

Fact, Fiction and Fables of the Melbourne Cup

(A complimentary abridged version to say 'thank you' for your support)



By
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aka Melbourne Cup Max

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The magic that is the Melbourne Cup...

Ask any Australian at the beginning of November each year "What'll win the Cup?" and you will be given the name of one of 24 horses. The Cup, as every good Aussie knows, refers to the Melbourne Cup, a handicap horse race held each year on the first Tuesday of November. On this day the entire nation stops to watch or listen to a race. For years it's been promoted as 'The race that stops a nation'. From Byron Bay to Broome, Darwin to Devonport, Cape York to Cape Leeuwin, everything stops....everyone listens...almost everyone has a bet. After the worldwide pandemic in 2020 it was promoted as the race that 'starts' a nation.



Australia is the only nation in the world to command such attention for a horse race. As popular as they are, the same cannot be said about the English Derby at Epsom, the Kentucky Derby, The Japan Cup or the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe at Longchamps.

Any event that commands such attention is going to be surrounded by mystique, intrigue, facts, fictions and fables. Horse racing attracts people from across the spectrum. Visit any race course and you will find paupers and princes, killers and kings queens and the quick and the dead; along with the seedy, the needy and the greedy. Where else could you be guaranteed to find hundreds of fascinating stories?

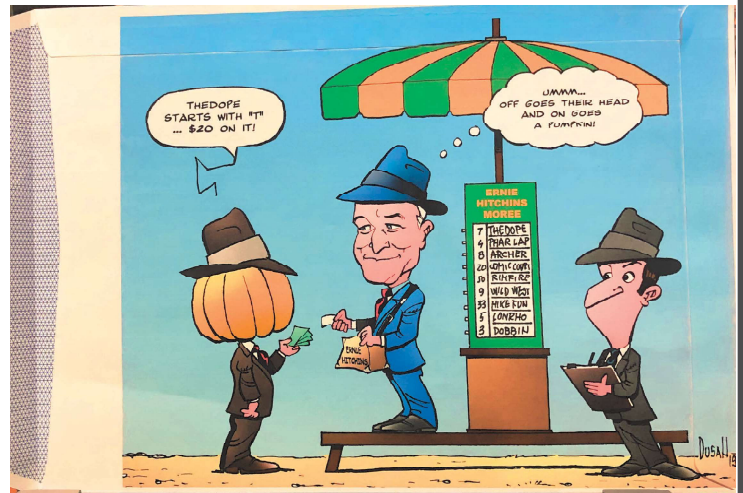
But, how do you pick the winner? Some people dream the winner; some people use a pin; other people are more scientific and study weights and form. There are many 'wacky ways' that have emerged over the years. In the 1880's Banjo Patterson wrote 'A Dream Of The Melbourne Cup.' He was inspired by the story of Walter Craig, a publican in Ballarat, who dreamt he saw his horse winning the Melbourne Cup in 1870....with disastrous results! (See page 7). I love another story out of Adelaide telling how all Aussies become Melbourne Cup 'experts' around the first Tuesday in November.

I commend to Melbourne Cup fans The Saga of 127 Cup Winners covering winners from 1861 to 1987 by Bill Ahern. Another outstanding publication by Maurice Cavanough and Meurig Davies is titled The Melbourne Cup. It was first published in 1960 and reprinted in 1971, covering the Cups until 1970. The foreword was by Bart Cummings. They are both wonderful books and I am deeply indebted to these Cup historians. I also commend Australian Horse Racing by Jack Pollard.

This eBook is not designed to compete with the above publications as an historical document. Rather, it is just for sheer fun and entertaining reading and a way to say 'thank you' to my new and long term supporters. I appreciate you and love sharing the stories with you. Our stories are in no particular order. You can start anywhere, anytime. Have fun with it. Don't take it too seriously....just enjoy it!

My old man used to say....

My Dad - Ernie Hitchins - was a well-known bookmaker in the North West of New South Wales in the 1950s and '60s. Through the book you will find homespun country bookie logic under the heading of "my old man used to say." One of his favourites was "When some people go to the races, it's off goes a head and on goes a pumpkin".



I freely admit I used to fit into this category. But, I happily tell, I've finally taken notice of my Dad, and gotten smarter. Yes, when I went to races with pals I used to bet on every race on the program. I know that's stupid...but I liked to do it. We all liked it. We had a lot of fun. But, at the end of the day, we rarely won.



Whilst we all need a little luck at the races, for me to win, a sackful of rabbits feet was essential. Now, I rarely go as I prefer to watch the races on TV. If I do go to the races, I take a limited amount of money and if I bring any home, I feel successful.

Lucky omens...

Superstitious ways of bringing good luck are found everywhere. To some extent, superstitions work. New research shows that believing in, say, the power of a good luck charm can actually help improve performance in certain situations, even though the charm and event aren't logically linked. Perhaps it morphs into positive thinking.

Finding a four-leaf clover, carrying a rabbit's foot, and crossing your fingers are considered symbols of good luck. The Ladybug is known as an emblem for good luck.

The four-leaf clover is an ancient Irish symbol of luck. Pigs are a symbol of wealth, good fortune, and prosperity. Horseshoes symbolise good luck, power over evil, good fortune and fertility. You should not throw away the lucky symbol, as signs of prosperity often possess some excellent energy. It is also believed that if you bury them in a metal box in your garden, the good luck multiplies. Ummmm.



2020...a Cup for Australian horses...

Did you know in the 2019 Melbourne Cup there were only two Australian bred horses? Against the odds Vow and Declare (an Australian-bred horse) won the 2019 Cup. The other Aussie-bred was Surprise Baby who ran 5th. But did you know the last 'Aussie bred' horse to win the Cup was Shocking in 2009? So, you may be thinking, because of Covid-19 disruption to the world, there probably won't be any internationally bred horses in the 2020 Melbourne Cup. Better think again!



Did you know the Sydney Cup, which was run in April 2020, had only one locally bred horse in the field? That was Angel of Truth who ran 6th behind Etah James from New Zealand. The Chosen One from New Zealand was 2nd, Raheen House from Ireland was 3rd and Mustajeer from Great Britain was 4th. But there is a bright side to the story. The international horses likely to run in the 2020 Melbourne Cup are already here and, by Melbourne Cup time, we will know something of their form.

A 'nightmare for' the Prime Minister's Father...

Did you know the father of one of our Prime Ministers sold his house and wagered the entire proceeds on the Melbourne Cup...because of a dream?

Joe Lyons was born in Stanley, Tasmania on 15th September 1879. He was the fifth of eight children born to Michael and Ellen Lyons. He began working, at the age of nine, as a printer's messenger boy. By the age of 12, he was "cutting scrub" (clearing land) for local farmers. He became Premier of Tasmania from 1923 to 1928 and went on to serve as one of Australia's most popular Prime Ministers (1931-1938).



Joe Lyons' father, Michael, failed in a series of enterprises - as hotel keeper, farmer, butcher and baker - before finally losing his family's savings on the 1887 Melbourne Cup.

In 1887 Michael Lyons sold the family house (see picture) and took the ship to Melbourne. He took the entire proceeds of the sale of the house and bet all of it on Trantner in the 1887 Melbourne Cup. Unhappily for Michael Lyons the race was won by Dunlop. Trantner finished 15th. The only 'good' to come from this experience was it allowed his son Joe to be able to boast he grew up in poverty before reaching the highest office in Australia. Several years ago I visited the Lyons family home in Stanley. It has been preserved as an historic site.



Racing superstitions - a lucky hat...



"You must have luck in racing." My Dad, Ernie Hitchins, was a bookmaker in the northern NSW town of Moree. Every Saturday, when he fielded at the various race meetings around the area, he always wore his special felt hat - for luck. There was a lot of stress in our house on Saturdays if my Dad could not find his lucky hat!

Racing superstitions - the lucky Randwick position...

A good mate of mine always feels lucky at Randwick when he watches the races from a specific position. He is legendary for elbowing people out of his 'lucky spot.'

Racing superstitions - Race 8 #8...

A very intelligent lawyer friend swore by this system he 'discovered'. It was simple. You bet on the horse with the same number saddlecloth as the race number. Eg. In Race 1 he backed #1. In Race 2 he backed #2. etc. etc. I was with him one day when, using this system and betting in a pub on a trotting meeting, he backed the winner #8 in Race 8 at the price of \$88. He also had a 'back-up system' if the horse chosen was scratched from the race. Eg. If #8 was scratched in Race 8 he substituted the horse in Barrier #8. (Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!)

Racing superstitions - nodding horses...

A bookmaker's wife we know always has to look at horses in the mounting yard before each race. If any horse looks at her and nods its head she believes that is 'a lucky sign' to back that horse.



Racing superstitions - Frankie Dettori...

World-renowned jockey Frankie Dettori likes to put white tape on his saddle before a big race when riding in the UK. I'm not sure if he did it when he rode Master Of Reality in the 2019 Melbourne Cup. He was my #1 selection. With 100 metres to go he looked a certainty to run 1st or 2nd (...and he did run 2nd!). However, after the race, in very unusual circumstances 'the stewards' protested and relegated Master of Reality to 4th...thus ruining our Trifectas. Grrrrrrrr.

Racing superstitions - Starting Gate #18...

Many people will not bet on the horse drawn in Gate #18 in the Melbourne Cup. This gate is considered 'unlucky' as no horse has ever won from Gate #18. It is the only barrier that has never been successful.

Racing superstitions - lucky #6...

New Zealand jockey Michael Walker was reported as saying *"Six is my favourite number. Every time I ride in a Melbourne Cup, or any of the big Group One race, I always dream of drawing Barrier #6."*

Racing Superstitions - No interviews...

Cranbourne trainer Mick Kent believes media interviews before the races bring bad luck.

You still need ability...

Following on from the stories above, about luck and superstitions, I remember my Dad told me about an Irish Priest who took his friend, the Presbyterian Minister, to the fights at the Sydney Stadium at Rushcutters Bay.

The Priest was a great fight fan. The Minister was at the fights for the first time. As the young boxer wiped his feet in the rosin box the Minister asked "*Why's he doing that?*" The priest explained how it stopped the boxer from slipping on the canvas floor. "*Will it help?*" asked the Minister. "*Oh yes,*" said the Priest. Questions and answers continued in rapid fire. Always the Minister asked "*Will it help?*"

Finally the young boxer returned to his corner, went down on one knee and blessed himself. "*Why's he doing that?*" asked the Minister. "*He's a good Catholic boy,*" replied the Priest. "*Will it help?*" said the Minister. "*Not if he can't fight!*" said the priest dryly. **Moral:** When betting on horses don't rely on luck!

Good advice in 1983...

Again, I remember my Dad saying to me "*Don't be afraid to ask questions; and don't worry if your questions may look foolish to some people.*" Have you noticed in life that the really good operators are never afraid to ask questions? They seek out the best and learn from them. The 1983 Melbourne Cup was won by Kiwi, a New Zealand horse. His trainer, Ewan (Snowy) Lupton was termed a 'hobby' trainer. I was impressed when I read Ewan walked around the entire Flemington track on Cup Day morning just 'feeling' it. He sought the advice of the master horseman of the time, Roy Higgins. It is now part of Cup legend that Kiwi (ridden by Jim Cassidy) was stone motherless last going out of the straight for the first time and stayed there for most of the race. Yet he produced one of the best finishes ever seen to beat Noble Comment by one and three quarter lengths.



[Click to see video:](#)

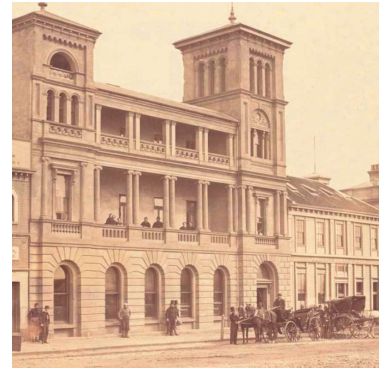
The devil's 'unlucky' number (13)

Mrs J. J. Kitson was the owner the 1941 Cup winner, Skipton. It seems that Mrs Kitson was a little superstitious. The horse lost on the only occasion she had watched him race. She concluded that she must have 'Jonahed' him. At the time, the papers made headlines of the Devil's Number. Velocity had won the Caulfield Cup carrying No 13. Skipton was to carry saddlecloth No 13. A double for the Devil's number! The news-hounds also pointed out if Skipton won it would be the 13th three-year-old to complete the Derby-Cup double. Seems like the only thing they were short of were several ladders to walk under and a tribe of black cats! Skipton won by two and a half lengths. **[Click to see video:](#)**

On the topic of dreaming...



The 1870 Melbourne Cup has been referred to as the 'Dreamers Cup'. There are conflicting reports about the authenticity of this story...but it certainly has been woven into the legend of the Cup. The fable goes like this. Some months before the running of the Cup Walter Craig, the owner of Craig's Hotel in Ballarat, dreamt he saw his horse



Nimblefoot win the race. The jockey was riding in Walter's violet colours. In the dream the jockey also wore a black crepe armband. Walter concluded that his horse would win but he would not live to see the race. On the morning after the dream he recounted it to his friends and that night he died. One thing is for sure, Nimblefoot did win the 1870 Melbourne Cup. Also, I personally saw a painting (supposedly painted at that time) hanging in the wall of the VRC Committee room. In the picture the jockey, J. Day, is certainly wearing a black crepe armband. Spooky!

More about dreamers...

In 1913, a non-betting friend of a Mr Albert Coppel dreamt that #5 Aurifer would win the Caulfield Cup and #8 Posinatus would win the Melbourne Cup. That night Albert had the same dream. He told his bookie mate, the legendary Sol Green (see picture), about the dream. Sol obviously thought Albert was going around the bend. The combination was being quoted at 660/1 in the Caulfield/Melbourne Cup double. Sol said *"If you want to rely on dreams to pick the winner and waste your money I'll bet you 1000/1 the double."* Albert then wagered five pounds on the bet.



Neither of the horses had done much during 1913.

The owners had given away the idea of making the trip to Melbourne. However, Albert Coppel wrote to the owners and persuaded them to take their horses to Melbourne for the Cups. He helped them finance the trip....and guess what...both horses won.

Even more about dreamers

In 1898 The Grafton won the Melbourne Cup. He starting at odds of 8/1. However, because of a dream, a remarkable betting plunge occurred that year. Similar to the 1870 'dream' story, in the week leading up to the race a woman dreamt Clarion would win the Cup...but she would not live to see the race. She related the story to friends next morning and that night she died. The story spread like wildfire. Clarion's odds dropped from 20/1 to start favourite at 5/1... because of the dream. Unfortunately, for the punters, the dream did not follow the 1870 Cup script. Clarion ran 10th!

What is it about dreaming and racing...

On Friday 8th March 1946, John Godley, a student at Oxford University, dreamt he was reading the race results for the following day's races. He saw the names of two winners, Bindal and Juladin. The next morning he told a friend about the dream. They consulted the papers and noted both horses were running in separate races. They backed them. They both won.



A few weeks later, April 4th, Godley was at his parents' place in Ireland and dreamt he was looking at a list of winners. On waking he could only remember one name, Tubermore. He discovered a horse called Tuberoise was running in the Grand National next day. The family backed it. It won.

On July 28th, 1946, he dreamt that while talking on the phone to his bookmaker he was told that Monumentor had won. There was a horse running that day called Mentores. He backed it. It won.

In the next dream, a year later, he saw a horse carrying the distinctive colours of the Gaekwad Maharajah of Baroda. His horse was to be ridden by Australian jockey Edgar Britt. During Godley's dream he heard the crowd calling the name of the favourite of the next race, The Bogie. When he checked the papers he found that the Prince's horse was running and was to be ridden by Edgar Britt. The favourite for the next race was "The Brogue". By now, Godley was really taking his dreaming seriously. He told two friends about this dream. They wrote down the details, had it witnessed and lodged the detail in a post office safe. The three of them backed both horses. They won.

The news of this dreamer began to circulate around the world. He became a racing correspondent for the London Daily Mirror. He wrote under the pseudonym of The Dreamer. History tells that this strange power came to him spasmodically. He had similar successes on October 29th, 1946; January 16th 1949; February 11th 1949; and a final major coup in 1958 when he dreamt the winner of the Grand National. Then this strange power left him. Were the dreams just luck? Was there a greater power guiding him? Why? He wasn't particularly religious or interested in horses. Could the future be running in tandem with the present.....spooky stuff, huh..... **See: Unsolved Mysteries**

There is another story involving Walter Craig. (See earlier story - On the topic of Dreaming) It tells of Melbourne bookmaker Joseph "Billy" Slack (pictured) making an unusual bet in Craig's Ballarat pub. Slack offered Craig 1000 pounds to eight drinks about Croyden and Nimblefoot winning the Metropolitan/ Melbourne Cup double in 1870. They both won. However, as Walter Craig had died before the events were completed, the bookie was not legally bound to pay the bet. The story has it that Billy Slack did honour the bet and settled with Walter Craig's widow.



They come from everywhere...

My good friend John Schreck was the Chief Stipendiary Steward for the Australian Jockey Club. I recall him telling me the wondrous thing about the racing industry is it brings together people from all levels of societies. On a racecourse you will see knights of the realm rubbing shoulders with well-known villains and scoundrels.

It seems there has always been a seamier side to racing. I quote from the Australasian Post of 1884. "At Flemington on Cup Day, ravenous birds of prey, in the shape of pickpockets, cardsharps, thimble riggers, spielers, and confidence men seemed to spring up as suddenly as the growth of a toad-stool or other poisonous fungi and found plenty of victims to fasten upon."

Of course, one expects to find scoundrels in all walks of life. Wherever money is involved someone will always try on a scam. (For example...look at the scams perpetrated during Covid-19). The bookmaking fraternity have produced their fair share of scammers.

Up until 1882 it was easy to be a bookie. All you needed to do was pay your admission and be armed with a pen and pencil and a notebook. Often a bookie would disappear if the race result went against him. Imagine the pandemonium this would cause today. Novice racegoers, particularly on a Melbourne Cup day, would not have known the established reputable bookies from the welshers. So, the VRC, for the Grand National meeting of 1882, introduced a system of bookmaker registration. It required the payment of a £25 fee. Bookies were identified by a silver lapel badge.

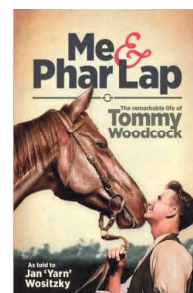
In 1906, bookmaker Don McLeod believed the short-priced favourite, Poseidon, could not win. So, with almost no money in his bag, he began to bet 8/1 against the horse, while the other bookies were offering 4/1. Naturally he was swamped with punters wanting to take the good odds. Unfortunately for McLeod, Poseidon won. He attempted to beat a hasty retreat with the punters' money in his bag, but he was not quick enough. An irate mob set upon him and gave him a fearful hiding. McLeod died later in hospital from the pounding he received.



Stop Phar Lap....was the order...

Whilst talking of villains and scoundrels, money was the motive and illegal bookmakers the suspected culprits in 1930, when an attempt was made to shoot the favourite Phar Lap.

The champion was leaving Caulfield racecourse after an early morning workout on the day the Cup was run. He was being led by a young strapper, Tommy Woodcock, on a stable pony. Tommy dearly loved Phar Lap.



A sinister-looking black limousine began to follow the trio. Suddenly it sped up and Tommy sensed danger. He put himself between the car and Phar Lap, pushing the horse up against a fence. A shotgun blast rang out and pellets scattered all around them....but none of them touched Phar Lap.

Tommy certainly loved the horse. It must have been a great thrill to see him go out and win that day in front of 72,358 wildly excited Phar Lap fans. No one was ever caught or charged with the attempted murder of the horse. But rumour had it that illegal bookmakers lost a fortune on the Caulfield/Melbourne Cup double.

[Click to see video:](#)

My old man used to say....

...owners, trainers and jockeys were the worst judges. This probably came from experience (as a bookmaker) of listening to them giving him 'good oil'. (A racing expression indicating the information comes from a very reliable source.)

There are many examples of owners, trainers and jockeys 'getting it wrong'. Older readers may remember Shane Dye. He was one of Australia's leading jockeys in the 1980's and 1990's. He was a great horseman and judge. However, he was given the opportunity of riding Coachwood or Jeune in the 1994 Melbourne Cup. He did not have to make a decision until the Saturday before the Cup. He chose Coachwood. This gave Wayne Harris, a battling jockey, the opportunity pick up a last-minute ride on the 1994 Cup winner - Jeune. **[Click to see video:](#)**

In 1956 the owners of Evening Peal, Mr and Mrs White, believed Evening Peal and Redcraze would win the Caulfield/Melbourne Cup double. They wagered heavily at 160/1. Their selections were correct....but....they got it the wrong way around. Redcraze won the Caulfield and Evening Peal the Melbourne Cup.

In June 2019 super-successful jockey Glen Boss rode Vow and Declare in the Tatts Cup (3200 metres) at Eagle Farm in Brisbane. He was 'hugely impressed' with Vow and Declare's run. Yet, he chose to accept the ride on the favourite Constantinople in the 2019 Melbourne Cup. Unhappily, just prior to the Melbourne Cup he was suspended and missed riding in the Cup. He described Craig Williams' audacious, inspired ride on Vow And Declare as one of the most 'intelligent' he has seen in Australia's greatest race. **[Click to see video:](#)**

On the topic of Bart Cummings...

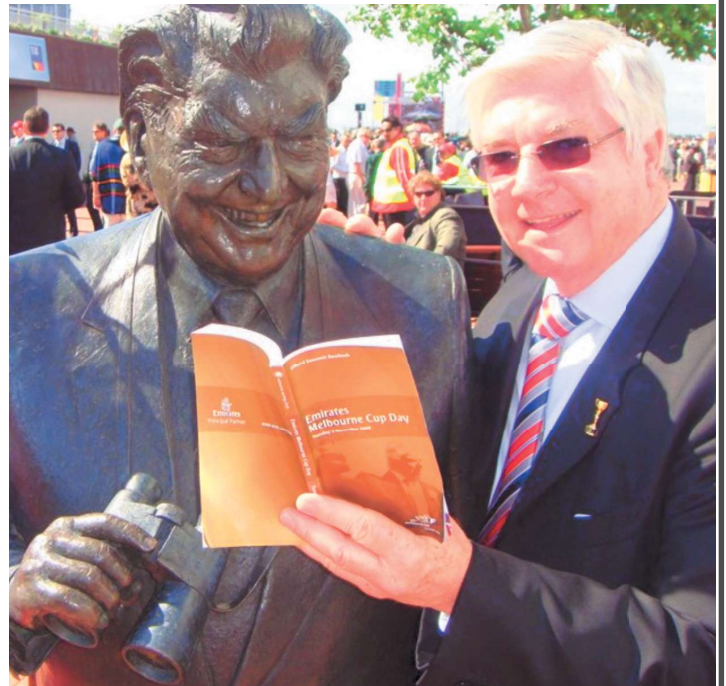
Bart Cummings is without a doubt the best-ever Melbourne Cup trainer. I seriously doubt if his record will ever be beaten. He trained the winners of 12 Melbourne Cups:

Light Fingers (1965); Gallilee (1966); Red Handed (1967); Think Big (1974 & 1975); Gold & Black (1977); Hyperno (1979); Kingston Rule (1990); Let's Elope (1991); Saintly (1996); Rogan Josh (1999); Viewed (2008):

He is the only trainer to train three winners in a row - 1965, 1966 & 1967:

He has quinellaed (trained the first and second placed horses) in the event five times:

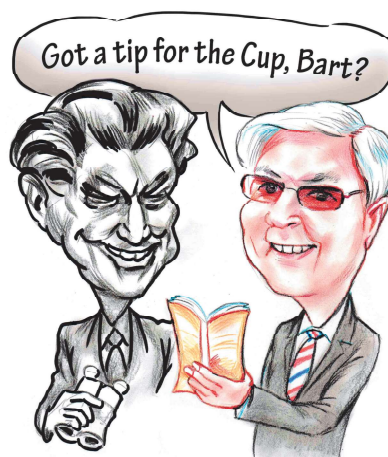
Light Fingers & Zieme 1965
Gallilee & Light Fingers 1966
Think Big & Lelini 1974
Think Big & Holiday Wagon 1975
Let's Elope and Chivas Revenge in 1991.



[Click to see video:](#)

Bad error by Bart...

As good a judge and trainer as Bart Cummings obviously was, you have to wonder about his judgement in relation to dual Melbourne Cup winner Think Big. He bought Think Big for himself for \$10,000. Then he decided to take a profit and sell him for \$20,000. The horse went on to win (under Bart's training) \$262,720.



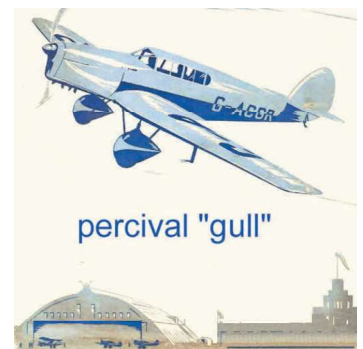
The jockey who 'rode' two horses at once in the Cup

In 1939, Rivette was ridden by a youthful Teddy Preston. Down the river side of the course Ortelle Star stumbled and lost the rider. Rivette took the lead coming into the race and looked the winner. But the crowd hushed as Ortelle Star made a charge along the rails. Preston sensed the danger of a 'loose cannon' horse among them and asked his horse for another effort. All down the straight Teddy could be heard calling out "*steady Star, steady Star*". Ortelle Star actually crossed the line ahead of Rivette. However Rivette was declared the winner; Maikai was 2nd and Pantler was 3rd. **[Click to see video:](#)**

Kingsford Smith and the Melbourne Cup



The 1933 Cup was won by Hall Mark. For the very first time the Cup was seen, at the cinema in Sydney, on the same day it was run. On Cup day, in 1933, Sir Charles Kingsford Smith had his famous speedy Percival Gull aircraft ready to fly the film direct to Sydney at the conclusion of the event.



Hall Mark was owned by Charles Kellow who also owned the first Victorian franchise for the famous luxury car, The Packard. Older Sydney-ites will remember one of the city's earlier department stores was Anthony Horden's. Charles Kellow was a great friend and great admirer of Anthony Horden. So much so he wanted to place on record his respect for the man he considered the "hall-mark" of a gentleman. Hence the horse's name.

Movietone News rushes Cup movie to troops in 1944...



The Melbourne Cup has always been extremely important to Australians wherever they are in the world. In 1944 the Cup was run on a Saturday because we were at war. Sirius won the Cup from Peter and Cellini.



Immediately after the running of the Cup, Movietone News rushed the newsreel (by private plane) back to their Sydney studio for processing. That done, it was sent to troops around the world in order for them to see it the following day. I'm guessing many people in their 40s have probably never seen a Movietone clip! **[Click to see video:](#)**

From Prince to Pauper

At the beginning of the 1920s Darcy Eccles was an unqualified racing industry success. He had a private trainer, a beautiful home and stables opposite the Caulfield Race Course. But things started to go wrong for poor Darcy. In 1922, his horse The Cypher started favourite for the Cup (carrying pots of Darcy's money). King Ingoda managed to just pip The Cypher on the post.

In 1923 Darcy's horse Spare was regarded as a living certainty for the Caulfield Cup. On the night before the Cup a fire, supposedly organised by the notorious Melbourne criminal Squizzy Taylor, burnt the stables to the ground. The effect of this ruined any chance Spare had in the race. Darcy lost heavily.

In 1932 Darcy had a horse called Sleepy Head. Unimpressed with the name, he changed it to Yarramba. As the horses entered the straight in the 1932 Melbourne Cup, Yarramba cleared away causing the announcer, Eric Welsh, to declare *"Yarramba will bolt in."* But almost as soon as he had made the statement, Peter Pan burst on the scene to wear Yarramba down and win by a head.

By 1937 Darcy was stone motherless broke. But, he still owned a racehorse. It was to start in a race at Moonee Valley. Darcy begged and borrowed £100 from his friends to back his horse at 33/1. The horse was named **The Trump**. It won - and won another six successive races culminating in the Melbourne Cup. Each time Darcy just kept doubling up and betting all his winnings. Darcy was in clover again. It didn't last long unfortunately. Several years later poor Darcy had lost all his winnings once more and he died penniless.



Jockey was stiff

The 1907 Cup was won by Apologue. Jockey W Evans had fasted to ride at the required weight of 7st. 9lbs. After a vigorous ride he was noticeably pale on the way back to the enclosure. As he mounted the steps, to weigh in, he collapsed in a dead faint. Undeterred, a steward endeavoured to continue on with the weigh-in. However Evans was placed on a bench to recuperate. Fifteen minutes went by and Evans was still out cold. The crowd outside was yelling and complaining. The judge then gave the order for the jockey to be placed on the scales. He was....with his whip and saddle on top of Evans. Correct weight was then called. Evans was carried back to the jockeys' room where he came to an hour later.

Watch the video:

The Cup stops absolutely everything

In Brisbane, in 1949, a Stipendary Magistrate had four men before him on charges of attempting to rob a bank at Samford (near Brisbane). At Cup time, a short recess was called. The Court officials and the four men charged adjourned to the front verandah of the Court House. A radio was located there allowing all to hear the Cup. (I couldn't find out the result of the case....but Foxami won the Cup).

Watch the video:

A battling jockey wins

1994 produced one of the better stories connected with the Cup. Wayne Harris had been an outstanding jockey early in his career. Indeed, legendary trainer Tommy Smith had rated him as one of the best apprentice jockeys he had seen. On the day before the running of the 1994 Cup my pal Ray Thomas wrote a poignant article, in the Sydney Daily Telegraph Mirror. It told of Wayne Harris, in 1993, pleading with the doctors at the Prince of Wales Hospital to allow him to go home to watch the running of the 1993 (Vintage Crop) Cup. Wayne had cut his left index finger on a buckle on his riding gear and the wound became infected.

It took four operations, two amputations and a month in hospital. There was a possibility, if the germ remained, that the entire hand would have to be amputated. Not a pleasant thought for a jockey. Ray Thomas told of Wayne being plagued by a "litany of serious illnesses" including a life-threatening brain tumour, which incidentally left him deaf in one ear.

It's here we pick up the name Andrew Read. Many people will remember Wayne was interviewed while riding back to the saddling paddock. It was then he said "There is a little fellow in a country town down here in Victoria. His name is Andrew Read who's been through the same as I have with tumours. I let him down yesterday. I was supposed to go and see him but with the pressure on.....this is for you Andrew, too."



Wayne Harris had not been able to get to see Andrew. But he did manage to call him and talk to him on the telephone for about an hour. Wayne's wife Linda was quoted telling Andrew's parents were concerned because of Andrew was having trouble bouncing back after operations. Wayne had offered the advice not to give up; he said you always have to keep trying. Not bad advice for any endeavour we may undertake! Good on you Wayne. You sound like a beaut bloke.

Note: Wayne has gone on to become a member of the Sky Sports team along with Tony Brassel, Bradley Davidson, Ron Dufficy, David Gately, Mark Guest, Gary Harley, Paul Joice, Chynna Marston and Mick Wallace.



The 'ice' horse won...

In 1984, What a Nuisance damaged his spinal cord running in the Sydney Cup. Having the horse 'put down' was a real option. The experts suggested he would never race again. But, What a Nuisance went on to win the 1985 Melbourne Cup. In his acceptance speech, trainer John Meagher paid tribute to John Peatsfield and Peter Joyce for their part in getting the horse racing again. Jockey Pat Hyland is quoted as saying *"I doubt if any other Cup horse has stood in more buckets of ice, had more work done on its back or walked more than this game old bloke."*

Watch the video:

Age is no barrier...

In 1948 Ray Neville, Rimfire's jockey, was just 15 years old. On the morning of the Cup young Neville didn't even know he was riding in the race. He had risen to do his normal duties. At this time his master, trainer Lou Robertson, told him he would be riding the 80/1 outsider, Rimfire. It was his first ride in a Melbourne Cup and only his seventh race ride. Many other jockeys had been approached to ride Rimfire. All of them refused to ride this rank outsider. I wonder how they felt when the 15-year-old boldly rode Rimfire to a half-head win over Dark Marne ridden by Jack Thompson. For his effort Neville was paid 25 pounds. **Watch video:**

When 'upper class' bookmakers were replaced...

On the 25th of April in 1895, in the last race of the day held at the then Kensington Racecourse (now the site of the University of NSW), Merry Girl was declared the winner. However, sometime later, Merry Girl was declared disqualified due to incorrect weight because the jockey had carried his whip onto the scales. The second place horse Pearl Powder was subsequently declared the winner.

At that time the 'well to do' bookmakers mostly belonged to the up-market Tattersalls Club (currently in Elizabeth St). These bookmakers occupied the prestigious 'Paddock' area of the racecourse. When they were requested to pay out on Pearl Powder they refused, stating they had already paid out on Merry Girl.



The following Thursday, the race officials invited the Paddock bookmakers to once again pay out on Pearl Powder. Again they refused. The Paddock bookmakers were then escorted off the racecourse and the 'Middle Class' St Leger Reserve bookmakers were invited from the outer rail racecourse to the Paddock area.

Click the see video:

Subsequently the St Leger Bookmakers took over the Paddock areas of all the major racecourses in NSW and on September 2nd 1895 formed their own Club to be called 'City Tattersalls Club'. **Watch video:**

A Birthday/Christmas gift idea?

Do you have family member or friend having a birthday soon? Or perhaps you are thinking about a Christmas gift for one or more people. **Why not give them a personalised, hard-copy, unabridged version (with THEIR name on it) of Fact, Fiction and Fables of the Melbourne Cup, signed by the author?** As well as adding their name on the cover of the book, we can add a personal message from you. The book will be wrapped and packaged and can be sent direct to whomever you wish to give such an extraordinary gift. We think this is something that has never been done before.

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