

What you should know

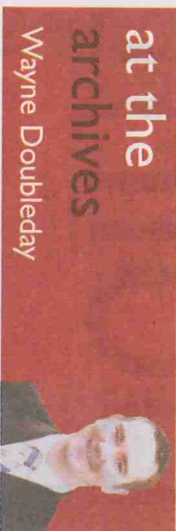
■ The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore building at the south campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue.

■ Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with enquiries. For those unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straightforward enquiries for a fee of \$55 an hour, including copying and postage.

■ For further information, phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au or visit the website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.

Around the track

Horseracing in Wagga's early years



at the archives
Wayne Doubleday

Horseracing in Wagga has a long and distinguished history.

The first recorded race took place before the township was officially gazetted.

On St Patrick's Day 1849 a race was organised by the publican Ginger Roberts, with the main prize being a silver trophy worth 50 guineas.

Despite the obvious popularity of horseracing no official body or club was formed in Wagga until 1860.

On June 5 of that year a meeting was held at the Australian Hotel where the Murrumbidgee Turf Club (MTC) was established.

Some of those present at this initial meeting included Henry Baylis (Police Magistrate), T.W. Hammond (Junee Station), John Leitch (Berry Jerry Station), P.S. Murray (Post Master), Henry Wallace (Emanoreenya Station) and D McIntosh (Gobogonbalin Station). An annual subscription fee was set at five guineas.

On January 10, 1865, a total of 161 acres were dedicated for the purpose of a racecourse and recreational area.

Shortly after a booth and judge's stand were erected on the site and a saddling yard was built on the corner of Travers and Beckwith streets.

No racecourse would be complete without a grandstand, and this was built in 1867 by Charles Hardy, although it was later destroyed by fire in February 1903.

The most infamous of all the horseraces held in Wagga was undoubtedly the Ten Mile Race held in November 1868.

There were great differences of opinion regarding the success of this race, although it definitely put Wagga on the map, albeit through notoriety.

The obvious distress of the horses was to be considered against the excitement and "innovation" of the race.

Newspaper reports, while acknowledging the suffering of the horses, concluded in favour of the race. This, however, was the first and only 10 mile race ever held in Wagga.

A number of horses were pushed beyond their limits as a result of the race.

W. Flood's Troilus, in particular, was so distressed after the race that he was led out of the saddling paddock staggering. His tail was cut in order to bleed him and for a time a rumour circulated that he had died.

The report in the *Wagga Advertiser* said that all the horses were "spur-marked to a frightful extent. Riverina could scarcely stand, and poor old Troilus had to be propped up".

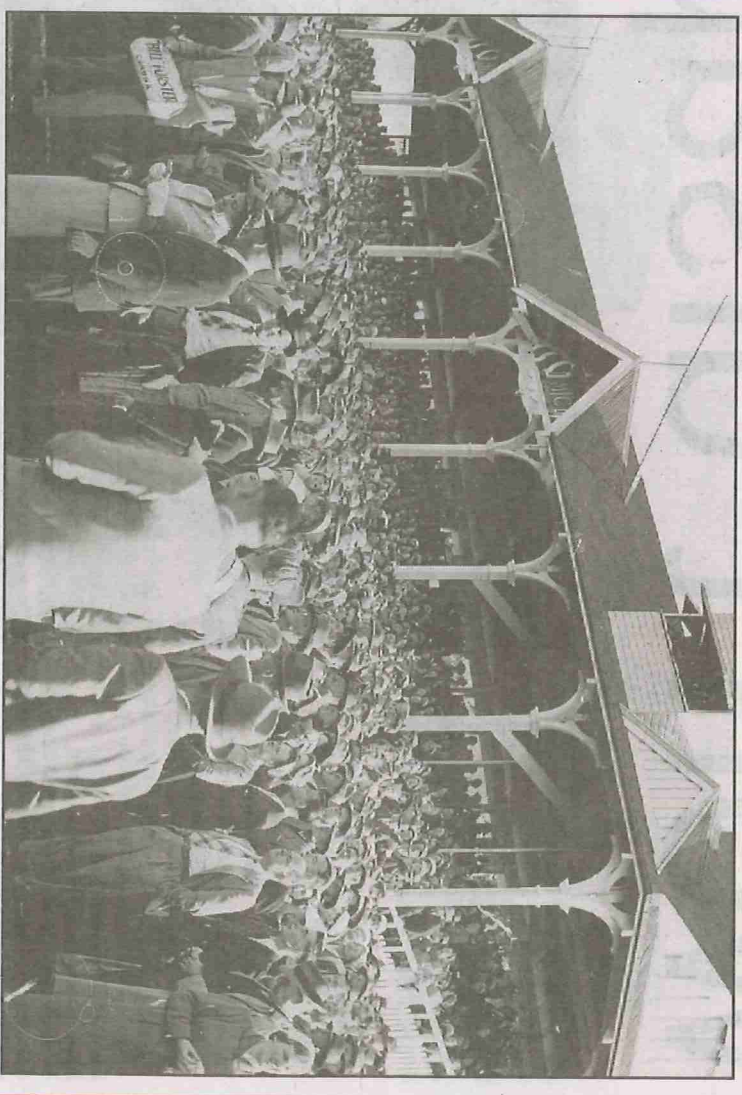
The idea for the race was originally raised by a man named Rawden Greene who addressed a meeting of the Murrumbidgee Turf Club to propose the concept.

There were 12 starters. H.J. Bowler's Australian was declared the winner, covering the 10 mile distance in a time of 23 minutes and 35 seconds, with R. Gosvenor's Comet coming a close second and W.J. Bowen's Riverina (the only mare) running third.

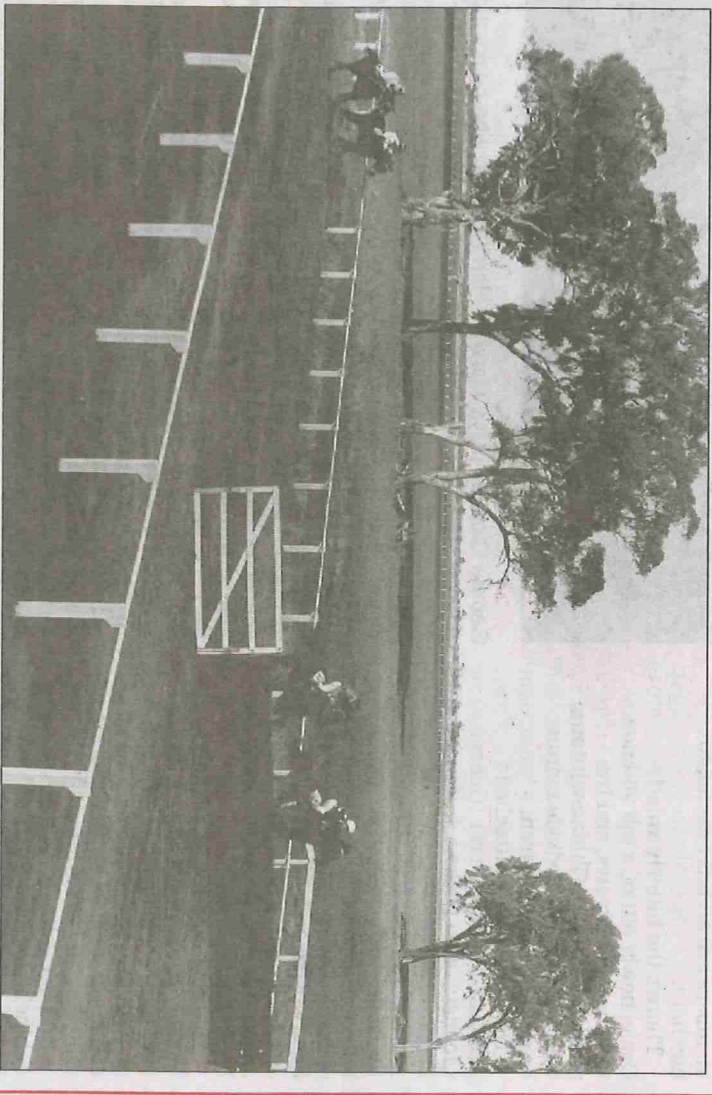
In May 1873, the Murrumbidgee Turf Club decided to hold the first Wagga Gold Cup meeting. The cup race took place on November 26, and was two miles long with prizemoney of £400.

The race was won by H.J. Bowler's bay gelding, Mountaineer, in a time of 3 minutes and 37 seconds. Second place was taken by J. Diffe's Friendless, with W.H. William's Highland Chief coming third.

Highland Chief may well have placed higher, if not for the fact that he had bolted from the starting line and run twice around the track before he could be halted.



The Murrumbidgee Turf Club filled to capacity during a race day in the 1950s. Pictures: (CSU Regional Archives: RW1574/268/985 - Lennon Collection).



An unidentified race at the Murrumbidgee Turf Club in the 1950s.

His rider's hands were reportedly raw and bleeding from the effort of pulling up the horse. The prizemoney for the Wagga Gold Cup has fluctuated throughout the years.

Two years after the first race, the stake was raised from £400 to £1000 and within another two years had risen to £1050.

For a time during this period the prize money on offer from the Murrumbidgee Turf Club exceeded that of the Melbourne Cup. In 1878, the prizemoney dropped dramatically to £500 and continued dropping, to just £80 in 1910 and 1911, before increasing again in later years.

In 1906 the Wagga Amateur Picnic Race Club was established, with an emphasis on horseracing as a sport only, whereby ordinary horses were ridden by their owners and no prizemoney was on offer, only trophies.

■ Compiled by Wayne Doubleday and Jillian Kohlhagen
References: *A History of Wagga Wagga* by Keith Swan, pp.76-79; *Wagga Wagga: A History* by Sherry Morris, pp. 94-95; *Gormly Card Index*, held at CSU Regional Archives.



The Wagga Gold Cup. The meeting was first held in 1873. For a time the Wagga Gold Cup had a greater amount of prizemoney than the Melbourne Cup.

Joint exhibition

■ The exhibition *Not Just Black and White: The Life and*

Images of Tom Lennon is now on display at the Historic Council Chambers site. This is a joint exhibition between the CSU Regional Archives and the Riverina.

The exhibition will be on display from October 11, 2008 to January 11, 2009.