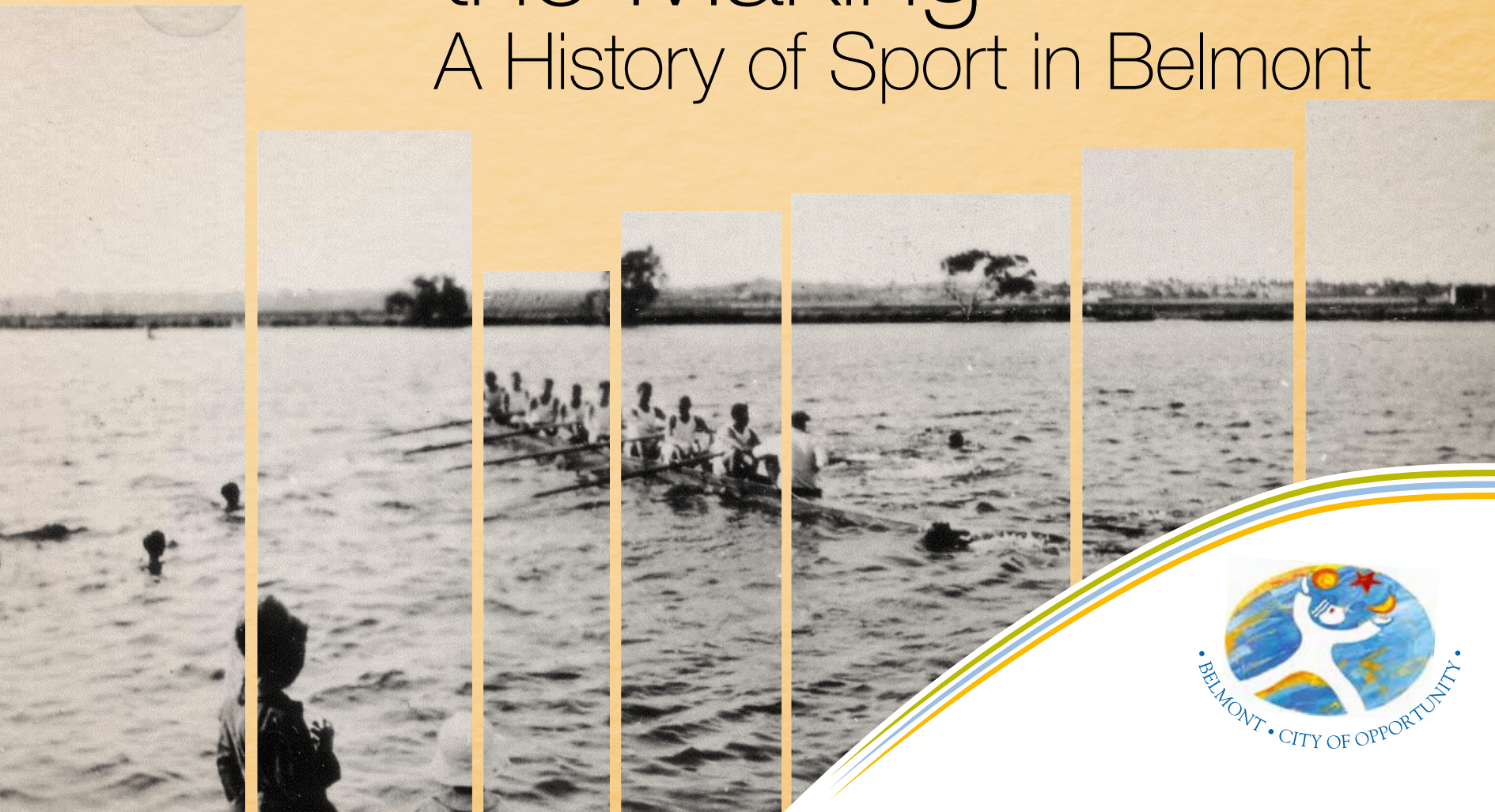
Champions in the Making

A History of Sport in Belmont



BELMONT • CITY OF OPPORTUNITY •

Apprentices at J. J. Kelly's stables: 1912

Belmont's Sporting Heroes

Because there are many places to play sport in the Belmont district, it is no surprise that the area has developed a number of stars.

In 1954, Belmont's junior Australian Rules Football Club combined with the Under Age Club to field one of the strongest teams in the league. Three famous footballers passed through its ranks: John Turnball, Fred Castledine, and Mal Atwell.

Mal was a tough, hard hitting footballer who went on to play at East Perth, and subsequently Perth. He made seventeen interstate appearances, and had a highly successful stint as Perth coach. Mal was eventually named as the coach of Perth's official Team of the Century.

In 1949, a cycling club called 'The Belmont Wheelers' was formed. This went on to organise many significant races and to produce several champion cyclists. By 1954, two local cyclists were dominating the competitions: Ron Cleary in the seniors and Barry Waddell in the juniors.

Barry went on to become one of the greats of Australian cycling in the 1960s, winning the Sun Tour five years running, a race involving 1,920 km in nine days. He also held the record for the trip from Adelaide to Melbourne, completing it in 22 hours.

Internationally acclaimed cricketer, Dennis Lillee first played cricket at Belmay Primary School. The best fast bowler of his generation, Dennis had the school's practice nets named after him. Known for his fiery temperament, when he retired from international cricket in 1984 he held the world record holder for most test wickets (355).

In 1981, Margaret Reddish, 'the barefoot distance star', set a women's record of four individual gold medals in the national Track & Field Championships. The 17 year old, who began her career at Belmont Little Athletics, once set an Australian record and then ran the 20 kilometres from Perry Lakes Stadium to her home in Cloverdale.

Dennis Lillee: 1972

On the River

Regatta at the Springs: 1926

Regatta at the Springs: 1926

Between 1923 and 1929, the Rivervale Progress Association held annual regattas, originally on the stretch of water between the Sandringham Hotel and Cracknell Park. These regattas included eight-oar rowing races, as well as swimming contests.

RIVERVALE REGATTA

Given a fine day tomorrow the rendezvous of rowing and swimming enthusiasts will be the Rivervale regatta, which will be held between the Belmont Park racecourse and the Sandringham Hotel, admittedly, one of the finest stretches of water obtainable for regatta purposes, as all events may be seen from start to finish from either bank.

This will be the second regatta promoted by the Rivervale Progress Association, who may be congratulated on their efforts to promote healthy sport. The principal rowing event will be the eight-oar race for the challenge shield; while among the others will be the first sculling event and the first ladies' fours to be held on this reach.

The chief swimming event will be the State three-quarters of a mile championship, backed up by a teams relay race over 440 yards, and other events.

West Australian, 6 February 1925

ROWING

The results of the Rivervale regatta emphasised, if any emphasis is needed, the value of proper training, for with one exception every winning crew had covered many miles in the course of its preparation.

The most popular win was that of Fremantle in the maiden novice fours. To enable it to take part in the races, it had to row up from Fremantle, no light undertaking for an evening row.

For the Rivervale regatta it was decided to row the boat up last Thursday, when very rough water was encountered, with the result that the crew when near Nedlands swamped. The enthusiasm that carried the Fremantle men through their difficulties was fittingly rewarded by their victory.

West Australian, 13 February 1929

From River to Pool

For most people growing up in the Belmont district, swimming took place in the Swan River, usually at 'The Springs' at the end of Hawksburn Road, Rivervale, where bathing sheds were installed.

However, it was not until 1919 that the local authority finally banned horses from swimming in the same space as people. By the early 1920s, a jetty had been erected at the Hawksburn Road site by the Belmont Young Men's Club, with jarrah donated by the Roads Board.

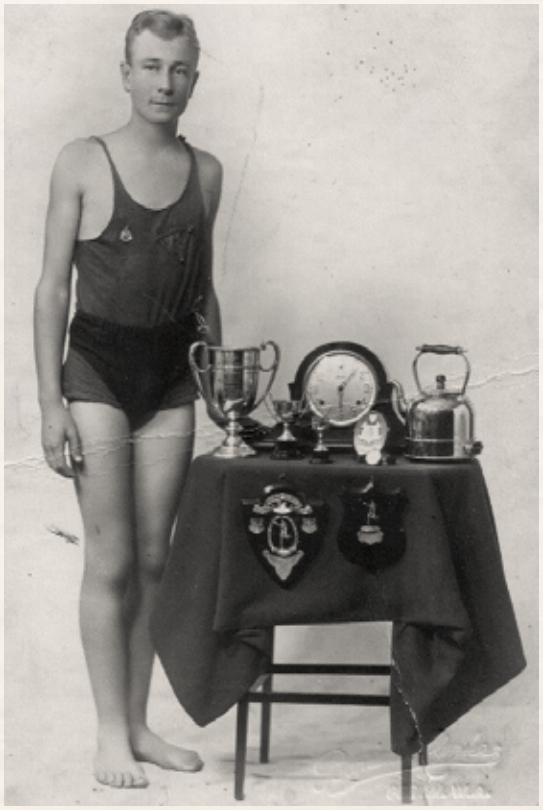
Belmont Young Men's Club purchased land at The Springs with the intention of developing it as a major swimming and rowing venue, but was unable to raise the funds needed. So in 1926, the club presented the land to the Belmont Roads Board on the condition that it be reserved for public use.

It was not always quiet down by the river, and acts of 'rowdyism' were a common occurrence at the bathing area. There were also regular failures to conform to the dress standards of the day. Ken Harvey and Douglas Phillips were charged by the police with the crime of swimming 'with only the lower portion of bathers on'.

Belmont residents began to push for a public swimming pool in the 1960s. The river was no longer popular for swimming because of increasing pollution, and a freshwater pool was seen as a necessity. There were several delays due to lack of funds, but with Belmont Councillor Bart Clayden pushing hard, the Swimming Pool Project Committee was formed.

The result was that a block of land was finally purchased in 1970. It was fourteen acres in size and in a suitably central position on Alexander Road between Robinson Avenue and Abernethy Road.

The work was completed in 1971, and the Bart Clayden Aquatic Centre was officially opened by the Premier, John Tonkin, in November of that year.



Swimming Champion, Fred Wigmore: 1932

Swimmers at the Bart Clayden Aquatic Centre: c.1970

Success at last

Belmont Junior Football Club has produced several AFL stars such as Chris Mayne (Fremantle Dockers), Michael Johnson (Fremantle Dockers), Brennan Stack (Western Bulldogs) and past Fremantle player, Dion Woods.

Eric Nock recalls the early days of the club:

While football had been played in Belmont long before that date, it was in 1953 that all the National Football Clubs introduced a competition for players 16 years and under.

Our sons and their mates, who had been playing cricket in the Temperance League, wanted to start playing football. I told them it would be more costly and their parents would not approve. So the boys—legally or otherwise—raised £63, which was enough to pay for uniforms and leave a balance.

While other Belmont teams played in the Perth league, the Juniors, at their own wish, played in the Swan competition.

Cliff Severin, who was well known in Belmont, purchased one of the Caisley's buses when the company sold out. I had driven for Caisley's for eight years, so Cliff suggested I should use the bus to convey the team to the various grounds.

The players went into their games with enthusiasm but success was hard to come by. However, the Junior Club continued in its endeavours, even if Bassendean seemed to have a permanent right to the Grand Finals.

In 1957 Belmont outscored and outpointed Bassendean in the skills department of the game and there was much jubilation. It was then our turn to treat the opposing clubs to a celebration. The players' parents provided a dinner evening in Redcliffe Hall, which was full to capacity.

It can be said with some pride that when Western Australia won the Australian Championships outright in 1961, Belmont Football Club had three players in that team who had passed through their ranks: Mal Atwell, Fred Castledine and John Turnbull.

Belmont Junior Football Club:1927

Two games of football

The first organised Australian Rules league in Belmont took place in 1908. The finals were fought out between the Cowboys—dressed in bright yellow—and the Fenians who, as the name suggests, were clad in green.

On a Sunday afternoon in August, around 500 spectators made their way to the Belmont Recreation Ground in Hardey Park to witness the struggle for the championship of Belmont.

The peace of a Belmont Sunday was disturbed by loud shouts greeting the contenders as they entered the arena, and the supporters of both teams shouted themselves hoarse throughout the match.

The game was fast and vigorous, full of tense excitement, and resulted in a victory for the Fenians by a single goal.

Despite losing the finals, The Cowboys remained proud of one of the more vocal of their female fans, who they declared was the undisputed 'champion lady barracker of the district'.

SOUTH BELMONT SOCCER TEAM BEATS CANNING 7-1

Wind and rain made conditions unpleasant when South Belmont and Canning met for the second time this season, Belmont winning 7-1.

Belmont's teams was as follows:—Brearly, Taylor, Beamish, Wells, Howard, Hunter, Harkins, Cooper, Horrigan and Marrable.

A good run by the Belmont forwards saw Harkins and Hunter score in quick succession.

Bell for Canning had a good run down the centre to hit the cross bar. At the other end Wells shot hard at Hepple and raced in to score from the rebound. Half time was called with the score 3-0.

The second half saw heavy showers fall and the big pools of water on the ground made for difficult football.

Canning were indeed unlucky in not scoring on several occasions, the ball striking the crossbar and posts five times.

Belmont made use of every opportunity, whilst Canning were not decisive enough in their attacks.

South Western Advertiser, 11 August 1949

Belmont Amateur Football Club: 1953

South Belmont Soccer Team: possibly 1940s

Junior Cricket, Belmont Style

Members of the Young Men's Club and Swimming Club were entitled to free membership of Belmont's Senior Cricket Club, formed in 1919. The club was given the use of Hardey Park and members helped improve the facilities there under the supervision of caretaker Peter Keen.

In 1921 the area was renamed Belmont Recreation Ground, and Riversdale Cricket Club was also allowed to use it. A South Belmont Cricket Club was also formed, a concrete pitch being laid in H. H. Roberts' bull paddock in Uranium Street.

Rivervale State School Cricket team (1967)

Frank Wilson recalled that Belmont children had to play a more improvised version of the game:

Around the early 1920s, there were no properly created cricket pitches in any of the school grounds in the Belmont district. Wickets were either sharpened broom handles, fruit cases or kerosene tins. The ball was of a cork composition.

I recall when once the 'pitch' we used was too close to the school house. Wally Atwell bowled a full toss to Arthur Wilson and of course the ball had to find its way inside the house. Unfortunately the window was closed at the time. They were each made to pay sixpence per week until the cost of the replaced window was recovered.

After school the kids from the vicinity of Belmont State School often played cricket using Belgravia Street as the pitch. Bicycles were the main traffic and the generally had the good sense to bypass us. Sometimes we could play for an hour without moving the wicket off the road.

I remember one Sunday afternoon when we were playing and we could have been a 'little' noisier than usual. Scottie Cameron, a well-known character who lived opposite the school area, threw three straw hats into the playing area and said, 'You've got your b–––y hat trick, now let me get some b–––y sleep!'

Bunny and Tiger

P.H. 'Bunny' Hyde: 1927

Frank 'Tiger' Moore: 1962

Bunny Hyde

P.H. Hyde grew up in Kalgoorlie. He would go rabbiting every Saturday, always returning with rabbits hanging around his waist. A friend told him he looked like a 'bunny rabbit' and the nicknamed 'Bunny' stuck.

Bunny was a very successful jockey over the years, with several hundred winners at tracks all over the State. Wood Arab gave him his biggest thrill as a rider, with fourteen wins and also as his first big win as a trainer. With an ever threatening weight problem, Bunny turned to training in 1931 at stables on Orrong Road, Rivervale, where he kept up to eleven horses.

In 1951 he was awarded the winning trainer's trophy for Royal Brocade, who won the Jubilee Cup. In 1957 Bunny was the leading trainer during the Goldfields racing season.

In 1971, Bunny decided it was time to retire and the WA Turf Club honoured him with a Trainer's Life Membership.

Tiger Moore

Born in 1926 and raised in Redcliffe, the young Frank Moore gained the nickname 'Tiger' early. When playing football a young Frank would burst out of the pack with the ball while people yelled 'Go Tiger!'

Leaving school at fourteen, Tiger was indentured to Ascot trainer Bunny Hyde. In the 1946-47 season Tiger won the first of six metropolitan jockey premierships.

His record of nine WA St Legers, eight WA Oaks, seven WA Derbies and five Karrakatta Plates are the envy of any jockey.

Tiger's association with the champion Aquanita raised him to prominence on the national racing scene, partnering the horse to seven of his eight wins in the 1962-63 season.

In a career spanning 35 years, Tiger rode in excess of 2,000 winners and won almost every major race on the Western Australian racing calendar.

Tiger Moore passed away in 1992, aged 66.

Stables and their trainers

Bernard 'Tim' Woods was one of a number of trainers who appeared in Belmont in the post-war years. He set up near the course in 1947—close enough for him to be able to walk the horses to the track for training and racing.

The old house that he lived in with his two apprentices, at the back of the stables, was little more than a shack, with boxes to sit on and an old wood stove, though not much cooking went on. There were two beds in one room with mattresses for the young boys and a couple of old blankets, but no sheets and no pyjamas (that saved washing), and Tim's room was much the same. But the stables were always fairly ship-shape.

By 1960 there were more than fifty horse-trainers in the area between Rivervale and Redcliffe, with the greater proportion around the Ascot Racecourse. Most had several acres. Probably the largest establishment in that time was Currie's. His stables were situated on a seventeen acre paddock in Belgravia Street.

Trainer Eric O'Malley married Gwendoline Sugars, granddaughter of the founder of Sugars' Brickworks, and set up his racing establishment next to the old factory site. His stables remained there until the 1980s when they were demolished to make way for the Tonkin Highway Bridge.

Even when trainers lived close to the races, getting all their entries to the course and home again could prove difficult. It was much more of a problem for those who lived in South Belmont, and local lads who were good riders could often pick up a shilling on Saturdays by helping out. These stables were forced to close when Town Planning Scheme No. 4 was implemented in the late 1940s. This restricted all training stables to the northern side of the Highway near Ascot and to Newburn.

Trainer Eric O'Malley with Single Phase: 1968

A brand new racecourse

Ascot Racecourse (or the Perth Racecourse as it was officially known) was totally transformed in 1903. All the old buildings on the 200 acre site were completely demolished to their foundations.

Even back then, the Western Australian Turf Club knew that some people would be unhappy about the loss of the racecourse's heritage buildings:

A sentimental sadness at obliterating these old landmarks for stern utilitarian 20th Century principles must claim a passing sigh.

The old buildings have been razed to the ground, and their bricks and mortar converted into concrete for superior foundations, granolithic floors, etc, of the new buildings which had to be realigned to suit the all-determining requirement of this class of engineering, defined by the 'line of sight'.

WATC Programme (1903)

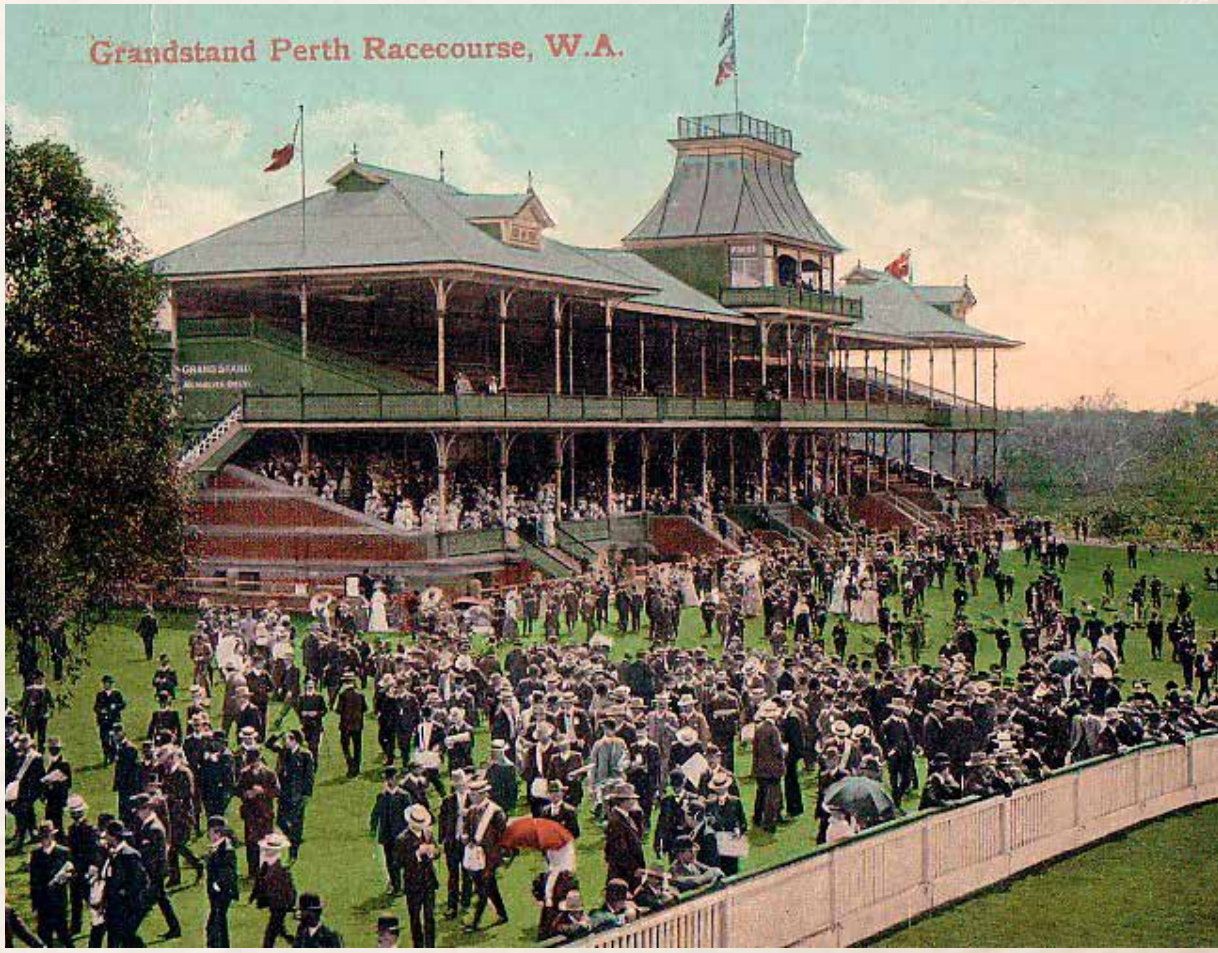
The new grandstand was a bold design, one which was constructed for safety and convenience, rather than to have a striking appearance.

The ground floor was used for refreshments. A Committee Dining Hall was located on one corner, with the rest of the space for members of the Club who wished to dine.

The first floor provided eight tiers of seats and a large open tea room for those who did not wish to dine downstairs. The second floor had another eight tiers of seats. Particularly praiseworthy was the introduction of lavatories on all floors connected with the sewerage system.

Among the many new buildings, including the impressive Administrative Quarters, was a much-needed jockeys' quarters. A covered way led from it to the Administrative Quarters. It was noted at the time that jockeys would now be able to have privacy and comfort.

The modern buildings may have been functional, but they were not at first much loved. One journalist noted that they needed time to lose some of their 'aggressive newness' before Perth would have good reason to be proud of its principal racecourse.



Cycling Man

Ronald Cleary was brought up in his grandmother's house in Hardey Road. He started the Belmont Wheel of Cycle Club, later joining the Azzuri racing team. State Champion in 1954, Ron won the annual Stan Gurney V.C Memorial Bike Race the following year.

Ronald Cleary recalled his early days of cycling:

I first got interested in cycling when my uncle Paddy gave me some armguards, some mittens and a crash helmet. So I put them on and charged around the road.

Well, I'd seen a bike in Lucas' shop, but the old man said 'I'll go up and get it'. He came back with a shocking bike, but it was a sort of semi-racing bike, so I used to ride that.

I'd be riding towards the causeway and a bloke would come up behind me. Eventually he caught up. His name was Fred Fewings, and he worked for Swansea cycles.

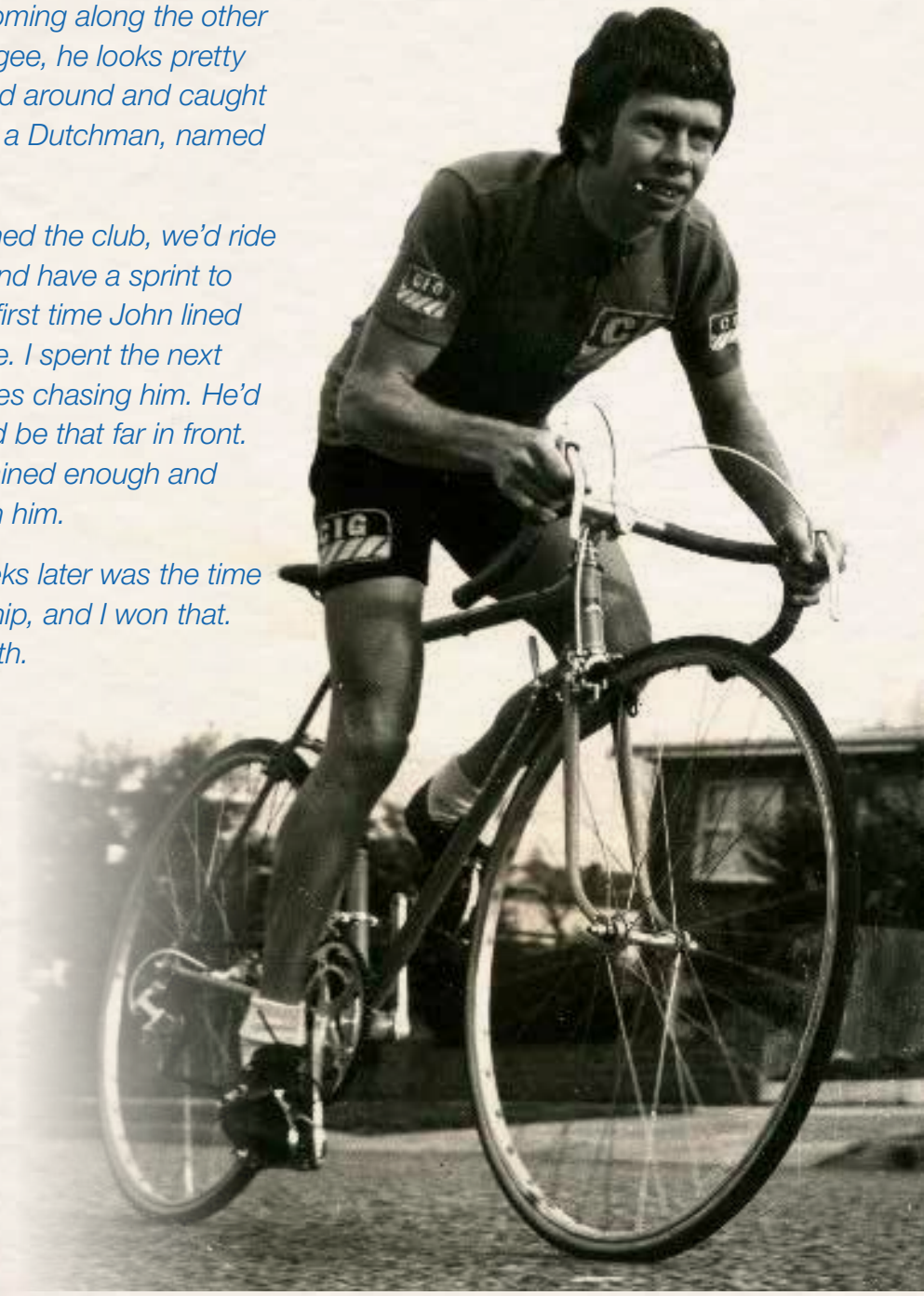
He said 'Would you like to race? There's races up in Midland of a Saturday.' I told him I would, although the first race was a handicap and I didn't do much good.

I got a better bike but I wasn't training hard enough. When I got in a senior race, and only just turned 18, I thought: 'I could beat these jokers but I've got to start training'.

I was going down to Scarborough, and this rider was coming along the other side. I thought, gee, he looks pretty good, so I turned around and caught him up. He was a Dutchman, named John Vogels.

Before John joined the club, we'd ride nice and easy and have a sprint to finish. Well, the first time John lined up, he was gone. I spent the next six or seven races chasing him. He'd just take off, and be that far in front. Eventually I'd trained enough and was staying with him.

A couple of weeks later was the time trial championship, and I won that. John came fourth.



Ron Cleary:1970s

The American Influence

International quality baseball venues are rare in Australia, so it was a loss for the sport when Belmont's Parry Fields was decommissioned for medium-density housing in the mid-1990s. First opened in 1982, three years later Kevin Parry, a local businessman and baseball enthusiast, signed an agreement with Belmont City Council to take over the venue for fifteen years.

When the Australian Baseball League came to Parry Fields, fireworks were set off together with music blaring from the loudspeakers. These caused conflict with the more established horse racing industry located nearby. Complaints about the noise and disruption also came from residents of the new housing estates in the area.

Unfortunately, this coincided with Kevin Parry having business difficulties and the retirement of Mayor Peg Parkin, a great baseball supporter. With the start of the 'Building Better Cities', the City of Belmont resolved that it would be better to redevelop the whole area, rather than leave the stadium intact.

In any case, the managers of the stadium had not been able to keep the venue profitable and could not meet the stadium's high maintenance costs.

Parry Fields: 1980s

Parry Fields: 1980s

Rivervale State School - Basketball team (1967). Back row: D. McPherson, C. Moran, P. Mowday, Miss M. Brown, G. Rea; front row: N. Forlani, L. Harper, K. Johnson

There must be something about basketball—over 2000 girls can't be wrong.

See any group of girls in shop or office, in their lunch room, even outside their church door, and you can be almost sure that they're talking basketball.

If they're not, then it won't be long before they form themselves into a basketball team.

And just let's look at a few typical girls who play basketball.

Sisters include State players Pat Kirby and Aileen Travers who play for Rivervale and are as adept as softball as they are at basketball.

While Evelyn Robinson is playing basketball for South Belmont—she has been 5 years in the State team—her husband Ross is playing rugby. Baby daughter Deborah hasn't indicated her preferences yet.

Sunday Times, 17 May 1953

Little Athletics

Gerry Archer Athletic Park

Little Athletics in Western Australia developed, like many community organisations, because of the efforts of one person.

In 1967, Robin Johnson saw Little Athletics in action in Victoria where he met Trevor Billingham, the founder of the Victorian Little Athletics Association. Robin was impressed by what he saw and decided on his return to Perth to commence the organisation in the West.

He enlisted the aid of a dozen helpers, athletes and officials and in February 1968 the first Little Athletics meeting was held at Perry Lakes Stadium.

Belmont's Little Athletics was launched at Forster Park in 1971. An athletic park was established between 1972 and 1973 on Abernethy Road. It was later named the 'Gerry Archer Athletic Park' in honour of Gerry Archer, who served on the Shire Council from 1974 to 1979. This facility became the home of the Belmont Amateur Athletic Club and Belmont Little Athletics Association.

Mr Archer was president of the Belmont Little Athletic Centre for three years and held various other offices in the junior and senior athletics clubs at this centre in their formative years. He first served as a Belmont Councillor in May 1974 and held the post with distinction until his death in September 1979, at the age of just forty five.

References

p. 3: Maxine Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward: The Story of Belmont* (City of Belmont, 1999); Herald Sun, 11 February 2011; The Age, 23 March 1981; *West Australian*, 18 May 1949; *West Australian*, 24 May 1954; *West Australian*, 14 June 1954.

p. 5: Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward; Daily News*, 10 December 1919; West Australian, 6 October 1949

p. 6: E. M. Nock, 'Belmont Junior Football Club', *Looking Back* (Belmont Historical Society, 1983)

p. 7: Daily News, 16 October 1908; *Daily News*, 7 August 1908

p. 8: Frank Wilson, 'Junior Cricket Belmont Style', *Memories of Belmont* (Belmont Historical Society, 1986); Laurie, Ever Flowing Forward

p. 9: [Anon], 'Bunny Hyde—A Lifetime in Racing', *Memories of Belmont* (Belmont Historical Society, 1986)

p. 10: Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward*

p. 11: *West Australian*, 14 December 1903; *Western Mail*, 2 January 1904

p. 12: Oral History interview with Ron Cleary (2013), copy held by City of Belmont

p. 13: Joe Clark, 'A History of Australian Baseball' (2004)

p. 14: Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward*; Stephen Egan, 'Little Athletics – an Australian Social Phenomenon: The early history' (2008)

Images (in order as shown in book)

p. 2: Stables: City of Belmont M0035-01

p. 3: Dennis Lillee: State Library of Western Australia 359143PD

p. 4: Regatta: City of Belmont M0002-05 & M0002-12

p. 5: Fred Wigmore: City of Belmont M0391-01; Bart Clayden Pool: City of Belmont S012-16

p. 6: Junior Football Club: City of Belmont M0020-01

p. 7: Football club image: Image held City of Belmont Museum; South Belmont SC: City of Belmont M0156-01

p. 8: School cricket team: City of Belmont M0282-01

p. 9: Bunny Hyde: State Library of Western Australia 047416PD; Tiger Moore: Courtesy of Steve Moore

p. 10: Eric O'Malley: City of Belmont M0069-03

p. 11: Grandstand: City of Belmont M0318-01

p. 12: Ron Cleary: The Advocate (TAS)

p. 13: Images of Parry Fields courtesy of Perth Heat; Rivervale School team: City of Belmont M0277-01

p. 14: Gerry Archer Park: City of Belmont 0114-01

Front Cover Images (top and bottom)

Stables: City of Belmont M0035-01

Regatta: City of Belmont M0002-05

Back Cover Image

Inaugural Sandringham Rowing Regatta 1987: City of Belmont M0421-01

Publication correct at date of printing, June 2015. **Writer** Eddie Marcus, History Now. **Designer** Marketforce.

Each part of the coat of arms symbolises an aspect of the City of Belmont. The kiln and stack represent brick making and the cog is a symbol for industry. The wings symbolise flight and the airport, while the horse is the racing industry. The green stands for public space; silver, the sky; and blue is the Swan River. The black swan is the State emblem, and the ducal coronet around its neck symbolises Belmont's relationship to WA.

For further information on the City of Belmont Heritage Series, please contact the Belmont Museum on 9477 7450 or email museum@belmont.wa.gov.au or visit 61 Elizabeth Street, Belmont WA 6104