 (City of Sydney Archives)

The centrally-located Sydney Sports Arena seemed to be a logical replacement for the more distant Canterbury Velodrome in 1937, and was the only board track in Sydney until its closure in 1948. But it was considered a bit too steep for amateurs, who moved to other tracks: Henson Park, Wiley Park, Hurstville Oval, Sydney Sports Ground and Pratten Park (until 1941). This left the professionals, who expected to be paid well for their efforts, but money was tight after World War II. Probably the main reason for the decline in bicycle use from the late 1940s was the rise in the affordability of motor cars. Where people cycled before, after the War they began to drive everywhere.

Merrylands Oval (1940 – present)

Address: Merrylands Road and Burnett Street, Merrylands

In March 1926, the Prospect and Sherwood Council purchased 23 acres of land fronting Burnett Street and Major Road for park purposes. It planned to construct two cricket grounds, two football fields, tennis courts and a bowling green⁴²⁰. Football was being played in the new Merrylands Park in September⁴²¹. In 1927, the council was renamed to the Municipality of Holroyd⁴²² (present-day Cumberland City Council includes Merrylands and Holroyd).

A concrete cycling track was constructed around the perimeter of the main oval in 1940⁴²³, with lighting for night riding⁴²⁴. The opening event was a gala sports carnival held on the King's Birthday holiday on 17 June and featured the champion cyclist Len Rogers⁴²⁵. The Central Cumberland Cycling Club was using the track for racing by 1941⁴²⁶, and in December 1944, the Lidcombe Amateur Cycle Club requested permission from the Holroyd Council to conduct races on Saturday afternoons⁴²⁷.



Figure 48 Merrylands Oval (Holroyd Council)

By 1966, the cycling track had fallen into disrepair, and the Parramatta City Amateur Cycling Club offered to donate \$1,000 toward the cost of resurfacing the track, and more money towards the lighting of the track⁴²⁸. This was completed by the Council the following year, with improvements including lighting, resealing of the track and seating changes. The club decided to change its name to the Parramatta-Holroyd Amateur Cycling Club to acknowledge its new association with the Holroyd Council⁴²⁹.

In February 1968, the world champion professional cyclist Sid Patterson told the Holroyd Mayor that it was one of the best tracks he had ridden on⁴³⁰. Despite this, the Merrylands Oval cycle track was only used for local club racing: it was reported in 1976 that Wiley Park was the only track in Sydney that was suitable for State and national championships⁴³¹. The Merrylands Oval track is still in use today, and is utilised by the Parramatta Cycling Club for summer track racing and all year training. But the racing is mostly for juniors⁴³².

Brad McGee was a notable member of the Parramatta Cycling Club. He was an Olympic Games (2004) and Commonwealth Games (1994, 1998 and 2002) champion, and wore the leader's jersey in all three European Grand Tours (Tour de France, Giro d'Italia and the Vuelta de Espana).

Cycling manufacturer

Tom Wallace Cycles, Brisbane (1928-present)

Address: Wilson Street Lutwyche, then 496 Lutwyche Road, Lutwyche, Brisbane.

Thomas Samuel Wallace (1902-1981) was born in Gympie Queensland, and developed early cycling strength by delivering meat orders around the hilly town. Local cycling club members noticed his ability, and he began to win races from the age of eight. He moved to Brisbane where his

competitive cycling years as a senior were 1922 to 1933. At 25, he was Australian track champion⁴³³ and won more State track and road titles than any other amateur in the country.

In 1928 he established Tom Wallace Cycles in his home garage in Wilson Street Lutwyche, offering bicycle repairs and frame building, with the Tom Wallace Special as his signature model. When business expanded, he moved to busy Lutwyche Road in the 1940s, and first advertised from the new shop in February 1944⁴³⁴. He became adept at gaining free advertising, and while travelling around south-east Queensland he painted “Tom Wallace Cycles” in white paint on any stray boulder, tree or fence. His supporters also took up the practice.



Figure 49 Tom Wallace Cycles, 2009 (Google maps)

After retiring from racing, Wallace concentrated on growing his business, while sponsoring races and helping new riders. He was good at promotional stunts, such as setting up two stationary bikes outside Brisbane Town Hall for riders to compete with each other beside a huge clock emblazoned with his business name advertising upcoming races. Apart from being a notable cyclist, businessman and publicist, Tom Wallace was a popular identity in Brisbane until his death in 1981⁴³⁵. From 2019, the bike shop has been known as Giant Lutwyche⁴³⁶.

Cyclists

Cecil Walker (professional 1920 to 1935)

Cecil Walker (1898-1968) was born William Joseph Cecil Walker in Marrickville, Sydney. He started out as a cyclist by delivering goods from his father's greengrocer's shop to local customers on his bike and soon joined the Marrickville Cycling Club⁴³⁷. He gradually found success, and while he was expected to compete in the 1920 Paris Olympics⁴³⁸, he turned professional instead and headed for the United States that year⁴³⁹.



Figure 50 Cecil Walker (Cycle Collection)

The timing was good for him, as America was the home of track racing at the time with the largest following and prizemoney in the world, and sports and travel were getting back to normal after World War I. Older cyclists like Frank Corry, Reg McNamara and Bob Spears had been living and racing in America during the war, and Cecil Walker would have followed the exciting accounts of their exploits in the newspapers (see the section on Frank Corry's career), making him keen to join them.

He admitted in a 1939 interview that, while he really wanted to get a break in cycle racing in America, the main reason he decided to go there was to escape a life of working in his father's grocery store in Marrickville. He thought that if he eventually went back home to weighing sugar and butter, at least he had made a valiant attempt to escape it!⁴⁴⁰

Like other top level professional cyclists, he raced for several years in America and Europe in the northern summer season, returning to Australia for the southern summer. He teamed up with Frank Corry to win a six-day race at the Sydney Sports Ground in January 1924⁴⁴¹. He had matured as a rider by this time, and won the all-round title in America for the 1924 season and finished second in the national sprint championship⁴⁴². By 1930, he had won the American all-round title six times in succession. This title requires outstanding speed and stamina and was judged over 24 races in all kinds of events, from 1/6 mile to five miles, including scratch, handicap and teams events. Walker and his compatriot Harris Horder were the only non-Americans to win the title up to 1930⁴⁴³. He eventually won the all-round title a further three times before the end of his American career⁴⁴⁴.



Figure 51 Cecil Walker Cycles, Melbourne (Cecil Walker website)

He also won the one-mile sprint championship of America from 1930 to 1932⁴⁴⁵. While in America, he married a figure skater he had met at Madison Square Garden. On returning to Melbourne, he opened a bike shop, which he ran until his death in 1968⁴⁴⁶. The shop still operates today and occupies a prominent position in Elizabeth Street in the Melbourne CBD.

Hubert Opperman (professional 1922-1940)

Sir Hubert Ferdinand Opperman (1904-1996) was born in Rochester, Victoria. His father was a miner and a successful cyclist. Hubert started bicycle racing in Melbourne at age 15, and in 1921 he met Bruce Small, owner of Malvern Star Cycles, who was building a stable of talented young riders to race and promote his bikes. Small became his coach, mentor and father-figure.

Being 5'7" and 65kg, he was not strong enough to be a great sprinter, but his light physique gave him an advantage over steep terrain. After winning the 1922 Launceston to Hobart race, he quickly became one of the most recognised and respected sportsmen in the country. In 1928, he went to France as the captain of the Australian Tour de France team, where he finished in 18th place. A few months later, he set a world record for 1000 km in France. He was so moved by the adulation he received in France that he took to wearing a beret, and from then on was rarely seen without one.



Figure 52 Hubert Opperman, 1922 (Museums Victoria)

In 1931, he raced in the Tour de France for the second time, overcoming dysentery and crashes to finish a creditable twelfth. Later that year he became the world's greatest endurance cyclist by winning the Paris-Brest-Paris race (1,162 km) in just over 49 hours, breaking all previous records. He also mastered the dangerous sport of motor-paced cycling in which a cyclist raced around velodrome in the slipstream of a powerful motorbike. In 1930 he broke the motor-paced world record for 100 miles in 100 minutes in Melbourne.

He dedicated himself in the 1930s to setting records in long solo rides in Australia, culminating in 1937 by riding 4,300km from Fremantle to Sydney in just over 13 days. He was especially adept at riding for 24 hours without rest, holding records in every cycling discipline. In his last record-breaking ride in 1940, he set more than 100 records in a 24-hour solo cycling marathon at the Sydney Sports Arena velodrome⁴⁴⁷.



Figure 53 Opperman's 24-hour ride, 1940 (*Australian Geographic*, 24 May 2016)

His fierce competitiveness was softened by a gregarious and down-to-earth manner which endeared him to sports reporters and fans alike. From the early 1930s, Opperman was placed on the same exalted level as Don Bradman, Sir Charles Kingsford Smith and Phar Lap. Proving that there is life after professional sport, in 1949 he narrowly won the seat of Corio for the Liberal Party in the Federal election that heralded the Menzies era. He became the Minister for Shipping and Transport in 1960, overseeing the introduction of uniform traffic laws, improved vehicle safety standards and advocating for the compulsory installation of seat belts.

He then became Immigration Minister in 1963, bringing in changes to citizenship requirements and permanent residence status. In 1966, Harold Holt appointed him High Commissioner to Malta, where he proved himself an able and adept diplomat. A medal in his name, the Oppy Medal, is awarded annually to the top cyclist of the year. Cadel Evans has won it four times and Anna Meares twice⁴⁴⁸.

Dunc Gray (amateur career 1925-1942)

Edgar Laurence "Dunc" Gray (1906-1996) was born near Goulburn. After attending Goulburn High School, he studied carpentry and joinery at the Goulburn Trades School and worked as a carpenter. He joined the Goulburn Amateur Cycling Club and gradually began winning club events. He adopted

his schoolboy nickname of “Dunc” as his cycling name to avoid confusion with his brother Ellis on event programs (at a time when it was common to use the initials and surname only).



Figure 54 Dunc Gray, 1930s (National Museum of Australia)

He won his first State title in 1925. He was then selected for the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics after the Goulburn public raised the cost of his fare. He won Australis’s first Olympic cycling medal by finishing third in the 1000 metre time trial. Despite speculation that he might turn professional, he remained an amateur, unlike his contemporaries who routinely turned professional after early success to cash in on the lucrative American and European circuits. In the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, he won the 1000 metre time trial, Australia’s first Olympic cycling gold medal.

Unable to find adequate employment in Goulburn during the 1930s Depression, he moved to Sydney in 1932 to work for Bennett and Wood Ltd, selling Speedwell bicycles. The company kept him on half-pay when he competed in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and he did business for them while overseas. He became Australia’s dominant amateur cyclist, winning twenty national titles from 1928 to 1939, in events from the sprint and time trial up to 10 miles. He also won the 1000 metre time trial at the 1934 Empire Games in Manchester and the 1000 metre sprint at the 1938 Empire Games in Sydney.

Dunc Gray retired from cycling in 1942. A highly popular figure in Australian cycling, he was described as “modest in victory, generous in defeat and scrupulously fair in his races and in life”⁴⁴⁹. In his last years, he devoted his time and energy to supporting the Olympic movement, including Melbourne’s bid for the 1996 Games and the Sydney’s successful 2000 Games bid⁴⁵⁰. The covered board cycling track built in Sydney for the 2000 Olympic Games is named the Dunc Gray Velodrome.

Cycling promoter

Bruce Small (owner of Malvern Star cycles 1920-1958)

Sir Andrew Bruce Small (1895-1980) was a bicycle manufacturer, land developer and politician who was born in Sydney. His parents were ardent members of the Salvation Army, and at the age of six Bruce was playing tenor horn in their bands, then played euphonium in the Territorial Staff Band in Victoria for 22 years. The family was always on the move, and Bruce attended 14 schools before ending his formal education at 13. He worked in Melbourne as a printer's devil, then operated a milk run and became a commercial traveller.

By 1920, Bruce Small had saved enough money to buy Malvern Star Cycles from Tom Finnigan. In 1921 he hired a young telegram messenger named Hubert Opperman, who brought fame to Malvern Star with his national and international feats as a racing cyclist. The business blossomed and he formed the company Bruce Small Pty Ltd in 1926. Small, Opperman and a promotional team toured the world six times and successfully marketed his bicycles abroad. During World War II his factories produced bicycles both for the armed forces and civilians, when petrol rationing caused demand to surge.



Figure 55 Bruce Small (*Gold Coast Bulletin*, 23 April 2015)

By 1958 he was a millionaire. He sold Malvern Star and moved to the Gold Coast, where he purchased, reclaimed and developed 500 acres of low-lying dairy land and swamps as Paradise City. Flamboyant and extroverted, he fell afoul of the local Council by calling for an overall town plan and co-operation between developers and the different levels of government.

Under the slogan "Think Big, Vote Small" Bruce Small was elected mayor of the City of the Gold Coast in 1967. After a season of cyclonic storms battered the region that year, he made efforts to protect the vulnerable Gold Coast beaches with permanent rock walls. Other flamboyant gestures, such as the gold bikini-clad "meter maids", dance marathons and circus parades laid the foundation for the Gold Coast as an international tourist destination. In 1972 at the age of 76 he won a seat in the Legislative Assembly, retaining it until 1977⁴⁵¹.

Post-WWII – the decline of cycle manufacturing

Post-war velodromes

Camperdown Velodrome (1971-1992)

Address: O’Dea Reserve, Ross Street, Camperdown.

Fowler’s Pottery

Enoch Fowler (1807-1879) migrated to Sydney from County Tyrone in Ireland, where several generations of the Fowler family worked in the pottery trade. In 1837, he leased land on Parramatta Street (now Broadway) between Wattle and Harris Streets⁴⁵² and established a small pottery kiln, where he produced a range of items. In 1844, the landowners auctioned the site⁴⁵³ and Fowler purchased an allotment of 208 x 100 feet. He continued making pottery until expanding to a larger site in Bay Street, Glebe, where ginger beer bottles and kitchenware were manufactured⁴⁵⁴.



Figure 56 Fowler's Pottery, 1865 (*Illustrated Sydney News*, 16 October 1865)

In 1854, Fowler was advertising ginger beer bottles for sale at both the Parramatta Street and Glebe sites⁴⁵⁵. Meanwhile, in the 1850s he was planning another expansion by acquiring five acres of land on Parramatta Road at Camperdown⁴⁵⁶. He first advertised the ever-popular ginger beer bottles from the Camperdown pottery in October 1856⁴⁵⁷.



Figure 57 Camperdown, 1886 (Higginbotham Robinson maps)

By 1865, the firm employed 25 staff to mass-produce salt-glazed drainpipes, plain bricks, fire bricks, tiles, chimney pots and all types of household pottery⁴⁵⁸. Enoch Fowler died in his home at the pottery in 1879 and his eldest son Robert took over the company⁴⁵⁹. The firm eventually outgrew the Camperdown site and moved to a 17-acre site in Fitzroy Street Marrickville in 1919. Pottery production ceased in Marrickville in 1975, and the entire site was demolished in 1982⁴⁶⁰.

O'Dea Reserve and a Mayor's dream

The historic maps and documents on Fowler's Pottery show that the triangular-shaped site was bounded by Parramatta Road, Denison Street and Cardigan Lane, with an irregular southern block bounded by Derry Street, Ross Street and Salisbury Lane. The pottery buildings were at the Parramatta Road end, and the portion running south to Derby Street was the large yard where the excavated clay and the finished products were stored. The clay pit was in the remainder of the site to the south of Derby Street (which now forms O'Dea Reserve).

In April 1920, the motor car importers Garratts Ltd purchased the Fowler's Pottery buildings, with floor space of 3.5 acres and constructed a machine shop, a repair shop and a car body building shop. A showroom was ready by June to import the latest FIAT automobiles⁴⁶¹. Then in February 1926 the Sydney City Council announced an ambitious plan to purchase the rest of the pottery site (called the pottery yard) and convert it into sports grounds, swimming baths, tennis courts and a children's playground. Alderman (later Mayor) Ernest O'Dea was a strong advocate of this scheme⁴⁶².

In May 1927, the old pottery site was rumoured to be one of the locations being investigated by the cyclist Frank Corry to build Sydney's first board velodrome. Corry reported that he had been authorised by a wealthy syndicate to find a suitable location, and that the Camperdown site seemed to be a good possibility and was very conveniently located⁴⁶³. In the end, he purchased part of the more distant Canterbury Sports Ground and constructed a velodrome there at the end of 1928.

Sydney City Council decided to purchase ten acres of the pottery site in October 1927 at an estimated cost of estimated cost of £24,000 and transform it into a sports area and a section for workers' homes⁴⁶⁴. But this did not materialise at the time, and in May 1929 the large retail company Anthony Hordern and Sons Ltd announced that they would utilise the ten-acre site to transfer stables, a garage and a marble yard and later other factories from their other sites⁴⁶⁵.

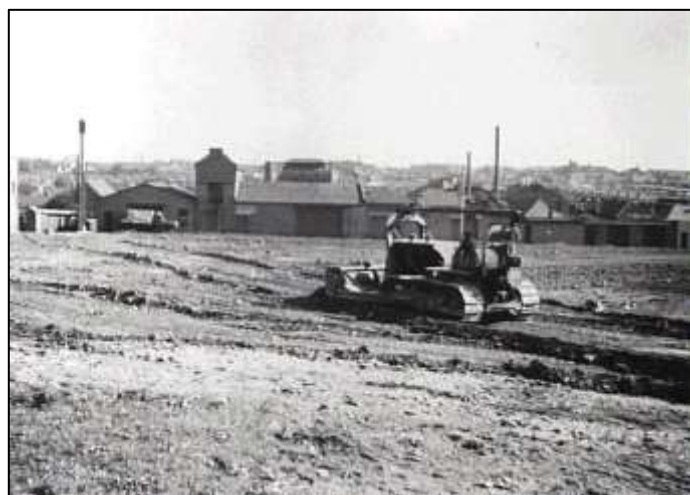


Figure 58 Construction of O'Dea Reserve, 1950 (City of Sydney Archives)

The old clay pit in the southern end of the old pottery was eventually acquired by the Sydney City Council in 1949⁴⁶⁶ and work commenced on filling in and developing the land as a recreation area⁴⁶⁷. Following the closure of the pottery in 1919, the disused clay pit had been used as a local rubbish tip, which meant it was probably contaminated by an unknown number of noxious chemicals. But the site was not remediated at the time, and the rubbish was simply covered over.

The new reserve was opened in October 1952 by then Lord Mayor Ernest O'Dea. At the council's request it was named after him in recognition of his efforts to create it. At the opening ceremony, the Mayor said that it was the realisation of a 28-year old ambition of his to convert the clay pit (where he used to play as a child) into a playing reserve. The former pit was turned into two women's vigoro pitches surrounded by terraced lawns. It would be used by women at the weekends and children on weekdays. 25 uniformed vigoro teams attended the opening⁴⁶⁸.

In July 1968, the management of O'Dea Reserve was transferred from Sydney City Council to Marrickville Council when parts of Camperdown and Newtown were added to the Marrickville municipality⁴⁶⁹.

DHCC builds a velodrome

When the popular Henson Park cycling track in Marrickville was removed in the late 1960s due to pressure from the Newtown Rugby League Club, Marrickville Council assisted the Dulwich Hill Cycling Club (DHCC) to obtain a lease on O'Dea Reserve in 1969. Then, mostly with labour provided by Dulwich Hill club members, a 250-metre Olympic-standard concrete velodrome was completed in 1971⁴⁷⁰.



Figure 59 Camperdown Velodrome opening, 1971 (Brian Townsley)

Many of the top cyclists raced on the track, and the Sydney 1000, which began in 1903 at the Sydney Cricket Ground with £1,000 prize money (thus the name of the event), was held at the Camperdown Velodrome from 1976 to 1983⁴⁷¹. The velodrome was used until 1992, after which it fell into disuse. The Dulwich Hill Cycling Club obtained the use of the new Canterbury velodrome at Earlwood, where it resides today. The Camperdown velodrome was eventually demolished in 2000 after it was found that toxic landfill was starting to leak from the site⁴⁷². After remediation work by the Marrickville Council (now called the Inner West Council), O'Dea Reserve is once more a public recreation area.



Figure 60 Camperdown Velodrome, 1980s (Mirror Sydney website)

Heffron Park, Maroubra (1972-present)

Address: 417-439 Bunnerong Road, Maroubra.

Before European settlement, the landscape around Heffron Park was covered in banksia scrub with undulating sand dunes around a marshland that was part of the Botany Watershed. In April 1901, Minister for Works Edward O'Sullivan approved the development of the land into a Labour Depot and Refuge⁴⁷³. The area developed for this use was bounded by Bunnerong Road, Maroubra Road (formerly Maroubra Bay Road), Anzac Parade and Beauchamp Road, with the main buildings constructed on the southern side of Maroubra Road and a farm extending south to Beauchamp Road⁴⁷⁴. The depot was designed for up to a hundred long-term unemployed men who would perform some work in return for food and shelter. The main work was the cultivation of vegetables.

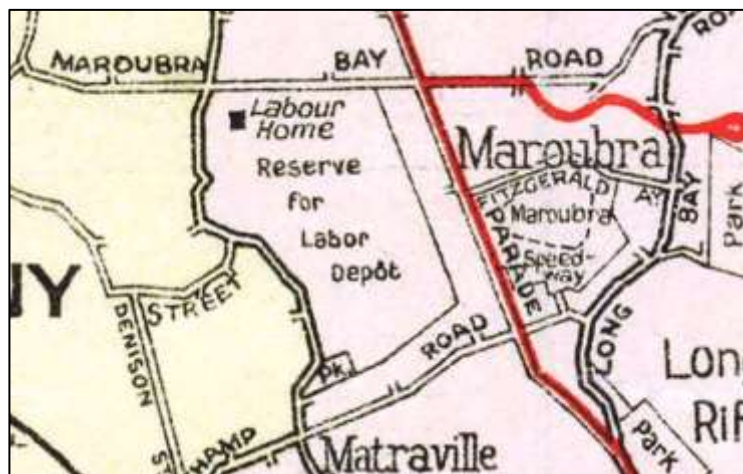


Figure 61 Labour Depot, c1917 (Department of Lands map)

In addition, it was available as a residence for elderly men classed as third-class labourers who could perform light work assigned to them⁴⁷⁵. By May 1902, despite the sandy soil, the centre was reportedly yielding excellent crops with manure from stables and regular watering. Gaols and other State institutions were being supplied with vegetables, and the Depot was expected to be self-supporting before long⁴⁷⁶.

The Depot was initially a success while unemployment was still very high after the 1890s economic depression, but by 1924 it had fallen into a state of decay, and ran at a loss of £300 the year before. It was thought that it was not serving the purpose of helping many men climb back onto the path to permanent work. The Government decided to sell about 200 acres of the farm to provide good building land close to the city. Any useful equipment at the farm was transferred to the Labour Farm at Pitt Town⁴⁷⁷.

The Daily Telegraph commented on the demise of the Labour Farm, suggesting that Government institutions were gradually disappearing and this was the latest to receive the axe. In its early days, the scheme expanded until about 100 men were employed, with takings of £18,000 in one year. Modern equipment was installed, and up to 50 cattle and 1,000 pigs were kept. But by 1924, only 26 men remained. It was doubtful that the farm had the expected reforming effect: over 90% of cases were from drunkenness, and after a man recovered and left, he returned at a later date from the same cause⁴⁷⁸.

The first subdivision of the area by the Department of Lands commenced in 1925 after filling and levelling was completed and access roads were constructed. About 80 allotments were offered for sale in the first auction⁴⁷⁹. The sixth subdivision was auctioned in April 1930⁴⁸⁰, which was the last reported subdivision. A newspaper article in 1939 reported that the old Bunnerong Farm had been practically built out by then⁴⁸¹. However, a 1943 aerial photograph of the area shows that most of the building development was to the north of Fitzgerald Street (which was extended through the site during the subdivisions) and along Anzac Parade and Beauchamp Road, leaving most of present-day Heffron Park still undeveloped⁴⁸².

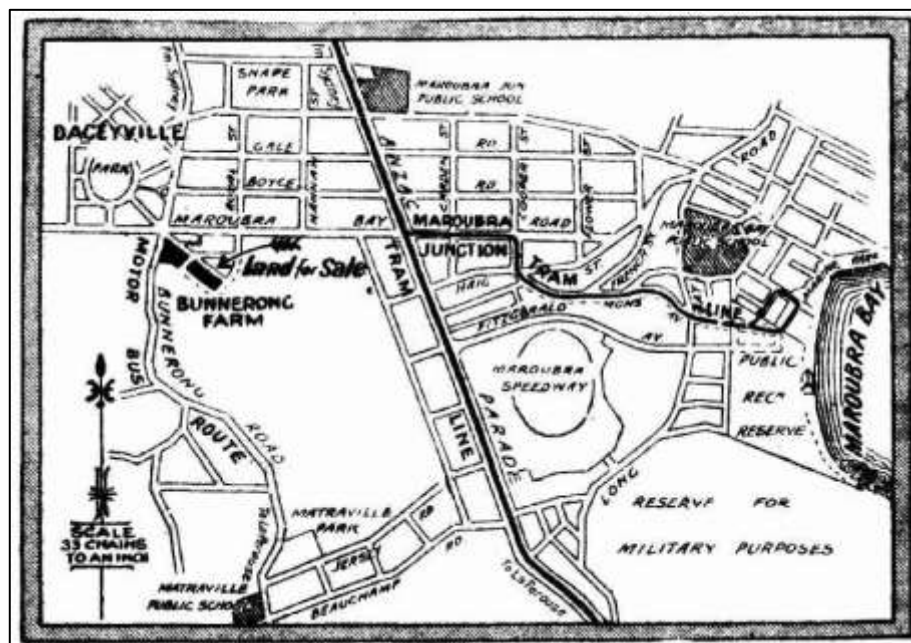


Figure 62 Labour Farm 2nd subdivision, 1928 (*Daily Telegraph*, 4 January 1928)

In 1945, the Bunnerong Naval Stores were constructed in the undeveloped part of the former Labour Farm. These were an extension of large stores already erected at Randwick for the American and Australian Navies. Approval to construct the Bunnerong stores was given in March 1945 and five large stores a month were put up until August. To connect the buildings, three miles of concrete

road were installed. The roads were designed for intensive use by 1,000 heavy vehicles a day. Other statistics illustrate the huge scale of this enterprise: over two miles of fencing, 3,500,000 super feet of timber, 47 acres of asbestos cement roofing, 11 acres of asbestos cement wall sheeting, eight miles of reinforced concrete drains and six miles of water mains⁴⁸³.

After World War II ended, the stores buildings were converted for use as the Bunnerong migrant hostel in 1950⁴⁸⁴, officially known as the Bunnerong British Migrants' Hostel⁴⁸⁵. The hostel was not mentioned in the press after 1959⁴⁸⁶, but the National Library of Australia has a photo taken at the hostel in 1963⁴⁸⁷, and the Moran Aged Care website records a migrant family staying in the hostel in 1966⁴⁸⁸.



Figure 63 Bunnerong Migrant Hostel, 1960s (Migrant Web website)

In 1972, most of the Naval stores buildings were demolished and Heffron Park was created, with some of the military roads utilised to form a 4.2 km concrete criterium bicycle track. The park was named after Robert Heffron (1890-1978), former local Member of Parliament (1930-1968) and New South Wales Premier (1959-1964). The park now contains many sporting facilities: the Des Renford Leisure Centre (a swimming pool and fitness centre), netball courts, playground, synthetic soccer field, pedal park, sports fields and a tennis centre⁴⁸⁹.



Figure 64 Heffron Park criterium course (B grade Cyclist website)

The Randwick Cycling Club, founded in 1903, conducts races on the criterium track most Saturdays⁴⁹⁰. The B Grade Cyclist website summarises the track as “always windy with a challenging surface and is a complete test of criterium skills”. Cyclists who have experienced the track both on and after coming off the bike report that the concrete surface is “a cross between goat track and low-grit sandpaper, with numerous bumps and grooves”⁴⁹¹.

Easts Cycling Club conducts Tuesday night handicap racing at Heffron Park during the daylight-saving months of October to March⁴⁹². Other groups to use the track are the Sydney University Velo Club and Waratah Masters Cycle Club, which run graded scratch races on Sunday mornings about once a month⁴⁹³.



Figure 65 Racing at Heffron Park (B Grade Cyclist website)

Canterbury Velodrome, Earlwood (1982-present)

Address: Bayview Avenue, Earlwood.

The Wiley Park Velodrome was constructed by Canterbury Council in 1935 as a cinder track. In 1937, it was resurfaced with bitumen and lights were installed. The track was demolished in about 1979 when Canterbury and King Georges Roads were widened.



Figure 66 Canterbury Earlwood Velodrome (Saving Our Trees website)

Canterbury Council constructed a replacement velodrome in Waterworth Park, Earlwood, which was opened in October 1982 with a carnival run by the Bankstown Cycling Club⁴⁹⁴. The velodrome is an Olympic-standard outdoor concrete track with a circumference of 333 metres. It is a sister track to the Chandler Velodrome in Brisbane, which was built for the 1982 Commonwealth Games⁴⁹⁵.

The historic Sydney 1000 wheel race returned to Canterbury in October 2006 (it is not known when it was there previously) after Canterbury Council repaired the track. Cycling promoter Phil Bates said that one side of the track had been continually sinking as it was built on a swamp, and the bank was recently underpinned to stop it slipping any further⁴⁹⁶. The Dulwich Hill Cycling Club moved from Camperdown to the Canterbury velodrome in the 1980s, and the club resides there today.

Dunc Gray Velodrome, Bass Hill (1999-present)

Address: Carysfield Road, Bass Hill.

The Dunc Gray Velodrome is the only surviving indoor velodrome in New South Wales, and was opened in November 1999 as the track cycling venue for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. The venue has also hosted UCI World Cup and Cycling Australia National Championship events.



Figure 67 Dunc Gray Velodrome (Wikipedia)

The timber track is of Baltic pine, is 250 metres around, with a maximum banking of 42° on the ends and 12.5° on the straights. It is named after Edgar “Dunc” Gray, the champion cyclist from Goulburn who won Australia’s first Olympic gold medal at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics.

AusCycling uses the track for training and racing. It is also used by the New South Wales Institute of Sport, Bankstown Sports Cycling Club and other local clubs⁴⁹⁷.

Post-war cyclists

Lionel Cox (amateur career 1948-1963)

Lionel Cox (1930-2010) was born in Brisbane, but lived in Sydney from the age of 15. He joined the Marrickville Cycling Club as a junior, but had so many falls without success that his mother insisted he give the sport away until “he had some more sense”. She gave him a new racing bike two years later for his seventeenth birthday, and was always a great supporter, acting as timekeeper and helping raise money to send him to the Olympics. On his new bike, he won every race he contested

as a junior, including the State junior sprint title. He worked in the Sydney Fruit Market to build up his strength, and entered the senior ranks in 1948. That year he won the State sprint title and was placed fourth in the Australian sprint title.

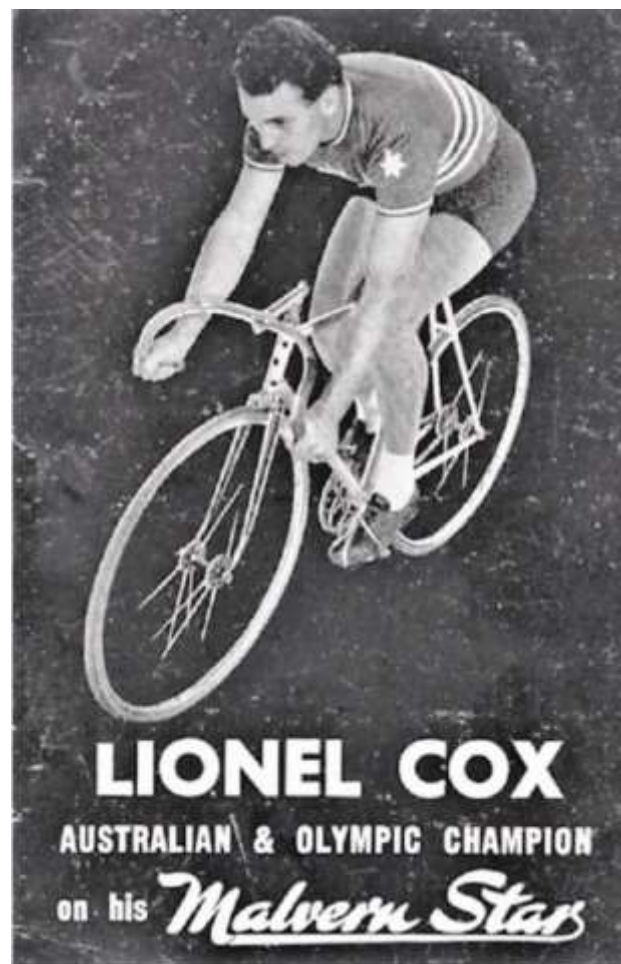


Figure 68 Lionel Cox (Cycling Archives)

When the cycling team for the 1952 Olympic team was named, Cox was number six in the list and seemed to have no chance to making the trip. But victories in the sprint and one-mile State titles convinced selectors that he could be a champion. The New South Wales Cyclists' Union launched a fund to raise his expenses for the Helsinki trip, his workmates at the Sydney Fruit Market donated generously⁴⁹⁸, and his mother took out a mortgage on her cottage, making up more than half of the required £800⁴⁹⁹.

Cox's partnership with Russell Mockridge at Helsinki was one of the most remarkable in Australian sporting history. The two, very different in personality and background, had not had much contact before, and none at all on a tandem. But the day after Mockridge's arrival in Helsinki, the two unpacked and reassembled a tandem bike in a storeroom. Mockridge had flown to Helsinki from London with the English team, who told him they had no use for a tandem bike that had been brought to the airport. They offered it to Mockridge who took it, not quite knowing what he would do with it.

When the tandem was reassembled, Mockridge suggested he and Cox try it out, and they were impressed with their form. The two could hardly have been more different: Mockridge was bespectacled and was once a candidate for the church ministry, while Cox's background in the hurly burly of the fruit market gave him a more knockabout view of the world. They decided between them that Mockridge would ride the time trial, Cox would ride the sprint, and both would tackle the tandem event.

With Mockridge in front of the tandem as steersman and Cox behind as tactician, they improved with every ride through the heats and finals. They almost missed out on winning the quarter final against Denmark when Mockridge's defective eyesight mistook the start line for the finish line 40 metres further on. He momentarily relaxed, but some colourful motivation from behind by Cox spurred him on to win narrowly. In the grand final, the Australian pair won a closely-contested tactical race against South Africa⁵⁰⁰. Cox also brought home the silver medal for the sprint, and Mockridge won the gold medal in the one kilometre event⁵⁰¹. Cox also represented Australia at the 1954 Vancouver Commonwealth Games⁵⁰².

Lionel Cox turned professional in 1957, making his first professional appearance in November at a charity gala at Cumberland Oval in Parramatta⁵⁰³. He applied to be reinstated as an amateur in 1958 and this was granted. He competed in his last national championship in 1963. He retired from competition after breaking a vertebra in his neck, but continued his connection with the sport by coaching youngsters for over thirty years⁵⁰⁴, firstly as a coach for the New South Wales schoolboy's championship in August 1957⁵⁰⁵. He coached at Camperdown and then at Tempe (Earlwood) velodromes, guiding riders to State, national and international success. In 1999, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for services to cycling, particularly as a coach and former competitor.

Lionel Cox remained committed to the Olympic movement in his later years. He died of pneumonia in a Sydney Hospital in March 2010. Following his death, John Coates, head of the Australian Olympic Committee, paid tribute to him as a tough competitor who made a great contribution to his sport both as an athlete and as a coach⁵⁰⁶.

Russell Mockridge (professional 1953-1958)

Edward Russell Mockridge (1928-1958) was born at South Melbourne, and the family later moved to Geelong. At Geelong College, a fellow student remembers him as quiet, a good student, but not very sporty and interested in the humanities and in art⁵⁰⁷.

He was lured into cycling mainly because his defective eyesight kept him out of most ball games. After progressing rapidly from his first race in 1946, he won the 125 mile road title in 1947 at Centennial Park in Sydney, and was selected in the 1948 London Olympic team. He had the misfortune to puncture twice in the Olympic road race and finished poorly.



Figure 69 Mockridge/Cox's tandem win, 1952 (National Archives of Australia)

But by the 1950 Auckland Empire Games he was Australia's premier cyclist, and won the 1000 metre time trial and the 1000 metre sprint, placing second in the 4000 metre individual pursuit. On returning home, he created a sensation by abruptly quitting the sport to prepare for the Anglican ministry. But he was beset by doubts about his calling, and returned to the track a year later. In 1952, he became the first ever rider to win both the amateur and professional divisions of the Paris Grand Prix against the world professional champion Reg Harris. This was so embarrassing for the professionals that amateurs were barred from competing in the same races for many years.



Figure 70 Russell Mockridge, Helsinki 1952 (Geelong College)

After dual gold medals in the 1952 Helsinki Olympics (the 1000 metre time trial and the tandem with Lionel Cox), Mockridge did not perform well in the European circuit as a novice professional. He abandoned the track and made a modest living in road and criterium races. Returning to Australia after an acclaimed solo ride in the Tour de France, he signed with promoter Ted Waterford and became the most celebrated Australian cyclist of his generation, frequently winning both road and

track races. By 1957, Mockridge was unbeatable, and won the Australian road title for the second straight year and several Tour races.

He was different from other cyclists in his mastery of all disciplines of the sport, and until 2004 (Ryan Bayley at the 2004 Athens Olympics) was the only Australian cyclist to win two gold medals at the same Olympics. As a result, he is considered one of Australia's greatest ever cyclists. But in September 1958, shortly after the start of the Tour of Gippsland, he was struck by a bus and killed on the Princes Highway at Clayton. At the time, he had seemed set for a triumphant return to Europe.

Early suggestions that he was too delicate for the rigours of competition had been well silenced. An international star already, he died with his great potential unfulfilled⁵⁰⁸. Before becoming a professional cyclist, he had worked as a journalist at the *Geelong Advertiser*⁵⁰⁹.

The decline of cycling as a spectator sport in Australia

The early Austral Wheel Races at the start of the twentieth century were staged in front of 65,000 roaring cycling enthusiasts. Cycle racing remained popular up to the 1950s as a spectator sport at venues like the Sydney Sports Arena in Surry Hills, and then seemed to die a natural death. Today, apart from the occasional well-attended national and international events, track racing has virtually been relegated to a non-event in this country⁵¹⁰.

The usefulness of the bicycle was often dismissed in the late nineteenth century. The fact that it was widely used by shearers and itinerant workers, and was faster than the horse over long distances, was galling to many horsemen and squatters⁵¹¹. A similar difference of opinion exists today in that, while cycling is popular again (bicycle sales have outnumbered car sales for several years), for others their new horse (the motor car) is real life, and bicycles have no place in this world⁵¹².

Malvern Star Cycles experienced their best-ever sales in 1958, the year Bruce Small sold the company. The brand ceased local production in the 1970s in the face of cheaper imports⁵¹³. In Britain, cycling levels have been in long-term decline from the end of World War II, down from 24 billion kilometres in 1949 to just 4.4 billion kilometres in 1994⁵¹⁴. This contrasted with a steep rise in automobile use and a government policy that focused on increasing the road network to benefit motorists⁵¹⁵.

From the middle of the twentieth century, the many organisations that previously supported cycling events bowed out one by one. When these affiliations ended, so did the races and tracks that they once promoted. But some remain, supported by local enthusiasm for cycle racing. Cycling clubs have always promoted cycling carnivals, but before the middle of the twentieth century there were also many cycling promoters from outside the sport. These promoted multi-sporting events, often in conjunction with local cycling or running clubs. Sports organisations often pitched in alongside councils and government to help raise funds and provided labour to build and maintain velodromes and tracks⁵¹⁶.

Cycling proved to be an enduring activity for Australians until falling automobile prices and growing consumer affluence saw increased numbers of cyclists switch over to the car in the 1940s and 1950s. Until the 1940s, the bicycle was an important commuter vehicle, but after World War II, cycling was largely relegated to a children's or teenager's activity or for sporting or recreational use. Professional road racing still arouses local and national interest each season with events like the world-ranked Tour Down Under, the historic Melbourne to Warrnambool classic, the Tasmanian Cycling Tour and the Tour of Gippsland.

Modern Australian success in track racing

While this history focuses more on the earlier days of track cycling, Australian cyclists continue to do very well on the international scene. This can partly be credited to the Australian and State-based Institutes of Sport, which provide financial assistance and coaching to promising young cyclists. This is a brief selection of a few of these successful cyclists.

Anna Meares

Anna Marie Devenish Meares (born 1983) is widely regarded as one of the greatest track cyclists Australia has produced after winning eleven world championships and six Olympic medals (including two gold) over a 14-year cycling career. She completed in four Olympic Games (2004-2016), resulting in two gold, one silver and three bronze medals and became the first athlete to win a medal in each Olympics she competed in. The silver in 2008 was achieved four months after fracturing her neck during a World Cup race in Los Angeles.



Figure 71 Anna Meares, 2012 Olympics (ABC website)

In the world championships, she finished with eleven gold, nine silver and six bronze medals from four events. She was inspired to take up cycling after watching Kathy Watt and her idol Shane Kelly at the 1994 Victoria Commonwealth Games in Canada. For two years, her father drove Anna and her older sister Kerrie more than 300 kilometres each week to the nearest velodrome in Mackay, Queensland. They then moved to Rockhampton where the sisters had better access to coaches.

She made her international debut at the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games, winning bronze in the sprint while her sister won two gold medals. In the 2004 Athens Olympics, she became the first Australian woman to win gold in the velodrome. After becoming the first Australian athlete in any sport to win an individual medal at four consecutive Olympics (including bronze at Rio in 2016), she retired from elite cycling later that year⁵¹⁷.

Shane Kelly

Shane John Kelly OAM (born 1972) was born in Ararat in Victoria. He competed in five Olympics (1992 to 2008), finishing with one silver and two bronze medals⁵¹⁸. His specialty was the 1000 metre time trial, in which he won three world championships from 1995 to 1997. He also won gold in this event at Commonwealth Games in 1994 and 1998.



Figure 72 Shane Kelly (Cycling Archives)

Shane Kelly is remembered for a heartbreaking moment at the start of the 1000 metre time trial at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. He was the world record holder and reigning world champion, and was the red hot favourite to win the event. But when he pushed off at the start, his left shoe suddenly came out of the pedal and he missed the chance of improving on his silver medal in 2004. Despite this setback, Kelly was widely admired for his recovery from this disaster by going on to win the 1997 world championship in Perth and bronze in the 2000 Sydney Olympics⁵¹⁹.

Brad McGee

Bradley John McGee OAM (born 1976) was born in Sydney. He competed in four Olympic Games from 1996 to 2008, finishing with one gold, one silver and three bronze medals. He is the only Australian to win medals in the individual pursuit at three Olympic Games and had won more track medals than any other Australian until Anna Meares won her sixth medal at Rio de Janeiro in 2016. He also won five gold medals at the Commonwealth Games between 1994 and 2002, and two UCI Track World Championships, in 1995 and 2002.



Figure 73 Brad McGee, 2003 Tour de France (Shimmer Images)

He was the first Australian to wear the leader's jersey in all three European Grand Tours - the Tour de France in 2003, Giro d'Italia in 2004 and Vuelta de Espana in 2005. He retired from racing in 2008 to take the role of manager of his professional team. He is currently the Cycling Performance Manager at the New South Wales Institute of Sport⁵²⁰.

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