Unregistered Proprietary Horse Racing in Sydney 1888-1942

by

Wayne Peake

A thesis submitted to the University of Western Sydney in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor Of Philosophy

December 2004

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For Bryce and Emma
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I would like to thank my wife Jody, who shelved her beloved Stephen King to read drafts of this work and provide valuable feedback. My thanks as well go to Terry Woodward and Tyrone Paterson for undertaking similar selfless readings.
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other higher degree or diploma of the university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

....................................................

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Conversions

Distances and area

One inch = 2.54 centimetres
One hand = 12.7 centimetres
One foot = 30.48 centimetres
One chain = 20.177 metres
One furlong = 201.168 metres
One mile = 1.609344 kilometres
One acre = .404686 hectares

Weights

One pound = 0.45359 kilograms
One stone = 6.35026 kilograms

Currency Equivalents

One shilling = 10 cents
One pound (£1) = Two dollars ($2)
One sovereign equalled one pound
One guinea equalled £1 1s
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<td>Australian Bookmakers Association</td>
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<td>AIF</td>
<td>Australian Imperial Force</td>
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<td>AJC</td>
<td>Australian Jockey Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>Associated Racing Clubs</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATC</td>
<td>Australian Trotting Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJC</td>
<td>Newcastle Jockey Clubs</td>
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<td>NSWTC</td>
<td>New South Wales Trotting Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>PGOA</td>
<td>Pony and Galloways Owners Association</td>
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<td>POTA</td>
<td>Pony Owners and Trainers Association</td>
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<td>QTC</td>
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<td>SDPC</td>
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Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of unregistered proprietary horse racing, or pony racing as it was popularly known, which took place weekly or more frequently in Sydney, New South Wales, between the years 1888 and 1942. It is also concerned with how unregistered proprietary horse racing has been remembered. Pony racing’s principal venues in the twentieth century were the Ascot, Victoria Park, Rosebery Park and Kensington racecourses. The clubs that operated these racecourses located in the district between the city and Botany Bay formed in 1907 the Associated Racing Clubs (ARC). None of these racecourses exists today; the last, Rosebery, was dismantled during 1962, but the last race meeting there took place almost 23 years earlier. The last race meeting at any Sydney pony racecourse took place at Ascot on 22 August 1942.

This thesis is the first substantive analysis of the broad subject of pony racing in Sydney. However, a significant number of scholars, journalists and other writers have contributed commentary and judgements to a discourse that has existed since the establishment of the Sydney Turf Club (STC) in 1943. These writings have created an orthodox view of the sport that asserts that *inter alia* it was a cultural expression of a ‘needy and greedy’ element of the working class and that its constituency was mutually excluded from that of the racing of the Establishment, conducted by the Australian Jockey Club (AJC). The orthodoxy also holds unregistered racing was subject to endemic corruption, haphazardly conducted, inexpensive to attend, provided poor money and was in general a burlesque of AJC racing.

It is the purpose of this work to engage in this discourse and to test the tenets of the orthodoxy through examination or re-examination of relevant primary sources, including parliamentary papers, contemporary newspapers and journals, race books and other documents, administrative records, photographs, and the memoirs and transcripts of oral history provided by human participants.
Preface

This thesis is an analysis of unregistered proprietary horse racing, or pony racing as it was popularly known, which took place weekly or more frequently in Sydney, New South Wales, between the years 1888 and 1942. In it I am also concerned with how unregistered proprietary horse racing has been remembered. Pony racing’s principal venues in the twentieth century were the Ascot, Victoria Park, Rosebery Park and Kensington racecourses. The clubs that operated these racecourses located in the district between the city and Botany Bay formed in 1907 the Associated Racing Clubs (ARC). None of these racecourses exists today; the last, Rosebery, was dismantled during 1962, but the last race meeting there took place almost 23 years earlier. The last race meeting at any Sydney pony racecourse took place at Ascot on 22 August 1942. Aside from Sydney, pony racing had also been significant in Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Hobart, as well as rural areas of New South Wales, and overseas, in England, India and South Africa.

It is essential to define some of the terminology that will be encountered throughout this thesis, in particular the key phrases *pony*, *proprietary* and *unregistered racing*. In general usage ‘pony’ connotes variously a child’s pet, a fully-grown small horse, or an animal that belongs to a different breed from the horse altogether, such as the Exmoor or Welsh pony. Pony breeds are shorter in the leg in relation to the body than the horse and therefore have a sturdier appearance that is accentuated by a less gracile head.

The attributive use of *pony* for a form of equine racing has led some to visualise it as a sort of gimmicky promotion, similar to the use of circus monkeys as ‘jockeys’ on greyhounds at Sydney’s Epping racecourse in the 1920s.\(^1\) This was not the case; pony races were legitimate contests for thoroughbred or mixed-bred racehorses of slightly

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\(^1\) *Daily Mirror* 27/10/1973 p. 5
smaller build. They are the subjects of this thesis—not Shetland ponies ridden by children competing in ‘hay bale’ hurdle races, as are sometimes seen at the Sydney Easter Show and other rural fairs, as several of my interlocutors have (not unreasonably) assumed. To a casual observer, an ARC pony race would have appeared virtually identical to a thoroughbred race at Randwick racecourse.

The New South Wales *Gaming and Betting Act 1906* defined a pony race meeting as ‘any meeting at which the conditions of *any race* include any condition relating to the height of any horse, mare, or gelding eligible to compete therein.’ By 1939 such ‘restricted-heights’ races were generally programmed for 14.1 or 14.2 hand ponies. In earlier years there had also been races for ponies 14, 13 and even 12.3 hands or less, which were often given whimsical titles such as the ‘Tom Thumb,’ ‘Lilliputian’ or ‘midget’ handicap. Pony meetings also included races for *galloways*. The semantics of this nebulous term are explored in chapter four, but it referred to competitors between 14.2 and 14.5, or later, 15 hands. In addition pony meetings included races for ‘all-heights’ horses above 15 hands. Confusingly all of these contests came, as the *Act* demanded, under the trope of pony racing. Over time the preponderance of thoroughbred blood increased, as did the size of most competitors. In the twentieth century the majority of races on pony programs were open to horses of any height, and the rhyming slang for ponies, ‘macaronis,’ replaced the outdated nineteenth-century colloquialism ‘littl’uns’ in the common parlance and on the press racing pages.

Profit-seeking individuals or syndicates and later, companies, who staged race meetings on enclosed grounds to which admission was charged, conducted *proprietary racing*. The promoters usually owned the land on which their racecourses stood. Proprietary clubs can be further classified as *registered* (i.e., racing under Australian Jockey Club [AJC] authority and control) or *unregistered*, denoting those

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2 The height of a pony is a contested concept. The British Royal Agricultural Society defined a pony as a beast of less than 14.0 hands, whereas in Australia 14.5 hands were the upper limit. A hand—about 12.7 cm—is the traditional unit of horse height, measured from the withers.

race meetings not sanctioned by the AJC. In virtually all situations unregistered racing and pony racing are synonymous terms, except that unregistered racing ceased earlier, in 1933, while pony racing continued under AJC registration.

The obverse of the commercial ‘proprietary’ racing ventures was the non-proprietary racing clubs that purportedly raced for sport and utility rather than profit. In New South Wales these were the AJC and the Hawkesbury Jockey Club, as well as the numerous country town race clubs. The AJC was the principal (or governing) racing club of New South Wales. An honorary committee and a stipendiary secretary administered the AJC, which mythologised its racecourse at Randwick as a sort of Elysian Field on which the best horses were raced and identified for future breeding. It ostensibly tolerated betting at its race meetings as something of a necessary evil.

The start-up capital of non-proprietary clubs was raised from the subscriptions of the inaugural membership, or by debentures. Their racecourses were located on crown land on which the clubs held long-term leases at peppercorn rental. They were modelled on the Jockey Club of England, the progenitor of all gentlemanly turf clubs. However they, unlike the Jockey Club racing at Newmarket, but like the Sydney proprietaries, depended on taking gate money to fund their racing program. The non-proprietary clubs have provided the best-known and most prestigious races of the Australian turf such as the Melbourne and Caulfield Cups, the derbies, the Doncaster and the Stradbroke Handicap.

**Writings on Australian equine racing**

An extensive discourse on Australian horse racing has developed since the 1880s and the pioneering work of Nat Gould, but little of it is the result of scholarly analysis, and its consideration of unregistered racing is relatively limited. Of the very large library on Australian racing (probably exceeded in sporting subjects only by the literature devoted to cricket), almost all are works of journalism, or memoirs, their purpose the celebration of the deeds of past champions. Many focus on either the race, or racehorse, that are key elements in the Anglo-Australian imaginary—the

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Melbourne Cup, and the legendary gelding Phar Lap. Works by Maurice Cavanagh, Bill Ahern and D.L. Bernstein are three of many on the Cup, and there have been still more studies of Phar Lap, which ranks second only to the cricketer Bradman as the most monographed icon of Australian sport. Nonetheless, while many other works have taken a broad perspective of racing, for the main part they have been limited to accounts of major races, and exclusively to registered racing. Historical treatments of horse racing in the popular press have also focused on major races and champion horses, jockeys and owners, although stories on the trainer Bob Skelton, jockey Myles Connell and the 1907 Melbourne Cup winner Apologue, all of whom had links to pony racing, appeared on the *Daily Mirror* Historical Page.

The limited academic treatment of unregistered racing is not surprising, given that sport has only recently (and partially) gained acceptance as a legitimate interest of scholars, as a branch of social history. Amongst the earliest of such works in Australia is *A Mug’s Game* by John O’Hara, which was derived from a doctoral thesis on the history of Australian gambling. O’Hara analysed the ultimately unsuccessful attempts by sections of the middle class to suppress gambling in terms of the way those attempts expressed changing patterns of cultural hegemony, a trope suggested by Gramsci. Horse racing has been the most popular agency of gambling in Australia and O’Hara recognised the particularly close relationship between pony racing and wagering.

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6 For stories on Skelton and Connell see *Daily Mirror* 28/4/1986 p. 32 and 18/5/1979 p. 46. This historical feature is a source of much detailed information on Australian horse racing, which, with cricket and rugby league, was a favourite subject. The racing stories, by an anonymous writer (but possibly James Hollege in the 1950s) with great knowledge of the sport, usually appeared in Friday and Saturday editions, perhaps to whet the appetites of readers looking forward to the Saturday afternoon races


Andrew Lemon’s monumental *The History of Australian Thoroughbred Racing* was written as popular history but nonetheless is regarded as a definitive and scholarly work. Its research and referencing is comprehensive, and its coverage encyclopaedic. It gave generous space to pony racing (reflected in over 30 index entries), although its origins as a project in cooperation with the Victoria Racing Club (VRC) are reflected in the greater emphasis on Melbourne and Melbourne pony racing. Like other works that cover Australian racing on a continental level, the great breadth of its subject matter is quite unlike the deep and Sydney-specific examination of pony racing made in this thesis.

Commissioned racing club histories have also provided important contributions to the historiography. Martin Painter and Richard Waterhouse, two academic historians, wrote *The Principal Club: A History of the Australian Jockey Club*. It updated and expanded an earlier work, *Turf Cavalcade*, by Douglas Barrie, which had been published to coincide with the AJC’s centenary of tenancy of Randwick racecourse. John Pacini’s history of the VRC, *A Century Galloped By*, provided a Victorian parallel to *The Principal Club*, but was stylistically closer to Richard Boulter’s history of the Sydney Turf Club (STC), *Forty Years On*. Neither of the latter two studies was conceived or written as a scholarly work. Boulter was a past secretary of the STC and produced perhaps a more introspective work than the AJC history. His text draws heavily on the administrative records of the STC and provides considerable information on the end of pony and proprietary racing in Sydney.

O’Hara, Lemon, John Ryan, Wray Vamplew and other historians have contributed chapters on racing to scholarly anthologies that have examined thematically the broad
spectrum of popular Australian sports. There has also been discussion of horse racing in Sporting Traditions, the journal of the Australian Society for Sports History. Joseph Waugh of the Randwick and District Historical Society produced another fully referenced work; a monograph on Kensington racecourse. There are also two undergraduate theses on horse racing in New South Wales. ‘Racecourses of Sydney’, a Bachelor of Architecture Honours thesis written in 1981 by Voldemars Osenieks, focused primarily on the surviving Sydney racecourses, but presented considerable research on the ARC pony racecourses. It anticipated much of the later writing about pony racing and explored some of the matters this thesis examines. It makes a valuable contribution to this discourse but included some oversights and misrepresentations, such as the morphing of the old and new Rosebery racecourses into one entity, and a failure to numerate (or identify) the non-ARC Sydney racecourses on which pony racing occurred. The focus of Stein Helgeby’s thesis ‘Sport and Festival: Horse-Racing in New South Wales 1850—1870’ is the period prior to the rise of pony and proprietary racing. Helgeby, however, does consider the move away from open ‘festive’ style racing meetings to enclosed racecourses and the taking of gate money, which are important themes in this thesis as well.

These academic or referenced works have published most of the primary research on pony racing published to date, and their importance to this work as secondary sources will be evident in the numerous citations made to them. However, journalists and popular historians have provided the main body of reflective writing on racing and pony racing. Notable among these works was a series of articles by David Hickie on the five Sydney racecourses that ceased racing between 1940 and 1951, which

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13 See for example Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan (eds), *Sport in History: the Making of Modern Sporting History*, St Lucia, Qld., University of Queensland Press, 1979. Several of these publications were the fruits of Australian Society for Sports History conferences
14 Joseph Waugh, *Kensington Racecourse: 1890-1942*. Randwick, NSW, Randwick & District Historical Society, 1997. This work contains informative description of the course and its administrators, as well as maps and photographs
15 Voldemars Osenieks, Racecourses of Sydney, Bachelor Of Architecture thesis, University of New South Wales, 1981
Preface

appeared in the Sydney *Sun Herald* in 1985. They stimulated my interest in this subject and led me to write articles on Victoria Park and Rosebery racecourses, which appeared in *Turf Monthly* in 1995, and ultimately this dissertation. Journalistic restraints on time and space limited the potential for in-depth analysis in Hickie’s articles, but they captured much of the folkloric fascination of pony racing, and invaluably, preserved the recollections of several octogenarian pony jockeys. Earlier, Bert Lillye performed a similarly important service by writing the stories on pony racing that appeared in the *Sun Herald* column ‘Backstage of Racing’, many of which were republished in a 1985 collection.

In addition to the various monographs on Phar Lap and the Melbourne Cup, there have been several ambitious popularist books on Australian racing that, like Lemon, sought to be definitive histories, and covered all states and periods. These works have taken pony racing into account in varying degrees. They include: *The Pictorial History of Australian Horse Racing* by the versatile, prolific and widely-read sports journalist and historian Jack Pollard; *A Racing Heart*, by the journalist and racing romantic Neville Penton; and *They’re Racing*, a recent (1999) publication that provides a year-by-year chronology of Australian racing from 1788 to 1998. The latter compilation includes contributions by many of the most notable recent Australasian racing writers and historians. In addition, Pollard produced *Australian Horse Racing: a Racegoer’s Companion to the Australian Turf*, which has a broader coverage than most works, including extensive entries on less well-known aspects of Australian racing, including proprietary and pony racing.
Other works, however, such as *The Australasian Book of Thoroughbred Racing*,\(^{21}\) and the companion volume to an ABC television series, *The Track*, adopted thematic approaches. *The Track* sought to encapsulate the social history of Australian racing, and to provide detail on the competitors and competition. The author of the book, who is described as a ‘yarnspinner and folklorist’, bravely admitted to not being a ‘fan of the sport of kings’ and to having never laid a bet in a TAB.\(^{22}\) Perhaps his unlikely antecedents matter little because, like Harry Bailey in the *Canterbury Tales*, his main function was to frame the contributions of initiated others, in this case leading racing writers, including Lemon, Hickie, O’Hara and John Ryan. *The Track* devoted several pages to pony racing.

Several works on trotting have contributed to the discourse on pony racing, a consequence of the often close association between the two branches of horse racing in the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras, and because of the thirty-year tenancy of Victoria Park racecourse by the proprietary Australian Trotting Club. Greg Brown’s *One Hundred Years of Trotting*, which touches at several points on pony and proprietary racing, concentrates on the exploits of great horses and drivers, primarily in New South Wales, rather than on the social aspects of racing. Similar epic contributions to trotting history, and by extension pony and proprietary racing, have been made by the two Max Agnew studies, *Australia’s Trotting Heritage* and *Silks and Sulkies*.\(^{23}\)

A number of memoirs have been written by participants on the Australian turf, although the supply does not match the astonishing abundance of recollections penned by English racing men, particularly in the period before World War I. The memoir that relates most directly to proprietary racing in Sydney is *My Life Story* by Sir James Joynton Smith, an entrepreneur in several fields and the developer of the


\(^{22}\) Mike Hayes, *The Track: the Story of Good Breeding and Bad Behaviour*, Sydney, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2000, p. 1

Victoria Park racecourse. It appears in the bibliography of most works on Australian horse racing of that period. There is some question about whether the book was at least partly ghosted, and it contains some chronological errors. Other published biographical material of consequence includes *Winners Can Laugh*, the biography of jockey Sam Unwin, which contains some interesting discussion of Sydney pony racing in the 1920s. As well, the racing reminiscences of men such as James Collins and George Thompson, A.B. Paterson (as journalist, prose fiction writer and poet), Clive Inglis, Nat Gould, Sam Griffiths and Thomas Haydon sometimes touch on unregistered racing.\(^\text{24}\)

All of these works were important sources or stimuli for this thesis. However, the studies that purported to provide complete histories of Australian horse racing (not all do) are imbalanced, because the space they give to unregistered racing is not commensurate with the sport’s contemporary profile and popularity, and they fail to account for the amount of attention it received from government. Pony racing was the subject of two New South Wales parliamentary committees, and an important consideration in several others that investigated such matters as the establishment of on-course totalisators, off-course gambling, and the often-proposed appointment of a racing board to replace the AJC. It prompted legislation and regulations that defined the legality of betting, racing dates, racecourse construction and usage, and figured in a number of court cases.\(^\text{25}\) The weekly sports newspapers, the *Referee* and the *Sydney Sportsman*, devoted long columns to it, and the daily press reported all metropolitan meetings extensively. The extent of this contemporary press coverage reflected the enormous public following of pony racing (the vast interest in racing *in general* is

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almost impossible to convey from the perspective of the early twenty-first century, when it is just one among many sports and gambling mediums).\textsuperscript{26}

All of this begs the question of why pony racing has largely been excluded from popular works on Australian horse racing. I believe the answer lies in the paradigm used for their writing, which has been so dominated by enthusiasm for the celebratory ‘Melbourne Cup-Phar Lap’ quinella that consideration of more mundane aspects has been squeezed out. Pony racing had few big events and certainly no legends like Phar Lap, or names familiar to informed followers of racing such as Bernborough or Tulloch, George Moore or T.J. Smith to provide focal points for popular writing. The champion unregistered ponies and horses were largely unknown outside racing circles, and their names probably mean little even to erudite present-day racing historians.

Thus while the choices in subject matter made by previous writers can be appreciated, they have nevertheless contributed to the perpetuation of a significant distortion of the social and economic importance of unregistered pony racing.\textsuperscript{27} The extensive degree of description included in this thesis is necessary not only to test generalisations about pony racing—which have been critical in the establishment of an orthodox view of it that currently prevails—but also to provide a usable record of the phenomenon, to fill some egregious omissions in the history of horse racing in Sydney, and to help complete its broader social and suburban history.

\textsuperscript{26} In the early 1960s the \textit{Australian Encyclopaedia} described horse racing as ‘virtually the national sport’; Alec. H. Chisholm (ed. in chief), \textit{The Australian Encyclopaedia} vol. 4, Sydney, The Grolier Society 1965, p. 537

\textsuperscript{27} Historians have also largely overlooked the British equivalent of unregistered racing, known as ‘flapping’ meetings. In the late nineteenth century they featured small prizes of less than £10 and included races for jumpers, ponies and harness horses. Organised by a body called the British Racing Club, unlike Australian pony racing its most important centres were not in large metropolitan areas, but enclosed racecourses in Northern England like West Hartlepool and Newcastle, which at 25 acres was not much larger than the smallest Sydney courses. It seems to have matured at about the same time as unregistered racing in Australia. Mike Huggins included flapping races in his work but noted that ‘more detailed work, [is required] while we still know little about the numbers, organization and control of the non-recognized racing events.’ The omission is even more glaring in the case of racing in New South Wales, where unregistered racing was of much greater relative importance than in Britain; Mike Huggins, \textit{Flat Racing and British Society 1790 – 1914: A Social and Economic History}, London, Frank Cass, 2000, pp. 185, 199
The orthodoxy of pony racing

Research and writings that I have identified as the major contributions to the discourse on pony racing are reproduced below. Most provide similar observations and conclusions, which perhaps suggest a common ancestor, although they diverge in some matters of detail. Scholarly sources are given first, consistent with the order of discussion above.

John O’Hara wrote of pony and proprietary racing in Sydney:

These [race]courses and their counterparts established in the other colonies…catered more for the tradesman and the working classes than for the gentry. They catered for thoroughbreds with less ability, which were consequently cheaper to purchase, and their use of ponies and hacks enabled the tradesman to race their carthorses…[pony races] were designed to generate more excitement than was usually the case on the major racecourses,…the pony track proprietors, unlike their contemporary thoroughbred competitors and their successors on the STC committees, were conscious of the need to provide entertainment. This they achieved by…the spectacle of large fields racing on tight circuits. This feature, however, also had its disadvantages as it led to much interference, which fuelled suggestions of corrupt practice.

Elsewhere O’Hara suggested that the paying public had ‘access to the better sections of the racecourse for much less cost than at Randwick or Flemington.’

Painter and Waterhouse in *The Principal Club* claim:

The ponies were a distinctly working-class form of racing and were immensely popular because of cheap admission, the presence of bookmakers willing to lay penny bets, and their sheer entertainment value. None of the restraints or efforts to uphold standards of social respectability that accompanied racing at Randwick were in any way inhibitions on the popular pursuit of pleasure at the pony track. Race meetings there had up to sixteen or seventeen events.

Writing of the pony racing of the 1890s, they concluded, ‘controls were lax and lawlessness of all sorts was rife. The cheaper, less strictly regulated unregistered circuit acted as a magnet for the shadier elements that the AJC had always sought to exclude from the sport.’ Waterhouse reiterated most of the assertions made in *The

28 O’Hara *A Mug’s Game* p. 103
29 Ibid. pp. 182-3
31 Painter and Waterhouse op. cit. pp. 45, 38
Principal Club in a subsequent work on popular culture, including description of proprietary and pony racecourses as mostly ‘small and tight-turning.’\(^\text{32}\)

Michael McKernan, who has written on Australian society as it was during both world wars, suggested that the pony tracks of Brisbane and Melbourne ‘attracted an almost exclusively working-class clientele.’\(^\text{33}\)

Andrew Lemon, speaking of Melbourne pony racing in the 1890s, noted:

\begin{quote}
Indeed it seemed a sport well suited to depressed times. Close to the working men’s homes—within walking distance for those with nothing to spare for a fare—with short races on tight courses offering a particular brand of excitement, all easily visible from the stand, with weekly meetings or more (since sand could take constant racing), with a dozen or more events on the card, with inferior and undersized horses cheap to buy, with small stakes for the racing companies to find but with plenty of bookmakers to oil the wheels, it offered a cheap chance to win for trainers and punters alike.\(^\text{34}\)
\end{quote}

Of Sydney pony racing in the 1920s Lemon said, ‘The prize money was basic…pony races were often described as the working man’s sport.’ He likened the greyhound racing that emerged in the 1920s to the ponies: ‘[it] appealed by and large to the same punters…it was a medium for gambling, and only incidentally a sport.’ He also placed Sydney metropolitan pony racing ‘at the next level of the racing geology’ \textit{below} proprietary provincial racing at Gosford and Menangle racecourses (despite infinitely smaller prize money, attendances and betting turnover at those courses), because the latter were registered with the AJC.\(^\text{35}\)

In \textit{Forty Years On} Richard Boulter made the following summation of pony and proprietary racing:

\begin{quote}
[In the 1930s] There were…indicators that maintenance of racecourse buildings was not always receiving current attention and complaints to the effect that some courses were little better than dust bowls in the summer…It should not be overlooked, however, that the proprietary clubs served a need and in doing so added their own colour and excitement to the racing scene. The 30’s [sic] were the decade of ‘characters’ and many were the stories which
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
33 Michael McKernan, \textit{The Australian People and the Great War}, West Melbourne, Thomas Nelson, 1980, p. 112
34 Freedman and Lemon \textit{op. cit.} p. 384
35 \textit{Ibid.} pp. 491, 494
\end{flushright}
went the rounds. The times generally were not good and the races attracted their share of the needy. 36

Voldemars Osenieks makes other assertions about pony racing:

The ponies were easier to obtain and cheaper to feed. The form of the ponies was not as predictable as those of thoroughbreds and every race became a battle of wits between riders, ponies and punters …quick profit-takers [bred] low-set, stunted thoroughbreds for the [pony] market…with the advent of World War I and the ensuing depression…pony racing declined rapidly…[facilities were] run down and haphazard. 37

As does Jack Pollard:

Prize money was low, malpractice common, but in hard times pony meetings with up to 14 races in an afternoon gave workers a chance to boost meagre incomes;…cows often strayed onto the courses, all the races were roughly run…the ponies…often ignored…the rules of racing;…course amenities were primitive…The syndicates who ran them were more devoted to achieving profits than to the ethics of racing…meetings became colourful centres of every known form of skullduggery, haunts of the ‘needy and greedy’. 38

The ponies…provided an exciting brand of racing for informally-dressed hard-bitten regular punters who were out of place at the meetings staged by the race clubs dominated by powerful owners and breeders…some jockeys transferred successfully. 39

*The Track* essayed a social examination of Australian horse racing of the past and present. As it was largely predicated on interviews with industry participants, that work will continue to be an invaluable repository of oral history. It contains several interviews which touch on pony racing. Most relate specifically to the Melbourne pony milieu, and to John Wren, the Melbourne sports entrepreneur, rather than the situation in Sydney (although this distinction was not always made clear), but these interviews have inevitably entered the wider discourse of pony racing. One of the interviewees, a former jockey, John Correy, recalled poor prize money: ‘All them pony races, they were all races only worth £30 or £40…’ Niall Brennan, a political commentator and the biographer of John Wren, stated that, ‘It [pony racing] meant the battlers north of the Yarra had their own racecourses, their own bookies and their own pleasure. They had a society of their own.’ Brennan went on to describe Wren’s Melbourne racecourses as:

36 Boulter *op. cit.* p. 9
37 Osenieks *op. cit.* p. 45
38 Pollard *Racegoer’s Companion* pp. 36, 428-9
39 Pollard *Pictorial History* p. 136
four [sic] grubby little pony tracks...[they] lacked much of the grace found at Flemington and a
heady atmosphere of masculine aggression lay over them...They were universally execrated
and places that were unkempt, disorderly. \(^{40}\)

Despite these unflattering assessments Brennan is in fact a Wren apologist. Elsewhere
he insisted that Wren cleaned up a sport that had become:

encrusted with undesirable barnacles, and was being throttled by an outer layer of welshers,
scalers, race-riggers, and ferret-faced crooks...There were arrangements between jockeys and
bookmakers, conspiracies between bookies, owners and jockeys, and the fairly constant
presence of some of Melbourne’s best known criminals [in the pre-Wren era]. \(^{41}\)

The following comments by journalist and writer David Hickie, however, also from
*The Track*, relate to Sydney:

The ponies represented the workingman’s easy access to the Track...the horses themselves
were not very expensive. They weren’t that well bred. It was quick turnaround of small amounts
of money throughout the afternoon and the working classes, the masses, went there in droves.
However, they were also very loosely regulated and it was an absolute hive of criminality,
trickery, and every ruse that somebody could come up with to part a sucker from his money. \(^{42}\)

In his 1985 *Sun Herald* articles Hickie stereotyped Rosebery racecourse with
unattributed calumnies such as ‘the Mecca of the famous and infamous’ and ‘the
haunt of the needy and greedy.’ He often described Sydney’s pony racing as
‘notorious,’ and he asserted that in the late 1920s entrance to the pony courses cost
five shillings. \(^{43}\)

John Ryan, the Sydney-based scholar and racing historian, suggested:

The anthology of nefarious deeds on the racecourse is very wide but it was felt that the ponies
were the place where a scam could be on at any old time and you just had to know what was
going. Although some of them might have been run very well.

John Kelly was the son of a Sydney doctor who worked on the pony courses, at which
he occasionally accompanied his father. He remembered that pony racing ‘was very

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40 Hayes *op. cit.* p. 80
42 Hayes *op. cit.* p. 99
different from Randwick. They were very different people. They were battlers and urgers.  

*They’re Racing*, despite its subtitular claim to be the ‘Complete Story’ of Australian racing, is most significant (at least for this thesis) for its omissions. By devoting a mere handful of paragraphs to pony racing, and barely a page to proprietary racing, *They’re Racing* implies that both racing forms are insignificant in the story of Australian racing.  

Bert Lillye, the writer who was most active in preserving the folkloric barroom and stable-door tales of horse racing, found:  

Sydney’s old ‘pony’ tracks…always were the happy hunting ground for those in search of the unusual; especially in the days of the Great Depression when there was as many racecourse knockabouts betting in silver on the sandhills overlooking Rosebery and Kensington as there were inside. ...For almost the first twenty years of the twentieth century, Pony Racing in Sydney, known as the ‘bread and butter sport’, flourished more than the AJC-controlled racing.  

Neville Penton wrote:  

the poorer people of racing broke away from the control of the major clubs such as the AJC and started a cheaper version of the sport restricted to ponies…this form of racing proved immensely popular, particular on the Sydney tracks…the rules were made and often broken, and the expression ‘the quick and the dead’ had nothing whatsoever to do with dying.  

Joe Andersen, the biographer of the unregistered jockey Sam Unwin, concluded:  

The ARC patrons were well aware that many races were not genuine contests, but meetings were well attended…the battling punters were closer to the action here and had more in common with those owners and trainers than they had with the silvertail image of the members’ enclosure at Randwick.  

All of the works cited above were written after 1970, but a thriving oral tradition of pony racing lore, largely maintained by barroom discussion, and to some extent, radio broadcasters, spanned the period between their publication and the end of pony racing  

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44 Hayes *op. cit.* pp.45, 99-100  
45 Hutchinson *op. cit.* p. 61  
46 Lillye *Backstage* p. 10  
48 Penton *op. cit.* p. 87  
49 Andersen *Winners Can Laugh* p. 66
and, it seems certain, it has influenced much of the written work. This oral tradition and the writers cited have established an orthodoxy of pony racing, the main tenets of which hold the following:

- Pony racing attracted an homogeneous, male public of shabbily dressed, working-class ‘battlers’, the ‘needy and greedy’ and ‘the quick and the dead’ that was inherently different to that of registered racing. Pony racing existed in isolation from registered racing—after a species of ‘peasants’ revolt’ had established it—and had little in common with it. Criminals abounded on pony racecourses.
- The sport was notorious and badly and haphazardly conducted, and that officials allowed the prevailing rules of racing to be flaunted. Its followers knew it was inherently corrupt but nevertheless could not resist attending its meetings.
- It was undercapitalised and provided poor and unattractive facilities, including small and often unsafe racecourses. All pony racecourses were of much the same (poor) standard, regardless of city, location and era.
- Pony racing was restricted to races for mixed-bred ponies including the haulers of tradesmen’s carts, or poorly bred and performed larger equines. In some cases a scarcely more flattering estimate is implied of the human participants—the jockeys, trainers and officials.
- It existed purely for the purpose of betting and contributed nothing to the development of racing.
- It provided poor prize money.
- Pony-racing did not generate large betting markets, and most bets were made in coins. It was serviced by a group of bookmakers of lower standing than those who worked on AJC-registered courses.
- It drew large attendances primarily because of cheap admission, but also because it placed a premium on entertainment and excitement.
- Pony racing produced profits for an oligarchy of rapacious sports entrepreneurs.
- It was insignificant, economically and socially, when compared to registered racing.
- It was exclusively a weekday sport.
- It was essentially a sport of the 1930s Depression, and hard times.
And, finally, pony racing became defunct due to maladministration, poor prize money, and payment of excessive dividends, although the Great Depression and World War II were the immediate catalysts.

I suggest that the images created by this orthodoxy of unregistered racing are very similar to those realised in the 2003 American film, *Seabiscuit*, an eponymous account of the champion Californian horse of the late 1930s. The scenes I have in mind from that film are of the elementary ‘unregistered’ American racecourses of that era, where Seabiscuit’s jockey John Pollard learnt to ride; of unrailed, two-furlong tracks, the jockeys involved in fist fighting as they rode, apparently unrestrained by stewards; and of an unshaven, dishevelled male crowd. There were structural differences in American and Australian racing but the descriptions conveyed in the orthodoxy of unregistered horse racing in Australia might engender images much like these.  

It is the main purpose of this work to test the dogmas of the orthodoxy outlined above, and to investigate some associated aspects of unregistered pony racing, viz.:

- The popular memory, preservation and commemoration of it.
- The social dynamic implied by movements up and down the status hierarchy by jockeys and trainers transferring between unregistered and AJC racing.
- The significance of the enclosure of racecourses and its impact on social stratification of racegoers.
- The significance of gender, and the marginalisation of women and children.
- The creation of racing suburbs and communities around unregistered racecourses, and the consequences of their closures.

**Theoretical social framework**

Many of the builders of the orthodox interpretations of unregistered pony racing have, as I have demonstrated, made unqualified statements to the effect that pony racing
‘Unregistered’ racing portrayed in the 2003 American film *Seabiscuit*; Down-at-heel racegoers, primitive racecourses. There were structural differences between American and Australian racing but the descriptions conveyed in the orthodoxy of unregistered horse racing in Australia could engender images much like these. (source: *Seabiscuit*, Touchstone Films, Buena Vista Entertainment and Spyglass Entertainment Group, 2003)
was a ‘working-class sport’. What did they mean by these assertions? Was it to imply that workers set up and administered pony racing as a sort of proletarian cooperative, rather like the vision for the early Sydney Rugby League district competition (wherein profits were to be divided between the players and charity) intended?\(^{51}\)

Class is a notoriously nebulous concept and it is often applied imprecisely; Marx himself never provided a ‘clear basic definition’, and his usage was inconsistent, writing at times of the existence of two classes, and at others of three.\(^{52}\) A later theorist, Peter Stearns, identified four major classifications of classes with up to four sub-groups within each.\(^{53}\) Hearn also felt that the applications of class were dynamic and that labels employed in the early period of industrialisation were no longer appropriate for mature industrial societies, such as Sydney in the pony-racing era. It should also be kept in mind that Australia in that period is often posited as a relatively egalitarian society that lacked an upper class, if it was not in fact entirely classless.\(^ {54}\)

It may be true that the rigid classes of Britain, which amounted virtually to castes, did not exist, but researchers such as Connell and Irving have demonstrated widespread economic and social stratification in Australia, and evidence of class consciousness that is hardly disputable.\(^ {55}\)

In order to interpret the class-based comments about pony racing more precisely, it is necessary to deduce what sectors of unregistered racing had the commentators intended to label ‘working class’. The contextual evidence suggests they had in mind the public that followed and attended the sport, and in some cases the human competitors—the jockeys and trainers. But these groups represent only one half of the equation of unregistered racing; the suppliers of the sport should also be included in any attempts at broad classification. Propositions about the class and status groups to

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51 Ian Heads, *South Sydney: Pride of the League*, Melbourne, Thomas Lothian, 2000, p. 16
52 Connell and Irving *op. cit.* p. 6
53 Within the middle orders of the class structure of mature industrial society Stearns identifies a “Middling” class, a disgruntled middle class (of older professionals), the middle class proper and the lower middle class; Peter Stearns, *European Society in Upheaval: Social History since 1750*, 2nd ed., New York, Macmillan Publishing Co, 1975, p. 337
55 Connell & Irving *op. cit.* pp. 3-26 and passim
which the promoters of pony racing belonged, especially in relation to the patrician overlords of AJC racing, have not been considered in the extant literature.

What theory of class informed (even if unconsciously) the commentators who created the orthodoxy? Again, context seems to suggest it is the Marxian one current in the Communist Manifesto, which splits society into ‘two great hostile camps’, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, as determined by their relation to the means of production; that is, on the basis of economic circumstances. In this model the proletariat, or working class, remains a monolithic entity, but as Vamplew emphasizes, (and as Connell and Irving, in the Australian context, have agreed), ‘There are obvious difficulties in generalizing about the working class, for it was far from being a homogeneous group.’

However, on the evidence of the use of terms such as ‘needy and greedy’ and ‘battler’, it seems that many commentators were thinking in rather homogenous terms and that the putative followers of pony racing would have been recognisably differentiated from racegoers at registered meetings, presumably on the basis of appearance, and possibly behaviour. If I were to suggest a model that would match what are admittedly rather unspecified likenesses given in the orthodoxy, it would be this—an urban-based, Anglo-Celtic Australian male wearing working boots, collarless shirt, a vest and a weather-stained soft felt hat, a roll-your-own cigarette or pipe at his lips. If I were to swim a little further from shore, I would make him a veteran of the 1st AIF. One can often identify men fitting this description in photographs of Great Depression relief workers.

Thus, I suggest the identification by the commentators of pony racing as a ‘working-class sport’ is of a sport mainly patronised by men of this physical appearance, who worked with their hands and who would have used terms such as ‘labourer’ and

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56 The discussion of the theories of Marx and Weber on class and status is informed by the analysis undertaken by Ken Morrison in Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Formations of Modern Social Thought, London, Sage Publications, 1995

A 14.1 hand pony race at Kensington in 1920; not a novelty gimmick, and of identical appearance to a race at Randwick to a casual observer. (source: University of New South Wales Archive)

Depression relief workers: images that may well have informed the commentators’ conceptualisations of unregistered racing attendances (source: Hood Collection, State Library of New South Wales)
‘carter’ to describe themselves on the census.\textsuperscript{58} But should it in fact include the career clerks and public servants who are usually classified as members of the lower-middle class, because of the office-based work they performed, despite the complication caused by the fact that the majority earned less than somewhat privileged manual workers such as wharf labourers?

These are crucial questions for this thesis and, generally speaking, they can be more effectively considered in a Weberian framework than a Marxist one. In commenting on Weber’s social theory, Ken Morrison points out that ‘classes [are] not considered to be communities with common interests and this means that they [are] not groups as such.’\textsuperscript{59} For Weber, status groups, by contrast, operate outside the market and in addition to possessing (economic) class-consciousness do form communities with common interests and purposes, social habits, shared meaning, patterns of consumption, and, moreover, \textit{specific styles of dress}. Class relates to how a person generates income, status to what they choose to, or are allowed to, spend it on. For these reasons I believe status is a more useful concept than class in analysing racecourse attendances. However it is not possible to engage in the discourse of the socio-economic circumstances of racegoers without speaking of classes, because of the long-established currency of ‘class’ that exists within the historiography. For my part I have used ‘class’ generally not in the strict Marxist sense, but within the less homogeneous framework of the social classes (or status groups) of Weber.

There are in fact very real difficulties in attempting \textit{any} sociological classification of pony racegoers, the most obvious being a lack of primary data. There are few documents to provide demographics, other than some isolated turnstile accounts, and even these can do no more than provide information on ratios between men, women and children on particular afternoons. I believe however it is possible to make inferences on the basis of other evidence, including the observations of journalists and other contemporary commentators, admission charges, gambling behaviour and turnover, catering and transport arrangements, and, in particular, photographic

\textsuperscript{58} Allowing that Depression relief gangs certainly included men displaced from former skilled or administrative positions
records that have not previously been considered. Such an analysis is provided here in chapter five.

Omissions

The meta-narrative of Australian horse racing has been engaged in this thesis only where there are implications for unregistered racing. Pony racing in country areas, interstate and overseas is mostly outside its scope. There are two important exceptions to these omissions. First, considerable attention has been paid to Melbourne because it was the other city that developed a circuit of unregistered pony racing on a scale approaching that of Sydney. Comparison between the two cities thus enables the particularities of each to be distinguished, as well as the factors in the demise of pony racing at either location, which have wider implications. Second, there are also numerous references to aspects of nineteenth-century British racing that either influenced Sydney, or like Melbourne, provide instructive comparison, particularly the commercialisation of racing and enclosure of racecourses.

Abridged discussion of the tramway network which brought most of the public (and for whose new lines the pony racecourses were often responsible), the other uses to which the Sydney pony racecourses were put, such as sports carnivals, community celebrations and aerodromes, has also been necessary. I have described extensively the defunct racecourses on which pony racing in Sydney took place, but largely passed over those that still exist.

What happened to the pony racing companies and their assets after they were legislated out of business was intrinsically bound up with the history of the STC, and

59 Morrison *op. cit*. pp. 240-43
60 Brisbane, although a significant centre of unregistered racing, operated on a much smaller scale than either Sydney or Melbourne
61 The information on British racing has mainly been provided by the recent work of Wray Vamplew and Mike Huggins, which discussed in the British context themes such as enclosure, commercialisation, ‘unrecognised’ (i.e., unregistered) racing, and the changing character of race meetings and attendances, which are also major considerations of this work
62 For a thorough account of the construction and operation of the tramlines that serviced the pony racecourses see David R. Keenan, *The South-Eastern Lines of the Sydney Tramway System*, Sydney, Transit Press, c1982
has already been discussed extensively in *Forty Years On*. Consequently, this thesis looks only briefly into the period after pony racing competition ended in 1942.

**Sources**

It transpired that any Rankean thirst for official documents with which to research this thesis could not have been slaked by The State Records Authority of New South Wales holding, which is limited to a small number of treasury papers relating to taxation and registration of race clubs, totalisators and bookmakers. For the period before 1906, when the government did not regulate racing, the Authority has no holdings. Consequently the research methodology adopted was to examine contemporary documents held by other archives and libraries, supported by the personnel recollections of participants in the form of memoirs and oral history. I highly prized oral history, particularly in relation to aspects of social history such as the experiences of jockeys and trainers, but it was difficult to gather, mainly because unregistered pony racing ended seventy years ago; however the difficulty of locating live participants was redressed to an extent by access to interviews conducted by earlier researchers. Other interviews and discussions took place with representatives of modern racing organisations, in particular the Australian Racing Board. Fieldwork, apart from interviews, consisted mainly of visits to the sites of dismantled racecourses.

A brief sources desiderata, and details of what research was able to provide, is given here.

**Primary sources**

*Contemporary newspapers*: Regardless of whether contemporary newspaper journalism is considered a purely primary source, or a hybrid containing secondary subjectivities, it is almost inevitably the major theatre of research into popular modern spectator sports such as horse racing, cricket and football. Millions of words (in miniscule fonts) were printed in the Sydney press on pony racing, most of them the intriguing but largely irrelevant dross of ‘anticipations’ (tips), reports and results.
of race meetings, and track work. In the absence (almost universally) of newspaper indexes, from this vast ocean of data had to be trawled information pertinent to the themes of this work, and the most rare of catches were those paragraphs that provided information on the social aspects of pony racing. An examination of each issue of the sporting weekly the *Referee* (1886-1939) from the first number until the late 1920s provided the chronology and spine of the research for this thesis, from whence other investigation sprang. The *Sydney Sportsman* and the *Arrow*, the *Referee’s* weekly sporting paper contemporaries, were used as supplements.

The *Sydney Morning Herald*, which is indexed for much of the period of pony racing, was useful as a signpost to the major developments that affected it, particularly in the later period. Other newspapers such as the *Daily Telegraph*, *Town and Country Journal* and *Sydney Truth* supplemented the most commonly used papers.

*Racing club records*: What became of the records of the proprietary racing clubs is something of a mystery. I had anticipated locating committee minutes (in particular), financial statements, correspondence and registers, at least of the twentieth-century racing clubs that formed the ARC, but little seems to have been archived. The Mitchell Library, Sydney, holds a few documents of the Kensington Racing Club from the 1890s and the AJC Library and Archive has recently received the Minutes of the Victoria Park Committee from 1911 to dissolution, and of the ARC from 1941 to 1945. The minutes of the AJC Committee contain a deal of information on pony racing, but I have relied heavily on the existing research of Painter and Waterhouse in their regard.

I received, while working on an archiving project for the STC (which replaced the proprietary clubs as the second provider of racing in Sydney in 1943), the club’s permission to examine and cite administrative records from its legislative birth until the 1980s, which previously Boulter alone had used in published work. The collection included financial statements, registers of shareholders, catering schedules, by-laws, etc of the proprietary clubs. It is the most extensive source of documents relating to unregistered racing to come to light. In addition, the collection contains the valuer-
general’s 1943 reports of the proprietary racecourses and other information about infrastructure and staff, as well as the STC’s own files pertaining to the disposal of racecourses and relocation of trainers. Even so, the STC records represent a small percentage of what once must have existed.

New South Wales Parliamentary Papers: The disputes that took place within pony racing in 1923 (refer chapter six) caused the government to call a select committee inquiry into the sport. The transcript of the inquiry provides much information about pony racing and its participants, especially its disaffected trainers. In a similar way the 1900 Racing Association Bill committee hearings provided a forum for the principals of the AJC to deplore pony racing. These and other parliamentary papers were among the most productive primary resources for this work.  

Contemporary racing guides and annuals: The established turf annuals and guides, such as those of Victorian Ruffs and the Australasian published details of pony races that were conducted as part of thoroughbred meetings at locations such as Liverpool and Parramatta, but they were excluded after the AJC and VRC outlawed restricted heights races in 1898. In 1913 the ARC began to publish a short-lived annual of its own. It recorded results, distances prize money, and so on, as well as jockeys and trainers premierships. Details of ARC racing returned to the official organs following registration in 1933.

Manuscripts, letters and collections: The Mitchell Library houses the papers of Joynton Smith and the Carruthers family, as well as the Davis Collection (papers of the one time editor of the Referee) but these contain few references to pony and proprietary racing.

Photographs, maps and illustrations: Photographs that appear in this thesis were taken from the collections of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales Picman database, Australian War Memorial pictorial database, University of New

63 New South Wales, Parliament, Legislative Assembly, Progress Report of the Racing Association Bill Select Committee, in Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly during of the Session of 1900, with the various documents connected therewith, in six volumes, Sydney, Government Printer, 1901
South Wales Archive, and reprinted from a number of books and newspapers, in particular the *Referee*. The main source of racecourse maps was the STC collection, now archived at Mitchell Library. These images serve in this work primarily as evidence for arguments about the characteristics of racegoers, racecourse infrastructure and locality, and the conduct of racing.

*Oral histories and memoirs:* I interviewed the internationally successful jockey Edgar Britt in March 2000 about his experiences of Sydney pony racecourses and jockeys, and Frank Williams, formerly apprenticed at Victoria Park, in July 2000. Britt was the first registered AJC rider to win on one of the former pony racecourses following the détente of January 1933 that caused all racing in New South Wales to become open. Neill Bennetts also recorded oral history with Britt, as well as rival jockey Bill Cook, in 1980. Williams became stable foreman for the leading stable of trainer Neville Begg. In 1983 the ARC rider Harry Reed recorded an interview with the archivist of the University of New South Wales. The pony riders Alf Stanton and Ernie Henry shared many recollections with David Hickie in his 1985 series referred to previously.

*Race books and other ephemera.* Race books, which people keep as mementos (especially of winning days), are relatively plentiful but in the pony era contained little information of use to racegoers. They are, however, valuable to the researcher for filling in some of the many blank spaces relating to such matters as admission prices, racing club personnel, handicapping, programming and trainers. Some race books are available at Mitchell Library but the AJC library holds the best collection, including numerous pony numbers. Advertisements placed by the secretaries of the race clubs in the press were another source of information, although the copy is annoyingly reticent on significant issues such as admission costs.

*Secondary works (non-racing)*

While secondary works devoted to horse racing provided less material than might have been expected, references to pony racing occur in a surprisingly diverse range of works with wider subject matter. A.B. Paterson, for example, published verse and prose about it in monographs and journals, and also commented on it in his column in
the *Sydney Mail*. Thus, in addition to the various works on racing discussed above, writing on local history, socio-economic based clubs (such as Tattersalls), transport, animal husbandry, other sports such as rugby league, cricket, athletics and rowing, the military, and the activities of government authorities, have all provided information.

**Methodology**

The research in this thesis is presented for the most part qualitatively, but some of the data relating to admissions and attendances, prize money, programming and gambling is treated quantitatively in order to identify trends within unregistered racing, and relativities with registered racing. The chapters are thematic, with the exception of the first, which is a chronological narrative that examines the ‘pre-history’ of pony racing from 1810 to 1888, and the formative years to 1908, and how and why it became separated from AJC-sanctioned racing. This reconstruction provides the basis for the detailed analysis that follows. Subsequent chapters provide responses to the planks of the historical orthodoxy identified in this preface, as well as description of the most important aspects of the sport. Chapter two explores how it began with an entrepreneurial ethos of quick financial returns and drew personnel, finance and expertise from other early commercial sports, but evolved to become the major supplier of racing product (by quantity) to Sydney, and a major developer of the nascent leisure industry. An appreciation of these circumstances is necessary to comprehend the economic and social significance of pony racing. The quality and extent of racecourse facilities, services and information sources are discussed in chapter three. My aim here is to provide an enduring record and to also allow assessment of pejorative generalisations that have been made and accepted about the infrastructure and public facilities of unregistered racing. Similarly chapter four provides analysis of the conduct of pony racing—its programming, prize money, handicapping, starting and judging, stewardship and so on—mainly in the ARC period, to determine if claims that it was a rather slipshod affair are valid, and to enable comparison with other forms of racing. Chapter five contains perhaps the most crucial critique of the orthodox narrative of pony racing, as it analyses unregistered race attendances and makes judgements about social classes, gender and behaviour,
Preface

associated matters such as the comparative cost of admission, and the sport’s popularity. Chapter six considers the careers and behaviour of pony jockeys and trainers to enable assessment of their skills and characters and to mark their status relative to their counterparts in registered racing. In combination, chapters five and six test the orthodox assertion that pony racing was an underclass burlesque of thoroughbred racing. Chapter seven examines the tactics and motivations of the racing establishment, government and others who attempted to suppress the sport. Of importance to the central concerns of the thesis are efforts by some representatives of these groups to affect, and perhaps sabotage, the memory of unregistered pony racing, in order to help legitimise their own corporate histories. Finally, I provide a general conclusion that serves as a rejoinder to the proponents and tenets of the orthodoxy identified in this preface. Further description of the defunct pony racecourses and a guide to locating their sites are provided as an appendix.
Chapter one

The origins and establishment of unregistered proprietary pony racing in Sydney

Pony and proprietary racing in Sydney evolved from the eighteenth-century paradigm of horse racing in England, the fertile crescent of thoroughbred horse racing. In the nineteenth century Australian horse racing followed the trends evident in England and other English speaking countries, but developed novel features that made it unique. One of these was unregistered proprietary pony racing.

This chapter provides a sketch of horse racing in Sydney in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century.¹ Particular attention is paid to developments that had implications for pony racing, including the emergence of handicap-sweepstakes races, private racecourses and publicans’ race meetings. The earliest known instances of proprietary racing in Sydney are identified. There follows an analysis of the boom years of proprietary racecourse building in Sydney from 1884 until the completion of the Victoria Park racecourse in January 1908, the last course for galloping to be constructed in metropolitan Sydney.² The discussion includes the more ephemeral of these ventures, as well as those that endured to promote pony racing in the twentieth century. The purpose of this discussion is to provide a previously undemonstrated context for the detailed analysis of unregistered proprietary pony racing in Sydney that follows in later chapters. Such a context is crucial because of, as the preface illustrated, the paucity of serious research into the establishment of the sport, and the tendency among the few commentators to telescope all pony racing into the post-Federation era.

¹ For more detail see in particular Lemon’s comments in Freedman & Lemon op. cit. vol. 1 chapters three and ten
² Nor is it likely that more will be built
**Origins and establishment**

British background and Australian beginnings

At the end of the eighteenth century, when white settlement in New South Wales began, horse racing in England remained a rural sport. Most race meetings coincided with local annual holidays and were contested by beasts stabled within walking distance of the racecourse. Similarly the cost, discomfort and slowness of existing forms of transport limited attendances to local inhabitants, the connections of the horses and perhaps a small core of professional gamblers who followed regional circuits.  

In the years before the First Fleet sailed, however, significant change had been fomenting in English racing. The established forms of contest—heat and match races for mature horses—were being challenged by new concepts. The first of these caused the creation of the English classic races; the St Leger, the Derby and the Oaks, each run at level weights without heats, for three-year-old colts in the case of the first two, and for fillies in the latter. Set weights racing was supplemented by weight-for-age racing, which began in the 1790s, as did handicap sweepstakes. This latter was to become the standard format of modern horse racing.  

In weight-for-age racing the weights are determined by a horse’s age and sex. In a handicap race, in addition to these variables, allowances are made for differences in ability between horses (judged by past racing performances), so that other things being equal, all contestants would in theory cross the finish in a multiple dead-heat. The extraneous factors that invariably militate against this include limitations imposed on the autonomy of the handicapper, luck in running of the race, track conditions, fitness, and the ability or earnestness of the jockey.  

In sweepstakes, owners are required to pay only a comparatively small and equal acceptance fee, rather than risk large side-wagers with the connections of the one or two opponents, as was the case in heat races. Sweepstakes, in combination with the egalitarian effects of the handicaps, allow entrants to compete on more-or-less equal terms for large prizes with limited direct personal financial risk for the owners.

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3 For full discussion of these developments in Britain see Vamplew *The Turf* chapter one and Huggins *op. cit.* chapter one  
**Origins and establishment**

owner. Moreover, sweepstakes handicaps attract larger race-fields that so help to obfuscate the outcome that bettors can often obtain large payouts from small wagers.\(^5\) This type of race appealed not only to owners but also to unaligned gamblers limited by small banks, who could have little expectation of achieving the jackpot wins they sought by betting on the old style match races. These large-field handicaps were exactly the type of race offered by pony racing in Sydney at its zenith.

Largely unaffected by the developments in England, early Sydney racing remained a faithful replica of the informal eighteenth-century English model, and indeed the first thoroughly organised meetings did not come until the settlement was past twenty years of age. All elements of the white community, including women and children, attended Sydney’s first formal race meeting organised by the 73\(^{rd}\) Regiment at the Hyde park racecourse in October 1810, a holiday having been declared for each of the three days, which consisted entirely of heat racing.\(^6\) Later Hyde Park meetings included pony races—not as part of the advertised program, but in the form of impromptu challenges arranged to satisfy the desire for additional racing.\(^7\) This extempore organisation was to be the model for pony racing for the next 80 years.

Until the establishment of Randwick in 1860, racecourses in Sydney were mostly ephemeral and incapable of hosting more than a meeting or two a year, because of the damage racing did them. In March 1825 a new ground known as the Bellevue or Captain Piper’s course hosted a race meeting.\(^8\) Bellevue remained Sydney’s principal course for the next few years and there, in April 1825, occurred another development of importance to this study; the first race under handicap conditions in Australia.\(^9\) Sydney’s first racing club, the Sydney Turf Club, opened a new course at Grose Farm, Camperdown, in June 1826,\(^10\) and at about the same time Sir John Jamison established a private racecourse on his estate at Regentville, near

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5 Vamplew *The Turf* pp. 23-24  
6 Freedman & Lemon *op. cit.* pp. 51-57  
7 It is not clear whether race committees bothered to measure the starters. Barrie *op. cit.* p. 14  
8 ‘The Bellevue course lay below that eminence on the eastern side of the old South Head Road opposite Captain Piper’s property (part of which is now the Royal Sydney Golf Links)’ Barracluff Park and Bondi Bowling Club are today situated on the site of this racecourse; *Ibid.* p. 19  
9 *Ibid.* p. 21  
10 The course was located on the southern side of the main road west (now Parramatta Road) near Prince Alfred Hospital and Sydney University; *Ibid.* p. 22
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Penrith. This course and other similar ones, including one established on the Macarthur estate at Camden Park, are significant here because they were expressions of nascent claims for independence from the authoritarianism of government-organised horse racing in Sydney.\textsuperscript{11} The Hyde Park meetings had been manifestations of government policy and were run on crown land. While motivated by desire for prestige and status rather than financial gain, in establishing their courses the ‘pure merinos’ foreshadowed the actions of proprietary racing by building racecourses on their own land at their own expense, where racing could be conducted as seen fit, and in pursuing their own ends in determining who would be allowed to attend. Although the opening meeting at Regentville has been said to have been the occasion of ‘much brawling’, which suggests a popular presence, generally attendances at these gentlemen’s racecourses were by invitation only, arrangements were informal and the grounds largely unimproved.\textsuperscript{12}

By 1831 all Sydney racecourses established in the previous 20 years were defunct and the nearest extant grounds were at Parramatta. Lobbying for a venue closer to the town’s centre resulted in the establishment of the ‘Sandy Course’ near Randwick in May 1833. It coped no better with the modest degree of use than its predecessors and was abandoned in 1838. Thereafter racing returned to the west of Sydney at Homebush, Petersham, Burwood, Five Dock, Ashfield and Newtown (also known as Barwon Park.) Each of these was privately owned racecourses. Meanwhile racing and a nascent breeding program continued to develop in the Hawkesbury region and permanent racecourses appeared at Campbelltown and Liverpool.\textsuperscript{13}

The Australian Race Committee, the progenitor of the Australian Jockey Club (AJC), established the Homebush racecourse on the estate of W.C. Wentworth in 1841. The site’s merit rested principally in Wentworth’s waiving of rent, and it served as Sydney’s main racecourse until 1860. Homebush was a large racecourse and, as the topography included several undulations, it more closely resembled a traditional English downs racecourse than had the earlier Sydney tracks. The first

\textsuperscript{11} For Regentville and Camden Park refer Freedman & Lemon. \textit{op. cit.} p. 188

\textsuperscript{12} Alec H. Chisholm (ed. in chief), \textit{The Australian Encyclopaedia vol. V}, Sydney, The Grolier Society, 1965, p. 120
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meeting, held over two days in March 1841, featured what was noted as the biggest public booths ever provided in Australia.\textsuperscript{14} Homebush raced on just a handful of occasions each year. In the 1840s the AJC staged an annual meeting there, as did the drapers’ trade guild, a body that for the first time took the organization of race meetings on permanent metropolitan racecourses out of the hands of the colonial military and landed classes, and into those of commercial interests. In the 1840s the drapers meeting, run on a day when all drapers stores were closed, rivalled the AJC’s autumn meeting in importance.\textsuperscript{15}

In 1858 the AJC abandoned Homebush to return to the Sandy Course, soon to be dignified with the title of Randwick racecourse. Thomas Dawson and James Perry, the publican of the Craven Hotel, which was located next-door to the Tattersalls rooms in Pitt St, reopened Homebush as a proprietary racecourse eight years after the departure of the AJC and race meetings continued there sporadically, until the permanent closure of the course in 1877.\textsuperscript{16}

The government charged the AJC a nominal peppercorn rental for the occupation of Randwick, an arrangement that enabled the club to devote its funds to the development of the course.\textsuperscript{17} It was only after a decade of consolidation of its facilities that the AJC began to slip into the robes of office of a principal club. The \textit{Australian Jockey Club Act}, 1873, formalised many of the arrangements made during the preceding decade. Subsequently, in the 1880s, the AJC consolidated its position as the controlling body of the sport in New South Wales through a set of rules of racing styled on those of the Jockey Club of England, the registration of race clubs, and the licensing of trainers, jockeys and bookmakers. It followed the English Jockey Club by a mere year or two in these initiatives.\textsuperscript{18}

While the racing of the Establishment was taking form, the first instances of the entrepreneurial race meetings that led to proprietary racing began to appear in New South Wales. Publicans and their associates staged them and they became

\textsuperscript{13} Freedman & Lemon \textit{op. cit.} pp. 186-187
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. p. 187. ‘Booth’ here is used as a synonym for an alcohol bar
\textsuperscript{15} Helgeby \textit{op. cit.} p. 23
\textsuperscript{16} Freedman & Lemon \textit{op. cit.} p. 69, 283; Joseph Andersen, \textit{Tattersall’s Club, Sydney, 1858 – 1983}, Canterbury NSW, Koorana, 1985
\textsuperscript{17} Painter & Waterhouse \textit{op. cit.} pp. 23-24
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. p. 30; Huggins \textit{op. cit.} p. 192
increasingly prevalent from the 1840s onwards. Andrew Lemon has identified the importance of hotelkeepers in the development of Australian horse racing, for apart from supplying the essential grog they were often the driving force in the construction of tracks and grandstands, provided prize money for the publican’s purse, accommodation for both men and horses, and allowed their hotels to be used as race offices for the acceptance of nominations, and so on. They also owned and trained horses of their own. Publicans publicised meetings with their patrons among whom were members of the sporting types most likely to attend the races. 19

Publicans were the direct forebears of the racing entrepreneurs of the later nineteenth century and they drove the first phase of the commercialisation of sport and racing 20—at a surprisingly early date in the case of North America, where Francis Child, an inn-keeper, in 1736, promoted a meeting at the Church Farm racecourse to which, although the course was presumably unenclosed, he charged 6d entrance. 21

In late eighteenth-century England it had become customary for publicans to provide patrons with a range of parlour games and indoor sporting equipment. Many of these amusements, including games such as cards, quoits and darts, were of a nature to encourage gambling. 22 Similar activities were soon facilitated in the public houses of New South Wales and hoteliers began to offer more ambitious outdoor amusements, to attract larger crowds. The Jewish publican James Larra, who kept the Freemason’s Arms near A’Beckett’s Creek, south of Parramatta, arranged a day’s diversions in 1810 that offered scratch horse racing, cock fighting and sack, barrow and blindfold races. Larra’s quid pro quo was the patronage of the thirsty at his inn during and after the sport. 23 Other publicans followed Larra’s example by establishing rough private racetracks near their hotels or by setting up booths on district racecourses. At larger meetings the local

19 Freedman & Lemon op. cit. p. 190
23 Barrie op. cit. p. 12
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magistrate licensed the booths, with the race committee’s approval. At some
country racecourses as many as 23 booths operated, and takings at the bar tents
were regarded as a more important barometer of a ‘successful day’ than the
quality of the sport.

In England most annual race meetings occurred on holidays like Boxing and St
Patrick’s days and this practice was replicated in Australia. A race committee
established a racecourse at Petersham in the mid-1840s, and subsequently Thomas
Shaw, who became licensee of the Petersham Inn located across the road, staged
some rather informal meetings there on holidays. In the same decade several other
private racecourses, including Coulton’s course at Baulkam Hills, were in
operation. William Cutts established an early hotel-racecourse venture at
Burwood in the 1850s—though the course was much ruder than Petersham. A
paddock adjoined Cutt’s Horse and Jockey Hotel and this was marked out for the
occasional holiday meeting, such as the one conducted on St Patrick's Day 1851.

Publican meetings also occurred irregularly in the more accessible western
hinterlands of Sydney. On 4 February 1870 George Ireland advertised in the
*Sydney Morning Herald* a race meeting to be held at Blacktown on Wednesday 9
February. Blacktown was at the time a fringing rural district but it boasted a
railway station that had opened in 1862, a facility Ireland must have hoped would
allow metropolitan excursionists to attend his meeting. He could program four
events only, including a race for ponies of 14 hands and under. Two races were to
be decided by heats and Ireland underwrote his prize money by stipulating that
each contest must attract at least four entrants or be declared a no-race.

The relationship between racecourses and nineteenth-century inns and taverns was
symbiotic and it is unsurprising that they were often in the same ownership The

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24 Helgeby op. cit. p. 6
25 Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 28; ‘Progress report from the select Committee on the Racing
Association Bill; together with the Proceedings of the Committee, minutes of evidence and
appendix’, in *NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900* vol. 6 p. 1172.
There were said to be up to 100 booths on the Newcastle racecourse, England; Huggins op. cit. p. 126
26 O’Hara *A Mug’s Game* p. 37. Further research has caused that author to modify his original
findings about the Petersham course, and the new interpretation is given here
27 Freedman & Lemon *op. cit.* pp. 185c, 190
29 *Sydney Morning Herald* 4/2/1870
nexus between drinking and gambling was well established and the presence of both establishments in a district made a strong call to men of certain predilections. Usually hotels predated racecourses, but in January 1891 Peter Moore built a grand hotel on the highway near the entrance to his Moorefield racecourse, three years after the course’s opening, to service the sportsmen attracted to race meetings, and to provide permanent lodgings for stable retainers such as jockeys and strappers.30

The earliest known private racing in the South Sydney district, which was to be the base of pony racing in Sydney, took place at The Albert Ground. The Ground was located opposite present-day Redfern Oval and it was, before the rise of the Association Ground (now the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG)), the most important cricket ground in Sydney. Isaac Foulsham, later a successful Melbourne trainer, rode in pony races there in the 1860s.31 Members of the military stationed at Victoria Barracks, Paddington, also raced on the Albert Ground in that period.32 Further east, on Coogee Beach, the local publican Peter Hogan promoted rudimentary catch-weight races that nevertheless required a 5s sweepstake and provided a guaranteed purse.33

Meanwhile, to the south small, localised meetings were held on holidays at Kogarah and Sans Souci. The Boxing Day events at the latter were especially primitive and perhaps even too remote to be of use to a publican, and were conducted on a course of 50 chains, with no fixed starting times or names for the horses.34 Mr English, the publican of the Kogarah Hotel, was also the proprietor of the Kogarah racecourse that was in operation in the early 1880s. Horses belonging to prominent racing men such as Peter Moore and Bill Kelso competed there, which suggests that the racing was of some significance, even though Town...

30 Town & Country Journal 31/1/1891 p. 36. The Moorefield Hotel possessed the longest bar in Sydney, had extensive sleeping quarters and stabling, and many trainers visiting for the AJC carnival were accommodated there. It remained in operation until the 1920s; Turf Monthly, Arnold Publications, December 1998, pp. 28-31
31 Herald & Weekly Times Ltd, Turf Men and Memories: Sketches of The Careers of Leading Australian Trainers, Jockeys and Sporting Identities, Thomas Smart, Melbourne, 1912, p. 29
32 Freedman & Lemon op. cit. p. 343
33 W.B. Lynch & F.A. Larcombe, Randwick 1859-1959, produced for the Council of the Municipality of Randwick, New South Wales, Australia, by Oswald Ziegler Publications, Sydney, 1959, p. 128
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& *Country Journal* complained of the rowdiness of the gatherings.\(^{35}\) Racing of a ‘gymkhana’ or picnic type was provided by Henry Kinsela, a prominent member of the AJC, on 27 acres of the Preddey estate near the junction of Forest and Stony Creek Roads, Bexley. Kinsela provided the prizes for the contests—horse accoutrements such as whips and saddles.\(^ {36}\)

Restricted heights races were added to the small-scale meetings at locations like Blacktown and Kogarah to compensate for the shortage of local thoroughbreds. By programming a race reserved for undersized beasts, race organisers could provide three or four races, about the minimum needed to justify calling a meeting. Races reserved for hacks and grass-fed (or virtually untrained) horses fulfilled a similar purpose. Of these meetings it has been said that ‘any contest, whatever the breeding of the steeds, was as good as another so long as it provided a gambling medium.’\(^ {37}\) The utilitarian use of ponies helped create a quantity over quality ethos that was ever after associated with restricted heights racing. Here were early indications of that lack of concern with the quality of the equine participants, on the part of both organisers and spectators (which came to so gall the AJC), and the ascendancy of the imperative of gambling over sport.

Pony racing had also become a component of meetings of the longer established Glenfield or Collingwood course at Liverpool (1832), and of meetings of the Parramatta club, which took place annually or bi-annually, and even of the AJC (while still based at Homebush) and the Tattersalls club, which staged a 14.0 hands sweepstakes with 20 sovereigns added at Randwick on New Year’s Day 1866. At three-day regional meetings, a pony race was often run on the middle day of which was usually taken as rest-days by the better horses.\(^ {38}\) At the three-day Liverpool autumn meeting of 14-16 April 1857, the first race was named a galloway stakes (though actually restricted to beasts under 14 hands), with a sweepstake of two sovereigns and 25 sovereigns added by the club. Julia, ridden by John Driscoll, subsequently the rider of the 1867 Melbourne Cup winner Tim Whiffler, won the race. A race for hacks helped to extend the day’s racing to four

\(^{36}\) Geeves & Jervis *op. cit.* p. 77
\(^{37}\) Painter & Waterhouse *op. cit.* p. 28
\(^{38}\) Helgeby *op. cit.* p. 10
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events, but before allowing a start in the hack race the stewards sought evidence that the entrants were indeed regularly used for ordinary road riding.\(^3\) Pony and hack races usually carried discounted prize money, reflecting their lower status, but their results were nevertheless reported in the various turf registers.

The Cross Roads Jockey Club also raced on the Liverpool course in the early 1880s. Following a hiatus of several years, racing resumed there in 1887 under the Liverpool Jockey Club. Most meetings operating on the old Liverpool course in these latter years were registered with the AJC and consequently were prohibited from running restricted-height events.\(^4\)

The Parramatta Turf Club held an annual race meeting, usually on Boxing Day, on its course near present-day Rydalmere on the northern side of the Parramatta River. Its meetings were popular events and drew crowds of up to 2,000 people. At the 1874 renewal the club programmed a 15 sovereign race for 14 hands and under ponies, over one lap of the track. Also on the program was a publican’s purse of 50 sovereigns.\(^5\)

Publicans meetings, despite the profitability of the booths, remained irregular events and little more than an occasional diversion, even for the publican. Generally the collection of gate money was not feasible. They did however suggest the potential profitability of privatised and commercialised horse racing (a possibility that began to be fully exploited in the 1880s), and have been acknowledged as the origin of proprietary racing.\(^6\)

The emergence of a proprietary racing circuit

Regular proprietary racing’s appearance coincided with several novel developments in commerce, transport and the lives of the working class and the emerging lower-middle class. The 1880s was the decade of the land boom, when

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39 Fowler Boyd Price (ed.), ‘The Era’ Racing Calendar for 1858, Sydney, The Era, 1858, p. 35
40 Christopher Keating concluded that the Collingwood racecourse was one in the same with the 1832 Liverpool course built by the Sydney Turf Club. Advertisements for the Cross Roads Jockey Club meeting stated it would take place at the ‘Glenfield’ racecourse. Given the proximity of these locations it is reasonable to assume that Glenfield and Collingwood are also different names for one racecourse. Christopher Keating, On the Frontier: a Social History of Liverpool. Sydney, Hale & Iremonger, 1995, p. 116
41 The ‘Australasian’ Turf Register 1874, Melbourne, The Australasian, p. 51
42 Andrew Lemon in Hutchinson et al op. cit, p. 43
large amounts of money came into the hands of nouveau capitalists through speculation in residential real estate.\footnote{Refer Michael Cannon, \textit{The Land Boomers}, South Yarra, Lloyd O’Neill, 1986, chapter one} New investment opportunities for the facile profits of the property boom, and other highly speculative ventures, were sought. The realisation of the commercial possibilities of sport coincided with a dramatic increase in the populations in the major cities and the establishment of extensive public transport infrastructure. The population of the Sydney metropolitan area increased from about 135,000 in 1871 to 383,283 in 1891, and 462,000 by the end of the century, a remarkable growth that was nonetheless exceeded by that of Melbourne.\footnote{O’Hara, \textit{Mug’s Game} p. 59; Cuneen \textit{op. cit.} p. 10} The late nineteenth century saw the rapid development of suburbanisation,\footnote{See Cashman \textit{Paradise of Sport} p. 93} and in this period many of Sydney and Melbourne’s suburban racecourses were built.\footnote{For details of racecourse enclosure refer chapter five} The earlier establishment of weekly suburban proprietary racing in Melbourne than in Sydney is a reflection of the remarkably acute economic and demographic stimuli in the southern city during the long boom, and the precocity of its Cox family, which had first identified the possibilities of proprietary racing in Australia.\footnote{Freedman & Lemon \textit{op. cit.} p. 309-310}

The May 1869 meeting held at the Croxton Park racecourse, Melbourne, is believed to mark the beginning of regular proprietary racing in Australia. The course was adjacent to the Red House Hotel and its syndicate of owners included several prominent hotel owners.\footnote{Ibid.} The founders of the Canterbury racecourse are considered the pioneers of true (if initially infrequent) proprietary racing in Sydney. Frederick Clissold and Thomas Davis staged the first primitive meetings—that included pony races—at that location, on Bramshot Farm, on Boxing Day in 1868 and 1869.\footnote{Ibid. p. 283; re Bramshot Farm refer \url{http://www.williamsfamilyoz.com/George%20Sydney%20Williams%201833%20-%201892.htm}. Accessed 30/4/2004} At a November 1871 meeting there was an attendance of about 300, made up almost exclusively of local farmers. The contestants, too, were mainly locals, and as was becoming the rule, the meeting...
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included a pony race.\textsuperscript{50} Similar meetings took place sporadically at Canterbury in ensuing years. The extent of profit making at those meetings is unclear, but they have not been regarded as truly proprietary.\textsuperscript{51} Meanwhile, in Melbourne, Samuel Cox had established the model for mixed proprietary trotting and pony meetings at his Kennington Park course from 1874.\textsuperscript{52}

Regular proprietary racing also commenced in Sydney at Canterbury, 15 years after it did in Melbourne. Clissold and Davis had retained their interests in the Canterbury district and the sporadic racing that took place in the 1870s, and were among the original four shareholders (with Messrs Ford and Nightingale) in the Canterbury Park Race Club. It staged its first meeting on Saturday 19 January 1884, under AJC rules, which precluded restricted heights or hack racing. The location was not entirely suitable for a regular racing venue, for while Canterbury had the most rapidly expanding population of any electorate in Sydney, the course lacked a direct transport link.\textsuperscript{53} At six furlongs some judged the track too small for high speed, full-sized thoroughbreds to navigate. The ‘new [1884] track’, as it was advertised, had evidently been overlaid on a previous configuration.\textsuperscript{54} As invariably seems the case at opening meetings the catering was inadequate, as was the capacity of the grandstand.\textsuperscript{55} Despite these perceived shortcomings the AJC agreed to register Canterbury, which held a second meeting on 22 March 1884, followed by a further five meetings in its first year. By 1887 Canterbury was staging meetings at roughly monthly intervals and the partners formed a company to administer the affairs of the club and invited three more men, Messrs Seale, Kellick and Spence, to join them. Shares in the company were of £500, a value that ensured participation by men of substance alone.

In the early 1880s the inner-metropolitan racing calendar consisted of the AJC’s two annual meetings at Randwick and several others on the same course that were

\textsuperscript{52} Agnew Australia’s Trotting Heritage p. 42
\textsuperscript{53} Shirley Fitzgerald, Rising Damp: Sydney 1870-90, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1987 p. 18
\textsuperscript{54} Town & Country Journal 1/3/1884 p. 383
\textsuperscript{55} Daily Telegraph 21/1/1884 p. 6; Town & Country Journal 26/1/1884 p. 177
conducted by the (second) STC and the bookmakers’ club, Tattersalls. Thus race meetings were relatively rare events and the Daily Telegraph remarked, upon the success of Canterbury, ‘there is a good opening for a like racing institution within easy reach of Sydney.’\textsuperscript{56} The market decided this was a modest assessment. Within ten years Sydney was transformed from a town with one permanent racecourse and infrequent meetings to one where the number of tracks had almost reached double figures, all them conducted by proprietary companies except for those at Randwick, with racing conducted on most days except the Sabbath. The Rosehill, Moorefield, Warwick Farm, Sydney Driving Park Club (SDPC) and Lillie Bridge racecourses had all opened by 1890. With Canterbury they each contributed materially to the establishment of proprietary pony racing in Sydney.

John Bennett, a promoter with experience in professional sports, had a vision for a new racecourse on a tract of land near Parramatta. The 140 acres that became Rosehill racecourse lay within the original boundaries of the Elizabeth Farm Estate, which in 1883 was subdivided and sold. Bennett was instrumental in the establishment of the Rosehill Racing Club, which enjoyed a floated reserve of £100,000. Despite the large sums spent on the planning and construction of the course, which was much larger and more impressive than Canterbury, Rosehill initially had difficulty attracting patronage comparable to that of the old Parramatta course, where there had been free admission. Before 1888, the rosehill club staged just one three-day meeting a year, in January. Its ownership must have regarded their asset as grossly under-utilised.

Moorefield racecourse, located several hundred yards to the east of Kogarah railway station, which opened on 13 October 1888, was more modest than either Rosehill or Canterbury, but had the advantage of a better location and accessibility, as it lay only 13 minutes from Sydney by fast train and its development had followed quickly on the 1884 opening of the Illawarra railway line. Moorefield is sometimes incorrectly identified as an ARC or pony racecourse, perhaps because it ceased racing in the same period as they did.\textsuperscript{57} It did indeed host midweek pony racing in the 1890s, but was always registered with

\textsuperscript{56}Daily Telegraph 21/1/1884 p. 6
\textsuperscript{57}For example, Penton op. cit. p. 141. Similarly Moorefield, Rosehill and Warwick Farm have been erroneously described as unregistered clubs; Pollard, Pictorial History p. 136
the AJC, and Saturday thoroughbred racing was its main activity. Peter Joseph Moore, an architect and enthusiastic racing man, inherited from his father Patrick Moore the land on which the course was built but the money from the estate had been given to his sisters. He was able to persuade them to provide the finance for the racecourse’s development. Its construction including the grandstands and other buildings cost a comparatively modest £5,000 (Rosehill had cost £17,000), although the Moorefield figure probably does not include the capital value of the land.\(^{58}\) Moore did not bother to level the eastern end of the course, which fell away with a steep gradient towards the Patmore Swamp.

Warwick Farm, a rather more ambitious project than Moorefield, opened less than six months later in March 1889. It was constructed on ‘Brush Farm,’ which formed part of a grant made to Mr J.H. Stroud (the master of the local orphanage), who established stables and a training track on the old farm.\(^{59}\) This complex passed through the hands of the AJC Chairman W.A. Long to the owner-trainer William Forrester, winner of Melbourne Cups with the brothers Grafter and Gaulus, and who was a dominant figure in both Sydney racing and the Liverpool district. A syndicate was formed to establish Warwick Farm as a registered proprietary racecourse, and it included several men with experience of the Rosehill venture including Andrew Town, J.A. Scarr, Thomas Donnellan and Bennett. Some new ways of thinking distinguished this venture, including an idea to offer of 250 £100 shares to owners and trainers, in order to form a sort of cooperative that would allow members to race whenever they wished—which would probably have earned Warwick Farm deregistration, as such a Marxist structure would have been extremely offensive to the AJC, but the concept was in any event not implemented.\(^{60}\) Some years later, E.A. Oatley, a member of the original syndicate, took control of Warwick Farm. In the twentieth century his son Percy succeeded him.\(^{61}\)

The first two-day meeting at Warwick Farm in March 1889 produced difficulties of the sort that seem to have dogged its various owners to the present day. The weather was poor and the railway arrangements unsatisfactory, and many

\(^{58}\) Geeves & Jarvis *op. cit.* p. 98
\(^{59}\) *Australian Jockey Club 139th Annual Report*, Randwick, New South Wales, AJC, 1981
\(^{60}\) *Town & Country Journal* 28/7/1888 p. 192
racegoers grew impatient with the long ride from the city to Liverpool, although Nat Gould spoke of the delights of the excursion through orchards to Cabramatta and the buggy ride to the old course homestead. Some of the on-course facilities also failed to meet expectations. Those who watched the races from the leger stand risked a ricked neck, as it was badly aligned to the home straight.62

The three-tiered structure of Sydney pony racing

The four racecourses discussed in the proceeding paragraphs established the first of several models for the implementation of an associated pony racing circuit in Sydney. As I have suggested, pony racing was a reaction to the limited number of fully-grown thoroughbreds entered at meetings away from Randwick. It also provided an opportunity for owners to race horses and ponies that were not eligible for admission to the Australian Stud Book (first published in 1877), and for bloodhorse breeders to lease out their inferior stock. Pony races continued after the thoroughbred shortage ended because emerging sports entrepreneurs found they could stage meetings free of AJC impositions such as minimum levels of prize money, and rules that regulated race distances and course circumferences, which were proving an encumbrance for registered proprietary clubs.63

By 1889, pony racing no longer merely filled the gaps between all-heights events at hinterland meetings. It also constituted full programs of metropolitan racing. During the 54 years in which pony racing took place in Sydney—a much longer period than is generally appreciated or represented—three paradigms for its conduct developed, and they are discussed below.64 Their place in the wider context of Sydney racing in the period 1888 to 1942 is emphasised in Table 1.1.

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61 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1912 vol. 4 p. 526
63 For detail of these impositions refer to chapter seven
64 This circumstance was unique to Sydney; Melbourne pony racing, for example, conformed entirely to one model
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Table 1.1 Structure of Sydney racing 1888 to 1942 (details of metropolitan pony racing highlighted by bold font)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>status</th>
<th>racecourses</th>
<th>racing type</th>
<th>location</th>
<th>period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>registered, non-proprietary, licensed by government in 1906</td>
<td>Randwick (AJC, STC, Tattersalls, City Tattersalls)</td>
<td>all-heights</td>
<td>inner-metropolitan</td>
<td>1888-1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>registered, non-proprietary, licensed in 1906</td>
<td>Hawkesbury</td>
<td>all-heights</td>
<td>outer-metropolitan</td>
<td>1888-1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>registered, proprietary, licensed in 1906</td>
<td>Canterbury, Rosehill, Moorefield, Warwick Farm</td>
<td>all-heights</td>
<td>metropolitan</td>
<td>1888-1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unregistered, proprietary run on reg. courses</td>
<td>Canterbury, Rosehill, Moorefield, Warwick Farm</td>
<td>restricted heights</td>
<td>metropolitan</td>
<td>1889-1898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unregistered proprietary, licensed in 1906</td>
<td>Kensington, Ascot, Rosebery (new), Victoria Park</td>
<td>restricted heights &amp; all-heights; tracks greater than 6 fs</td>
<td>inner-metropolitan</td>
<td>1893-1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unregistered proprietary, never licensed</td>
<td>SDPC, Lillie Bridge, Forest Lodge, Epping, Liverpool, Botany, Brighton, Rosebery (old), Belmore</td>
<td>mostly restricted heights, tracks less than 6 fs</td>
<td>metropolitan</td>
<td>1888-1906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unregistered proprietary, never licensed</td>
<td>Camden, Narellan, Penrith, Wiseman’s Ferry, Wollongong, etc</td>
<td>restricted heights &amp; all-heights</td>
<td>outer-metropolitan</td>
<td>1888-1906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>registered, proprietary, licensed</td>
<td>Kembla Grange, Gosford, Wyong, Menangle</td>
<td>all-heights</td>
<td>outer-metropolitan</td>
<td>1910-1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unregistered proprietary</td>
<td>Menangle (pony club), Richmond</td>
<td>restricted heights</td>
<td>outer-metropolitan</td>
<td>1912-1941</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Constructed by the author from newspaper sources

**Pony racing on registered proprietary racecourses before 1898**

In the 1890s the Canterbury, Rosehill, Moorefield and Warwick Farm racecourses, each of which was the base of a club registered with the AJC, provided the best prize money for pony racing, but it is no longer commonly realised that restricted heights racing ever took place on them. The shared features of this pony circuit were large courses and races for comparatively taller contestants (frequently galloways). Their pony meetings were strictly that—they did not include all-heights races. The success they experienced in staging pony meetings as supplements to their Saturday fixtures led in turn to the formation of the pony-specific Kensington racecourse and the subsequent proliferation of independent proprietary ventures.

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65 Painter & Waterhouse imply erroneously that no pony racing occurred on registered courses after 1890; ‘The registered clubs submitted to the rules against dual participation, albeit reluctantly’; Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 36
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(Illustration 1.1) small-scale location map of the Sydney racecourses on which unregistered pony racing took place. The initial letters of each racecourse name mark the location.
The registered clubs entered pony racing to allow them to run meetings every week, a desire that had been frustrated by the AJC, which limited them to one meeting a month or less. An AJC oversight allowed them to create subsidiary clubs with unlimited access to pony racing. The Moorefield Pony and Trotting Club conducted the first full pony meeting on a registered racecourse on 30 January 1889, less than four months after the first thoroughbred meeting at the track. The initiative drew large fields; ‘few people in the colony would dare to have thought that we were the happy possessors of so many miniature racehorses as we have—thanks in the main to the SDPC,’ the Referee commented. Canterbury conducted its first pony-race meeting on 20 April 1889, an otherwise raceless date, and was gratified by the arrival of an army of patrons that in the Referee’s estimation exceeded anything previously seen at the course. The Rosehill pony club commenced racing on 24 May 1889. Thereafter pony meetings at one of these venues were held each Wednesday, and in 1890 Rosehill staged a number of meetings on Saturdays on which no registered meetings were scheduled.

In February 1890 the Rosehill, Canterbury and Moorefield clubs formed the Associated Pony Clubs for the purpose of rationalising the administration of their pony racing activities. Warwick Farm later joined the Association but the Liverpool, Lillie Bridge and SDPC pony clubs, who had also joined the field, either remained aloof or uninvited, despite the fact the latter club had first proposed a pony club association. This distancing of themselves by the registered clubs defined the divisions within the sport in Sydney. The newer clubs had decided that pony racing ‘was a popular and profitable business, but that the Driving Park people didn’t know anything about the business worth mentioning,’ and declined to join with it. The Associated clubs appointed an official who issued height certificates that were recognised by all the members; John Daly became handicapper, and a panel of six stewards operated on all four racecourses. The Association also formulated a set of rules and a scale of fines, and set a racing calendar to eliminate clash meetings. All this was done without reference to the

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66 Refer chapter seven
67 Referee 6/2/1889 p. 1
68 Referee 24/4/1889 p. 1
69 Ibid.
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AJC. The proprietary clubs, however, did not operate entirely free of the feudal hierarchy that governed registered racing, and they were reminded of their fealty during the 1894-95 season when pressured to suspend their pony activities for the duration of the AJC spring and autumn carnivals.\(^{71}\) The AJC eventually outlawed pony racing on registered racecourses in 1898.\(^{72}\)

Pony racing on small, unlicensed racecourses before 1906

A number of more rudimentary racecourses—Liverpool (Woodlands), Lillie Bridge, Botany, the first Rosebery Park, New Brighton and Belmore—emerged between 1890 and 1901 to contest the market for smaller animals between 11 and 14 hands high that had belonged exclusively to the SDPC. The tracks and prize money in this sector, which employed a distinct pool of jockeys and trainers, were smaller than on the other pony circuits. The Botany, Lillie Bridge and fleeting Belmore ventures remained part of this lesser grouping throughout their existences. Woodlands, Brighton and the first Rosebery course sometimes betrayed loftier aspirations by programming longer races with larger stakes, for starters up to 15 hands, and occasionally, all heights races.

The Sydney Driving Park Club

The monthly meetings of the SDPC are the earliest instances of regular pony racing in Sydney and they provided a training ground for many of the men who came to prominence at later proprietary ventures. The Club began with the promotion of trotting meetings on a two-and-a-half furlong track that had been laid down in 1882 at the Moore Park Showground. The first (trotting) meeting took place on Saturday October 24 1885.\(^{73}\) Races for pony gallopers were staged from 1888 and eventually replaced trotting as the club’s primary activity. The SDPC was, in the estimation of many, a place of dubious reputation.\(^{74}\)

After a short period under AJC supervision the SDPC ran unregistered pony meetings until 1893, some of which clashed with meetings of the Associated

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70 Sydney Sportsman 10/10/1900 p. 5
71 Referee 9/5/1894 p. 5
72 Refer chapter seven
73 Brown op. cit. p. 34
74 Refer for example to the comments of W.P. Crick p. 224
Clubs, which were irritated by the SDPC’s ability to undercut their admission prices because of its low level of exposure to overheads costs. The Rosehill club took legal action against the SDPC, arguing it could not ‘legally charge persons attending race meetings for admission, on the grounds that the land occupied was held in trust by the municipal corporation for purposes of public recreation only, and all persons were entitled to free access to it’. This litigation represented the opening salvo of the ‘pony wars’ that were to flare intermittingly for the next 15 years.\(^{75}\) The Supreme Court found against the SDPC, which was thereafter unable to charge admission and ceased to stage meetings. It successfully challenged the Court’s decision at the Privy Council, but meanwhile the *Moore Park Act* had outlawed horse and pony racing at the Showground. In 1893 the SDPC sought unsuccessfully to lease Kensington racecourse, a rejection that caused it to disband.\(^{76}\)

**Liverpool**

The Liverpool district contained for some years the greatest concentration of racecourses and associated racing establishments in New South Wales. In the late 1880s promoters staged pony racing almost concurrently at two racecourses in the Liverpool district, in addition to Warwick Farm. One was the 1832 Glenfield or Collingwood Estate course, noted above.\(^{77}\) Meetings there attracted nominations from remote satellites of pony racing such as Wagga Wagga, Goulburn and Bowral.\(^{78}\) The second Liverpool course was named ‘Woodlands’, and here the Liverpool Pony and Galloway Club began proprietary racing in November 1889.\(^{79}\) The Club’s meetings were unregistered and its sporadic existence was typical of the minor pony courses of the 1890s, as it closed several times, changed its name and experimented with trotting races. For a short period in 1893 the Woodlands course became the centre of trotting in Sydney after the demise of the SDPC and discontinuation of the sport at Kensington.\(^{80}\)

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75 Refer chapter two  
76 *Referee* 13/6/1894 p. 1  
77 Refer page 9  
78 *Referee* 22/1/1890 p. 1  
79 *Referee* 221/1/1890 p. 5, 15/5/1890 p. 1, 17/12/1890 p. 5  
80 Brown *op. cit.* pp. 27, 40, 46
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The first Woodlands promotion failed in late 1893 but W.R. Delander and James Sharpe revived racing on Tuesdays in April 1894. Prize money was increased to 20 sovereigns per race but the venture proved unprofitable and racing again ceased before the end of 1894. Racing resumed for a short time in September 1897 then seems to have been discontinued.\(^{81}\)

Lillie Bridge-Forest Lodge-Epping

As there has been a racecourse on the site of Harold Park Paceway, Glebe, for more than a century, it may seem odd to classify it an ephemeral venue, but in the first two decades it had several closures, new administrations and refits, and four name changes in its first 39 years. Originally called Lillie Bridge, it reopened as Forest Lodge in 1899, after a metamorphism became Epping in 1903, but has been known as Harold Park since 1929. In its first three incarnations Harold Park was used primarily for pony racing.

Like the SDPC, Lillie Bridge promoted both trotting and pony racing, with the emphasis on the latter, but also professional foot running and cycling—all the terrestrial contests of speed, in fact, that were bet on in that era. The first meeting of 1 January 1890 also included ‘road sculling’, strange races in which boat-like vehicles were impelled forward by oars geared to a drive shaft; a reference to the promoters backgrounds in professional rowing.\(^{82}\) However the outstanding novelty of Lillie Bridge was that its meetings were held in the evening under electric light only two years after the introduction of electric street lighting at Tamworth and fourteen before its establishment in Sydney city.\(^{83}\) Early Lillie Bridge programs were, by modern standards, extremely brief, typically consisting of two races for ‘peds’,\(^ {84}\) and the same number for ponies, and were concluded in little more than an hour. Despite such limited bills the Referee reported attendances of 2,500 people.\(^ {85}\)

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\(^{81}\) Referee 18/4/1894 p. 5, Referee 22/9/97 p. 4
\(^{82}\) Stuart Ripley personal communication July 2003
\(^{84}\) That is, professional runners
\(^{85}\) Referee 1/1/1890 p. 1; 8/1/1890 p. 3; 22/1/1890 p. 5
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Lillie Bridge’s history is punctuated by interregnums. Racing ceased at Easter 1897 before resuming on the evening of the Prince of Wales birthday holiday on 9 November. Thereafter weekly racing resumed, generally on Monday evenings, though the days of thrice weekly meetings, as had once prevailed, were past.86 The promoters the Spencer brothers recognised the need for expansion of the grounds and work to enlarge Lillie Bridge’s modest area of 4.5 acres began in July 1898 into swampy land beyond Toxteth Road, near to the tram sheds.87 Racing had hardly resumed when, after a bad fall, questions were raised about the track’s safety, for its record was almost as bad as that of Rosebery Park.88

Lillie Bridge became known officially as Forest Lodge on Christmas Day 1899. A large amount of money had been spent on renovations, and prize money increased considerably, and the first meetings under the new arrangements were impressive, culminating in September 1901 in the Forest Lodge Cup of 100 sovereigns. However, fields at Forest Lodge rarely exceeded five or six and the odds offered by bookmakers were very restricted. The club experimented with programs for a widening range of heights until even all-heights and steeplechases were tried.

The Forest Lodge club failed and ceased racing in June 1903, largely due to intrigues sponsored by the Kensington club. James Joynton Smith, at that time racing at Brighton, moved to acquire a lease on the vacant course. Its inner-city location made Forest Lodge more viable than Brighton, even if the racing course, which consisted of loam and was small in circumference, was clearly inferior. Smith renamed the course Epping in July 1904, at the risk of confusion with the northern-Sydney suburb. The rental on Epping was £16 a week (several times greater than Brighton) and Smith had inserted in the lease a clause that gave him the option to purchase the course from the Metropolitan Rugby Union, for £12,000. The first Epping meeting took place on 1 July 1904. Smith had added a number of further improvements to the Forest Lodge initiatives including a new grandstand that cost £3,000. He continued to use Epping for pony racing while preparations proceeded for his new course at Victoria Park, until the 1906 gaming

86 Referee 24/11/1897 p. 2
87 Brown op. cit. p. 51
88 Refer chapter six
Origins and establishment

legislation came into force. The last unregistered pony meeting at Epping took place on 28 December 1906. 89

Botany

Equine racing at Botany began when the licensee of the landmark Sir Joseph Banks Hotel, Frank Smith, encouraged by the successes of the Moorefield, Canterbury and Lillie Bridge racecourses, staged a meeting for ponies on 27 January 1891. In the early 1880s Smith had built a track suitable for conducting the in-vogue sport of pedestrianism (professional foot running) at the Banks, thereby adding another attraction to the impressive hotel grounds, which included a menagerie, pleasant walks and bathing. Smith needed to make only slight alterations to fit-out his Botany course for pony racing, and the successful athletics meetings continued concurrently. The track was widened and the turns made more gradual to make it just large enough for smaller classes of ponies. Current Lillie Bridge height certificates were accepted at Botany, or racers could be measured for new certificates at Blott’s stables in the Haymarket, City. Some of the early Botany meetings clashed with fixtures at the SDPC. 90

The Botany course was accessible by the tramline that had opened in 1882, on which ordinary services and specials deposited punters at the Botany terminus. 91 Meetings usually began in the mid afternoon, though some staged in the summer months began in the early evening gaslights in place on the perimeter of the track in the hope of attracting persons whose employment was over for the day. Mainly with respect to the salubriousness of its location, the Referee prophesied that the Botany venture was ‘sure to be very popular’. 92

Pony racing continued at Botany on 16 February, 4 March and 11 March and thereafter weekly meetings, usually on Tuesdays, took place for three years, a couple of moratoriums notwithstanding, including one prompted by the promoter’s death. James Murtough resumed racing at Botany on behalf of Smith’s

89 Smith op. cit. p. 188
90 Referee 21/1/1891 p. 4, 28/1/1891 p. 5
92 Referee 28/1/1891 p. 5
Origins and establishment

widow on 18 April 1893 but drew only a fair attendance. Further improvements, including the installation of Gray’s new starting machine, did not save racing at Botany in the long term. The last pony meeting of the Smith and Murtough era took place on 9 October 1894 when a ladies bracelet of 30 sovereigns was raced for over four heats and a final.93

In 1899 Thomas Holder advertised his intention to revive pony racing at Botany on 25 March, a Saturday. That meeting did not go ahead but by 17 April 1899 weekly Monday meetings for 13 to 14.2 ponies did resume at Botany and continued for about a month, before equine racing there was permanently discontinued.94 The concept of tiny ponies racing on diminutive rinks such as Botany and Lillie Bridge was by then effete, and unregistered racing was on the move to bigger courses featuring larger ponies to attract customers. However, the Botany course remained viable for pedestrianism and promoters continued to stage athletics meetings adjacent to Sir Joseph Banks Hotel well into the new century.

The first Rosebery Park

Soon after the first cessation of racing at Botany in 1893, James Murtough, the race starter, measurer and sometime promoter there formed a small syndicate of prominent local businessmen to build a new track to be known as Rosebery Park on the southern boundary of the estate of Sir William Cooper.95 Work on the track commenced in 1894 under the supervision of the engineering firm of Cameron and Hawkins. It opened for training on 11 February 1895 and, after an official inspection on 26 February, the first meeting took place on Tuesday 12 March.96

The reputation Rosebery racecourse earned was mixed; management was compelled to close it on several occasions to make track improvements; to bank the turns in May 1895, and to lay new turf from August to October 1897, and yet it was consistently popular with racegoers.97 In 1901 the syndicate obtained the freehold of the racecourse and in January 1902 it undertook further alterations to

93 Referee 30/5/1894 p. 5
94 Referee 19/4/1899 p. 2
95 Town & Country Journal 27/10/1894 p. 37
96 Referee 5/12/1894 p. 1, 13/3/1895 p. 5
97 Referee 11/8/1897 p. 5; 6/10/1897 p. 5
Origins and establishment

(Illustration 1.2) Tramways servicing Sydney’s southeastern racecourses. The Botany racecourse was located near the pier that runs on to Botany Bay (source: Spearritt, *Sydney’s Century*)
the course proper, in response to criticism generated by a string of jockey deaths. The minimum course circumference provisions of the 1906 gaming and betting legislation ultimately forced the closure of the course, and the final meeting at the original Rosebery took place on 24 December 1906. 98

**Brighton**

The success of Moorefield racecourse at Kogarah encouraged the establishment of Brighton racecourse at Napper’s Bush behind Lady Robinson’s Beach, Botany Bay, which opened on 16 December 1895. It lay close enough to its progenitor to be visible from the Moorefield grandstand. The racecourse was an addition to an early Sydney resort complex—inspired by the English seaside town and racetrack at Brighton, which its developer Thomas Saywell had visited during a European tour in 189399—that also featured a grand hotel, public baths, a private wharf, cottages, picnic grounds and a baroque pavilion. The location and racetrack were both known initially as New Brighton. 100

Jack Deeble, a prominent sports promoter, cut the racetrack from a dense coastal scrub of gums and ti trees. 101 Its emergence compelled the *Referee* to wryly update its observation of a decade earlier regarding ‘openings’ for proprietary racing: ‘we shall have a course for every day of the week shortly’. 102 Canterbury, Rosehill, Moorefield, the SDPC, Lillie Bridge, Botany, Kensington and Rosebery had opened within the previous decade and Belmore, Ascot, the second Rosebery and Victoria Park were to follow in the next.

The first program at Brighton, which despite its remote location and the onset of unpleasant weather drew a large attendance of one thousand, included an all heights races and three for galloways. A trotting event of 25 sovereigns was the novelty of the first day, but the conduct of trotting races proved in general so unsatisfactory that Deeble, who was managing the course, soon abandoned them. 103 A steam tram shuttle service on Bay Street met each special race train

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98 *Sydney Morning Herald* 25/12/1906 p. 6
99 Geeves & Jervis *op. cit.* p 122
100 *Ibid.* p. 88
102 *Referee* 17/7/1895 p. 5
103 *Referee* 18/12/1895 p. 5; 15/1/1896 p. 1
Origins and establishment

(Illustration 1.3) Brighton racecourse circa 1900, featuring a section of the leger (or infield) crowd. The winning post is at centre, left of the man in the light-coloured cap. The grandstand is small but attractive and reminiscent of the Ladies’ Stand at the SCG. The dense bush from which the course was cut is evident above the awning of the horse stalls at left. (source: Geeves & Jervis, Rockdale)

(Illustration 1.4) Brighton racecourse, circa 1900, looking southeast from the turn out of the home straight. The cadets are probably from nearby Scot’s College. Beyond the back straight are terrace houses situated near the intersection of present-day Bay St and Grand Parade. (source: A Place of Pleasure: Some Notes on Lady Robinson’s Beach, State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales)
Origins and establishment

from Redfern to convey racegoers, who sometimes had to leave their seats to shoulder the tram up steep rises, the mile or so to the course.\textsuperscript{104}

Despite drawing reasonable attendances Brighton closed and changed hands several times. It went into recess for several months before reopening on 12 July 1897, when Thomas Saywell personally guaranteed the payment of prize money, which indicates previous defaulting.\textsuperscript{105} The promoters had by now determined to cater for beasts of all sizes—from 12.1 hands to all-heights—at each program. Such broad catering seems to have counted for little however, for within weeks racing again was in recess, before resuming in September 1897, under a new name and management, the Brighton Racing and Driving Park Club.\textsuperscript{106} The new organisation made modest prize money increases and reintroduced trotting. Officials came and went several times during that year and the ultimate demise of racing at Brighton was predicted, but the course continued to operate sporadically despite more moratoriums and changes in administration.

It seems it was at this point that Joynton Smith, later the senior figure of pony racing in Sydney, made his entry into the business at Brighton, having reached a managerial arrangement with Saywell, on the advice of his employee Tom Peters, who became club secretary.\textsuperscript{107} However Smith soon concluded that he needed a venue closer to the heart of the city if he were to control pony racing in Sydney. Once he obtained the Forest Lodge lease he began secretly to prepare to abandon Brighton. He remained at the seaside course during the first half of 1904 while he finalised improvements to Forest Lodge-cum-Epping,\textsuperscript{108} but he abruptly ended his occupancy after the meeting of Friday 24 June 1904, despite the protestations of civic-minded Saywell, who claimed that the course’s closure was likely to retard

\textsuperscript{104} Joan Lawrence, \textit{St George Pictorial Memories: Rockdale, Kogarah, Hurstville, Crows Nest} NSW, Kingsclear Books, 1996, p. 39
\textsuperscript{105} Referee 24/11/1897 p. 4
\textsuperscript{106} Referee 22/9/1897 p. 4
\textsuperscript{107} Refer chapter two. Smith’s autobiography does not specify the year he began operating at the course but does mention he took over its management from Jack Deeble; the year of Peters’ appointment as secretary, 1897, may signify Smith’s arrival at Brighton (Smith \textit{op. cit.} p. 186), although Deeble reappears as Brighton secretary in 1900-01 and The \textit{Australian Dictionary of Biography} suggests Smith became manager in 1901. Douglas Pike, Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (general eds.), \textit{Australian Dictionary of Biography}, Melbourne University Press, 1966-; vol. 11, 1891-1939, Nas-Smi, pp. 650-651
\textsuperscript{108} Many Brighton meetings were cancelled in this period because of poor weather.
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development in the Rockdale district.\textsuperscript{109} The galloway West Key, ridden by Myles Connell, won the last race on the last day of regular racing.\textsuperscript{110}

Local enthusiasts attempted to save the racecourse. On 7 January 1905 the Brighton Picnic Race Club staged a meeting of five races, one of which was for ponies. It was hoped this would become an annual event, but in a rather mean spirit Kensington and the other Associated Clubs threatened to stop anyone participating at the Brighton picnics from competing at their tracks. This bullying was sufficient to scare Kensington licence-holders away and just one more picnic meetings was held at Brighton, in February 1906.\textsuperscript{111} Soon after, the 1906 Gaming Betting Act’s insistence on six-furlong tracks sealed the fate of the Brighton racecourse and by 1908 it had disappeared from the government’s list of licensed racecourses. It was demolished during 1911.\textsuperscript{112}

Belmore

The Belmore Racing Club operated a pony-racing venture in 1901-1902 on its racecourse near the Belmore railway station, several stops west of Canterbury racecourse, on the Bankstown rail line.\textsuperscript{113} The racecourse, which was in the form of a seven-furlong horseshoe, and which at least one critic rated the best pony track in Sydney, was built on the proprietary Belmore greyhound coursing grounds, a venue which had been functioning successfully for some time.\textsuperscript{114} The proprietors conducted their first pony meeting on Friday 20 December 1901, offering four flat races and a time handicap trot run on an inner circle track. Despite a large attendance at the opening meeting, where facilities were found primitive and prize money moderate, when weekly racing began support from the public was only moderate and fields were limited to a small pool of local horses. Belmore’s fortunes were not helped by it being ostracized by the leading pony club, Kensington.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{109} Smith \textit{op. cit.} p. 188
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Referee} 29/4/1904 p. 2
\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Referee} 4/1/1905 p 2, 21/6/1905 p. 5
\textsuperscript{112} re licensed racecourses refer \textit{Town & Country Journal} 15/1/1908 p. 47
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Sydney Sportsman} 21/1/1902 pp. 5-6
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Sydney Sportsman} 25/12/1901 p. 4
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Referee} 17/7/1901 p. 5, 24/12/1901 p. 5, re Kensington’s tactics refer chapter two
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After some half-a-dozen Tuesday meetings at the Belmore course it was announced that pony racing would go into recess until the end of the coursing season, some six months hence. Pony racing in fact was never resumed, but the Belmore Coursing Grounds continued in existence into the 1930s, despite the considerable losses the company must have accrued in the construction of a galloping course that was used on only a handful of occasions.116

The ARC racecourses

The third category of nineteenth-century pony racing began in 1893, on larger pony-specific racecourses operated by clubs not registered with the AJC. It catered for larger ponies and galloways, especially in later years, and paid greater prize money than was given at other unregistered courses. The four clubs of this category provided the basis of the ARC, and developed the mature product of pony racing of the twentieth century that is the main topic of this thesis.117

Kensington

The opening of Kensington marked the emergence of the South Sydney-North Botany district racecourses used exclusively for unregistered racing, built to be first-rate racecourses following large capital outlays. This distinguished them from venues such as the Albert Ground, the SDPC, Lillie Bridge, Botany and Belmore—where pony racing was usually introduced as an afterthought, on modified sports or recreation grounds—and outer-metropolitan locations such as Woodlands. Kensington and its imitators became the core providers of pony racing after the AJC barred it from registered racecourses in 1898.

Kensington was the first unregistered racing company to provide racing of a standard comparable with AJC registered racing. Every aspect of its enterprise—prize money, facilities, conduct of racing and administration—represented a significant advance on previous practices. It conducted itself with great efficiency and with the evident intention of establishing a long-term niche in the racing

116 Referee 26/2/1902 p. 5
117 Joynton Smith’s Victoria Park, which emerged in 1908, was not formally a member of the ARC and employed its own racing secretary, rather than the ARC’s Jack Underhill. But there were such close cooperation between the two bodies that the running of pony racing in Sydney appeared
Origins and establishment

(Illustration 1.5) Aerial photograph taken in the mid-1950s showing the locations of several racecourses and the Australian Golf Course in Sydney’s southeastern suburbs racing precinct. (photograph courtesy of Allen Windross)
Origins and establishment

market. Its popularity and profitability inspired the establishment of the three other premium pony courses, although they did not emerge until the worst effects of the depression and drought of the 1890s had passed—when they opened over three successive years.

The sight of the flags waving merrily atop Kensington’s grandstand across High Street, clearly visible from the edifices at Randwick, caused consternation to AJC secretary Clibborn and a succession of committee members. The reputation of Kensington grew to such an extent during the 1890s that respected men of registered racing paid it flattering compliments. ‘There is no club in the world that carries on its affairs better than Kensington,’ declared S.R. Kennedy, the betting agent and owner of winners of several races now classified as group one events. The journalist Andrew Farthing, agreed: ‘I may say that the Kensington club manage their place better than any club I have seen.’ Even the caustic Sportsman declared ‘of all the courses in the country a punter has a better chance at Kensington than he has anywhere else.’ The implications of these statements could not be lost on the AJC. 118

The Rosehill Racing Club spawned Kensington when George Rowley, the Rosehill secretary, obtained approval for a lease in November 1889 of vacant crown land south of Randwick racecourse. 119 It is unclear what purpose the Rosehill club had in mind while constructing Kensington—whether to sublet it, to race ponies itself, or to seek registration with the AJC. It is probably not a coincidence, however, that the Kensington application followed within months of a brief disciplinary deregistration of Rosehill meted as a consequence of defiance of an AJC ruling on racing dates. 120

What is certain is that like Rosehill, the Kensington project was conducted on ambitious lines. There was an initial expenditure of £12,000 but Henry Harris, the largest shareholder, said in 1900 that the real cost in establishing the course was almost seamless. For the purposes of this work, references to the ARC are intended to include Victoria Park, unless the contrary is specified.

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118 NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 pp. 1234, 1238; Sydney Sportsman 26/12/1900 p. 5
120 Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 33
Origins and establishment

closer to £30,000,\textsuperscript{121} a remarkable investment given that the company did not possess the freehold. Further, Harris added that in the years from 1890 to 1900 approximately £110,000 was expended on the consolidation of the grounds and in added prize money. The lease of the course remained in Rowley’s name until August 1894 when it was transferred to the Rosehill Racing Company. In 1896 the £800 p.a. lease was assigned to the Kensington Recreation Ground Company, which had been incorporated on 5 July 1895.\textsuperscript{122}

Ascot

Ascot racecourse, which opened at the northern corner of Botany Bay almost 13 years after Kensington, was perhaps the first pony racecourse for which profit-seeking did not completely overshadow other motives. A member of the Richmond family of sportsmen conceived its formation as something of a payback in consequence of a bitter dispute between the Pony and Galloway Owners Association (PGOA) and the Kensington club. The PGOA certainly provided the philosophical zeal behind Ascot, but a group known as the Lord’s Ground Syndicate financed it. The nominal capital of the Ascot venture was 15,000 shares of £1 each, and the listing closed on 24 June 1905. The initial company meeting of 60 shareholders took place in September 1905 and elected J. Butterfield, Herbert Garratt, G.L. Fagan, W.R. Tilley, Richard Gaut, and Dr W. MacDonald Kelly unopposed to directorships.\textsuperscript{123}

Work, including the sowing of grass for the course proper and enclosure lawns, began in May 1905, but the continuance of the decade-old drought forced a delay in the opening for several months.\textsuperscript{124} Ultimately Ascot held its first meeting on Saturday 7 April 1906, on the same day as the traditional Hawkesbury prelude to the AJC autumn carnival. Twenty-three-hundred curious racegoers travelled to North Botany, and their presence inevitably decreased the attendance at distant Hawkesbury—an unwelcome imposition, no doubt, for that club, which already

\textsuperscript{121} NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1271
\textsuperscript{122} Waugh op. cit. p. 7; NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1269. By the 1920s rental had increased to £4,000; Sydney Morning Herald 14/4/1985 p. 97
\textsuperscript{123} re Richmond family refer Smith op. cit. p. 188; T.G. Barber, Mascot 1888-1938: Fifty Years of Progress, Sydney, Harbour Press, 1938 p. 59; Referee 6/9/1905 p. 5; Jervis & Flack op. cit. p. 19

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fled it had been harshly treated by AJC programming decisions made since the 1880s.\textsuperscript{125} Many bookmakers who earned their regular livelihood at the Associated (pony) Club courses led by Kensington were kept away from early Ascot meetings by the threat of disqualification formulated during earlier pony wars,\textsuperscript{126} but an ample number of unaffiliated bookmakers were licensed to field.\textsuperscript{127}

**New Rosebery Park**

The new Rosebery Park racecourse, which opened on 7 August 1907, belonged to the original 1895 syndicate, which purchased land for the second course, located about half a mile east on Gardeners Road from the original, in October 1906. The cost of setting up the new course to the first day’s racing was reckoned at £12,000. A new grandstand was built in the paddock and the stand from the old track was moved over to serve patrons in the leger.\textsuperscript{128}

**Victoria Park**

The Victoria Park project was the longest and most expensive associated with the creation of a Sydney pony racecourse. The man with the vision for a venue to rival Randwick was James Joynton Smith, already identified in this work as the sometime manager of Brighton and Epping racecourses. Smith and his companies spent an estimated £70,000 on the development of Victoria Park racecourse.\textsuperscript{129} While it might be supposed that he conceived Victoria Park in response to the *Gaming and Betting Act 1906*, which disqualified Epping from conducting galloping meetings (as indeed his autobiography stated), he had in fact purchased the site on 27 September 1904, just three months after leaving Brighton and long before the likely provisions of the legislation were discussed.\textsuperscript{130}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{124} *Town & Country Journal* 14/3/1906 p. 44, 11/4/1906 p. 47. Because of water shortages for the first few meetings of April 1906 the section of the course between the winning post and the back straight was not settled sufficiently and racing was limited to sprints
\item \textsuperscript{125} The end of the predatory programming practices of the pony clubs was to be one undeniably positive outcome of the 1906 gaming legislation
\item \textsuperscript{126} Refer chapter two
\item \textsuperscript{127} *Referee* 11/4/1906 p. 5
\item \textsuperscript{128} *Referee* 7/8/1907 p. 5; Peake *Rosebery* p. 30
\item \textsuperscript{129} *New South Wales Parliamentary papers* 1912 p. 505
\item \textsuperscript{130} Land and Valuation Court Sydney, *Victoria Park Racecourse and Recreation Grounds Company Limited V Sydney Turf Club—Judgment*, March 1952, p. 2; Smith *op. cit.* p. 189
\end{itemize}
Smith desired that his new course should be as close to Sydney as Randwick, and be able to accommodate a large course proper. Satisfying these criteria proved extremely difficult, and he had almost given up the search when, standing on a sand dune that became the bunker on the sixth hole on the Australian Golf Course, he cast his eye over a ‘dreary looking swamp, almost wholly under water.’

This was the Waterloo swamp. Somehow Smith imagined a racecourse there. He bought the site for £15,000...the consulting engineers Smith hired told him the site could not be drained except at unacceptable expense. Mulling over the problem, Smith was inspecting his swamp at its deepest point and noticed nearby Shea’s Creek. On a hunch, he had a trench dug from the swamp into the creek. With almost biblical haste, the swamp waters emptied into the creek and rushed out into Botany Bay. Smith was left with a flat dry basin sitting on top of soil rich with peat built over centuries. The location was a kilometre or two closer to the heart of Sydney than Randwick.

Like old Rosebery Park the site of Victoria Park lay on the Cooper estate. Smith held a ‘press conference’ to launch the development of the proposed showpiece in August 1905, at which time he anticipated a February or March 1907 opening.

On 4 July 1907 Smith leased Victoria Park for 20 years to a company formed to conduct racing there, in consideration of 5,000 fully paid-up shares, and an annuity of £750 for the first year and £1,300 per year thereafter. Smith had negotiated favourable terms for the transfer of his racecourse to a company over which he retained effective control, a device for which his friend John Wren was to become notorious.

The first Victoria Park meeting, which the club promoted as ‘the event of the year,’ took place on Wednesday 15 January 1908 and a second meeting followed three days later. In the week preceding these meetings, at the official course opening, the jockey Stan Lomond rode two circuits of the course (Lomond’s grandfather, Tom, had performed the same office at the opening of Randwick racecourse in 1860). When Victoria Park closed in 1952, Stan Lomond, who was master of ‘Zetland Lodge’ stables for many years, was an elder statesman among the remaining trainers.

131 Smith op. cit. p. 192
132 Peake Victoria Park pp. 19-20 (based on Smith’s account; Smith op. cit. p. 194)
133 Referee 2/1/1907 p. 5
134 Land and Valuation Court Sydney, Victoria Park Racecourse and Recreation Grounds Company Limited V Sydney Turf Club—Judgment, March 1952, p. 2
136 Referee 8/1/1908 p. 3
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The completion of Victoria Park marked the end of the great era of racecourse building in Sydney. Intended to become a Sydney institution, it was used as a racecourse for less than 35 years. Nevertheless it and the ARC racecourses had played a significant part in the lives of many Sydney people.

Table 1.2: opening meetings, ARC pony racecourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>racecourse</th>
<th>date</th>
<th>first race</th>
<th>winner</th>
<th>jockey</th>
<th>trainer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kensington</td>
<td>Thursday 15.6.1893</td>
<td>Opening Hcp, 5.5 fl</td>
<td>Zulander</td>
<td>Woodgate</td>
<td>Richard Wootton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascot</td>
<td>Saturday 7.4.1906</td>
<td>Flying Hcp, 4 fl</td>
<td>Medea</td>
<td>E. Smith</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosebery</td>
<td>Wednesday 7.8.1907</td>
<td>Opening Hcp, 5 fl</td>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td>W.H. Barnett</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Park</td>
<td>Wednesday 15.1.1908</td>
<td>Flying Hcp, 5 fl</td>
<td>Lorraine</td>
<td>C. Nulty</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Constructed by the author from newspaper sources

Conclusions

Sydney racing began with a blueprint drawn from eighteenth century English racing. It gradually diverged from that model in response to local conditions, such as a relative scarcity of capital, smaller racecourses and a different nexus between metropolitan and regional racing, and the greater influence of gambling, but it also acquired many of the features of commercialised racing that developed in Britain in the nineteenth century. Pony racing was in particular a consequence of a shortage of thoroughbreds and the need to pad out limited programs. Early meetings at which pony racing took place were often organised by publicans for the purpose of attracting clientele to racecourse stalls selling their product, or to nearby inns and taverns. Sometimes admission was charged to grandstands or other small reserved areas. These publicans meetings were the antecedents of proprietary racing. To allow ponies and other slower animals to be competitive, and to provide an opportunity for betting, entrants were grouped and opposed to one another on the basis of height, training and diet.

Ultimately three tiers of pony racing evolved in Sydney in the 1890s. The existence of these tiers demonstrates that the homogeneity assumed by the orthodox interpretation of pony racing certainly did not exist in this period. The

137 Town & Country Journal 15/1/1908 p. 47
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foremost clubs were the AJC-registered proprietary clubs that led double lives as purveyors of lucrative Wednesday pony racing in addition to their Saturday thoroughbred programs. In the late Victorian and early Edwardian era a number of hastily organised and modestly capitalised racecourses, at which pony races constituted the whole program rather than fillers between the thoroughbred events, began to appear within greater Sydney, but increasingly in the lightly developed region between Sydney Harbour and Botany Bay. These included the SDPC, Lillie Bridge and its successors, Woodlands, Botany, Brighton, Old Rosebery and Belmore. Unregistered pony racing was an attractive proposition to start-up businesses as it did not demand the additional costs required to meet AJC expectations of racing organisers.

Most of these unregistered racing ventures were ephemeral, but the appearance of the more ambitious Kensington club began a trend to larger, better-appointed, specialist pony racecourses. An increasingly mature market and severe depression did not deter investors from entering the field and building ever-more sophisticated racecourses such as Ascot and new Rosebery, culminating in the construction of the sport’s equivalent of the revolutionary Dreadnought class battleship, the Victoria Park complex. By 1908 pony racing, under the control of the ARC, had in place the basic infrastructure required for it to offer a serious alternative to registered racing. It is on these ARC racecourses and their operators, and the build up to the apotheosis of unregistered racing that began with the establishment of Victoria Park, that subsequent chapters concentrate.
Chapter two

Promotion, administration and financing of unregistered proprietary pony racing

Unregistered pony racing was transformed in the thirty years after 1888 from a relatively crude product predicated on nondescript beasts that usually competed at small racecourses provided with primitive infrastructure, to a well-marketed package that incorporated the most appealing features of registered racing, coupled with some unique value-added initiatives. This chapter examines the significance of the contributions that the first generation of sports entrepreneurs, and subsequently the ARC and other administrations, made to the popularisation of pony racing. It identifies the promoters’ common antecedents and sensibilities and explores the links between pony racing and other gate money sports.

The chapter considers first the speculators who built the small independent racecourses of early pony racing, and the racing association established by the AJC proprietary clubs, who shared responsibility for pony racing in Sydney in the late-nineteenth century. It discusses the establishment of a cadre of salaried racing officials and the important part played by pony racing in verifying the viability of commercial and proprietary sport in Sydney. There follows an examination of the disputes and alliances that led to the outbreak of internecine ‘pony wars’ and their resolution, and the subsequent unification of the sport that produced the ARC. The functions the ARC performed and its place in the wider racing industry, and its imperialist activities outside the metropolitan area are also discussed. Thereafter follows an account of the officials of the ARC, and identification of those aspects of the Association’s administration that mainstream racing adopted after World War II. The chapter concludes with consideration of the shareholders of the later pony-racing period. The analysis undertaken here is important because it will demonstrate the extent to which pony racing contributed to the fabric of modern Australian thoroughbred racing and it will help fix the place of the sport’s promoters and administrators in the economic and cultural matrix of Sydney. It
will also resolve some part of the question of whether unregistered racing was a working-class sport.

**Early promotions**

Pony racing in Sydney began on a very modest scale at a number of hastily established venues mostly organised by individuals or small syndicates. However the management of the SDPC, which introduced regular pony racing to Sydney, was virtually identical to the committee of the Agricultural Society of New South Wales, men who were mostly members of the squattocracy. It included the five-time premier of the colony Sir John Robertson, who was president of both the SDPC and the Agricultural Society. The participation of figures from the Establishment in the SDPC was a divergence from the paradigm of proprietary sports promotion that had been established in preceding decades. The minor mystery of why the august Agricultural Society became involved in a form of proprietary racing is deepened by the extremely low admission prices levied at SDPC meetings, which could hardly have led to substantial gate-takings—even though attendances were quite reasonable, as its central location at Moore Park probably ensured. It can only be concluded that the SDPC conducted its meetings for reasons other than large-scale profit making.

While the SDPC ultimately ran meetings that consisted exclusively of pony racing, other promoters continued to use the sport as one item on a varied bill of amusements, as it had been at publicans’ meetings. The promoters of the Lillie Bridge Grounds, who clearly were profit-seekers, provided what amounted to a circus or vaudeville under electric light. Others, such as Thomas Saywell, the financier of New Brighton racecourse, and Frank Smith of the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel, saw pony racing as one attraction among the hotel-based pleasure gardens of the era, which might now be recognised as nascent amusement parks.

Smith had tailored his hotel to appeal to all interested in professional sports, and it became so internationally renowned that the champion Afro-American boxer Jack

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1 Brown *op. cit.* p. 34
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Johnson resided and trained there during his two working visits to Sydney.\textsuperscript{2} Numerous agencies for gambling were provided, and £100 side wagers were not unusual on matches decided on the skittle alley.\textsuperscript{3} The St Patrick’s Day athletics meeting at Botany attained a reputation as one of the grandest sports days on the Sydney calendar, and reports of pedestrianism meetings there and at the other main Sydney venue, the Carrington Ground, had an international audience.\textsuperscript{4} Smith had promoted athletics events at Botany since 1884, originally on a straight 180-yard course, but later on a circular quarter-mile cinders track, which subsequently became the pony racecourse and which could be overseen from the southern balconies of the hotel. When Smith announced he was diversifying into pony racing the \textit{Referee} enthusiastically praised his integrity and record as an entrepreneur.\textsuperscript{5}

Smith, who also kept the Allambra and Burrangong hotels in the city, began in commerce by hawking potatoes in the Redfern district, before entering theatrical promotion. He once declined a stellar offer of £40,000 for the Banks Hotel, a decision he must have regretted when he lost a similar amount in the space of a week to an American gambler guest. This transaction was a factor in his 1893 bankruptcy, and he died soon after. His wife was compelled to open a boarding house at Redfern to support herself.\textsuperscript{6}

Despite Smith’s demise other sports entrepreneurs and administrators who had risen to prominence in the previous decade in the organisation of professional sports and registered proprietary racing entered pony racing and conducted weekly meetings at several venues. They soon formed a cadre of professional racing officials who moved fluidly between established and emerging ventures


\textsuperscript{3} Jervis & Flack \textit{op. cit.} p. 301

\textsuperscript{4} In fact the athletics meetings were apparently much grander affairs than the prosaic pony races proved to be: ‘the female fashion parade at their carnivals was on a par with that in the Randwick Paddock on Epsom or Metropolitan day’; Hollege \textit{op. cit.} p. 108; certainly prize money was much larger; Jervis and Flack found that Smith offered prizes up to 800 guineas for athletic events; Jervis and Flack \textit{op. cit.} p 95

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Referee} 21/1/1891 p. 5

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(see table 2.1 on page 85). The most peripatetic of all was Thomas Donnellan, who served as pro tem inaugural secretary with at least four new racecourses.

Unlike the old money (by Australian standards) pastoralists who controlled the AJC, VRC and QTC, most promoters of professional sport had acquired their capital in recent times, often in new industries, and frequently in the hotel business. Several of them had been born in humble circumstances in Great Britain—wherein perhaps lies the explanation for the frequent duplication of British sports ground nomenclature at Australian facilities. This British lineage demonstrates the origins of commercial sport in this country, even if some of its expressions—in particular proprietary pony racing—were uniquely Australian.

Frank Underwood, the freemason chairman of the Canterbury proprietary club, was heavily engaged in rowing before 1900. He had also been a publican since 1868, first at the Globe Tavern at the corner of Market and Castlereagh streets, Sydney, then the Elephant and Castle (Pitt and King streets) and finally at the Royal Surrey, Waverley, from 1884. Other rowing officials and hoteliers who entered unregistered racing included the Spencer brothers, Thomas and John—who A.B. Paterson recalled as members of a great Sydney sporting family, and backers of the sculler Trickett’s tour of England—who were the developers of Lillie Bridge. Richard Gaut, the Ascot director, kept the Grand Hotel in George St. Jack Deeble, who with the Spencer brothers established oligarchic control over

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7 Painter & Waterhouse provide a breakdown of the vocations of AJC committee members in an appendix to *The Principal Club*; for a breakdown of QTC membership in the late Victorian era see Bryan Jamison *op. cit.* p. 26-7
8. The most salient example of this was the Sydney Ascot racecourse. When it opened there were already three metropolitan Ascot racecourses operating around Australia—Wren’s course in Melbourne, the WATC course in Perth and Eagle Farm racecourse, which was within the Brisbane suburb of Ascot, and which was also known as Ascot racecourse. Other examples were the Epsom, Sandown Park, Albion Park, Cheltenham Park and Victoria Park (Sydney and Adelaide), Croxton Park, Hurlingham and Lillie Bridge racecourses, all named for British sports grounds. The appellation ‘park’ was also borrowed from Britain to denote an enclosed racecourse. See also Freedman & Lemon *op. cit.* p. 311
row rowing promoting in the 1880s, tried his hand at most functions associated with the administration of pony racing, including promoting.\textsuperscript{12} Deeble, who had also promoted professional running, backed William Beach on his World Championship rowing quest in England, as well as other famous rowers such as Kemp, Stanley and Neilsen. In the 1880s the Angel (or ‘Deeble’s’) Hotel, located on the corner of Pitt and King St, previously known as Beach’s Hotel and of course earlier as the Elephant and Castle, was the primary meeting place of those who speculated on rowing contests. Deeble also kept Bell’s Hotel at Wooloomooloo Bay. In common with several other pony racing administrators he was active in the Agricultural Society and was assistant ringmaster at the Sydney Easter Show for a number of years. After the closure of the Brighton racecourse he worked at Victoria Park and finally operated as timekeeper at Ascot until his death on 16 October 1912.\textsuperscript{13}

O’Hara concluded the pioneering racing entrepreneurs were impressed by the profits made by gambling-predicated businesses such as George Adams’s sweeps, and those of illegal totalisator operators, and recognised the even greater ‘potential of…race meetings which could be organised in ways designed to appeal to gamblers more than traditional horse racing. These men, usually in small syndicates, formed the first proprietary racing companies.’ The primary benefit in operating a racecourse was immunity from the governmental intervention that the betting consultations encountered, but there were other advantages as well.\textsuperscript{14} Ripley has suggested that the Spencers and Deeble abandoned rowing for the promotion of pony racing in the 1890s because it posed few of the problems of enclosure associated with the water-based sport, and was consequently more profitable.\textsuperscript{15}

While the new providers of racing may well have believed they could improve on what the AJC offered, at the very early pony meetings promoters expressed little flair for entertainment imperatives, (the novelty of trotting races notwithstanding),

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Ripley op. cit. p. 137
\item \textsuperscript{13} Referee 21/6/1899 p. 5, 13/12/1899 p. 5, 23/10/1912 p. 5; Stuart Ripley, personal communication, April 2000
\item \textsuperscript{14} O’Hara \textit{Mug’s Game}. p. 102; Freedman & Lemon \textit{op. cit.} p. 401
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ripley op. cit. p. 150
\end{itemize}
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for they provided short programs, small fields and cramped betting markets, and lacked extra-track diversions. At the first Botany meeting the promoters staged six races, each of 20 sovereigns (a modest enough sum but double the subsequent prize money). The races were for beasts of less than 12.3, 13, 13.2 and 13.3 hands—no more than tiny gimcracks that cantered several times around a miniscule track, often with wide margins between them.\textsuperscript{16} Such events were probably not very exciting to witness.

Many entrepreneurs entered pony racing from the AJC-registered proprietary companies that conducted pony meetings on the registered racecourses, and at Kensington. The syndicate that acquired Rosehill in October 1888 and floated it as a public company, for example, was said to comprise ‘the leading sporting gentlemen of Sydney.’\textsuperscript{17} It soon after sought a lease from the government to establish the Kensington racecourse. Pony race meetings conducted on registered courses became an additional responsibility of the secretaries of the registered proprietary clubs, such as John Jolly of Moorefield, W.L. Davis of Canterbury, George Rowe of Warwick Farm, and in particular George Rowley of Rosehill and his assistant Patrick O’Mara.

Members of the syndicate that opened the Rosebery Park racecourse in March 1895 were the first entrepreneurs to conduct unregistered pony racing, independently of trotting or registered racing, on a purpose-built track whose primary objective was profit making from gate-money, rather than the promotion of an adjacent hotel. The manager of this enterprise, James Murtough, was, as noted above, previously associated with pony racing at Botany and had indeed been active in Sydney sporting circles for many years. He had been a member of Tattersalls Club since 1865 and in addition to his duties at Botany he was the handicapper at Lillie Bridge until September 1894, when he resigned to concentrate on the construction of Rosebery. Murtough, who was described as the Czar of Rosebery, and his associates saw more promise in their new location than

\textsuperscript{16} Referee 28/1/1891 p. 5
\textsuperscript{17} Sydney Turf Club\textit{ op. cit.} p. 13; Referee 17/10/1888 p. 5
Botany because it was considerably closer to the city and more suitable for enclosure.  

The Rosebery venture was proposed immediately the success of Kensington became evident. It was, like other hopefuls over the new decade, undaunted by drought and depression and an increasingly crowded racing market. Murtough gained the support of Michael Gearin and Jerome Dowling Snr, members of two of Sydney’s wealthiest families and both prominent clubmen, in financing Rosebery. Gearin was a leading figure at Tattersalls, while Dowling became the founding treasurer of City Tattersalls soon after the opening of Rosebery.  

In general the amount of capital invested in proprietary racecourses grew in the 1890s, although the long-term effects of the depression were evident in the smaller scale of the Rosebery and Brighton projects (1895), compared to Kensington (1893). However an exponential increase in expenditure and prize money coincided with the appearance of the most influential and controversial Australian sports entrepreneur, John Wren, in pony racing matters. Although he built no new racecourses, Wren’s arrival brought much more ambitious management to the sport. In Melbourne, after establishing his fortune from winnings on Carbine’s 1890 Melbourne Cup and investment in the notorious Collingwood totalisator, Australia’s most successful illegal betting agency, he became the leading promoter of professional cycling and boxing. In 1906, soon after the registered clubs refused his nominations following his horse Murmur’s controversial win in the Caulfield Cup, he took over the three Melbourne pony racecourses, warned off the disreputable element that had been a blot on the sport in that city, expended £23,000 in upgrading the Richmond racecourse, and offered unprecedented prize money for his feature events.  

Proprietary racing in New South Wales is differentiated from that in other parts of the country by the absence of John Wren from its management. The extent of Wren’s involvement and influence in Sydney pony racing remains unclear,  

18 Sydney Sportsman 26/3/1902 p. 1
19 Andersen Tattersall’s, unpaginated
although he certainly held 9,000 shares in the original Ascot racecourse company.  

He also had some undefined interest in Joynton Smith's Victoria Park—although not as a listed shareholder—and was closely connected with the Donohoe family, who commissioned his Sydney bets and bought and trained horses for him. However, it is evident he did not enter into Sydney proprietary racing to the extent he did in Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. Probably this was due to the more mature and competitive pony market that existed in Sydney, whereas in Melbourne, where it was near collapse, Wren had been virtually begged to take over, as he was later in Brisbane. Nevertheless he did continue to expand his interest in the Sydney Ascot company, and by 1938 he was the second largest owner, although his holdings represented less than three per cent of the total issue. His direct influence on Sydney pony racing remained comparatively limited.

None of the Sydney pony men matched the millionaire Wren’s influence and audacity in Melbourne—he once made a serious offer to rent Flemington from the Victorian government and to fund and stage the Melbourne Cup as his private venture—but Joynton Smith, the Sydney sports entrepreneur who was Wren’s closest equivalent in a more diverse market, was a leading businessmen and (unlike Wren) respected civic leader, who (like Wren) is widely believed to have exerted considerable influence on the affairs of the Australian Labor Party. In 1918 Smith was at once Lord Mayor of Sydney, chairman of the Victoria Park racecourse company, and president of the NSW Rugby League. A year later he became proprietor of Smith’s Weekly, a bigoted, chauvinistic and somewhat fascist magazine popular among males of Sydney with right-wing sympathies, especially returned servicemen—a rather surprising orientation given his Labor

20 Hugh Buggy, The Real John Wren, North Ryde NSW, Angus & Robertson, 1986, p. 79; Daily Mirror 1/6/1987 p. 30; Richmond however remained aesthetically uninspiring
21 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1348
22 Harry Reed, Interview with Laurie Dillon 1980 University of NSW Archives, p. 3.
23 Wren once instructed Jim Donohoe snr to purchase a colt for him at the Sydney yearling sales. Donohoe grew nervous at the agreed price and the deal fell through. The colt, named Poitrel, won the 1920 Melbourne Cup, a race Wren always coveted but never won. Typically Wren bore Donohoe no ill will. Buggy op. cit. p. 53
24 Buggy op. cit. p. 157
25 Sydney Sun 12/6/1938
26 Pacini op. cit. p. 188
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(Illustration 2.1) James Joynton Smith, the promoter of pony racing at Brighton and Epping racecourses, and the owner, and later chairperson, of Victoria Park. Despite affecting Wodehousian accessories such as a monocle, stiff collar and broadcloth frock coats, Smith grew up in Cockney London (source: City of Sydney Council Archive)

(Illustration 2.2) The unspecified involvement of John Wren in Sydney pony racing. The Melbourne promoter (right) is taken for a tour of the new Victoria Park racecourse by Joynton Smith (source: Agnew, Australia’s Trotting Heritage)
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affiliations (it was a strident critic of the ALP premier Holman). Among Smith’s numerous other ventures were the funding of Sydney’s first radio station, 2BL, the establishment of the electricity grid in the Blue Mountains and the management of the ornate Carrington Hotel at Katoomba. A man of eccentric character and appearance, he favoured a gold-mounted lobster claw cigarette holder and affected the brilliantined hair and monocle of the stock theatre ‘silly ass’. Despite the evidence of these Wodehousian props he was in fact a London east-ender and the son of a gas fitter. In company with J.J. Giltinan and other sport entrepreneurs he underwrote the formation of the NSW Rugby League in 1908, and bankrolled the defection of the 1909 rugby union Wallabies to play a series of games against the Kangaroos that proved decisive in turning the battle of the codes in the favour of league.

Max Howell described Smith as a ‘private capitalist’ who had ‘no demonstrated love of Rugby League to this point’ for whom profit ‘would appear to be his primary motivation at the time’, although subsequent service as the League’s president suggests he had some real regard for the game. He demonstrated however an immediate and genuine interest in racing and trotting when he first ventured into proprietary racing at Lillie Bridge and then Brighton, which he undertook as a hobby to provide outdoors relief from his hotel business. He found he enjoyed immensely being a racecourse owner and active participant and for a time acted as the starter at Brighton. He liked to drive to Victoria Park in a pony trap, in the manner of a country squire, and drove

27 Smith left editorial control of Smith’s Weekly to Claude MacKay but published an opinion column each week called ‘Why I publish Smith’s Weekly’
28 George Blaikie, Remember Smith’s Weekly?, Adelaide, Rigby, 1967, p. 21
29 Smith op. cit. p. 2; Pike et. al. Australian Dictionary of Biography, Melbourne University Press, 1966--; vol. 11, 1891-1939, Nas-Smi, pp. 650-651. The concurrent establishment of Victoria Park and the Sydney Rugby League, and Joynton Smith’s influence in each, poses the question of links and similarities between the football code and pony racing. Each has been habitually described as a working-class sport, born as a schism from a sporting body that was closely linked with the political and cultural establishment. The nexus with the working class can be much more readily established however for rugby league. Its organisers were almost all linked to the Labor Party, its profits were shared between the players and local charities (rather than shareholders), and only a couple of its playing grounds were enclosed. See George Parsons, ‘Capitalism, class and community: “civilising” and sanitising the people’s game’ in David Headon and Lex Marinos (eds), League of a Nation, Sydney, ABC Books, 1996, pp. 9-10
30 Max Howell, ‘1909, the great defection’, in David Headon &Lex Marinos (eds), League of a Nation, Sydney, ABC Books, 1996, pp. 33, 36
trotters, but he was also a futurist who owned a forty horsepower Fiat automobile.

Smith had departed his native England as a cabin boy and sailed to New Zealand, where he married and settled in 1882. In the next few years he grew wealthy running hotels and by 1886 had done well enough to return to England with a £9,600 bank intending to exploit a betting system based on martingaling (i.e. the doubling of stakes until a winner is backed), in the expectation of plundering his homeland’s racecourses. While he enjoyed some success in backing the Australian sculler Bill Beach, Smith’s racecourse gambling proved disastrous and within a few months he retained little more than the stub of his return ticket for the Antipodes. He resettled in Sydney from New Zealand in 1887 and managed the Grand Central Coffee Palace so successfully that he was able to establish himself, though a teetotaller, in the hotel industry at the Imperial Arcade Hotel, where he made a second fortune that he did not squander.

While he purportedly entered proprietary racing for recreation it quickly became Smith’s primary commercial interest and, in 1906, he financed the establishment of Victoria Park, which greatly expanded the scope of Sydney pony racing. If he never matched Wren’s pre-eminence in Melbourne, he was ultimately recognised as the figurehead of Sydney pony racing and represented its interests at the conferences of July 1917 convened by Brigadier-General Lee, called to formulate limitations on war-time sport. Moreover, in 1921 Chief Secretary Dooley chose him to chair a meeting called to discuss a racing advisory board that the Labor Government was contemplating as a successor to the AJC. Smith was regarded as a likely chairman of any future board. He also gained much prestige during the War as the chairman of the successful War Loan Committee.

31 Referee 14/10/1903 p. 5; Smith op. cit. p. 185
32 Pike et. al. Australian Dictionary of Biography pp. 650-651. According to his autobiography Smith arrived in Sydney in 1890; Smith op. cit. p. 156
33 Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 64; The other representatives were Adrian Knox (non-proprietary racing), Sir James Carruthers (registered proprietaries), H.R. Miller, Snowy Baker (boxing), and R.C. Hungerford (trotting); Referee 25/7/1917 p. 1
34 Referee 9/3/1921 p. 3
35 Blaikie op. cit. p. 4
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Smith was an early practitioner of sports marketing, which he applied aggressively to his racecourses in the years immediately preceding the passing of the *Gaming and Betting Act 1906*, when the pony sector was its most cutthroat. His promotions included mundane measures such as lowering admission costs and providing free racecourse buses, but also imaginative stunts such as the roasting of bullocks in the Epping centre-course flat.\(^{36}\) His promotional schemes became more ambitious at Victoria Park racecourse. On Thursday 20 August 1908 he gained special permission to hold a meeting to mark the arrival of the American Great White Fleet in Sydney Harbour and provide a diversion for the sailors and their admirers. On this occasion however he badly misread the intentions of the people. The impromptu meeting attracted an unusually small attendance, as most citizens who managed to escape their usual commitments for the afternoon chose to remain on the foreshore to look at the ships. Those who did attend the races were annoyed to find there were no return trams from the course, as those usually reserved for racecourse work were required to clear sightseers from Circular Quay.\(^{37}\)

Smith made further speculations in proprietary racing when the success of Victoria Park was confirmed. In 1914, in partnership with the architect Alfred Payten (who had been the starter at Epping and had become the handicapper at Victoria Park trots), Dr Lamrock (later the assistant ARC starter) and Henry Pateson, a director of Kensington, he opened the Menangle Park racecourse.\(^{38}\) In 1918 Smith he sought to purchase the Albion Park and Kedron Park racecourses, Brisbane, from John Wren, for £350,000. Despite their friendship Wren declined the offer and later sold the tracks to the Brisbane Amateur Turf Club for £450,000.\(^{39}\)

Smith made his courses available to charitable causes with great liberality and it was for philanthropy that he was knighted in 1920. He was the principal benefactor of South Sydney Hospital, which stood less than a furlong from the

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36 Smith *op. cit.* p. 189  
37 *Referee* 19/8/1908 p. 5; 26/8/1908 p. 5  
38 *Town & Country Journal* 10/6/1914 p. 34  
39 Buggy *op. cit.* p. 160
Victoria Park turnstiles, and as a mark of this close association, in the AJC era that course’s most prestigious race, the WFA Sir Herbert Maitland Stakes, was named for the hospital’s chief surgeon, who was also a shareholder in the racecourse company. In 1909 Kensington and Victoria Park were provided free-of-charge to Randwick Council for its jubilee celebrations, and the picnics of friendly societies, labour organizations, Sunday schools and firms were often held at those racetracks.\(^{40}\) The Zetland course was on occasion a platform for the militaristic demonstrations popular before the War, including in 1909 a dreadnought fund-raiser, while in 1915 it hosted a sports carnival to raise funds for the war effort. The amusements included tent pegging and a novelty chariot race on the course proper. The profits of many proprietary wartime meetings were donated to the war effort.\(^{41}\)

In addition to these charitable and patriotic uses, the pony racetracks hosted a range of sporting and recreational events. Their flat and well-turfed surfaces were ideally suited to the modest needs of early aviation. Colin Defries made three unsuccessful attempts to become airborne at Victoria Park on 4 December 1909; William Hart, the holder of the first Australian flying licence, flew from that course on 2 December 1911, and J.J. Hammond departed from Ascot on his record-making flight to Liverpool of 3 May 1911. On 15 June 1912 50,000 people went to Ascot racecourse to witness the ‘first international air race’ between Hart and the American daredevil ‘Wizard’ Stone. To the crowd’s great chagrin the race was postponed because of strong winds. The Australian won the rescheduled event on 19 June. The last great aeronautical event held on a pony racetrack before purpose-built aerodromes took over took place at Victoria Park in 1922, in the form of a ‘Great Aerial Derby’.\(^{42}\)

The grassy expanses of the racetracks were also well suited to many land-bound sports. Kensington and Ascot hosted state cross-country and ten-mile championships on several occasions, as well as other sports carnivals. The infield

\(^{41}\) *Referee* 17/4/1915 p. 6
\(^{42}\) Neville Parnell, *Flypast, a Record of Aviation in Australia*, Canberra, AGPS Press, c1988. pp. 10,12; Barber *op. cit.* p. 59; *Daily Mirror* 28 October 1957 p. 21
at Kensington was the primary Sydney venue for many years for polo matches (at which Errol Flynn was a sometime spectator), and greyhound coursing, introduced in 1907, which was held on Fridays and Saturdays.\(^{43}\) Cricket, football and lacrosse matches also took place from time to time at Kensington. In 1918 a prototype rally-cross automobile race conducted on the cinders track at Victoria Park attracted an attendance of 18,000 people.\(^{44}\) The Brighton racecourse was home to two gun clubs. Victoria Park, like Kensington, encircled a small golf course, a business that returned the club £500 p.a. on the lease.\(^{45}\) Boxing however was one major sport that notably was not staged on Sydney pony racecourses. The promoter Hugh McIntosh chose to build a stadium at Rushcutter’s Bay for major bouts (the first of which was the Burns-Johnson world championship of 1908) rather than overlay the proprietary racecourses, as Wren had done in Melbourne.\(^{46}\)

In addition to these sundry amusements the pony racecourses provided \textit{pro tem} bases to the vagrant sport of trotting. The inaugural meeting of the New South Wales Trotting Club, a non-proprietary body, took place at Kensington on 13 September 1893, and in the following year the Woodlands course near Liverpool hosted the only regular Sydney trotting meetings at that time. Epping became the base for Sydney trotting in the Edwardian decade, although the reconstituted NSWTC resumed racing at Kensington in January 1903 and remained there until 1904. In 1911 Joynton Smith and other directors of Victoria Park formed (in rivalry to the NSWTC, to whom he had recently sold Epping), the proprietary Australian Trotting Club (ATC) that raced on the infield cinders track. Following the lead of John Wren’s Richmond (Melbourne) club, the ATC programmed annual £1,000 races that greatly exceeded the best money of the non-proprietary club. The vastness of the Victoria Park cinders track allowed races with twenty or more starters and the club continued to allow horses to compete in either harness or saddle long after the latter had been barred from Epping. Many of the victories

\(^{43}\) Waugh \textit{op. cit.} p. 17; a photograph of Errol Flynn at a Kensington polo match is held by the University of NSW archive

\(^{44}\) \textit{Referee} 2/7/1919 p. 11

\(^{45}\) Minutes of the Victoria Park Racing and Recreation Grounds Co. Ltd Committee, unpaginated, AJC Library

\(^{46}\) Re Macintosh’s stadium refer Richard Cashman (senior consultant), \textit{Australian Sport Through Time: The History of Sport in Australia}, Sydney, Random House, 1997, p. 129; Wren’s boxing matches on his racecourses refer Buggy \textit{op. cit.} p. 128-135
of the legendary pacers Globe Derby and Walla Walla, in which prodigious handicaps were overcome, were consummated on the long Victoria Park home straight. Meanwhile in December 1927, A.W. Anderson, a well-known smallgoods manufacturer, had financed an abortive attempt to introduce night trotting at Ascot racecourse (Sydney) on a new cinders track. The venture survived less than a month, although it remained as a debit on the Ascot company books for several years. A change in state governments, and the Conservatives’ decision that from 1 January 1928 betting would not be allowed on race meetings conducted after sunset, had ensured the demise of this undercapitalised experiment.47

Pony wars

Before the ARC was formed in 1907 an intense struggle raged for ascendancy within the Sydney pony sector of proprietary racing, as a consequence of the unregulated nature of the market and the involvement of unremitting men of business including the Kensington syndicate, and Joynton Smith. It flared into outright war in 1906 after several years of sabre rattling.

While there was little natural spirit of cooperation between the organisers in the formative period of pony racing, in the early 1890s a tentative detente had come with the bilateral acceptance of height certificates that allowed ponies to compete at more than one track. Such an arrangement existed between Lillie Bridge, Botany and the SDPC.48 Subsequently clubs, from time to time, realised the possibility of rationalising costs by sharing functions and staff with one another. Unstable alliances of convenience were thus formed.

Widespread trouble in the unregistered racing sector was first precipitated by challenges to the previously untested hegemony of the Kensington club. In December 1893, as the dissenter, it had caused one of the first conflagrations by its decision to leave The Association of NSW Pony Clubs—that is, the AJC clubs that were then conducting pony racing. Kensington identified the height

47 Brown op. cit. p. 176-79
48 re acceptance of height certificates refer Referee 26/8/1891
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certificates issued by the other members clubs, which it contended were inaccurate, as the cause of its departure. It is likely however that it had been seeking an excuse to leave the Association, so that it could race weekly under its own banner, rather than continue to share dates with the registered proprietary clubs.\(^{49}\) In the period from 1893 to 1906 Kensington had gradually forced weaker clubs into an alliance known as the Associated Pony and Galloway Clubs, which thereafter adopted Kensington Racing Club rules of racing. Such was the success and ascendancy of Kensington in that era that its imperialistic ambitions extended beyond Sydney and in 1902 there were rumours it might take control of the troubled Ascot, Melbourne, racecourse.\(^{50}\)

Kensington grew very jealous of its premiership and responded aggressively to challenges to its authority. Perhaps for this reason the various alliances of the unregistered clubs before 1907 exhibited a Balkan-like inconstancy. The parties were allies during one crisis and antagonists in the next. Kensington represents repressive Austria-Hungary in this analogy and invariably expected concessions to peace to be made by the other parties.

The alliance system was unable to prevent several outbreaks of internecine hostilities between participants that the contemporary sporting press labelled the \textit{pony wars}.\(^{51}\) A recurring cause of trouble for the league of pony clubs was the appearance of new clubs and racecourses.\(^{52}\) In 1901 the Kensington club made provision to stymie any future intruders. At a committee meeting in September 1901 it declared that from the prescribed date:

Horses racing at meetings for ponies and galloways within a radius of 15 miles of Sydney (and other than those conducted by clubs at present in existence and carrying on race meetings), will be debarred from any race meetings held at Kensington: the same condition will also apply to the owners of such pony and Galloways, and also the jockeys riding, as well as to the bookmakers following their avocation at these meetings.\(^{53}\)

By use of spoiling tactics such as this, which achieved its intention of ensuring the failure of the new pony venture at Belmore before it had even held a meeting,

\(^{49}\) Referee 6/12/1893 p. 1
\(^{50}\) Referee 4/11/1902 p. 1
\(^{51}\) See for example Referee 18/4/1906 p. 5
\(^{52}\) Refer chapter four
\(^{53}\) Referee 11/9/1901 p. 5
Kensington had maintained its primacy over the other unregistered clubs for a decade.\textsuperscript{54} In 1902, in response to unclear motives, it responded to a plea for help from the registered Warwick Farm club by barring horses and ponies from its meeting that had raced at Saturday pony meetings that had clashed with registered meetings.\textsuperscript{55} This remarkable decision clearly targeted the Forest Lodge club, to which Kensington in 1903, following a quite petty disagreement, applied the conditions of the 1901 proclamation, while forcing Rosebery Park and Brighton to join the boycott. In the same year Kensington decided that its own stewards should also officiate at Rosebery and Brighton and that stewards should not also be handicappers, which forced Frank Morris’s resignation from the latter position at Brighton.\textsuperscript{56}

An aggravating superciliousness and a propensity for punitive disqualifications caused growing hostility in some sectors of Sydney unregistered racing towards the Kensington club. These disgruntled interests ultimately formed the Pony and Galloway Owners Association (PGOA). This organization masterminded the formation of the Ascot club and racecourse as a sort of cooperative, which with its modern facilities and larger course proper, was expected to surpass the popularity of the Kensington club’s track. Early in 1906 the members of the PGOA paid a £10 bond and committed their stables to race exclusively at Ascot, which was soon to open, a move intended to starve the Kensington faction of starters. This, it was anticipated, would either break the club that had hitherto enjoyed hegemony in Sydney pony racing, or force it to the bargaining table.\textsuperscript{57}

The PGOA, which was eager to take the field against Kensington, urged on the Ascot Company during the construction of its course. The decision to hold a preliminary meeting at Ascot on Saturday 7 April 1906, five days before the scheduled opening date, was a provocative gesture, as it was made after last-minute peace negotiations with Kensington failed. Ascot proposed to race each Wednesday after the opening weekend meetings.\textsuperscript{58} Kensington responded to the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{54} Sydney Sportsman 25/12/1901 p. 4  \\
\textsuperscript{55} Sydney Sportsman 22/1/1902 p. 4  \\
\textsuperscript{56} Referee 10/6/1903 p. 5; 30/9/1903 p. 5  \\
\textsuperscript{57} Referee 11/4/1906 p. 5  \\
\textsuperscript{58} Referee 28/3/1906 p. 5
\end{flushleft}
Promotion, administration, financing

challenge to its Wednesday monopoly by reiterating the 1901 threat of disqualification against persons it had licensed who ventured to Ascot, which immediately announced reciprocal bans. By May both sides, desperate to establish popular support, had reduced the entrance charge to the paddock from 7s 6d to 2s 6d.

Curiosity drew large crowds to the early Ascot programs, even those that clashed with Kensington. Nevertheless the new club was thought to have lost a considerable sum of money on its meetings in its first months of operation.⁵⁹ Despite this, in May 1906 Ascot expanded its program to three meetings a week, contesting each of the racing dates of its associated opponents. As a result of this policy a unique and absurd circumstance arose on Saturday 26 May when three metropolitan race meetings took place on the same afternoon in Sydney—at Ascot, Kensington and Rosehill. The Ascot meeting was, in the circumstances, ‘remarkably well attended’ while the turnout at Kensington was judged ‘satisfactory’ only.⁶⁰

Despite good attendances internal clash meetings undermined the profitability and the credibility of unregistered racing. ‘Altogether pony racing in Sydney at the present time is just about as unsatisfactory as it can be,’ concluded Pilot, ‘and unless the opposing sides quickly come to terms, and put various unscrupulous owners in their place, the sport is likely to go out of public favour just as pedestrianism did a few years ago.’⁶¹

The clubs did come to terms; the squabbling was ended by the cognisance of a common threat emerging in Macquarie St, in the form of the New South Wales Government’s mooted legislation to greatly restrict racing.⁶² Unregistered pony racing was expected to be the main target of closer regulation. Within their bunker the clubs decided a unified front was essential if they were to effectively lobby the government. By the end of July, clash meetings between Ascot and Kensington ceased and a calendar was agreed for future years. Kensington and Ascot were to

⁵⁹ Referee 11/4/1906 p. 5
⁶⁰ Referee 2/5/1906 p. 5
⁶¹ Referee 18/7/1906 p. 5
⁶² Refer chapter seven
have 25 Wednesdays, 26 Mondays and 4 Fridays each, and Rosebery 44 Fridays, 6 Mondays and 2 Wednesdays. Joynton Smith’s Epping club, formerly a party to the Associated Clubs, was excluded from the new arrangement, and found it itself the target of boycotts similar to those imposed on Ascot just weeks earlier. The PGOA announced it would now support the Epping meetings to be run in opposition to the new alliance, but they disappointed it, and it became obvious that Smith was in fact tidying his desk for the move to Victoria Park, which had been already established as a training track. He disposed of Epping the following year, and government licensing was to render the new calendar proposed by Kensington, Ascot and Rosebery obsolete.  

**Truce and the emergence of the Associated Racing Clubs (ARC)**

The emergence of the ARC, which controlled its first meeting on 29 April 1907 and centralised the secretarial, handicapping and stewarding responsibilities previously performed independently by three clubs, signalled the formal resolution of the disputes that had brought about the second pony war, and coincided with the emergence of a pony racing industry that conformed with the law defined in the *Gaming and Betting Act 1906*. This act was initially judged an encumbrance for pony racing, but the restrictions forced upon the organisers proved a blessing in disguise. It is no coincidence that the greatest boom in the sport began immediately upon the introduction of the legislation, which by preventing the foundation of new clubs within 40 miles of the General Post Office, guaranteed the ARC a sector-wide monopoly. The ARC was an association, not a racing company. Its member clubs continued in their own rights as limited liability companies with distinct books and shareholders, but they shared the expense of running the ARC office at number 2, Castlereagh Street. These companies, which, but for Kensington owned their racecourses, leased them to their racing club subsidiaries, which conducted the racing. The relationship was not unlike that between modern rugby leagues clubs and their football clubs.

63 *Referee* 25/7/1906 p. 5, 1/8/1906 p. 5
64 Refer chapter seven
The ARC began to exhibit the behaviour of a cartel by structuring uniform admission prices, restricting competition, observing disqualifications imposed at other member courses, and reaching multilateral agreement on the racing calendar. Yet despite this monopoly the ARC board and management, which met each week to process applications for training and riding licences, appeals and other administrative matters, established a new efficiency in the conduct of racing in Sydney. Their greatest hours came around the end of World War I; the *Sportsman* noted in 1920 pony racing had ‘surpassed all its predecessors. [It] is becoming more popular every year…the standard of pony racing today is up to, if not better than that of the racing conducted by “registered” proprietary clubs’. Similarly Rufe Naylor rated the ARC the best racing administration in the world. In 1923 he reflected that when he had left Sydney around 1900, with the exception of the Kensington club, pony racing in his opinion was badly conducted. When he returned 13 years later he was surprised by the popularity of the sport and the dimensions it had assumed under the ARC. In 1932 *Sydney Truth*, which did not admit praise readily, opined that reforms effected by the ARC ‘have been manifold—so much so—that pony racing to-day, at least the conduct of it, enjoys the reputation of being second to none in the world…[it is] one of the great racing forces in the world.’ The ARC ensured that its racing product was presented professionally and matched the highest standards of AJC racing; A.B Paterson noted that ARC jockeys always turned out immaculately in their uniforms and he made favourable comparisons with American jockeys, who were guilty of aesthetic crimes such as pulling their socks out of their boots and up over their breeches.

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65 The departure from this cartel-like behaviour was that the ARC did not pursue ruthless profit maximisation. In England, Huggins identified a process of cartelisation by the British Jockey Club in the way it placed difficult-to-meet requirements in the way of new clubs seeking registration in the 1880s, Huggins *op. cit.* p. 184
66 *Sydney Sportsman* 15/12/1920 p. 6
67 *NSW Parliamentary Papers* 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1329; 1924 vol. 4 p. 805
68 *Sydney Truth* 25/9/1932 p. 3
69 *Sydney Sportsman* 25/8/1920 p. 6
The ARC and country racing

A decade before the formation of the ARC, unregistered city racing had begun to damage AJC-registered country racing through its promotion of galloway races, which drew on the same pool of contestants as the closer regional centres such as Bathurst.70 Also of significance for country thoroughbred racing was a decision by some registered inland clubs like Wagga and Orange to stage their own pony meetings. In 1893 several Hunter Valley racecourses including Singleton and Motto Farm71 near Raymond Terrace ran pony meetings, and the registered metropolitan proprietary clubs bought into the burgeoning Hunter racing scene by promoting pony racing at Wallsend, which was already a centre for well-attended thoroughbred meetings.72 These were opportunistic and ad hoc enterprises that sought to capitalise on the population’s seemingly inexhaustible thirst for horse racing, but the first incursion of organised pony racing into the country was ephemeral, as the AJC ruling of 1898 that banned pony racing on registered courses virtually ended the sport outside Sydney.73

The enthusiasms of proprietary concerns, race clubs and committees had caused a proliferation of racecourses throughout the state, a number of which were used for racing on only a handful of occasions before being allowed to return to nature. Nevertheless in 1908, a year after the emergence of the ARC, the New South Government licensed 237 racecourses. Of these, 212 were for thoroughbred racing, 15 were set-aside for trotting and five for pony racing, including a lone country course at Bingarra. Already absent from the roster were the recently abandoned Brighton and Botany racecourses.74

In the years from 1910 to 1914 a second proliferation of unregistered pony clubs occurred in country regions—six appeared in the Grafton district alone.75 Some clubs obtained their own courses but most made use of existing facilities, when

70 For explanation of the term galloway refer chapter four
71 Possibly at the training track of John Brown
72 Referee 14/6/1893 p. 5
73 Refer chapter seven
74 Town & Country Journal 15/1/1908 p. 47
75 Arrow 25/11/1921 p. 1
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the owners or trustees would allow them. By 1914 there were enough country pony clubs for it to be necessary that the ARC create a number of district associations to regulate the sport. The ARC’s function as governing body of unregistered mirrored that of the AJC—contentious matters were referred to it for rulings, ARC rules of racing prevailed, stewards were sometimes supplied and disqualifications were mutually recognised between organisations. To ensure the pony brand was evident all race meetings with ARC affiliation were required to include at least one 14.2 hand and under event. The ARC’s organ the Australian Pony & Galloway Racing Guide published the results of the meetings overseen by these associations.76

The expansion of country pony racing was once more retarded in 1917, when the military banned the sport outside the metropolitan area in New South Wales and Victoria for the duration of World War I.77 When country pony racing recommenced after the armistice, the ARC moved quickly to restore its association with non-metropolitan pony clubs and by 1930 it had 24 registered country clubs.78 A number of earlier affiliates had ceased racing and several of the survivors raced just once or twice a year, but nevertheless the possessions of the ARC were significant and it took its leadership obligations seriously. By the time of the 1933 amalgamation the ARC was the principal of 40 country clubs.79

The ARC and the unregistered clubs of the Hunter Valley and Lake Macquarie regions developed a particularly close relationship. In addition to those identified in the preceding footnote there were ARC-affiliated unregistered racecourses at Pokolbin, Millfield and Barraba in the Cessnock region, as well as the Bellbird racecourse that, at 180 acres, was almost as large as Randwick. Somewhat more remote were the ARC-affiliated racecourses at Millfield, Wollombi and Vacey. In

76 Referee 11/2/1914 p. 5
77 This seems to have been the outcome of government restrictions, although, the initial announcement does not specify unregistered country racing in particular for cessation; Daily Telegraph 13/9/1917 p. 4
78 These were Guyra A.T.C., Rosedale R.C., Warwick Park R.C. (Kempsey), Tattersall’s R.&T.C., Heddon J.C., Bellbird R.C., Cowra Pony R.C., Majors Creek R.C., Tingha Sports R.C., Combined Friendly Societies R.C., Piper’s Flat R.C., Colloray Soldier’s Settlement R.C., Craboon R.C., Gladstone R.C., Canberra T.C., Hargreaves R.C., Bingarra Friendly Society R.C., Bogey Valley R.C., Rylstone, Hill End, Port Macquarie, Portland R.C., Illawarra R.C. and the Richmond T. & R.C.
1927 the Hunter Valley clubs formed even closer ties with the ARC and named their association the Northern District ARC. A regular interchange of licensed personnel began between the two organizations. In July 1931 the Cessnock and Heddon Greta clubs, previously registered with the AJC, defected to the ARC. The Hunter circuit of unregistered racecourses was known as the ‘number nines’, a reference to the section of the legislation that provided for their licensing. The number nine racecourses were required to be at least 40 miles from the Newcastle GPO, a condition analogous to the requirement for provincial racecourses servicing the Sydney metropolitan area.

**The ARC and provincial racing**

In the late nineteenth century a number of unregistered racecourses operating in the Sydney hinterlands formed an early network of what became known as provincial racing. In 1899 they included the Penrith, Liverpool, Camden, Narellan, Wiseman’s Ferry (a last resort for city barrier rogues), Kurrajong and Bowral racecourses. Ponies and galloways made up the majority of the starters at these racecourses, where the prize money was much smaller than that available at city tracks.

From 1907 more sophisticated proprietary provincial racecourses began to appear, as a direct consequence of the restrictions on metropolitan racing imposed by the *Gaming and Betting Act*, which prohibited the construction of new racecourses within 40 miles of the Sydney General Post Office. This provision did not provide the fillip to country racing that had been anticipated but rather by encouraging a ring of racecourses at the fringe of greater Sydney placed another alternative between country racing and the metropolitan trainers. The provincial racecourses followed the expansion or consolidation of the railways to the west, south and north from Sydney, built close by new railway stations. The provincial clubs could choose to register with the AJC or affiliate with the ARC. Most chose

79 *Sydney Morning Herald* 29/1/1930; Freedman & Lemon op. cit. p. 498
80 Andersen *Winners Can Laugh* pp. 102-103; *Daily Telegraph* 10/1/1933 p. 2
81 Referee 10/1/1900 p. 2
Randwick but Richmond, which wished to stage trotting as well as galloping—a combination not permissible under AJC rules—registered with the ARC and with its city office at 13 Elizabeth St, which was next door to the ARC chambers, became akin to a fifth metropolitan pony course, though its attendances before World War I, of between 500 and 1,000 were well below those at ARC courses. The more distant Tuggerah R.C., located near Wyong north of Sydney, also selected the pony association as its mentor. This club held its first meeting on 10 February 1914, its course handily situated on the shore of Lake Tuggerah, just minutes from the railway.\footnote{Referee 28/1/1914 p. 8} The Menangle club, despite having similar directors to the Victoria Park club, whose city offices it shared, registered with the AJC and consequently did not at first conduct restricted heights races. However, a separate Menangle unregistered club under the management of Harvey Cobcroft began to stage pony meetings in November 1914.\footnote{Brown op. cit. p. 127}

The provincial courses, which raced on Tuesdays and Thursdays from just prior to World War I until 1940, were competitors with the well-established ARC circuit inasmuch as they both catered for restricted-class horses, though the registered provincial clubs could not run restricted heights races. But, somewhat perversely, the ARC was insulated to a large degree from direct challenge from them by the blockade that barred men and horses that had participated on unregistered racecourses from appearing on AJC-sanctioned turf. This prevented ARC regulars from flirting with the new provincial circuit. At any rate there was little incentive to forsake the ARC for the provincials, as the prize money offered was much smaller, and that differential widened as the ARC entered the period of rapid prize money growth that is described in chapter four. Also, despite the relative ease with which runners could be dispatched to the provincial courses on the horse train that left from the Alexandria siding on race mornings, it was easier still for trainers to walk their charges to the South Sydney tracks. After the AJC-ARC amalgamation, horses could of course be entered at either metropolitan pony or provincial racecourses. Once this had happened the latter were invariably plagued

\footnote{82 The Menangle racecourse was so close to the line that when the Regents Park line opened the rail distance came within the 40 mile limit. Some shareholders sold out as a consequence but the Act was amended to exclude Menangle; Referee 28/1/1914 p. 8}
by massive race-day scratchings of horses that had also accepted for ARC meetings.

Staff

Proprietary pony racing provided direct employment for a significant number of people. They included men employed as secretaries, handicappers, office assistants, clerks of the course, track managers, caretakers, greenkeepers, track attendants, plumbers, painters, carpenters and labourers. In addition there was a large pool of casual race-day staff. A permanent billet in one of the mid-city offices of the registered proprietary clubs or the ARC was highly esteemed, for while not sinecures they provided a comfortable existence and convivial male camaraderie among the coterie of sporting types who worked in that precinct of newspaper offices and sports and bookmakers’ clubs around Pitt St, and the enjoyment of simple pleasures like a drink and a frame of billiards at Tattersalls at lunch or in the evening. Most employment opportunities fell to men with connections in the insiders’ world of racing and the few positions that were advertised triggered torrents of applications; in 1932 the ARC received 2,400 enquiries for a junior office position. 85

Before the establishment of the ARC, a cadre of administrators had developed to fill and share important positions with the various proprietary clubs. Some officials became full-time professionals. This development replicated the model established in Britain, wherein Huggins noted that from the 1840s ‘clerks working for several meetings were common…and [they] could earn significant sums.’ 86 These officials, in the course of a few years, built up a formidable body of knowledge and skills in the various functions of administering a racing club and running a race meeting. They were the among the first permanent employees of commercial sporting ventures, and as such were the progenitors of football club executives, and other well-paid administrators such as the secretary-managers of private golf courses. They were generally a group distinct from the

84 Refer to advertisement placed in Referee 21/10/1894 p. 7
85 Sydney Morning Herald 22/9/1932 p. 10
86 Huggins op. cit. p. 159
shareholders, but there were those who crossed over, such as Jack Deeble and George Breathour.

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Source: compiled by the author from information contained in various newspaper advertisements and race books

The racing secretary, a position equivalent to what was known in English racing as the clerk of the course, was the chief executive of the racing club. He bore the primary responsibility for conducting race meetings, as well as the day-to-day activities of the racing office. The company secretary, who attended to financial accounting and assisted the board, was a position independent of the racing secretary, although Jack Underhill initially performed both jobs for the ARC.

In the week before a meeting the racing secretary, assisted by his staff, had a fairly quiet time of it answering correspondence, taking nominations and

---87 In Australian racing the title clerk of the course refers only to the equestrian in traditional hunting attire who leads runners to the barrier, and who assists the starter
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acceptances, issuing weights and liaising with the press.\textsuperscript{88} On race days, however, he was a busy man, required to supervise and monitor all course activities, (other than the immediate supervision of racing), including manning the racecourse office before the first race to issue complimentary tickets and badges, entertaining special guests, receiving last minute communications such as jockey engagements and scratchings, responding to developments around the ground, monitoring the weather, roaming the course watching for warned-off persons and infiltrators in reserved areas, and disbursing prize money, as well as monitoring the behaviour of licensed persons and employees. The other full-time office staff, all of whom had special duties on race days, supported him. In spite of these race day stresses, secretaryships were much sought-after posts, particularly as no professional qualifications were required. Men who had been commissioned as officers during wartime often found favour with committees.\textsuperscript{89}

In the rationalisation of administration that accompanied the emergence of the ARC, the employees of the old racing companies who gained the contested positions went on to match some of the long careers that were already a feature of registered racing. This contrasted with the fates of several of the earlier secretaries, who died young in tragic circumstances, including the first and second secretaries of Kensington, George Rowley and Patrick O’Mara.

The debonair Rowley had been instrumental in persuading the Crown to provide a lease on the land on which the Kensington racecourse was built. Shortly before his death the \textit{Referee} provided an admiring word-sketch of him that proved cruelly ironic:

\begin{quote}
Knows his way about. Can manage a race meeting as well as any man. Originator of several new ideas. Not many men have any. Reported to have a pony two. Don’t believe it. Has several ‘ponies’ of another sort. Is a good looking man. Has been taken for a member of the Australian eleven on race days. One of the promoters of Kensington racecourse. Sure to boom if he’s in it. Plays cricket occasionally. Thinks fishing a bit slow-prefers racing. Never lets a good spec go by him. Will be secretary of Rosehill for ever. \textsuperscript{90}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{88} Unlike their American counterparts, Australian proprietary secretaries usually delegated handicapping responsibilities to an assistant; refer Underwood \textit{op. cit.} passim
\textsuperscript{89} Such as Air Commodore L.V. Lachal, the first secretary of the STC, and subsequently secretary for the VRC; Boulter \textit{op. cit.} pp. 48-49
\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Referee} 2/8/1888 p. 4; 22/3/1893 p. 1

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Rowley was a native of Nova Scotia and a surveyor, a skill that enabled him to play the central role in the planning and construction of Kensington. He was as popular with the sporting press as the dour and unaccommodating T.S. Clibborn of the AJC was loathed.\textsuperscript{91}

His successor O’Mara began his career in racing as an AJC office boy in 1882 before he joined the wine and spirit business of Rowley and his partner G.N. Clark in Barrack St. He followed Rowley to the Rosehill company and on his mentor’s death he succeeded him as the racing secretary of the Rosehill and Kensington clubs. O’Mara, who was familiarly referred to in the press as ‘Mr O’\textsuperscript{92}, was forced to choose between his two posts by the AJC ultimatum of 1898, and it is indicative of Kensington’s success to that time that he chose it over Rosehill. It was he who directed Kensington’s somewhat sanctimonious ‘principal club’ era. He was a man of his time and something of an authoritarian, and often peremptory when communicating with licensed persons.\textsuperscript{93}

O’Mara’s attitude contributed to the escalation of a dispute that followed an incident at Kensington on Thursday 25 April 1895. It was to have a profound effect on the organisation of bookmaking in Sydney, and the habits of many clubmen. In the last race that day the very good galloway Pearl Powder started 5\textsuperscript{2}/2 favourite but was beaten narrowly by the 6\textsuperscript{1}/1 chance Merry Girl. Merry Girl’s jockey had declared 1 lb overweight but because the jockey retained his whip when weighing in the scales showed he was 2.5 lbs overweight. Because this additional weight had not been declared the Kensington officials disqualified Merry Girl and awarded the race to Pearl Powder.

Bookmakers in the paddock, who almost all were members of the Australian Bookmakers Association (ABA) and the Tattersalls Club, thought this a ridiculous decision and refused to pay tickets on Pearl Powder, who as favourite was a much worse result for them. At the next Kensington meeting Patrick O’Mara

\textsuperscript{91} In 1888, under a column headed ‘What the Referee would like to see’ were the entries ‘Mr Clibborn smile when he enters the press room at Randwick’ and ‘The ship that will carry Mr T.S. Clibborn home’ [to New Zealand]; Referee 2/2/1888 p. 4
\textsuperscript{92} Referee 3/2/1897 p. 1
approached the bookmaker McCormack with a person who held a ticket on Pearl Powder. When McCormack refused to pay out, O’Mara had the course detective put him off the course, whereupon the other paddock bookmakers left their stands and walked off the course in protest. O’Mara had anticipated this development and immediately invited the leger bookmakers, none of whom was a member of the ABA, to set up in the paddock, where they fielded for the rest of the day; some observers thought they operated with greater flair and daring than the bookmakers they had replaced. In the aftermath of the affair the committee of Tattersalls accused the Kensington club of fraud in taking the race from Merry Girl. Not surprisingly, Kensington’s sister club Rosehill took its part and barred those bookmakers who had refused to pay on Pearl Powder. Meanwhile the promoted leger bookmakers had developed class-consciousness and formed the St Leger Bookmaker’s Association and later, on 30 August 1895, created the City Tattersalls Club at Her Majesty’s Hotel, the old home of Tattersalls. The formation of a second bookmakers association ended the effective monopoly of the ABA of on-course bookmaking in Sydney.94

Both Rowley and O’Mara’s sudden deaths were somewhat bizarre. Rowley suffered fatal injuries after falling from a runaway buggy on New Year’s Eve, 1893, while returning to his Parramatta home from Rosehill.95 O’Mara was found in a park near Watson Bay in February 1904. Before he died he admitted to having swallowed arsenic, though his reasons for doing so were not revealed.96 O’Mara, like Rowley, was succeeded by his assistant, in his case A.E. Henningham, at Kensington.97

Easily the most influential and longest-serving secretary of Sydney pony racing was John Underhill, whom the press called ‘Big Jack’. His career matched almost exactly the lifespan of the ARC. Under the structure devised for the ARC, he was

93 This is evident in his negative response to a rider who had begged to have his license restored; Kensington papers, Mitchell Library archive document box 1681
94 B. Donohoo and R. Pitts, *City Tattersall’s Club, Seventy-Five Years: A History*, Sydney, City Tattersall’s Club, 1971, unpaginated
95 *Referee* 3/1/1894 p. 1; *Sydney Morning Herald* 2/1/1894 p. 6
racing secretary at each of Kensington, Ascot and Rosebery, a circumstance that granted him hegemony limited only by the independence of Victoria Park; one observer opined that Frank Morris, Frank Hill (the racecourse manager for Kensington) and Underhill were the czars of the sport in Sydney.\footnote{Referee 17/1/1912 p. 5; Coincidentally James Hitchcock, the inaugural secretary of Ascot, also met an untimely death, in a motor vehicle accident when returning from a Wollongong pony meeting} Underhill, who was secretary for 35 years, came to personify the ARC, in a like manner to Henry Byron Moore (45 years with the VRC), W.L. Davis (38 at Canterbury) and Clibborn (37 at Randwick).\footnote{NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1319} Born into a prominent New South Wales South Coast racing family, and a member of the AJC, Underhill was secretary of the Bega Jockey Club from 1898 until he accepted the ARC position in March 1907. He was extremely well regarded by the ARC committee, which successfully pleaded that he stay in their employment, after he had accepted the position of stipendiary steward with the WATC.\footnote{Referee 2/9/1908 p. 5} He in turn developed a great loyalty to the ARC and pony racing and objected to it being described as ‘unregistered’ racing, which he thought pejorative: ‘We are licensed by the government!’ he would protest. Though dapper and urbane as a young man, in later life Underhill’s countenance often appeared dyspeptic beneath his Homburg hat.\footnote{Sydney Morning Herald 20/6/1942, Referee 20/3/1907 p. 5, NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 pp. 787, 788, 793}

Underhill was not admired universally within pony racing. Some trainers thought him a bully and made implications of corruption against him during the 1923 Select Committee. One claimed he frequently bet on credit and did not bother to pay when he lost.\footnote{NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1320} He had undeniable influence over bookmakers’ fortunes as he allocated their positions within the betting ring, a decisive factor in determining turnover. But regardless of whether there was any truth in the aspersions made against him, Underhill was a skilled administrator who piloted the rise of pony racing in the early twentieth century, and was respected by the press as a ‘can do’
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man. He continued as ARC secretary until 1939, three years before his death at the age of 72.  

Several other of the racecourse employees of the proprietary clubs, who were responsible for the maintenance of the track, buildings and gardens, also had long careers, some of which occupied much of the first half of the twentieth century. George Breathour, for example, began his career at Ascot racecourse as track supervisor in 1905, while the course was still under construction. He later became racecourse manager, and, unusually, was asked to join the board in 1927. When William Arnott died Breathour was chosen to preside over a board that included heavyweights such as former Australian cricket captain, SCG trustee and eminent man of affairs M.A. Noble.  

For his long association with Ascot racecourse Breathour was ultimately well rewarded. In 1945 he received a salary of £665 per annum for his combined executive and board responsibilities.  

Several other proprietary club employees, particularly those who had worked at Rosehill, Canterbury, Rosebery and Moorefield, obtained work with the STC after the end of proprietary racing. Of those who lost their jobs, a handful of Ascot staffers received a payment from the Racing Compensation Fund, which had been established with money siphoned from the surviving racing clubs, primarily to pay compensation to the companies whose racecourses had been delicensed. 

The racing community was (and is) something of a closed society and marriages between prominent proprietary racing families common; thus Sam Peters became Jack Deeble’s father-in-law and Jack Hegerty, the Moorefield starter and subsequently, mayor of Rockdale, married a sister of Peter Moore. Sometimes entire generations followed fathers into racing. In Sydney pony racing the most salient example was that of the Donohoe family, which was so closely associated with Victoria Park. It is true Joynton Smith was the man with the vision and
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financier of the Zetland racing complex, but James Joseph Donohoe, when it was suggested at the 1923 pony Select Committee hearing that ‘You practically started Victoria Park?’ responded ‘I made the racecourse.’ \(^{108}\) If so he was well rewarded for his efforts, for it was primarily through his position at, and earnings from, Victoria Park, that four of his children were educated (the latter two to tertiary level) and able to find prominent and well-paid positions in racing or associated businesses. \(^{109}\)

Donohoe snr migrated to Australia in about 1870 and by the 1880s was established in the inner suburbs of Sydney, where he became associated with trotting at the SDPC and entered the allied cab and coaching businesses. It is likely that his close association with Joynton Smith began in this period. He subsequently made racehorse training his vocation, and maintained an establishment near a side entrance to Randwick. His eldest son, John, became a leading AJC trainer who enjoyed early career success winning the WFA Chelmsford Stakes in 1915 for John Wren, and who was still training major-race winners in the 1950s. James Donohoe junior was a senior steward with the ARC and AJC. William Patrick Donohoe began his working career at Joynton Smith’s Arcadia Hotel before joining the Victoria Park club in 1910. He became the secretary of Victoria Park following the death of Harvey Cobcroft in 1923 and became a director in Wren’s Stadiums Ltd business, as well as in other sporting ventures. In 1941 he was receiving a salary of £676 a year for his Victoria Park duties. Francis Patrick Donohoe, a solicitor, oversaw the last years of Victoria Park as chairman, following the death of Joynton Smith in 1943. \(^{110}\)

Shareholders

Metropolitan pony racing demanded much greater amounts of capitalisation than earlier nineteenth-century professional sports associated with betting because of the *sine qua non* of an extensively prepared racecourse. Nevertheless most of the nascent unregistered ventures, to which AJC secretary Tom Clibborn particularly

\(^{107}\) Geeves & Jervis *op. cit.* p. 202
\(^{108}\) NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1333
\(^{109}\) Pike et. al. *Australian Dictionary of Biography* vol. 8, pp. 321-22

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objected\textsuperscript{111}, strove to keep expenses to a minimum, relying on bush carpentry and cheap materials to provide essential infrastructure.

As the sport developed, and larger and better-presented racecourses were required, the pony entrepreneurs followed the example of Sandown Park, England, and set up limited liability joint stock companies. Some of these companies were wound up and reconstructed four or five times over the next few decades, and the original shares were ‘watered down,’\textsuperscript{112} their face values decreasing as the overall number of shares soared, as the early promoters indulged in profit taking, which they did increasingly as higher-level taxation made dividends less attractive. The re-formed companies sought and received capital from people of increasingly diverse backgrounds, including a growing number of hobby shareholders and participants from registered racing. Among the ownership of the ARC and Victoria Park companies were the registered trainers Frank Marsden, Bill Kelso and Ike Earnshaw, the Trautwein family that also controlled Richmond, the surgeon Sir Herbert Maitland, the journalist Spencer Cornford, and Peter Moore of Moorefield.\textsuperscript{113} Traditional investors, professional stockmarket speculators and bankers, were comparatively lightly represented. ‘Shareholders have been drawn from every strata of society and the most significant fact of all is that owners of horses are conspicuous by their absence,’ The Sydney Sun noted. ‘There are civil servants, hotel-keepers, financiers, solicitors, doctors, bookmakers, trainers, stewards, police inspectors, caterers, but exceedingly few ‘gentlemen.’’\textsuperscript{114} An analysis of the share listings in two of the companies, Ascot and Rosebery, supports the Sun’s summation.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Refer chapter seven
\textsuperscript{112} NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1347
\textsuperscript{113} NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1347-48
\textsuperscript{114} Sunday Sun and Guardian 12/6/1938 p. 3
Table 2.2: shareholders by occupation: Ascot and Rosebery racing companies, 1943

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>occupation</th>
<th>Ascot(^A)</th>
<th>Rosebery(^B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%(^C)</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accountants</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blue collar/labourers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>bookmakers and commission agents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.96</td>
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<tr>
<td>institutions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>directors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>domestic duties (married women, spinsters, widows)</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>29.98</td>
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<tr>
<td>farmers/graziers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>gentlemen, retirees, independent means</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hotel keepers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>investors, financiers, brokers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>legal professionals</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>managers</td>
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<td>0.96</td>
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<td>medical practitioners, dentists</td>
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<td>2.16</td>
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<td>merchants, contractors, retailers</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6.24</td>
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<td>other professionals</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>soldiers on active service</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tradesmen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>trainers, jockeys, blacksmiths</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>104</td>
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<tr>
<td>white collar/public servants</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>100.04(^D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^A\) Source: ‘Extracts from the annual return of the Ascot Racecourse and Recreation Ground Limited made up to 12th May 1943’; STC files, Mitchell Library

\(^B\) Source: ‘Extracts from the annual return of the Rosebery Racecourse Company Limited made up to 12th May 1943’; STC files, Mitchell Library

\(^C\) The percentage refers to the number of persons in each category as a percentage of the total, not to the number of shares they held

\(^D\) rounding error

The *Sun* also noted the strange attraction racecourse shares seemed to hold for females, who appeared under the occupations ‘domestic duties’, ‘married woman’, ‘spinster’ or ‘widow’. They accounted for more than 30 per cent of shareholders. Further, of the other living shareholders who did not nominate an occupation, many can be identified as married women. Undoubtedly many of these shares had been purchased on their behalves by their spouses, who probably had a large say in their deployment. Nevertheless, these holdings represent a
surprisingly large female presence in what has been portrayed as a particularly masculine sport.

The much larger number of shareholders in Ascot compared to Rosebery (417 against 69) evident in Table 2.2 reflects the divergent histories of the companies. Ascot, like Victoria Park, reconstituted on several occasions. Moreover subsequent share issues inflated the number of £1 shares in Ascot to 288,000, compared to 140,000 in Rosebery, which alone among the ARC companies remained largely in the hands of the families of the original syndicate members—the Murtoughs, Gearins, Dowlings, Thomsons and Thorntons—who were also prominent members of the North Botany business and civic community. The Gearins owned a meat processing plant and boiling-down works on Old Botany Rd Mascot, while the Thorntons had the Newmarket Hotel on Gardener’s Road. James Thornton served as mayor of Mascot on several occasions from 1895 to 1910 and Michael Gearin was mayor in 1901. The Rosebery syndicate regarded its project in a similar manner to Saywell of Brighton—not only as a means of profit-making, but as major contributions to development within their respective local districts.

One of the more socially prominent investors in pony racing was the lawyer Sir Joseph Carruthers, Premier of New South Wales from 1904 to 1907 who, unlike most other large investors (who tended to concentrate investment on one racecourse), had a diverse portfolio that included Ascot, Victoria Park, Moorefield and Kembla Grange stock. The appearance of his name, like that of Noble’s in association with Ascot, added respectability to the boards of proprietary clubs. Carruthers was a major player at both Moorefield and Victoria Park, and it was rumoured in 1919 that he was behind a well-advanced plan to merge the Warwick Farm, Moorefield and Victoria companies, close the racecourses of the first two and devote that of the latter to registered racing. Such a development would have greatly rewarded shareholders in the companies but would have had very adverse effects on pony racing and probably would have caused, because of the provisions

115 Sands Directory 1908 p. 1386, Barber op. cit. pp. 3-5; STC files, ‘Extracts from the annual return of the Rosebery Racecourse Company Limited made up to 12th May 1943’, Mitchell Library
of the *Gaming and Betting Act*, the loss of the eighteen Victoria Park racing dates.116

By the 1930s it was wrong to assume huge profits could be accrued from investing in proprietary racing. They had declined since 1911, in which year the Moorefield Company had paid a healthy dividend of 20.25 per cent to its 80 shareholders.117 In the same year Joynton Smith foreshadowed the less extravagant dividends to come when he decreed that henceforth those paid to Victoria Park shareholders would be limited to 10 per cent (the same ceiling that the Jockey Club of England imposed upon the commercial companies that raced under its registration), the balance of the profits to be committed to prize money increases and course improvements.118 ‘The idea that there is a mint of money in providing facilities [i.e. racecourses], gets the K.O the moment financial fortunes of the existing companies are examined,’ commented the *Sydney Sun* in 1938. ‘What investors would rush a prospectus which provided for a capital of over a million pounds, upon which only a beggarly three per cent can be earned?’119 In the financial year ending 31 December 1937 the Ascot company paid a single dividend of 4½d per £1 share, or earnings of less than 2 per cent.120

These humble returns are much at odds with McKell’s views of rapacious racecourse ownership.121 Most shareholders were prepared to accept the modest returns on their investment because they were compensated by a sense of participation in racing. Painter and Waterhouse suggested that the motivation of those who took up shares in racecourse companies was a mixture of commercial and sporting objectives.122 Similarly Huggins decided that for British racing shareholders ‘love of the sport was…at least as important as financial return.’123 Vamplew labelled this non-cash benefit, in what must otherwise be perceived as

117 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1912 vol. 4 p. 539
118 Smith op. cit. p. 207
119 Sunday Sun and Guardian 12/6/1938 p. 3
120 STC files, Ascot Racecourse and Recreation Grounds Limited, Profit and Loss Account for Twelve Months ended 31 December 1937, Mitchell Library
121 McKell wrote ‘Profits alone, not the sport, were the real concern of these clubs’; Boulter *op. cit.* p. v
122 Painter & Waterhouse *op. cit.* p. 32
consumption rather than profit making, ‘psychic income’.” Displaying similar sentiments, shareholders in the Australian racing companies that owned Rosehill and Canterbury in Sydney, and Moonee Valley and Mentone in Melbourne voluntarily became non-proprietary clubs, and the investors willingly exchanged their shareholdings for debentures. In August 1939 the Ascot pony club announced it also proposed to become non-proprietary and spend substantially on a revolutionary new track, but its plans were swept away by world events and a government that did not desire its survival in any form.

In any event there was little prospect by the end of the 1930s of investors in racing extracting themselves satisfactorily. Most were trapped in the rigging when Sydney proprietary racing’s ship began to founder, after the Stevens government legislated in 1937 that proprietary licenses would not be renewed in 1943. It became very difficult for shareholders to divest themselves of shares in companies once it became known that their one source of revenue was to be prohibited within five years. The losses caused to these investments could never be adequately calculated or compensated, regardless of the establishment of the Racecourse Compensation Fund.

Conclusions

The commercial possibilities of unregistered proprietary pony racing were recognised and exploited by sports entrepreneurs who became active in Australia in the second part of the nineteenth century. Many were parvenus who had established themselves financially as publicans and investors in hotels, and moved into proprietary racing after gaining experience in less capital-intensive sports promotions including rowing, cycling and pedestrianism. They were middle class by inclination if not birth and were informed by the developments in sports

123 Huggins op. cit. p. 77
125 Sydney Morning Herald 18/8/1939 p. 15
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promotions in Britain that many had seen first hand. Some were prominent in the civic and business communities of the districts in which the pony racecourses were built. It is clear that the financing of pony racing was not in any way a manifestation of working-class collectivism.

The proprietary racecourses of Sydney established in the 1880s, such as Rosehill, were built in outer suburbs, generously financed and raced under AJC rules. When the AJC disassociated itself from the pony racing that had developed at the SDPC, the advantages of unregistered racing, wherein the proprietors could operate with almost complete autonomy, became obvious to the existing proprietary clubs, and they moved to exploit pony racing as a supplement to their ‘legitimate’ racing activities. Soon after, in the 1890s, independent operators began to establish cheaper, purpose-built pony racecourses. They were able to find land closer to the city that could be serviced by tramways rather than rail. Capitalists intent on using pony racing to garner gate-money, rather than to indirectly increase the profitability of nearby hotels, replaced the remaining publican-promoters.

In the new century more ambitious promoters such as the Ascot syndicate and Joynton Smith moved beyond the modest paradigm of early pony racing. They oversaw the construction of racecourses that rivalled and even exceeded the registered courses built in the land-boom decade of the 1880s. There was more diversity in the ownership of unregistered racing in Sydney than Melbourne, and as a result more robust competition developed. Smith and his commercial rivals introduced modern marketing practices that included newsworthy on-course promotions and intensive newspaper advertising. The conflict generated by the unregulated activities of the uncompromising, independent promoters operating in pony racing caused brief but intensely fought ‘pony wars’, which produced characteristic marketing responses such as price discounting and boycotts. The last round of internecine squabbling ended immediately in 1906 when government regulation of racing loomed.

The proprietors of Sydney pony racing emerged united in 1907 as the ARC and began to exhibit cartel-like behaviour. As it matured the ARC adopted some of the patriarchal habitus of the AJC and increasingly resembled a ‘principal club’ of
pony racing, as they established district associations in rural areas, sent stewards to officiate on country meetings and arbitrated on referred disputes.

A single office of ARC administrators who accepted responsibilities delegated to them by the owners of the racing companies performed the same function as the five separate racing offices of registered racing, for a larger number of meetings. It employed men with extensive commercial and racing experience in roles that were usually filled by dilettantes in non-proprietary clubs. Prior to the emergence of the ARC these administrators had learnt their business as a corps of professional officials who had moved fluently between independent racing clubs. In the ARC period these transfers ceased and careers began that ultimately challenged the longevity of the most entrenched principal club administrators. The ARC men were the founders of professional sports administration in Sydney, which spread from racing to other gate sports such as football and cricket. They were generally progressively-minded and many racing innovations had their origins in pony racing, but this fact has tended to be lost among the negative generalisations made about the sport that have been discussed previously.

Proprietary pony racing was among the first and most significant of the great splinters of leading Australian sports that became offspring estranged from their amateur parent bodies. The nature of the ownership of pony racing clubs and racecourses changed over time, in keeping with the evolving structure of the sport generally. As increasing taxation made the industry less attractive to independent entrepreneurs, numerous smaller investors, who took up shares in the racing companies, formed the core of ownership. Control of the clubs passed from high profile individuals to boards, directors and salaried officials.

This chapter has demonstrated that several of the generalisations implicit in the orthodoxy of unregistered pony racing are misleading and without basis. They are the result of a failure to allow for the numerous changes in the sport that occurred over time. Thus it has not been recognised that while unregistered racing was initially financed in part by get-rich-quick profiteers, it was also adopted by more

126 Of course AJC racing was only partly amateur and employed some paid officials, as well as professional riders and trainers
conservative persons who were also involved in community development, and ultimately by investors who loved racing and for whom the chance to participate was at least as important as a desire for profit. Pony racing in Sydney also made valuable contributions to the social fabric of the community through the provision (usually at no charge) of racecourses for cultural and sporting events, and as part of a green belt in an increasingly urbanised environment. Similarly the perception exists that proprietary clubs exploited the popularity of horse racing without contributing in any way to its development. However, through conventionalising product marketing, providing stipended officials with extensive experience, and pioneering innovations that ultimately increased public confidence, unregistered racing blazed the trail towards the thorough commercialisation of racing that non-proprietary racing was subsequently compelled to broadly adopt. That development will be considered in the next chapter.
Chapter three

Facilities, information and services

This chapter provides analysis in greater depth of the facilities, information and services provided at the four ARC racecourses Kensington, Ascot, Rosebery and Victoria Park. It details the configurations of the racing and training tracks and other constructions, the infrastructure provided for racing and betting, and the provision of information necessary for those activities to take place. It considers the utility of these and other amenities at the apotheosis of the pony era and the implications of this for the popularity of the sport. It is essential that a record based on contemporary documents and supplementary evidence be provided here, as assessments made during the depression of the 1930s, which have been promulgated ever since, nurture the orthodoxy that all unregistered racecourses in all eras were of a poor standard and much inferior to registered equivalents.

Most Australian racecourses of the nineteenth century, particularly before the enclosure of boundaries and reserved areas became normative, were open paddocks that provided a sketchy definition of the course with posts, and perhaps, on race day, a line of wagons or drays that marked the run to the finishing line, and which served as rudimentary grandstands.\(^1\) Few amenities were provided for racegoers, other than food and drink booths. However, by the early 1860s the AJC and VRC and some of the major regional clubs had built racecourses that matched or exceeded the standards set by leading British clubs, albeit most often on a smaller scale. Soon thereafter significant Australian racecourses were fully railed and provided new standards of accommodation and comfort for their primary subscribers. Improved viewing arrangements were over time extended, in diminishing degree, to the public, in accordance with the scale of admission payments. The Sydney suburban racecourses, in particular Rosehill, sought to emulate the new marks set by the principal clubs, but the organisers of pony
Facilities, information and services

racing (other than of course that conducted on registered racecourses) at first provided elementary facilities only. However, during the more ambitious second phase of pony racing, beginning with the conceptualisation of Kensington, its promoters recognised that to expand their patron base they must build first-rate racecourses and install infrastructure that emulated the standards of registered racing. Patrons of racing had come to expect to make their gambling arrangements, observe events and receive intelligence on their outcome, purchase food and drink and consume it, and access other essential amenities, in a reasonable standard of comfort. Course propers\(^2\) needed to be long and wide enough to allow competition that closely resembled AJC racing, and be durable enough to allow weekly use. Facilities—such as sophisticated semaphore systems and other visual devices, warning signals and electronic communications—that would allow staff to be judged competent to supervise meetings were also necessary.

Facilities common to all ARC racecourses

Sir William McKell criticised the facilities provided at proprietary racecourses while a parliamentarian, and in later reflective writings. It was he who, while Labor Premier of New South Wales in the 1940s, delivered the *coup de grace* to proprietary racing in Sydney and placed all proprietary courses at the disposal of his creation, the STC.\(^3\) McKell was antipathetic towards proprietary racing and his distaste intensified during the Depression, when he was the state member for Redfern and leader of the opposition. He attributed his attitude, in part, to what he judged sub-standard accommodation provided for the racing public, and the complaints of trainers, who have a long history of expressing general dissatisfaction in the administration of racing that in fact continues to the present.

On Sunday mornings McKell often visited the stables of trainers Fred Cush and Joe Cook from his Dowling St home, where he heard the complaints of those that

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1 See for example the illustration by S. Lindsay ‘A bush race in Australia’, in Hutchison *op. cit.* p. 26 and Freedman & Lemon *op. cit.* p. 175
2 Most racecourses have several tracks for racing and training; the course proper is the one reserved for race days. The definition usually excludes the starting chutes
3 Refer chapter seven
made their livings in the industry—of loss of jobs, decreased prize money, poor pay and conditions in the stables, and crumbling grandstands. The cause, he believed, was the willingness of the racing companies to continue to pay excessive dividends (although chapter two illustrated that the dividends paid by the pony companies after 1910 were in fact very modest). He determined that, when given the opportunity, he would make all racing non-proprietary.

Subsequently McKell’s unreserved condemnation of proprietary racecourses and unflattering comparisons with the STC have influenced many of the judgments made of them by later-day researchers, and helped to create the current orthodoxy.\(^4\) Yet while he certainly had some first-hand knowledge on which to base his judgements, their acceptance should be tempered by awareness that McKell sometimes displayed a propensity for stubborn and somewhat peremptory generalisation. For example during the Great Depression he concluded that the numerous terrace houses within his electorate should all be levelled in a slum clearance program, despite many being connecting to the sewerage system and possessing internal plumbing and other advantages. Those terraces that somehow survived his pogrom were radically reappraised by renovators in the 1960s and became much sought-after properties.\(^5\)

Some relevant rejoinders can be made to McKell’s criticisms, beginning with generalisations about the ARC racecourses. They were not tiny rinks like the unregistered racecourses of the 1880s and 1890s (‘how they manage to run round some of them, I do not know’ observed a critic of those earlier courses),\(^6\) and the Melbourne pony tracks, as they had been built to stage the races for larger horses that prescient entrepreneurs saw becoming increasingly prevalent. Like most in New South Wales, the tracks were essentially flat and ovular (lacking the peculiarities of contour evident in many British courses), and they were raced on

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\(^4\) McKell’s expressed his views on proprietary racing in the introduction to Boulter \textit{op. cit.} p. v. These views are confirmed in John Ryan, ‘From penciller to prize giver—A Randwick story’, in \textit{AJC Racing Calendar, November 1988}, p. 40, and Cuneen, \textit{McKell} pp. 155-56

\(^5\) Spearritt \textit{op. cit.} pp.71-72; Stuart Macintyre found ‘the readiness of some Labor politicians to collaborate in the project to demolish their own working-class neighbourhoods…surprising’; Stuart Macintyre, \textit{The Oxford History of Australia Volume 4 1901-1942: The Succeeding Age}, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 317

\(^6\) \textit{NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900} vol. 6 p. 1241
Clockwise. All racing was conducted on turf course propers—on which flights were erected when required for hurdle races, which were rarely run before 1933—with the exception of the Victoria Park steeple track, which was also of turf.

Although turf was and still is the customary surface for metropolitan racecourses and regional centres in Australia, it was not the only one used for pony racing. The Richmond and Fitzroy courses in Melbourne, Lillie Bridge and its successors in Sydney, and Albion Park in Brisbane had course propers of loam, cinders or sand. The advantage of these surfaces lay in their ability to absorb considerably more traffic than grass, and the need for less maintenance. They were however much less aesthetically appealing; Richmond (Melbourne) was described as a ‘blot’ on the suburb. A more practical objection to non-turf tracks was that dirt and dust was often blown into adjoining enclosures.7

Until the mid 1930s, at least, the ARC turf tracks provided excellent racing surfaces, free of ‘track bias’—the term coined in late twentieth-century racing to describe inequitable lanes that form across a track after rain.8 Apart from the fact that few had the steep camber from the outside to the inside (which helps wide runners around bends, but tends to cause an accumulation of moisture near the inside fence), which is customary on modern racecourses, perhaps the equitable racing surfaces of the ARC courses were mainly due to their favourable location. The sandy coastal soils of the South Sydney district encouraged efficient drainage and lush grass growth. Each of the ARC courses coped well with wet weather but Ascot and Rosebery were particularly highly esteemed. By contrast Canterbury

7 Freedman & Lemon op. cit. pp. 383-84; Buggy op. cit. pp. 103, 143
8 The durability of turf racecourses has long been an issue for racing administrators. Jerome B. Dowling, the last chairman of the Rosebery Club who subsequently became a director of the STC and its inaugural racecourse manager, believed that turf tracks could cope with only one meeting a month. This was the extent of racing on the ARC courses in the 1930s, but before 1907 the Kensington and Ascot clubs raced on their courses twice or even three times a week without difficulty. In 1923 the experienced racing administrator Rufé Naylor expressed the opinion that the ARC did not need four racecourses to conduct its 72 meetings a year and that two would probably be sufficient; Boulter op. cit. p. 35, NSW Parliamentary Papers vol. 4 p. 805. Edgar Britt has insisted that there was no ‘track bias’ in the 1930s. Jockeys did not scout wide in the home straight in bad conditions; they merely raced less tight. Britt interview with Peake March 2000
Facilities, information and services

Park, the STC’s first choice on which to begin racing, was described as ‘the most notorious wet-weather course in Sydney’.  

At their best each of the ARC complexes possessed ‘fine stands and racecourses,’ superior to all but the best country non-proprietary courses such as Wagga Wagga and Grafton, and the registered proprietary courses. Each pony course provided a leger, paddock and official or members’ stands and reserved areas for the press, bookmakers and trainers.

Initially Kensington alone of the proprietary racecourses provided seating in the leger stand, but facilities were considerably more extensive and better finished in paddock enclosures. The pony grandstands held somewhat fewer people than those at Rosehill and Canterbury but matched or exceeded the capacity of Moorefield, and they had the advantage of being up to 45 years newer. The public stands tended to be less substantial edifices than the official reserve and were usually exposed at the rear and sides to inclement weather, but this was general in sports architecture of the early twentieth century. It was evidently the case at Rosebery before its 1928-29 renovation, for ‘Musket’ recounted complaints about the lack of shelter. However he wrote ‘Sydney [pony] racegoers who imagine they are badly catered for should take a trip to Melbourne, and they would come back satisfied that the appointments here are palatial compared to what are provided the public at Ascot [Melbourne].’ This is significant, as at that time Ascot was clearly the best of Wren’s Melbourne pony tracks and Rosebery Sydney’s most modest. Others in the racing industry endorsed the superiority of the Sydney pony courses.

Superior facilities were one of several advantages possessed by Sydney pony racing denied its Melbourne counterpart. A felonious element seems to have been.

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9 Sunday Truth 27/5/1945 p. 3. When rain caused the cancellation of several Canterbury meetings in April and May 1945, resulting in each occasion in a fortnight without racing in Sydney, the STC was accused of having failed the racing-starved public
10 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1296
11 Refer below
12 Referee 27/10/1920 p. 6
13 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1310
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more evident among Melbourne attendances, and anti-gambling groups, marshalled by the energetic Methodist clergyman W.H. Judkins, who once led a delegation of 5,000 to present an anti-gambling petition to the Victorian premier, more active. The different demographics of the cities, and the putative personification of gambling evil (John Wren) and ugly urban crime (Squizzy Taylor) that existed in Melbourne, which stimulated the vituperation of evangelists, were largely responsible for this. At any rate, ‘wowser’ activists condemned in particular Wren’s heartlands such as the Collingwood tote and midweek pony racing.

An even greater impediment to the development of southern unregistered racing was the absence of all-heights racing. Virtually all races at Richmond and Fitzroy were restricted heights, and races for 13.3 hands ponies (which had disappeared from Sydney by 1914) remained a staple of southern programs. This incumbrance severely limited the pool of available starters, and entirely excluded genuine thoroughbreds from entry. Field sizes in Victorian pony racing did not expand. These factors inhibited the evolution towards a ‘registered’ style of racing, as occurred in Sydney; ‘pony racing’ in Melbourne remained true to the name.

The location of the Melbourne pony racecourses amidst the factories and slums north of the Yarra River did not enhance the tracks’ reputations. These were, in that period, unprepossessing suburbs. The racecourses in their midst, which were small, dusty and modestly developed, seemed affected by their drab surroundings. They were located within minutes’ walk of workers’ dwellings, an obvious advantage for promoters in one sense, but the preponderance of rough, horn-handed types in the attendances may have retarded patronage from other groups.

14 Buggy op. cit. p. 142-45
15 See for example Freedman and Lemon op. cit. p. 407; O’Hara A Mug’s Game p. 147; Agnew Australia’s Trotting Heritage p. 107
16 Buggy op. cit. pp. 71, 82-83 and passim; refer also chapter seven
17 The exception that Ascot racecourse, Melbourne, represents should be noted. Possessing a grass track of much greater dimensions and aspirations, Ascot had more in common with the Sydney pony racecourses. Located northwest of the Melbourne Showgrounds, it did not share the inner-city grimness of Richmond, or to a lesser extent, Fitzroy, racecourse (which was in fact closer to the suburbs of Northcote and Preston). Nevertheless Ascot was built in the early 1890s, and Melbourne was never to have a newer pony racecourse (see chapter seven). Kensington, built at about the same time as the Melbourne courses, was much more impressive and ambitious than any of them.
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By contrast the Sydney pony courses, with the exception of Lillie Bridge, had been built in the relatively bucolic, unsettled district of south Sydney, which apart from small-scale dairy farming, was the domain of scattered practitioners of noxious trades such as fellmongering, tanning and wool scouring.18 While some Sydney tracks were within walking distance of working-class suburbs, except for Lillie Bridge it required more a forced march than an easy stroll to reach them. The closer habitations were in the Eastern Suburbs, considerably more affluent areas than Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy. At least until suburbs became well established around the racecourses after World War I, and private automobiles ownership became more widespread, the great majority of Sydney pony racegoers commuted by tram.19

The Melbourne pony courses faced sterner competition from the registered proprietary tracks than those of Sydney, and were disadvantaged by being compelled to race midweek on days other than Wednesdays, which belonged to the registered ‘suburban’ proprietary companies.20 Although sometimes deprecated as ‘down-the-line’ courses,21 these were, when compared to Sydney’s Rosehill, Canterbury, Moorefield and Warwick Farm (in particular), readily accessible, and equipped with superior facilities; Nat Gould rated the Melbourne registered proprietary racecourses Epsom, Aspendale and Mentone among the best anywhere. It is significant that Gould included the extant Sydney pony venues in his taxonomy of eastern Australian racecourses but ignored the Melbourne examples.22 In Melbourne the registered suburban racecourses outnumbered the pony tracks, whereas in the count of Sydney racecourses there was parity. As crowded as the proprietary racing market was in Sydney, in Melbourne, before the depression of the early 1890s, there were even more

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18 Fitzgerald op. cit. p 18
19 This reading countermands the usual one of Sydney and Melbourne as ‘walking’ and ‘riding’ cities, respectively. Refer Cashman Paradise of Sport p. 30
20 Freedman & Lemon op. cit. p. 385
21 Buggy op. cit. p. 26
22 Gould op. cit. pp. 177-78
entrepreneurs eager to cash in on the evidently facile profitability of proprietary racing. When the market collapsed pony racing was the loser.\footnote{In Melbourne 15 proprietary racecourses opened between 1883 and 1893 and perhaps as many as 12 were going concerns at one time. The greatest number in Sydney was probably the nine proprietary racecourses in operation in 1895. Freedman & Lemon \textit{op. cit.} pp. 379-80, 383-84}

To return to the shared features of the Sydney pony racecourses—in front of the official stand, or between it and the paddock stand in the case of Kensington, was the parade ring, a focal point conceived in mid-nineteenth century Britain as a logical complement to another recent innovation, the ‘grand stand’.\footnote{See Huggins \textit{op. cit.} p. 40. Sydney’s pony courses and stands were aligned so that spectators did not have to look into the westering sun during the later events of the day. The Kensington and Rosebery stands faced due south, Victoria Park’s, like Randwick, due east, and Ascot’s southeast} The architects Robertson and Marks, who did much of the work at Randwick under Adrian Knox, constructed many of the pony course stands, and the majority of the totalisator buildings constructed in 1917.\footnote{Mechanical totalisators utilise the \textit{pari mutual} betting system, invented in 1872, wherein a pool of money created by wagers on the possible outcome of an event is divided between the successful subscribers, after the operator takes a deduction. Examples of 1917 pony totalisators may be inspected at University of NSW, middle-campus and the Victoria Park Estate, Zetland; refer photograph on page 214a}

\textbf{The betting ring}

To an even greater extent than was the case in registered racing, the betting rings of pony racecourses were vortexes into which all unfettered male racegoers were inexorably drawn. It has been suggested that betting was the preoccupation of everyone in pony racing—not just the public, trainers, owners and bookmakers as one would expect, but also the jockeys, administrators, and even the stewards.\footnote{NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4, Select Committee \textit{On Pony Racing} passim.} ARC betting rings were usually densely populated, especially when they were situated on the lawn between the stand and the course, as they commonly were before the construction of the totalisator halls behind the stands. Unregistered racing was commonly believed to operate on inside information. The furtive exchanges that took place amidst the rows of bookmakers conveyed covert intelligence from touts, clockers and informants about which starters were ‘in for the run’, or conversely, in earnest. Some commission agents relied on information received directly from the stable, in return for which they staked bets for trainers.
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Gambling trainers who sought to place their bet without assistance from agents ran a considerable risk. The ring was a vicious and highly reactive environment as ruthless and contractless as the Hobbesian state of nature, and those who attempted to manage their own betting had to be ready to rush the bookmakers at any moment, as some pony track regulars (known as ‘crushers’) were expert at destroying connections’ markets.27 ‘There are so many professional backers and hangers-on of racing to be served that the owner is often left …to take 2-1 or less in a large field, or has his horse pulled to wait for another day,’ one critic observed.28

Unaffiliated and uninformed members of the public were also the prey of the professional gamblers, and they had to rely on attentiveness and mobility to try to make sense of the betting ring. As straight-out betting boards did not appear on Sydney racecourses until 1947, punters at pony meetings lacked even the opportunity to track market movements.29 Those who could recognize the major players in the market and overhear their bets had a decided advantage.

Despite the exclusion of the general public from these networks of inside information, its contributions to bookmakers’ bags and later, totalisator pools, was the essential grease that kept the gambling machinery functioning, increasingly important as betting deductions challenged gate money as the proprietary clubs’ main source of revenue. The prerequisite for the popularisation of racecourse gambling had been the establishment of arrangements that allowed the laying of small cash bets. Pony racing emerged at precisely the right time to be able to participate in the new broadly-based cash betting that replaced the racecourse side wagering of owners and their associates as the main form of transaction. Bookmakers began to take up fixed positions, rather than wander the course soliciting bets as was the previous practice, and payout winning bets immediately

27 Although betting boards were intended to primarily be of benefit to the general public they also forewarned bookmakers when ‘plunges’ were launched; thus the objectives of ‘crushers’ were more difficult to achieve
28 Brown op. cit. p. 133; Referee 12/12/1894 p. 1
29 Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 158; the photograph of the Kensington leger ring in the early 1930s reproduced on page126a suggests that doubles bookmakers were using betting boards earlier than has been acknowledged. The photograph of Rosebery in 1914 reproduced on page131a seems to show a board in use for doubles betting
on ‘correct weight’. Thus did the betting ‘rings’ of early modern racecourses take shape. The names of bookmakers were prominently displayed above their stands, and the clubs provided them large umbrellas, whose protection enabled them to stand in some comfort for hours despite hot sun and rain. Most betting rings on Sydney unregistered racecourses occupied the lawns in front of the stands, although several were relocated to the rear when totalisator buildings were raised at those locations in 1917.

**Bookmakers**

Prior to the advent of the totalisator, which provided a ‘real’ market determined by demand, licensed bookmakers enjoyed a monopoly in providing racecourse-betting options. Those that operated at pony race meetings were a largely homogeneous group drawn from the same socio-economic catchment area that served registered racing. This was centred on the eastern suburbs and those adjacent to the racing precinct, in particular Randwick and Bondi. In the 1890s and 1900s bookmakers found it easier to gain a license in the expanding pony sector.

Many of the standout and omnipresent characters in Australian racing folklore made books in pony betting rings. Rufe Naylor was a racing inveterate of dubious reputation who had several careers in pony racing. He was a one-time registered AJC bookmaker who had emerged as a bookmaker at unregistered meetings aged 18 in 1900. He disappeared from Australia soon after for some 13 years, during which period he operated a proprietary racecourse in South Africa. When he returned he operated, in addition to bookmaking, as a professional punter, subscription tipster and radio commentator. Victor ‘Lordy’ Angles stood as an ARC bookmaker in the 1920s and his son Fred clerked for him before becoming Naylor’s assistant and business manager. Through this connection a second son, Cyril, was made race broadcaster on radio station 2KY; he became the best-known commercial race broadcaster of the 1930s. Andy Kerr, who was known

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30 That is, the semaphored signal that jockeys have weighed in correctly and that no further inquiries are required
31 Painter & Waterhouse *op. cit.* p. 219; Hickie *op. cit.* p. 39
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(Illustration 3.1) The Australian test cricket captain Bert Collins working as a bookmaker at Kensington racecourse. (source: Pollard, *Australian Horse Racing Companion*)

(Illustration 3.2) Andy Kerr, centre, calling the odds without a betting board. (source: Hickie, *Gentlemen of the Australian Turf*)
as the ‘Coogee Bunyip’, began his bookmaking business operating on pony meetings around 1900 at Forest Lodge. In the 1930s, many successful post-war bookmakers began their careers on ARC racecourses. They included Arthur Sing, the long-serving rails bookmaker, who first fielded in the Victoria Park leger in 1935 and continued to operate at Randwick until 1988, when he remained invariably the first bookmaker to display a market. Ken Ranger, the leader of the Sydney ring in the 1950s, began bookmaking at Victoria Park in January 1939. Sing and Ranger joined established bookmaking celebrities of that era such as Jack Shaw, Jack Mandel and Lloyd Tidmarsh.

The flamboyant Kerr described the coins that small-unit gamblers deposited in his bag as ‘fruit for the sideboard’. He would set punters for a cigarette to £100 on rank outsiders. Another ‘showman’ bookmaker was George Nathan, who laid similar extravagant wagers in the leger and attracted large crowds with his wit and chaffing of the public.

The humorous exchanges between bookmakers and clients that took place in the early modern period are a staple of the racing folklore. Pre-war bookmakers were, according to racing orthodoxy, more animated and personable than their postmodern successors, who take more interest in statistical analysis than badinage. They had no betting boards that required constant trimming and they actively called the odds and fielded enquiries. These circumstances required gamblers as well as bookmakers to work harder to take advantage of the market, however interstate and country meetings distracted them much less than in later times.

At some times the ranks of bookmakers at pony meetings included the leading AJC-registered men, but at others the AJC refused them permission to field. In 1898 it ruled that bookmakers caught operating at the ponies would be stopped from working on registered racecourses and it employed private detectives at

33 Referee 21/3/1900 p. 3
34 Victoria Park Racing Club, Register of Bookmakers, AJC Archive
35 Hickie Gentlemen of the Australian Turf p. 20
36 Ibid. p. 22
37 Lillye Backstage p. 86
midweek events to police compliance with this edict. However in 1906 the AJC set aside this restriction and allowed its bookmakers to operate on ARC courses provided there were no registered racing taking place in the metropolitan area. This in effect meant that AJC bookmakers could operate on Wednesday pony meetings, as a result of which midweek ARC race days often provided a stronger betting ring than their Saturday programs. AJC bookmakers had used these unregistered Wednesday meetings as venues at which to bet on important country meetings, such as the Newcastle spring and autumn feature days, and Grafton and Wagga cups carnivals. As a consequence of ARC Wednesday meetings being rescheduled to Saturdays and public holidays, Kensington and Randwick both raced on Anniversary Day 26 January 1918.

Several resourceful ARC bookmakers bet on the AJC races, which could be witnessed from start to winning post by anyone looking rearward from the top rows of both the Kensington paddock and leger grandstands.

On occasions when large crowds attended pony meetings at which AJC bookmakers were not allowed to field, such as June Prince of Wales’ birthday meetings, there were not enough bookmakers operating in the paddock to comfortably accommodate all wishing to place bets. This was particularly the case before the 1917 advent of the totalisator. As a consequence of this inelasticity of demand ARC bookmakers were able to ‘lay ridiculously short odds about marketable horses’, something they could not do so readily when their AJC colleagues were also operating. However in general the larger tracks and fields of the later pony era gave bookmakers confidence to decrease their percentages somewhat and this drew further money into the market, bet on a wider range of starters.

38 Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 39
39 In theory the relaxation of the demarcation between registered and unregistered racing meant that ARC bookmakers could also work on AJC courses, but in reality few could obtain an AJC licence. Referee 31/8/1910 p. 1
40 Refer chapter seven
41 The only occasion on which this occurred
42 Presumably the results were ‘tic-tacked’ (semaphored) from Randwick to Kensington racecourse
43 Referee 28/6/1916 p. 5
Around the year 1900 the fastest growth in the number of legal bookmakers was occurring on pony racecourses, where it was much cheaper to set up than in registered racing, and more vacancies occurred. Inevitably among this influx some of the ‘crowd of cronk’ bookmakers that had ‘stiffened’ pedestrianism sought to enter pony racing, and no doubt some succeeded, although the granting of a license was far from automatic, at least in the case of the Kensington club, which refused many applications. Nevertheless the number of bookmakers operating on pony racecourses began to spiral after the NSW government licensed unregistered courses in 1907. At the inaugural Ascot meetings of 1906, 51 bookmakers had fielded. At the start of the 1909-10 season the ARC approved 34 bookmakers for the paddock and 55 for the leger. By the end of the season the number of fielders had risen to 40 in the paddock and 70 in the leger.

Table 3.1: Sydney bookmaker strengths, 1912

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>racecourse</th>
<th>paddock</th>
<th>leger</th>
<th>flat</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Randwick</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosehill and Canterbury</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moorefield</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warwick Farm and Hawkesbury</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3.1 demonstrates that by 1912 the number of unregistered bookmakers had risen a further 45 per cent from 1910 to 58 in the paddock, and a remarkable 70 per cent to 120 in the leger—the largest number of bookmakers operating in a single racecourse enclosure in the state. The total number of bookmakers working on ARC racecourses then was exceeded at Randwick only. In 1914 the Referee estimated more than half the total licence fees paid in Sydney came from bookmakers working on unregistered racecourses.

The number of licensed ARC bookmakers remained constant throughout World War I and the early 1920s, but by 1923 the strength had once more increased, to

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44 Kensington papers, Mitchell Library document box 1681; Sydney Sportsman 17/10/1900 p. 4
45 Referee 7/7/1909 p. 5
46 Mostyn does not identify his source, but his figures were almost identical to those provided by Peter Moore of Moorefield to the Commission
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104 in the paddock and 143 in the ledger.\textsuperscript{48} The increase mirrored a remarkable growth in attendances in that period, and occurred despite the introduction of the totalisator and a series of betting taxes. There were also an increased number of licensed bookmakers working in registered racing, but the percentage growth there did not match what had taken place in pony racing.

The totalisator

In 1912 the New South Wales government called a royal commission to consider the vexatious and perennial issue of the legalisation of on-course totalisators. The commissioners questioned numerous witnesses from throughout Australia and New Zealand (where the totalisator had already operated for some years) including racing administrators and members of the clergy, and gauged support for the introduction of the machine locally. The AJC saw the commission as an opportunity to play politics; it argued that only non-proprietary racecourses should receive the rights, or else that the proprietaries should receive only 5 per cent of turnover, half of what it advocated for itself.\textsuperscript{49}

On-course totalisators became legal on 31 March 1917, after 40 years of spirited debates, following the New South Wales parliament’s enabling legislation of 1916 that had jurisdiction for licensed racecourses, both registered and unregistered.\textsuperscript{50} The Holman Labor government, anxious not to be branded a promoter of gambling, included several measures in the totalisator legislation intended to impose a degree of probity and restriction. These included a minimum age for bettors of twenty-one, and a rule that totalisator clerks should close their windows

\textsuperscript{47} A.B. Paterson, \textit{Complete Works}, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1983, p. 320
\textsuperscript{48} A figure almost ten times the strength of bookmakers betting at Sydney race meetings in the twenty-first century; \textit{NSW Parliamentary Papers} 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1345; \textit{NSW Parliamentary Papers} 1912 vol. 4 p. 509
\textsuperscript{49} New South Wales, Parliament, \textit{Royal Commission of Inquiry Respecting the Question of Legalising and Regulating the Use of the Totalisator in News South Wales, Report}, in \textit{NSW Parliamentary Papers, 1912, Joint Volumes of papers presented to the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly}, vol. 4, Sydney, Government Printer, 1913
\textsuperscript{50} The Statutes of New South Wales, \textit{The Statutes of New South Wales (Public and Private) Passed during the Session of 1916, Totalizator Act (no. 75)} Sydney, Government Printer, 1917
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immediately the advertised starting time was reached, although initially most actually closed somewhat earlier, as the horses gained the course proper.\textsuperscript{51}

Rosebery, where the ARC had installed a temporary ‘duplex’ totalisator imported from New Zealand, was the first racecourse in New South Wales to provide the service, on 4 April 1917. Totalisators subsequently opened at Victoria Park, Kensington and Ascot before the first operation at a registered course, at Warwick Farm on 6 May. The totalisator did not commence at Randwick until Epsom Day in the spring of 1917.\textsuperscript{52}

An important consideration of the proponents of the totalisator bill had been deciding an appropriate minimum unit. Although, on average, bets made on course were larger than those made illegally elsewhere, off-course bets should have been taken into account when the regulator framed the on-course unit—if it was hoped to lure more people to the course—but it chose not to do so.\textsuperscript{53} An indication of an appropriate basic unit of off-course betting is provided by John Wren’s (illegal) Collingswood totalisator, where in 1903 the minimum bet was a shilling.\textsuperscript{54} Corroboration of this figure is provided by SP figures from Britain that suggest that the standard bet was between sixpence and a shilling. The 1912 totalisator Royal Commission heard how the majority of people at the races bet in half crowns, five shillings and half sovereigns, which led Harvey Cobcroft, secretary of the Victoria Park Club, to propose a five-shilling betting unit.\textsuperscript{55} The government decided that even this large unit was too small, and set it at 10s, similar to the cost of admission to the paddock and about one-sixth of the average male weekly wage—an extraordinarily high figure, especially as at first bets for the win only could be made.\textsuperscript{56} It was not until the 1920s that the unit was reduced to a more realistic 5s, though this still represented a large sum when few people’s

\textsuperscript{51} Rosebery Racecourse and Recreation Grounds Co. Ltd, \textit{Official Programme} 9/4/1930, Sydney, Ross Brothers
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Referee} 28/3/1917 p. 5, 11/4/1917 p. 5; The Randwick totalisator was however built on a much larger scale
\textsuperscript{53} Huggins \textit{op. cit.} p. 106
\textsuperscript{54} Buggy \textit{op. cit.} p. 17
\textsuperscript{55} NSW \textit{Parliamentary Papers} 1912 vol. 4 p. 542
\textsuperscript{56} Perhaps the same logic of discouragement that informed policy on early Totalisator Agency Board (TAB) outlets, which were made purposefully Spartan, to discourage loitering
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banks exceeded a pound or two. Not all courses lowered the minimum unit but ultimately paddock punters on pony racecourses were able to make 5s bets.

However, not everyone betting on unregistered racecourses had raided the milk money, as the orthodoxy implies. A.B. Paterson recalled collects of thousands of pounds being made at the modest Lillie Bridge course. In 1912 Thomas Rose, a journalist and one-time manager of leviathan bookmaker Humphrey Oxenham’s betting business, estimated that paddock pony bookmakers held on a conservative estimate an average of £50 on each race, and those in the leger £25. The extrapolation of Rose’s figures fix annual bookmakers’ turnover on the pony courses at £2,797,200. In 1914, paddock bookmakers on ARC courses were compelled to lay the odds for a minimum of £5 for odds up to 10-1 while for those in the leger the minimum was one pound.

The totalisator ultimately brought profound change to the ways racegoers wagered, but initially a niche had to be found for it. In January 1918, to facilitate its acceptance, the ARC barred place bookmakers and restructured totalisator dividends to attract more cautious bettors wanting to bet for a place. It did not create a separate place pool, (the system that now applies, introduced in 1931), but split the single pool, after deductions, 75/25 between supporters of the first and second horses, and beginning with the Ascot meeting of 5 January, in the ratio 50:30:20 to first, second and third (although third place returned a dividend when there were nine or more starters only). This arrangement pre-empted a similar one introduced by the AJC.

The most commonly laid bet on pony racecourses prior to the coming of the totalisator was for the straight out selection of the winner. The lack of bookmaking technology made more complex options difficult. More daring speculators could bet with doubles bookmakers or take a treble on selected events, such as the three divisions of a flying handicap. The mechanical nature of the

57 Paterson Off Down the Track pp. 154-5
58 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1912 vol. 4 p. 550
59 Referee 9/1/1918 p. 3; Sydney Sportsman 12/1/1918 p. 1
60 Sydney Morning Herald 6/4/1931 p. 7
61 Referee 28/3/1917 p. 5; Sydney Sportsman 23/7/1919 p. 1
totalisator opened the way for the slow development of more exotic forms of betting.

Totalisator pools in the leger and paddock were at first independent of each other, an arrangement that allowed significant variations in dividends, but when the electronic or ‘lightning’ totalisator replaced the original, primitive mechanical devices in May 1918, a single, course-wide dividend was declared. By 1919 pony totalisator patrons were betting £1,000 on a normal Wednesday event and somewhat more on a Saturday race. In response to the totalisator’s increasing popularity bookmakers began to accept each-way bets, although they did not always pay the now customary quarter of the win odds for the place; at Kensington in 1916 it was noted a horse with win odds of 15-1 returned just even money for the place.

In fact with place and each-way totalisator betting often unrewarding, and exotic forms such as quinellas and trifectas unknown, the majority of gamblers remained faithful to bookmakers and continued to bet win straight-out. The daily totalisator turnovers of around £13,000, achieved by the sophomore year of 1918, represented yet a fraction of the money bet with bookmakers. Some bettors disliked having no indication before the race what a dividend was likely to pay, a prejudice that was finally overcome when the Rosebery club installed the first ‘automatic logarithmic odds calculator’ in Australia in 1931, which allowed investors to evaluate current prices and which was the forerunner of modern digitalised indicator boards. Previously, the totalisator listed the number of ‘shareholders’ in each horse; in the first years there were frequent errors in these indications, which caused investors chagrin when dividends paid less that anticipated. Another handicap was the distrust that racecourse Luddite’s harboured for the complicated totalisator machinery, and as a corollary, fear of breakdown and lost dividends. Such prejudices were quickly dissipated by the reliable operation provided, but to seasoned plungers accustomed to the very

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62 Referee and Sydney Sportsman 1919, passim.
63 Referee 2/2/1916 p. 5
64 Randwick Racebook and Official Programme 28/3/1970, Sydney, Ross Brothers p. 37
65 Sydney Sportsman 3/9/1919 p. 1
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masculine and combative nature of the ring, polite transactions made at the totalisator window still seemed both passive and perhaps slightly effeminate.

On–course information

Nineteenth-century followers of the Australian turf had little data on which to base their gambling decisions. There were no daily newspapers offering analysis of form such as the Sporting Times (the ‘Pink’un’) and the Daily Racing Form (first published in 1894) provided in Britain and the USA, respectively. Racegoers could know little of the histories of the contestants or their connections, other than what they had gained through empiricism. Even certain knowledge of the ownership was not assured, as identity was often hidden behind a maze of leases and assumed names. The usage of noms de turf was not unique to pony racing. James Brown and L.K.S. MacKinnon were two prominent establishment owners who used assumed names, but the practice was less endemic than in unregistered racing. Journalists who wrote the Edwardian sporting pages informed their readers that bookmakers, in particular those operating off-course, owned many unregistered horses. Naturally such an arrangement raised suspicions that transactions made in betting shops influenced the instructions that jockeys received on race day. The use of assumed names stopped bettors knowing if the off-course bookmaker taking their bets owned the horse they were supporting. Some called for an end to this deception. ‘Under present arrangements owners do outrageous things under shelter of their go-between nominator, that they wouldn’t dream of doing if their identity was liable to be disclosed publicly,’ wrote one in 1893.66 The Kensington secretary Patrick O’ Mara informed the 1900 Racing Association Bill committee ‘There are many horses and ponies as well that are entered and taken to the various race-courses without any intention of starting them, for the simple reason that they are given into the hands of certain shopkeepers who lay against them as much as they can, because they know they will not be started.’67 While if a racecourse bettor supported a horse that was subsequently scratched he had his stake refunded, the betting shops (of which

66 Referee 21/6/1893 p. 5
67 NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 pp. 1240, 1276
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there were 31 in Sydney in 1901,\(^68\) that operated according to ante-post conventions (and mostly bet on doubles), kept stakes laid on listed horses that were later scratched. The risks of ante-post betting were obvious and the contracts heavily favoured the layers, but nevertheless the shops did a great deal of business. In the later pony-racing period, when increased on-course competition forced SP operators to refund scratchings, the leverage offered by owning competitors lapsed, and bookmaker ownership of unregistered horses rapidly dwindled.

For racegoers one of the major challenges lay in comprehending developments during a race. This difficulty was largely alleviated beginning at Warwick Farm in August 1933 when the AJC began to provide a public broadcast service, eight years after Mick Ferry made the first radio broadcast of Sydney race on 11 April 1925. Thereafter the buzz of race descriptions by Lochie Melville became familiar at all Sydney metropolitan racecourses, including the ARC racecourses. The public address system, though used initially only to broadcast musical selections between race descriptions, was used increasingly to disseminate information.\(^69\)

The broadcasting of information prior to the advent of public address systems had been largely a matter of bells and buzzers. In the early twentieth century three short electric bell rings sounded in the betting ring to warn punters and bookmakers that the contestants had reached the starting post (information provided since the 1970s by ubiquitous television monitors), while one long bell peal indicated that the field was away. In the saddling paddock and horse stalls a different tone rang once to advise trainers and strappers to have their horses ready, twice to direct them to the parade ring, and three times when it was time for them to go to the post.

Before on-course broadcasting there had been great difficulty in identifying horses and colours at distant points of the course, particularly for those without the aid of field glasses to identify jockeys’ silks—and the problem was naturally

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\(^68\) Painter & Waterhouse *op. cit.* p. 44  
more acute on large racecourses.\textsuperscript{70} As the race progressed, bemused spectators sought verification of their interpretations of events from neighbours. A sketch by A.B. Paterson captured the common confusion:

They’re off! The long line of colours across the track becomes a shapeless clump and then draws out into a long string. “What’s that in front?” yells someone at the rails. “Oh, that thing of Hart’s,” says someone else. But the Oracle hears them not; he is looking in the mass of colour for a purple cap and grey jacket, with black arm bands. He cannot see it anywhere, and the confused and confusing mass swings round the turn into the straight.

Then there is a babel of voices, and suddenly a shout of “Bendemeer! Bendemeer!” and the Oracle, without knowing which is Bendemeer, takes up the cry feverishly. “Bendemeer! Bendemeer!” he yells, waggling his glasses about, trying to see where the animal is.

“Where’s Royal Scot, Charley? Where’s Royal Scot?” screams one of his friends, in agony. “’Ow’s he doin’?”

“No ’ope!” says the Oracle, with fiendish glee. “Bendemeer! Bendemeer!”

The horses are at the Leger stand now, whips are out, and three horses seem to be nearly abreast; in fact, to the Oracle there seem to be a dozen nearly abreast. Then a big chestnut sticks his head in front of the others, and a small man at the Oracle’s side emits a deafening series of yells right by the Oracle’s ear:

“Go on, Jimmy! Rub it into him! Belt him! It’s a cake-walk! A cake-walk!”\textsuperscript{71}

After the race observers looked for the numbers to be posted—though before 1850 the placegetters’ numbers were simply shouted by the judge\textsuperscript{72}—and for some form of ‘all clear’ to be given.

In the 1890s the Kensington club pioneered many innovations in information provision. Among them was the practice of chalking on the semaphore board barrier positions and riding engagements as they came to hand, which was undertaken for the first time on 9 August 1899.\textsuperscript{73} The semaphore operator, as his title suggests, also used the naval colour-coded flag system to communicate with more distant club officials and members of the public. A blue flag showed that a committee member was required at the official stand, yellow that a doctor was needed. In direct contradistinction of modern associations, a red flag announced correct weight. A green flag caused similar upheaval as sightings of the Jolly Roger on the Spanish Main, as it signalled that a protest had been entered. The

\textsuperscript{70} That the pony courses, or at least the earlier ones, were smaller than most registered courses made observation a little easier for their patrons
\textsuperscript{71} whitewolf.newcastle.edu.au/words/authors/P/PatersonAB_Banjo/prose/ThreeElephantPower/oracle.html
\textsuperscript{72} Freedman & Lemon \textit{op. cit.} p. 192
\textsuperscript{73} Referee 9/8/1899 p. 5
subsequent raising of red-over-green announced that the protest had been dismissed, or white-over-green that it had been upheld. In 1907 Kensington took the logical step of linking the stewards with the starter by telephone. A public telegraph office opened in 1910.  

In the twentieth century, in response to growing attendances, increased commercialism, and advances in technology, race clubs began to investigate further means by which events taking place on course could be made more comprehensible. The pony club promoters displayed eagerness to be at the forefront of information and communication initiatives.

Jockey’s silks or ‘uniforms’ were already compulsory on metropolitan racecourses when regular pony racing commenced, although inadequate design standards and duplication were common until race clubs registered them. Numbered saddlecloths, whose introduction in Sydney dates from about 1886 (at Canterbury), were used to augment jockeys silks as a means of identification. They proved particularly useful when horses carried similar or identical colours, or when mud obscured them.

The ARC’s 1907 experiment with a standardised set of colours—which worked like the rug colour-system later used in greyhound racing, except that the ARC allocated colours by saddlecloth number rather than barrier position—was less successful. It was an odd decision to implement such a system and to deny an owner the right to use his own colours, especially after the ARC had not long previously registered them all. Despite its considerable set-up costs, the scheme was so clearly unpopular with owners and the public when introduced at Ascot on 5 July that the ARC abandoned it entirely after the meeting of 24 July.

The race book that evolved from the old fashioned silk race card in the later part of the nineteenth century was meant to be the main source of information on race outcomes.  

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74 Referee 12/6/1907 p. 5  
75 Rosebery Park Race Book 9/4/1930; The clubs also registered a set of their own (emergency) colours; the ARC chose all-black, which in registered racing belonged to Etienne De Mistre of Archer fame  
76 Referee 10/2/1887 p. 1  
77 Referee 12/6/1907 p. 5, 31/7/1907 p. 5

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course. In Sydney, Ross Brothers Printers held a monopoly over the production of both registered and unregistered galloping and trotting race books. The books, which cost a shilling on both registered and unregistered racecourses, identified club committeemen and officials such as stewards, starter, club doctor and so on. AJC books set out the program including the luncheon interval, the musical items to be played by the band, and a bookmakers’ settling sheet. They listed acceptors and saddlecloth numbers, their connections, and jockey’s colours. Usually there were results of recent meetings at similar locations. Books for registered meetings of the Victorian period reflected the vogue for sweeps, as they provided pages of perforated tabs to use to conduct the draw. Yet all race books possessed an almost complete absence of information useful for betting. Clearly they were designed with owners and club officials, rather than gamblers, in mind, but they also reflected the scarcity of ante-post information. They lacked any data on the form of entrants; or riding engagements—patrons pencilled the latter in from the lists that were posted on the scratching tower some half an hour before the race. The identity of the jockeys was believed so vital and indicative that most punters refrained from betting until they became known, as was the barrier draw, which was conducted only minutes before the race. It can be appreciated that the betting ring was a scene of feverish activity in the five minutes before the starter’s bell rang.

Until 1917, no indication of how races were to be divided could be given in the press, as stewards did not make a decision until they met at the racecourse. The coming of the totalisator caused a change in the declaration of divisions, as its operators, more so than bookmakers, needed considerable preparation time to set up their machines for each race. As a result stewards were compelled to make decisions about divisions the day before the meeting, which allowed the details to be included in race books, which were henceforth printed overnight. This was perhaps the first step on the slow progress to the point at which racebooks became

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78 Referee 4/4/1917 p. 5
useful tools for bettors. 79 Nevertheless photographs of pony attendances such as that reproduced on page 206b suggest few racegoers did without them.

Catering

Before World War II every Sydney racing club sold its catering rights at tender. This was an observance of the practices current in British racing. As chapter one demonstrated in the mid-nineteenth century publicans provided the food and liquor stalls that did a great trade on racecourses. W.J. O’Brien, the licensee of Major’s Inn (later Tattersalls Hotel) in Pitt St, provided catering at both Homebush and Randwick races, where as many as fifteen licensed booths operated at early meetings. 80

At pony meetings in the 1890s, which occupied little more than two hours, food and drink were peripheral considerations for both promoters and customers, but in the twentieth century, as programs extended through most of an afternoon, more attention had to be given to the corporeal needs of racegoers, although the genteel practice of interrupting the racing to take an hour’s luncheon, a tradition the AJC continued until 1937, was never adopted. However, despite its increased significance and potential, the clubs remained content to outsource catering and rely on gate takings, race books sales, totalisator deductions and bookmakers’ licence fees to create profit. This abnegation is absolutely at odds with the attitude of modern-day race clubs, for whom bar and food revenue are very major contributors to profits. Dining and drinking are among the most central attractions of race meetings in the modern era.

On ARC pony racecourses publicans from the South Sydney district and eastern suburbs stocked the alcohol bars, and also operated the dining and tearooms, and stalls, until in the late 1920s catering firms moved into the latter market. At Victoria Park McVie Ltd purchased the catering rights for the 1928-29 season for £65 per meeting and £80 for the cup meeting. 81 The catering companies tended to

79 Race books remained virtually useless as an aid to betting until they began to carry computerised form in the late 1970s
80 Andersen Tattersalls unpaginated
81 ‘Minutes of the Victoria Park Race Club Committee’ AJC Library, unpaginated
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masquerade behind matronly trade-names, such as ‘Mrs Kenny’ at Victoria Park, ‘Miss Bishop’ (the Aerated Bread Co.), at Randwick, Canterbury and Richmond, and Mrs Mahoney (perhaps a real local resident), who served light meals and Devonshire teas at the Menangle Park tea rooms.

The tender for catering at Rosebery in the 1930s listed the items the concession-holder was required to supply, which were an odd mixture of the extravagant and mundane: oysters, prawns, lobsters, fish, sandwiches, cakes, bread and butter, scones, meats, pies, vegetables, tea, coffee, cocoa, milk, cool drinks and lollies. Lobster was not available in the leger but oysters could be purchased there. This limitation was indicative; a wider selection of luncheons and teas could be had in the paddock. Simple and inexpensive fare such as pies and sandwiches were the staples in the leger. ‘Our experience has proved that the frankfurt and bread roll has always been popular and satisfying to the patrons of the lower priced enclosures,’ asserted a ‘Miss Bishop’ spokesperson.82

At Rosebery the other items on the tearoom menu in the late 1930s were:

- Two Frankforts[^94] with Mashed Potatoes and Bread and Butter………………… 2/-
- Two Frankforts with Bread and Butter………………………………………………...1/6
- Meat Pie with Mashed Potatoes and Bread and Butter…………………………………..1/6
- Meat Pie with Bread and Butter………………………………………………………….1/3
- Ham, Beef or Assorted Sandwiches, i.e. Egg and Lettuce, Sardine, Salmon, Cheese, etc. 1/3
- Sultana, Plain or Assorted Fancy Cakes………………………………………………….1/3
- Scones…………………………………………………………………………………….1/-
- Bread and Butter………………………………………………………………………….1/-
- Oysters, Plate or Cocktail…………………………………………………………………2/-
- Prawns, Plate or Cocktail…………………………………………………………………2/-
- Smoked Fish………………………………………………………………………………2/-[^94]

Racegoers could also buy individual items of food at several stalls. Among these were meat pies and frankfurt and bread rolls, which could be eaten in the betting ring or while watching a race. Each cost 6d, as did a cup of tea or coffee.85

[^94]: The spellings ‘frankfort’ and ‘frankfurt’ were both current at that time.

[^93]: The spellings ‘frankfort’ and ‘frankfurt’ were both current at that time.

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82 STC files, ‘Tender specifications for Catering at Rosebery racecourse’, Mitchell Library; *Sydney Truth* 7/2/1937 p. 5. The ubiquity of oyster bars on metropolitan racecourses in this period is somewhat mystifying, but in the 1920s twenty men were employed at Randwick on race days to shuck them; STC files, ‘Catering and liquor privileges’, Mitchell Library. The term ‘hot dog’, popularised in Australia by American serviceman, had not yet taken hold in commercialised.


85 Ibid.
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Alcohol bars on pony racecourses had not acquired the significance they gained after World War II, when they became gathering points for listening to (and later, watching) broadcasts of interstate races. All ARC courses featured an alcohol bar under the public grandstands in both enclosures, and open-air counters or booths near the betting ring often supplemented them. Racecourse alcohol was relatively expensive—only in the last decade of the twentieth century did Sydney racing clubs seek some parity with hotel prices. At meetings in the first two decades of unregistered racing bars were likely to have more patrons drinking spirits on their own than men in groups ‘shouting’ beers, as became the practice. Racecourse beer, which in the twentieth century was often sold in opaque paper cups that could conceal overlarge ‘heads’ from drinkers, was popularly reviled and judged inferior to tap beer sold in hotels.

ARC clubs sold their alcohol concessions cheaply. In 1908 the Victoria Park club sold booth rights for £40 per meeting, the equivalent of the prize money the club gave for a single race, and this relativity remained fairly constant in later years. Mr Yeend, publican of the nearby Grand Hotel, paid £185 for the bar rights at Victoria Park pony meetings, £30 for normal trotting meetings and £100 for trotting feature days. By 1935, close to the nadir of the Depression from the proprietary clubs’ perspective, the rental paid to Victoria Park for bar privileges had dropped to £100 for Saturday pony meetings, £68 for Wednesdays and £10 for all trotting meetings. By the 1930s Morrisons’ Outdoor Catering Co. paid £50 for the rights to the refreshment rooms for Saturday pony meetings, £32 for Wednesdays and a paltry £2 for the struggling trots. The cigar kiosk, no larger than a sentry’s box, at £22 in 1928 rising to £37 in 1930, was the highest-priced

86 Interstate race descriptions began in 1939
87 Geoffrey Blainey, Black Kettle and Fall Moon: Daily Life in a Vanished Australia, Camberwell Vic., Viking, 2003, pp. 344-45
88 Chapter five considers the behavioural implications of alcohol consumption during the pony era
89 Sydney Mail 22/1/1908 p. 245
90 Minutes of the Victoria Park Race Club Committee AJC Library, unpaginated
91 By comparison the sale of the catering rights to an STC meeting at Randwick in 1944 brought £500
92 Morrisons also performed the catering at the Sydney Cricket Ground, Moorefield and Wentworth and Harold Park racecourses. Joseph Carruthers held shares in the company
concession, by the ratio of rent to area. 93 This relativity is unsurprising given Blainey’s estimation that around 1900 perhaps eight of every ten adult males were committed smokers. 94

**Track layouts and facilities** 95

The ARC pony racecourses were by no means miniature or bijou tracks, and were as large or larger than the Canterbury, Wyong and Gosford layouts that continue in use for Sydney metropolitan and provincial racing in the twenty-first century. ARC racecourse dimensions are given in table 3.2 and thereafter follows a commentary on each.

### Table 3.2: dimensions of ARC racecourses at cessation of racing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>racecourse</th>
<th>area (acres)</th>
<th>course proper</th>
<th>straight</th>
<th>race distances and maximum starters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ascot</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1 mile &amp; 90 yds</td>
<td>1 fl &amp; 90 yds</td>
<td>4 fls, 6 fls, 6.5 fgs, 1 m*, 9 fgs &amp; 50 yds, 12 fgs (max. 20 all starts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>7 fgs</td>
<td>1 fl</td>
<td>4.5 fgs, 5 fgs, 6 fgs#, (18 starters) 5.25 fgs*, 5.5 fgs* (20 starters), 1 m, 10 fgs# (19 starters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosebery A</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1 mile 25 yds</td>
<td>2 fgs less 10 yds</td>
<td>4 fgs<em>4.5 fgs. (15 starters), 5 fgs, 6 fgs</em>, 6.5 fgs*, 5.25 fgs*, 5.5 fgs 1 m*, 9 fgs (18 starters)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Park</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>10.05 fgs</td>
<td>2.2 fgs</td>
<td>4.5 fgs, 6 fgs, 6.5 fgs, 1 m, 10 fgs 121 yds, 11 fgs# (25 all starts)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: STC file, Valuer-General’s reports on proprietary racecourses, and accompanying maps, Mitchell Library. The tables following in this chapter were derived from the same source.

A after 1928 alterations  
* denotes chute start, # denotes rarely used  
fl(s) denotes furlongs, yds denotes yards

**Kensington (opened during 1893)**

The 1899 photo of the Boer War encampment at Kensington reproduced on page 125a illustrates the sea of sand and low scrub that characterised the topography of the district between Sydney and Botany Bay. Transforming this unlikely, snake-
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(Illustration 3.3) Kensington racecourse depicted in a photograph taken from the hill to the north of the course, during the Boer War encampment of 1899. Open country consisting of sand hills and scrub border it to the south and east. The grandstands and other facilities can bee seen at far right (source: SLNSW)
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(Illustration 3.4) Kensington racecourse in the late 1930s, framed by High St (left), Anzac Pde (below) and Barker St (right) (source: University of New South Wales Archives)
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infested site into a racecourse was a major engineering project that required the removal or displacement of millions of tons of sand. Some rises were estimated to be twenty or thirty feet in height. The entire improvements at Kensington, including thorough drainage and the establishment of couch lawns on six inches of topsoil, were achieved within twenty months. Similar faintly miraculous transformations occurred on the sites of the later racecourses.

The Kensington course was saucer-shaped and seven furlongs in circumference—quite large by the standards of 1893—culminating in a short uphill straight of about a furlong. Like most Victorian-era racecourses it lacked starting chutes, but one was added off the five-furlong turn in August 1901. The course, which was fully railed on the inside and out, featured a tan training gallop of about 25 foot on the outside of the course proper and another inside it. By the 1920s there were three training tracks inside the course proper.

The facilities provided for racegoers and participants at Kensington were first rate and raised the benchmark for unregistered racecourses significantly. A large, picket-fenced saddling paddock, which stretched east almost to the Moreton Bay figs the proprietors had planted along the High St fence, was a striking feature. The frame for displaying race results was next to the fence on the outside of the course proper, aligned to be intelligible from most sections of the public grandstands. The course underwent constant maintenance and improvement for the next 35 years despite the club lacking the freehold. In 1913 the paddock lawn was filled and returfed to provide a sloped viewing area at the western end; at the same time the paddock stand was completely renovated. Another upgrade of the paddock enclosure took place in 1920.

The space beneath the viewing decks of the paddock stands housed a refreshment room and others set aside for ladies, the press, which also had the prime winning-

96 NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1269
97 Waugh op. cit. p. 9
98 Sydney Morning Herald 13/6/1893 p. 6
99 The club removed the tan track on the outside of the course proper in the 1930s
100 Referee 14/8/1908 p. 5
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(Illustration 3.5) The Kensington racecourse home straight and leger (left) and paddock public stands circa 1908; a photograph taken from the infield, looking north. The paddock stand lost its roof during a storm in 1917. The enclosed area at the right end of the paddock stand was reserved for licensed persons and the press. The unprotected rear of the stands allowed Kensington racegoers to watch the one instance of a ‘clash’ meeting with Randwick, which occurred in 1918 (source: D.M. Cooper, History of Randwick 1859-1909)

(Illustration 3.6) The Kensington home turn and leger enclosure; a view from the paddock grandstand during the Depression of the 1930s. The photograph shows that the leger is well patronised though there are some vacant spaces evident that are undetectable in World War I era photographs. Most of the paddock attendance would have been at the far left of the enclosure, in proximity to the winning post. The leger doubles bookmakers are using betting boards to display their prices, a method not adopted by straight-out fielders until after World War II (source: Lawrence, Randwick a Pictorial History)
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post end of the viewing deck for their exclusive use, and club officials.\textsuperscript{101} To the east of the public stand was the official building, which also served as judge’s tower and jockeys’ room.\textsuperscript{102} In 1898 the club opened a new pedestrian entrance at the corner of Bunnerong Rd (now Anzac Parade) to save leger patrons arriving by tram having to double up High Street.\textsuperscript{103}

Table 3.3: Kensington facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members stand</td>
<td>Two level weatherboard, southern face formed outside perimeter of the course opposite the winning post. The judges box was on the upper floor. The jockeys and steward’s rooms occupied the bottom floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddock stand</td>
<td>Wood, galvanised iron roof; accommodation for 1500; the roof was lost during a storm in 1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leger stand</td>
<td>Wood and galvanised iron roof; accommodation for 500 in 1893 increased to 1500 in 1908 and 2000 in 1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totalisator (1917)</td>
<td>Paddock and leger; Cement brick and tile, central section three stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavatories\textsuperscript{104}</td>
<td>Men’s: located along High St fence, a ladies lavatory in the paddock grandstand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>Refreshment room bottom deck of paddock and leger grandstands; two free-standing booths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse stalls</td>
<td>Along eastern end of paddock adjacent to Randwick Park, and High St side next to lavatory\textsuperscript{105}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ascot (1906)

The Ascot racecourse lay on the boundary of the original Macquarie grants to Simeon Lord (no. 153) and Edward Redmond (no. 158), which lay slightly east of the old main road from Sydney to Botany Bay.\textsuperscript{106} The land to the northwest of the bay was subject to tidal waters and consisted of mangrove swamps and marshy land.\textsuperscript{107}

\[\text{References:}\]
\textsuperscript{101} Replicated with slight variations at each of the later ARC racecourses
\textsuperscript{102} It seems that this building had not been constructed at the time of the opening meeting.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Referee} 14/6/1893 p. 5
\textsuperscript{104} Each of the ARC courses was connected at an early date to the Sydney sewerage system, though at some pans only were provided in the leger. The North Botany District was one of the first connected to the sewerage system in the 1880s—some years, in fact, before Sydney city. These sanitary arrangements established a considerable advantage over the suburban courses—even Rosehill had pans in its public lavatories. A septic tank system was provided in the members’ stand. Jervis and Flack \textit{op. cit.} p. 25; STC files, ‘Grandstands both courses’, Mitchell library
\textsuperscript{105} Waugh \textit{op. cit.} pp. 11-13
\textsuperscript{107} Barber \textit{op. cit.} p. 15
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(Illustration 3.7) Map of Ascot racecourse circa 1943 (source: STC files, Mitchell Library, State Library of News South Wales)
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(Illustration 3.8) Aerial view of Ascot racecourse and surrounding district, looking east, 1920s (source: Gall, *From Bullocks to Boeings*)

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The Australian Golf Club’s inaugural 99-acre course had previously occupied most of the Ascot site. In the first years of the new century the golf club sought unsuccessfully to purchase the land from the Perpetual Trustees, before it found an alternative site on the northern side of Gardeners Road, opposite the site of the second Rosebery racecourse, whence it relocated and remains in 2004.108

Beyond the trees to the east of the racecourse the Ascot club owned a large plot of vacant land below Botany Road. Further still to the east lay the Engine Pond, southernmost of the Botany Lakes, which until the 1880s had provided Sydney’s main water supply.109 To the north and southwest was open country, although by the 1940s the surrounding area was described as generally industrial.110 From 1925 the Botany goods rail line dissected the northern part of the locality, while to the southwest the Brighton golf course and the nascent Mascot airfield became Ascot’s immediate neighbours. Lords Road ran parallel to the home straight before, near the two furlongs mark, joining Ascot Avenue, which ran down the side of the track before swinging off to join the old General Holmes Drive.

Its promoters intended that Ascot racecourse would challenge Kensington as the premier unregistered venue, and completely eclipse the Brighton, Epping and original Rosebery circuits. Aesthetics were becoming increasingly important to promoters of unregistered racing. The Ascot grandstands featured attractive gabled roofs, and a copse of Norfolk pine trees ran parallel to the back straight and others marked the Engine pond and paddock entrance. Early advertising copy described Ascot as ‘Popular, pure and pretty; fringed with lofty pines, the verdure is refreshing to the eye. In the distance [are] the limpid waters of Botany Bay’.111 That the Cook’s River was subject to industrial pollution at low tide, and that unpleasant squalls from Botany Bay occasionally blew into the faces of patrons watching races, and until 1916, that miasmas emanated from the nearby sewerage farm at Kyeemagh, may have compromised the writer of this copy—but Ascot under favourable conditions was surely enough a pleasant seaside location.112

108 Larcombe op. cit. p. 164
109 Gall op. cit. p. 2
110 STC files, ‘Valuer General, Ascot racecourse’, Mitchell Library
111 Referee 11/04/1906 p. 4
112 Sun Herald 31/3/1985 p. 105
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(Illustration 3.9) The expansion of Sydney Airport into the former Ascot racecourse, 1948. The back straight and side of the course proper are still clearly evident. The mouth of the Cook’s River is being moved from below the southern end of the racecourse about one mile to the west (source: Gall, *Bullocks to Boeings*).

(Illustration 3.10) Aerial of the airport in the mid 1950s. The location of the grandstands of the former racecourse are marked by the twin roundabouts. A small section of the course proper is still apparent at bottom right of the photograph (photograph courtesy of Allen Windross).
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The plans for Ascot were ambitious and included a 10-furlong course proper on the 114-acre site (which would have been the largest of any Sydney proprietary racecourse), but it was decided instead to set aside 13 acres for a residential development that ultimately became the Lauriston Park Estate (nevertheless expansion of the course proper was still being proposed when the club was put on notice of being delicensing in 1939).\footnote{Referee 1/3/1905 p. 5 and 6/9/1905 p. 5, Sydney Morning Herald 21/9/1939 p. 13; refer also to the map on page 311a} At any rate at nine furlongs Ascot still represented a large course proper. It had one inside grass track, and later a tan track and a cinders trotting course. It had a very sharp turn out of the back straight, which sometimes caused bunching in large fields, as often occurs in 1200 metre races at modern Rosehill. Edgar Britt recalled riding in a race in which 10 of the 14 starters fell at that point.\footnote{Britt interview with Peake March 2000. As a result of the ten-horse fall, which occurred on 27 March 1935, three horses were destroyed and eight jockeys injured. Britt had been at the rear of the field and felt one of the fallen horse’s hooves fan the seat of his breeches as he rode through the accident zone unscathed. Sydney Morning Herald 28/3/1935 p. 11. Refer also the death of Sydney Griffith, chapter six} Nevertheless a 1930s commentator judged that ‘the course at Mascot is not only most popular with racing devotees, but is considered one of the safest…the special mile track (which includes 5-and-a-half furlongs in two straight runs) and 4 furlong track are particularly referred to, as they compare more than favourably with any similar tracks in the metropolitan area.’\footnote{Barber op. cit. p. 61} The main ring occupied the lawn in front of the paddock grandstand.

When larger aeroplanes began to use the nearby airport after World War I, government restrictions on the height of buildings stymied any plans to increase the size of the stands at Ascot.\footnote{Boulter op. cit. pp. 80, 85} Other planned improvements were deferred indefinitely when the Depression bit hard. The commentator of the 1930s cited above had added ‘while some of its buildings are due for renewal, others are equal to anything in the state, the totalisator houses being model structures.’\footnote{Barber op. cit. p. 61} The permanent tote houses had opened in June 1920, while in 1938 the club opened the world’s first fully automatic doubles totalisator in the existing building that served both the paddock and leger enclosures.\footnote{Sun Herald 31/3/1985 p. 105}
(Illustration 3.13) Ascot racecourse in 1926. The infield lake that was replaced by the cinders trotting track is behind the winning post. The chimney belongs to the sewage farm on the southern head of Cook’s river. The judge’s semaphore board is at infield right, the pines of Ascot Avenue behind it. (source: Hadley album, AJC Library and Archive)
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Ascot, which was a course on which fast times were often run, had one chute start (for the one-mile races referred to above), which joined the course at the turn into the back straight and provided a straight run of about four furlongs to the first turn. Starts at the one-mile and 9 furlongs 50 yards could be seen from the grandstand only; as a consequence betting sometimes (evidently when the bell system was not functioning) continued for several seconds after the start of the race.\textsuperscript{119} The run-in to the post at Ascot featured a kink at about the 1.5-furlong mark, similarly to the extant Gundagai racecourse. The training tracks were highly esteemed and so sound that neither bad weather nor any other circumstance ever caused them to be closed to trainers.\textsuperscript{120} Consequently many trainers based themselves at Ascot. Behind the winning post was an enclosure that surrounded a small body of water that was an outpost of the Botany Chain of Ponds, which disappeared beneath the cinders trotting track in 1927. Near the quarter-furlong mark on the infield the club constructed a board to post the judge’s numbers, an unusual feature for that time, as most clubs located them within the saddling paddock.

\textsuperscript{119} Sydney Morning Herald 9/9/1937 p. 15
\textsuperscript{120} Barber \textit{op. cit.} pp. 60-61
(Illustration 3.14) Map of Rosebery racecourse after the 1929 renovations. This drawing was made in the post racing period; it notes damages to the perimeter fencing around the new car park, at the corner of Gardener’s Rd and Maloney St. Several cottages lay within the boundaries of the course between Universal St and the back straight. (source: STC files, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)
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Table 3.4: Ascot facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members stand</td>
<td>Two storey, timber; limited seating; committee rooms; bar; jockey’s room,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>telegraph office; scratching board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddock stand</td>
<td>Brick with twin gabled iron roof; accommodation for 600; Ladies lavatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leger stand</td>
<td>Timber with twin-gabled iron roof; accommodation for 1500; tar paved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>floor; bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket office and</td>
<td>Brick with iron roof, 10 windows and seven turnstiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turnstiles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casualty room</td>
<td>Brick with iron roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totalisator (1917)</td>
<td>Paddock; brick and tile, central section three stories; leger: brick and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tiled/tin roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavatories (men’s)</td>
<td>Paddock: brick and tile 50 x 20 ft; 24 water closets and 40 ft of urinal;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>leger almost identical except 35 pans instead of WCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>In the paddock, a separate open bar 50 x 24 ft; brick paved with tin roof;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tea room, a wooden building 80 x 16 ft serving light meals; snack bar and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>liquor bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse stalls</td>
<td>250 adjacent to the one-mile starting chute. Timber with iron roof and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>brick paving 121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rosebery (1907)

The building firm of Foran & Co. constructed the new Rosebery Park racecourse, which opened on 7 August 1907, on 70 treeless acres of sand hills and hollows that had previously formed part of the Lindsay estate. Sandstorms whipped up by gusty coastal winds would sometimes prove an irritation at the course, so the success of a horse named Sandy in the first race run proved prophetic. The cost of setting up the new course to the first day’s racing was reckoned at £12,000.\textsuperscript{122}

The very experienced and knowledgeable jockey Edgar Britt rated the Rosebery racecourse of the 1930s one of the best ever in Sydney. He commended it as ‘great track—you could come from anywhere and win it.’\textsuperscript{123} His colleague Bill Cook agreed; ‘[it was] the best wet weather track we’ve had in Sydney…and you could come from last at the home turn and win there, it was a very good course.’\textsuperscript{124} There has been some confusion over the dimensions of Rosebery racecourse. In 1983 Richard Boulter wrote that its circumference had been 6.75 furlongs. However, a surveyor’s map drawn in 1943 shows that the course was

\textsuperscript{121} STC files ‘Ascot racecourse’ Mitchell Library
\textsuperscript{122} Referee 7/8/1907 p. 5
\textsuperscript{123} Britt interview with Peake March 2000
\textsuperscript{124} Cook interview with Bennett 1980
Facilities, information and services

(Illustration 3.15) The leger reserve, Rosebery racecourse in 1914 from the paddock grandstand. The leger grandstand was brought from old Rosebery racecourse in 1906, and collapsed in 1928. The leger betting ring is amid the crowd between the lawn and outside rail. The proximity to Gardener’s Rd is evident. Several racegoers are awaiting the return tram to the city (source: *Referee* 18/11/1914, State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales)

Facilities, information and services

(Illustration 3.17) Rosebery, ‘The most up-to-date pony racecourse in Australia’, in December 1929. Renovated at a cost of £100,000 on the eve of the Great Depression, Rosebery was a demonstration of the Rosebery company’s commitment to the sport. The structures displayed are (1) leger grandstand, (2) leger totalisator, (3) paddock grandstand, (4) paddock totalisator and racecourse offices, and (5) members stand. Each of the stands was cantilevered to provide unobstructed views of the racecourse. The perimeter fence and sand hills of the Australian Golf Course are visible between the paddock grandstand and totalisator (source: Referee 11/12/1929, State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales)
just over a mile long, and featured a long home straight of two furlongs.\textsuperscript{125} The explanation of this variance is that the course was lengthened twice from its original six furlongs (in addition to other important improvements) and that Boulter’s reference is to an earlier configuration. The engineers of the 1928 reconstruction, which followed the collapse of the leger grandstand,\textsuperscript{126} adopted for their model the modern American one-mile oval tracks, a feature of which was a more pronounced ‘batter’ or camber into corners. This made Rosebery unique among Australian racecourses built to that time. After a year-and-a-half, and £100,000 of renovations, Rosebery emerged in 1929 as practically a new racecourse, and the \textit{Referee} described it as ‘something to be marvelled at’ and a ‘stand out’ in terms of its accommodation.\textsuperscript{127} Bert Wolfe’s (‘Cardigan’) conclusion that ‘jockeys not accustomed to Rosebery will have to make up their minds that it does not pay to make their runs too soon’ supports Britt’s and Cook’s assessments of the course. ‘The turns are beautifully made and the long straight run along the back gives every horse a chance,’ added Wolfe, arguably the leading racing writer of the time who in 1933, recently relocated from Melbourne, was seeing the new Rosebery for the first time, as a result of the ARC-AJC détente.\textsuperscript{128} Facilities and buildings were upgraded to an extent equal to those on the running track. The stands had seating capacities beyond anything found away from Randwick.

Nevertheless the public areas at Rosebery were always rather cramped by the immediate proximity of Gardener’s Road, and the rear of the leger stand was hard upon the property boundary. The paddock-betting ring (part of almost 8000 square yards of brick paving laid during the 1929 renovations) was in the north-eastern corner of the three-quarter acre enclosure, while leger bookmakers operated on the lawn below the grandstand, with the scratching board at the western end. The land beyond the side of the course, to the southwest was initially occupied by market gardens but by the 1920s it contained numerous houses and shops.

\textsuperscript{125} Boulter \textit{op. cit.} p 77; surveyors map to accompany report number 43, by Fred C. Carr; in STC files ‘Rosebery racecourse’ Mitchell Library
\textsuperscript{126} Refer chapter five
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{Referee} 11/12/1929 p. 9
\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Daily Telegraph} 12/1/1933 p. 2
Facilities, information and services

(Illustration 3.18) A panorama of the Victoria Park racecourse paddock enclosure in the 1930s. The unusually designed official stand is at right; someone is standing on Joynon Smith’s balcony. The cigarette kiosk is in the foreground, the paddock grandstand and betting ring occupy the center of the image and the façade of the paddock totalisator building is at extreme right. (source: Referee 3/8/1933, State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales)
Facilities, information and services

In 1907 Rosebery had one starting chute, connecting to the turn out of the home straight, which was used for 6 furlongs races. Before 1914, chutes were constructed for 5.5 and 9 furlongs races, the former after the club purchased 10 acres on the eastern boundary of its property. The later reconfiguration that extended the course circumference to 6.75 furlongs enabled 6 furlongs races to start from this chute, with a run of nearly 2 furlongs to the first turn. Under the 1929 re-configuration starts from the extremities of the chutes provided races of 4 furlongs, 6.75 furlongs and one mile. The average track width was 66 feet, narrowing to 50 feet at the point of the home turn. The track also fell 10 feet in 1 furlong, 23 yards along the back straight.

For many years there were no training tracks at Rosebery to supplement use of the course proper but by 1943 an inside grass track had been constructed. The STC constructed a cinder track in 1952 to augment Rosebery’s usefulness for training, which continued there for almost a quarter of a century after the end of racing.

Table 3.5: Rosebery facilities (1943)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members’ stand, paddock and leger stands</td>
<td>All cantilevered for maximum viewing utility; concrete and cement render; accommodation for 400 (members), 1,800 (paddock), 2,500 (leger). On the first floor of the members stand lay the usual assembly of rooms for the committee, stewards, jockeys and press, as well as tea and lavatory facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totalisator (1917)</td>
<td>Three story brick and cement render, tile roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket and turnstile</td>
<td>Paddock, brick and cement render, tile roof; leger, weatherboard and fibro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casualty room</td>
<td>Weatherboard and fibro, iron roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavatories</td>
<td>Male and female in each stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>Refreshment room ground floor each stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car park</td>
<td>Replaced the chute start at the top of the home straight, at western end of course, during 1929 renovations. This location compelled paddock patrons to walk a considerable distance along Gardeners’ Rd to the entrance via turnstiles located behind the members’ stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse stalls</td>
<td>120 in 1907, 197 in 1943. Timber and weatherboard, brick paving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

129 The layout of the current Port Macquarie racecourse is almost identical to the last version of Rosebery, but for the lack of a four-furlong starting chute
130 Boulter op. cit. p. 77, based on Valuer General’s reports 1943, STC files, Mitchell Library
131 Boulter op. cit. p. 97
132 STC files, ‘Valuer General’s report on Rosebery racecourse 1943’, Mitchell Library
Facilities, information and services

(Illustration 3.19) Map of the Victoria Park racecourse and surrounding streets. The ‘outer’ was situated variously on the sand hills at lower right below Epsom Rd, and behind Dowling St (source: STC files, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)
Facilities, information and services

Victoria Park

The Victoria Park racecourse was ‘such a fine one that owners racing under AJC rules are always regretting that registered meetings are not held there,’ recorded one journalist.\textsuperscript{133} It represented another quantum leap forward in the standard of unregistered racecourses. Rufe Naylor, who had inspected racecourses on five continents, rated it among the best he had seen, and its proprietors proclaimed it ‘Sydney’s premier city racecourse’ in advertising copy.\textsuperscript{134} So good were the training facilities that many Randwick trainers chose to work their horses there in preference to the AJC course, especially on fast mornings. Visiting Victorian trainers also preferred to base themselves at Victoria Park.\textsuperscript{135}

The reference to the city in the copy was significant. With the transfer of Epping to trotting in 1906, Victoria Park was to become the gallops racecourse closest to the Sydney GPO. The panorama immediately to the north viewed from the stands\textsuperscript{136} consisted of a line of factory roofs and chimney stacks, and beyond them some hints of the city skyscape. To the east the course had a road frontage to Dowling Street, where a line of cottages and bungalows had recently been built on the Kensington side. At the northeastern corner of the course was the Randwick tramcar shelter. Between the course and Epsom Road to the south were expanses of sand, dust and slag heaps, while to the southeast stood the massive sand hill that was the location of the ‘outer.’\textsuperscript{137} To the west, in the vicinity of South Sydney Hospital was Dundas St, subsequently renamed Joynton Ave to honour the Hospital’s chief patron.

Anticipation of the opening of the new showpiece of unregistered racing mounted throughout 1907. Journalists who were taken on a tour of the racecourse by Sam Peters at Christmas time were greatly impressed by its opulence and attention to detail, which those of long memory said exceeded even that of the proprietary

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Referee} 25/08/1909 p. 5
\textsuperscript{134} \textit{NSW Parliamentary Papers} 1924 vol. 4 p. 805; \textit{Referee} 10/2/1915 p. 7
\textsuperscript{135} Hickie suggested that in 1919 the Warwick Farm and Moorefield clubs attempted to persuade Victoria Park to apply for registration with the AJC to merge with them to form a superclub. \textit{Sun Herald} 7/4/1985 p 93
\textsuperscript{136} refer photograph on page 134a
\textsuperscript{137} For an explanation of this term refer chapter five
Facilities, information and services

(Illustration 3.20) The verdant paddock lawn at Victoria Park in 1908. The paddock grandstand is at left, official stand at centre. The general view is towards the city (source: Government Printing Office Collection, State Library of New South Wales)

(Illustration 3.21) The entrance to the leger enclosure at Ascot racecourse. Patrons could step almost directly onto and from trams halted at the terminus loop at right. Lords Rd continues to the right beyond the loop while Ascot Ave bends to the left. (source: Government Printing Office Collection, State Library of New South Wales)
Facilities, information and services

courses constructed during the Camelot land-boom days of the 1880s. The designers of the Victoria Park racecourse drew their inspiration from the iron lace, colonnades and gentleman’s club atmosphere of Randwick rather than the clean-lined ‘Federation’ utility of Kensington and Ascot.

The ground floor contains weighing-room, jockeys’ quarters including shower baths, lavatories, beautifully finished in marble, stewards’ rooms, scratching quarters, etc. On the next floor are committee and visitors’ rooms, elaborately furnished and upholstered, and a spacious balcony affords a panoramic view of the entire course and surroundings, as far as Botany Bay. Above this is a garden roof, with ramparts and seats, decorated with pot plants and ferns of all varieties.

The three-story official stand resembled more a mansion than a functional piece of sports architecture and was in fact inhabited by several company employees. The viewing balcony, although described as ‘spacious’, could accommodate just 30 people and its exclusivity was suggestive of the vice-regal reserves at Randwick. It was from this eminence that Joynton Smith and his guests watched events on the course. The public stands, although lacking the artistic finishes evident in the members, were attractive edifices of brick and tile, although slightly compromised by corrugated iron roofing.

The course proper was the third longest in metropolitan Sydney and featured two very long straight runs, a very gradual turn out of the home straight and a rather sharper final turn. Inside the course proper was the so-called ‘magpie’ track, which was half tan and half turf, the cinders track (whose clay base had come from an adjacent brickworks) of nine furlongs with a two-furlong straight, and a tan trotting track. In the centre of the course grew rushes that were a reminder of its marshy origins. The semaphore board stood near the paddock-leger fence and served both enclosures. The betting ring lay behind the official stand in the paddock and the public stand in the leger. The rolling lawns of Victoria Park below the grandstands were manicured like bowling greens.

Between the opening meeting of 15 January and 30 September 1908 the club conducted all of its meetings on the cinders track in order to give the course

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138 *Town & Country Journal* 25/12/1907 pp. 45-46. The writer probably had Rosehill in mind, perhaps even the Melbourne proprietary courses.
139 *Town & Country Journal* 15/1/1908 p. 47
Facilities, information and services

proper time to settle and knit properly.\textsuperscript{141} There was some six miles of fencing on the property, double that at Rosebery. The lack of starting chutes at Victoria Park marked it as unusual for a racecourse constructed in the twentieth century. Jim Donohoe Snr dispensed with them by constructing a large track virtually to the boundaries of the property; smaller, turning tracks were compelled to create an acceptable length straight run to the first corner by creating spurs off the main course. The course proper was of sufficient breadth to allow 25 to start from all points of the course, and as a consequence there were fewer divisions of races required than at other pony racecourses.\textsuperscript{142}

Table 3.6: Victoria Park facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members stand</td>
<td>Three story brick; viewing accommodation for 30-40; stewards, jockeys and press rooms, bar and refreshments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddock stand</td>
<td>Brick, timber and malthoid decking, tin roof; accommodation: 1200; bar, ladies retiring room, lavatories; complete bathroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leger stand</td>
<td>Brick, timber decking, tin roof; accommodation 1000 (no seats); bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totalisator (1917)</td>
<td>Paddock and ledger: brick, three levels in central section; 28 windows in each enclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scratching towers</td>
<td>Paddock: brick and timber, tiled roof; ledger: weatherboard and tiled roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oyster bar and tea rooms</td>
<td>Paddock: weatherboard and fibro, tiled roof; area of 1900 sq ft including food preparation rooms. Leger, weatherboard and fibro, tiled roof, 1350 sq ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavatories</td>
<td>Separate weatherboard buildings for men in both paddock and leger. Leger provided 12 WCs and 36 urinals. There were separate ladies lavatories in the leger and paddock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>Additional open bar in leger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse stalls</td>
<td>238 at northern end of the paddock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In closing this description of the four ARC racecourses, it should be noted that their relative status fluctuated during the fifty-year period over which they were in use for racing. Kensington had been the premier club and track in the period from 1893 to 1906. It was challenged for hegemony by Ascot for two years before Victoria Park surpassed both of them. In the 1930s the rejuvenated Rosebery complex perhaps offered racegoers the best package. By the end of the Depression

\textsuperscript{141} Referee 9/9/1908 p. 4
\textsuperscript{142} In 1914 the Pony Jockeys’ Association sought a maximum of twenty starters in races but Joynton Smith convinced a deputation that the broader Victoria Park could cope with 25; Referee 12/8/1914 p. 1, 19/8/1914 p. 1
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the Ascot racing circuit that had been lauded as ‘first class’ by one journalist in 1906 was described as a ‘goat track’—the most damning label in the racing argot that can be attached to a racecourse. This critic also called the once vaunted Kensington a ‘poor track’. At the same time he pointed out that ‘Victoria Park and Rosebery are regarded, and rightly so, as tracks next best [in Sydney] to Randwick and Rosehill…Rosebery is a course that offers facilities during wet weather that are not enjoyed even by Randwick.143

The standard of public facilities were naturally important in determining the relative popularities of the courses. Ascot was exceedingly well attended during World War I, and the popularity of Rosebery increased after its 1928 rebirthing. Comfort was not however the sole determinant of popularity. Some courses were thought more difficult to win money at than others. The Referee described Ascot as a ‘punter’s paradise’ and the ‘bete noir of layers,’ but portrayed Victoria Park as a punting hell.144 These judgments were unsupported by statistics, but ‘Rover’ observed:

To pony patrons Victoria Park is what Randwick is to followers of the registered division—the most difficult course at which to pick winners. Responsible factors are two. Fields there are generally of greater magnitude than at the ARC venues, and the straight, being so much longer, invariably has an upsetting influence on the form displayed where the majority of races [at other courses] are won ere the turn for home is negotiated.145

However, proximity to the city and major residential areas, and the length of the trip by tram, seem to have been the most important factors in deciding popularity.146

The degradation of the Ascot and Kensington courses that had occurred by 1938 should be considered in the light of the effects of the Depression and uncertainty over Ascot’s future and, in Kensington’s case, educated suspicions that its lease was not to be renewed. While it is evident that deterioration had taken place, there

143 Referee 4/4/1906 p. 5; Sunday Truth 16/10/1938 p. 20
144 Referee 10/4/1918 p. 4; 8/5/1918 p. 5; the Sportsman also noted Ascot was regarded as a ‘punter’s paradise’, Sydney Sportsman 8/9/1920 p. 6
145 Referee 22/6/1921 p. 6; However on Wednesday 7 February 1934 the record dividend occurred at Rosebery when Spear Bell paid the equivalent of 403/1 on the totalisator, though most bookmakers had bet just 25/1. As was customary during the depression when extraordinary dividends were declared, a large crowd gathered at the pay window to witness the collect, but the successful punter proved coy. Sydney Morning Herald 8/2/1934 p. 9
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was not unanimous agreement with McKell’s low opinion of the South Sydney proprietary racecourses, even as they stood at end of the Depression. The 1938 Annual General Meeting of the Victoria Park club heard ‘The property…is in good order, though of course if times were better there is certain work which could be done.’ Frank Williams, who became foreman of the prominent Neville Begg stable at Randwick in the 1960s, served his jockey’s apprenticeship at Victoria Park with Stan Lamond in the 1940s. It was his opinion that the infrastructure remained in excellent repair at that time and that Victoria Park was a first-rate racecourse that should have been retained for racing.147

Conclusions

While it is true that the earliest racecourses reserved for pony racing were small, tight tracks that could provide for tiny beasts and fields only, and that the standard of infrastructure and facilities varied considerably, the analysis provided in this chapter demonstrates that the racecourses of the ARC were by no estimation ramshackle, shoddily constructed rinks, whose amenities were something to be endured by the public and licensed persons, as aspects of the orthodoxy imply. It is important that the generous capital, planning, care and expertise devoted to their establishment and maintenance be documented and recognised. The racing surfaces were safe, well-turfed, comparatively spacious, and they coped exceptionally well with wet weather, remaining free of track bias despite constant use. The public amenities on ARC courses were at least the equal of those of the registered suburban racecourses of Sydney and Melbourne, and indeed Victoria Park and, later, Rosebery, were inferior only to the racecourses of the principal clubs. Though designed to provide maximum utility, considerable effort was made to render the courses aesthetically pleasing through the provision of lawns and flowerbeds, and the infusion of a considerable degree of architectural distinctiveness, especially at the later venues.

Superior facilities were one of several advantages enjoyed by the ARC viz-a-viz Melbourne pony racing. The courses lay in more pleasant localities. Sydney could

146 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 790
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program races for all heights of ponies and horses, had some Saturday dates, and competed with registered proprietary clubs that were not as strong as those of Melbourne. However, the infrastructure provided for Sydney and Melbourne pony racing has been ‘morphed’ into one entity in the racing memory, to the cost of the reputation of the Sydney chapter.

The betting rings on pony racecourses were more powerful vortexes even than those on registered racecourses. The bookmakers whose stands defined the paths and boundaries of the ring at unregistered meetings were a homogeneous group drawn from the same socio-economic sources that supplied registered racing, and the rings, particularly in the leger, were larger and stronger than for all but the major registered race days. While a percentage of bets on unregistered races were laid in coins of small currency, this was far from universal (as the orthodoxy implies), and astonishingly large wagers were made even on the tight markets and small, poor quality fields of early pony racing.

The ARC indeed was a progressive organisation that was quick to embrace change and was in the van of the provision of electronic and tele-communications. Its members accepted large overdrafts to provide both the first temporary and permanent on-course totalisators at Sydney racecourses. An absurdly high basic unit imposed by the government and some suspicion and reactionary response from a percentage of the somewhat hidebound racecourse regulars, inhibited that device’s immediate widespread acceptance, but the totalisator established a lasting presence.

Racegoers without race stable connections in the early pony era had little access to vital information to assist their judgement. Subterfuges such as the use of assumed names, late announcement of riders, together with the lack of a daily racing form and the uninformative content of race books, denied the public the knowledge held by racing insiders. The public commonly remained unaware of crucial developments during a race and could only take them into account when assessing future form if they were reported in the columns of the press. It should

147 Minutes of the Victoria Park Recreation Grounds Ltd Committee, AJC library, unpaginated; Frank Williams, interview with Wayne Peake, 29 May 2000
be noted however that people suffered deprivations of this type at pony meetings no worse than those encountered at registered racecourses. By the end of the pony era, ARC racecourse communications had become sophisticated and user-friendly, although race books remained primitive and of little value for form study.

Race clubs were hardly cognizant of the vast potential for profitability that lay in racecourse catering before World War II and they continued to concentrate on their traditional sources of revenue, in particular, gate money. However while pony racing remained predicated on betting and events on the track, rather than festive celebration, and catering in the main was elementary, it did realise from about 1910 that there could be more to racing than racing, and took steps to provide a higher degree of hospitality, including the upgraded catering, lavatory and entertainment facilities that would make pony racecourses more appropriate places for respectable women.

In summary, the documentary evidence and opinions of knowledgeable racing men presented here contest out-of-context generalisations promulgated by the McKell perspective on the facilities and services provided by unregistered racing. These sentiments, which ignore major changes over time and variations between locations, and dwell on the unrepresentative Depression era, when the ARC were at a low ebb and unable to maintain their previous extremely high standards of administration, have coloured the orthodoxy. Later-day historians, journalists and other interested persons have tended to accept too uncritically the generalisations of vested parties.

The validity of similar pronouncements on the conduct of unregistered pony racing are considered in the next chapter.
Chapter four

Programming and conducting unregistered proprietary horse racing

This chapter tests the view that racing on pony racecourses was slackly conducted, and that the standards of control and supervision were significantly inferior to those in registered racing, and some other aspects of the orthodoxy of unregistered racing—in particular, that it provided very poor prize money, was contested exclusively by midget beasts of poor quality and that it was fundamentally a weekday sport. The analysis focuses on the period of ARC administration (1907-1942). It demonstrates the way in which Sydney pony meetings were devised and run. An account is given of those routine preparations for race meetings including the establishment of a racing calendar, decisions about class and race distances, prize money, nominations and acceptances, handicapping, division of races and the number of races on a program. It also considers the race-day activities of the officials responsible for providing owners, human participants and the public equitable racing.

As part of the analysis of the grading and handicapping system, the chapter examines the equine participants of unregistered racing. An understanding of their physiology and genealogy is a pre-requisite to discussion of several central sociological and historical aspects of unregistered pony racing, including the course of its evolution, its unusual programming, and the hostile attitude of the AJC. The chapter also considers the durability and post racing life of unregistered racers.

Racing days and cards

In modern Australian racing the statutory racing boards, after consultation with the clubs they oversee, submit annually a draft calendar to their respective state governments for approval. In New South Wales for most of the twentieth century the Chief Secretary’s Department received the calendar for registered racing from
the AJC, until racing became the responsibility of a department devoted to sport and racing, and the Thoroughbred Racing Board (TRB) was created in 1996.¹

When the *Gaming and Betting Act 1906* licensed the metropolitan pony clubs it also obliged them to henceforth submit a calendar to the Chief Secretary for approval. Previously, unlicensed racecourses had been able to operate six days a week if they chose and, despite the existence of pony club associations, there was little coordination of racing dates.

The speed at which the unregistered racing market became cluttered at the end of the nineteenth century was remarkable. In 1888 the SDPC staged the only regular pony meetings in Sydney, on one Saturday each month. Other meetings held in Sydney were the two four-day AJC carnivals and the Boxing Day meeting, the STC Anniversary Day (26 January) and two Tattersalls meetings at Randwick, and the monthly Canterbury and Rosehill meetings, also run mostly on Saturdays.² In 1889 the registered proprietary clubs began to run pony meetings on Wednesdays and occasionally Saturdays, and after its AJC deregistration the SDPC also moved into midweek racing.³ Wednesday was judged the best midweek day for racing, particularly after 1899, when legislation was introduced to compel shops to close at 1 pm one day each week (on Wednesday, in most cases).⁴ The other days were ranked according to the time that had elapsed from the previous Saturday payday.

In the 1890s the existing provisions for unregistered racing underwent regular challenge as new clubs formed and scrambled to claim the most propitious day of the week that was usually, but not always, vacant. In 1895 racing writers criticised this surfeit of racing: ‘if our racing promoters are not a little more considerate in what I might term the public purse I am very much afraid they will overdo the business and there will be a general falling off in attendances,’ decided one.⁵ By 1900 Sydney, with a population approaching half a million, staged as many horse races annually on the ‘flat’ as all of Great Britain, with a population of 40

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2 *Referee* 19/1/1888 p. 2. There were thus 45 metropolitan race dates for the year
3 Refer chapter seven
Programming, Conducting

million. Daily pony racing was mainly responsible for this remarkable statistic. Table 4.1 identifies typical distributions of pony meetings in the years 1894 to 1907.

Table 4.1: most common unregistered meeting distributions 1894-1907

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Liverpool Botany</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Lillie Bridge Rosebery</td>
<td>Associated Clubs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Brighton Rosebery</td>
<td>Associated Clubs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Brighton Rosebery</td>
<td>Associated Clubs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Brighton Rosebery</td>
<td>Associated Clubs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Brighton/Forrest Lodge Rosebery</td>
<td>Kensington</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Forest Lodge Rosebery</td>
<td>Kensington</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Kensington-Ascot (shared) Epping</td>
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<td>1907</td>
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<td>ARC</td>
<td>ARC (Saturdays)</td>
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A that is, the registered proprietary clubs Warwick Farm, Canterbury and Moorefield
B Racing at night, Lillie Bridge in some weeks staged up to four meetings a week
C In 1899 Rosebery alternated between Tuesdays and Fridays
D In September began racing on Saturdays for which no registered racing programmed
E moved to Mondays in the latter part of year
F following the introduction of the Gaming and Betting Act 1906; 48 Wednesdays, 24 Saturdays until 1932

Source: constructed by the author from newspaper sources

In 1903, in acknowledgement of the superabundance of racing and the commercial dangers of oversupply, Kensington persuaded its junior associates Rosebery and Brighton to commit to Mondays and Fridays respectively, having itself claimed Wednesdays. It advocated the observance of Tuesdays and Thursdays as lay-days, to provide the public a respite from racing. But despite these attempts by Kensington at regulation, the number of pony race days continued to grow and in 1906 there were 77 meetings at Epping, 69 at Kensington, 59 at Rosebery and 27 at the new Ascot course, for 232 meetings in all.  

6 NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1201
7 O’Hara Mug’s Game p. 165
All clubs coveted Saturday dates for by 1900 it had been well established as the principal day of sport, and of racing in particular. As early as 1860, the last day of Randwick carnivals, run on Saturday, invariably attracted much larger attendances than the preceding midweek programs.\(^8\) From 1890 the registered proprietary clubs staged pony meetings on those Saturday dates left vacant by registered racing, but they avoided deliberate clashes. When the Kensington club staged its first weekend program on 27 April 1895 it drew its largest attendance to that date.\(^9\) However in general, after 1898, by when registered meetings were scheduled every Saturday, pony racing limited itself to mid-week programming, but hastily arranged programs for Saturdays if the registered meeting was cancelled. Its promoters had coincidentally learnt that meetings held on Melbourne Cup day were unprofitable because their regular clients preferred to mill around newspaper offices in the city, waiting for the result of the Cup to be announced, than attend a minor local meeting.\(^10\) Public holidays were the exclusive domain of the AJC clubs, except for the Prince of Wales birthday meeting in June.

In the wake of changes brought by the 1906 legislation the ARC became major providers of Saturday racing. Their 24 prescribed dates clashed with Warwick Farm, Rosehill and Hawkesbury meetings, which, mainly because of the travelling time required, were judged the weakest opposition. However from 1908 the ARC magnanimously discontinued clashes with the historic Hawkesbury club, which was struggling to continue racing. Except for a short period during World War I, when they were compelled to race on the same Saturdays as Randwick, the ARC continued to avoid clashes with non-proprietary clubs until 1925, when the AJC suggested they race in opposition to its recently acquired racecourse, Warwick Farm.\(^11\)

In August 1932 amendments to the gaming legislation compelled the ARC to reduce its annual calendar from seventy-two race days to fifty-four. The reduction

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\(^8\) Helgeby op. cit. p. 23
\(^9\) Referee 1/5/1895 p. 5
\(^10\) The AJC did not obtain a meeting at Randwick to coincide with, and capitalize on, the Tuesday Melbourne Cup meeting at Flemington until 1968
\(^11\) NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 790
was achieved through the discontinuation of clash Saturdays, for which the pony clubs received six clash-free Saturdays. Nevertheless the changes created a crisis of confidence at the ARC and almost precipitated the resignation of ARC secretary Underhill. In 1937, as a corollary of the Government’s enquiry into proprietary racing, the ARC’s dates were further reduced to 48 meetings, with each club racing on 11 Wednesdays and one Saturday per year. The major beneficiary of the changed circumstances was the AJC’s Warwick Farm, which was given five additional meetings.

Although Greg Brown has suggested that the pony clubs were in the habit of postponing their Saturday meetings whenever they could, in order to race the following Monday unopposed by other galloping meetings, it is significant that the ARC usually chose to run their four annual cup meetings on Saturdays. On this evidence Saturdays were better propositions than Wednesdays for the pony clubs. After AJC amalgamation and the end of clash meetings, Saturday meetings were clearly more profitable for the ARC than weekday meetings.

**Handicapping**

In the second half of the nineteenth century handicapping liberated horse racing from the shackles of small fields and limited betting options. In Australia the remarkably rapid rise in popularity of the Melbourne Cup, which quickly surpassed older set-weights races such as the derbies and st legers, ‘was not so much an expression of any democratic sentiment which attracted mass support, but an appreciation of the opportunity for spirited betting on a feature event.’

With the same intention of encouraging spirited betting, unregistered racing consisted almost exclusively of handicaps. Weights allotments spanned massive imposts exceeding 12 stone, down to what amounted to catch weights for poorly

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12 *Sydney Morning Herald* 18/9/1932 p. 9
13 Refer chapter seven
14 Brown *op. cit.* p. 65
15 O’Hara *Mug’s Game* p. 71
16 There were some exceptions. Weight-for-age maiden races were run at Rosebery before 1900. Kensington programmed a set weights race for 2-year-olds on 20/9/1905. *Referee* 9/8/1905 p. 5
17 ‘Catch weights’ indicates horses in a contest carried their jockeys without added (lead) weights. These conditions apply in barrier trials
performed entrants.\textsuperscript{18} Such a range of weights is usually indicative of gross variations in the ability of the nominations, but in the case of pony racing it was as much due to the emphatic reaction of the handicapper to recent form. Horses were promoted and demoted in the weights from week to week much faster than in registered racing. The placed horses suffered substantive automatic penalties at their next nomination, if it was for the same class of race; 7 lb for a win, or 3 lb for a placing. A 2 lb allowance was made for unplaced horses.\textsuperscript{19} Largely as a consequence of this constant tinkering with handicaps, while some unregistered competitors managed a total of thirty or forty wins during very long careers, long winning sequences, and indeed consistent form, were comparatively rare. The fairly meagre percentage of prize money awarded minor place-getters hardly compensated a 3 lb weight rise in consequence, and riders were routinely instructed to avoid running second or third once it became clear they could not win. They often rode to the line strenuously whipping their boots, while an inexperienced apprentice, who returned to scale anticipating praise for urging his mount into a placing, was subjected to stony silence, or even ‘the curses of his master’\textsuperscript{20}. Automatic handicapping often caused anomalies that educated form judges easily recognised, and they were as often the basis for betting plunges as was the ending of a policy of restraint by a horse’s connections.\textsuperscript{21} At the same time the apparent defiance of logical conclusions that seemed evident in the decisions of the long-serving ARC handicapper, Tom Peters, frustrated trainers and caused the \textit{Sportsman} to campaign for changes in the system.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{Measuring}

While in both registered and unregistered racing competitors were categorised by age, sex and ability, in the latter, uniquely, they were also handicapped on the

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\textsuperscript{18} The spread of weights in thoroughbred racing at the time that pony racing was conducted was also much greater than it is in the present day, where the major handicaps are treated as \textit{de facto} quality handicaps. In 2004 better-class horses are weighted much more leniently than sixty, or even twenty years ago, to encourage their owners and trainers to start them

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Sydney Mail} 5/7/1933 p. 32

\textsuperscript{20} Paterson ‘A Day’s Racing’ \textit{Off Down the Track}, p. 41

\textsuperscript{21} A similar reactionary handicapping regime—and similar responses from connections—applied at meetings of the Australian Trotting Club at Victoria Park, where an automatic 12-yard handicap was imposed on winners at their next three starts in the same class. If the horse finished unplaced in these three starts the handicap was removed. Brown \textit{op. cit.} p. 133
basis of height. Ponies were measured by means of a device known as ‘the stick’, which was somewhat more sophisticated than the name suggests, as it consisted of a calibrated timber upright and an adjustable perpendicular brass bar that was brought to rest on the withers. There were more then ten classes of restricted heights races between 11 and 14.5 hands.

In the 1890s measuring sessions held on Monday and Friday mornings at various Moore Park hotels were popular occasions on which trainers gathered to discuss business and exchange gossip. The official measurer, a man in whom rested considerable authority, conducted his court at these sessions and considered the half-serious bribes offered by connections to provide favourable certification, which would allow a pony to race for 12 months in a class for which it had at best a borderline case. Obtaining such a certificate was a major coup, especially if it were the final one issued, at age five.23

Measuring fraud, either real or imagined, is the basis of much of the innuendo of endemic corruption levelled at pony racing, and it has been mythologised in anecdotes such as the following recorded by Bert Lillye:

In those days the measuring was done at the old AJC Hotel opposite Randwick Racecourse or at Pick’s Hotel which is now the Bat and Ball.... the official measurer would be available once a week at the AJC Hotel, and in between duties he would bide his time at the bar.... the ‘smarties’ would engage the measurer in conversation while one of their confreres would stick a couple of those gelatine lollies at the base of the measuring stick. When the pony was measured it would scrape under the bar that was made just a little taller by the gumdrops.24

In another story conspirators got the stick away from the hotel overnight:

the smarties carefully took off the strip of brass that encased the measurer. Then they increased the length of the stick by an inch, after which they rebound the brass strip, then put the measurer back in the room.25

Other artifices said to have been used to obtain a favourable measurement included filing back hooves, teaching ponies to cringe at the touch of a bar, and placing sandbags on their withers overnight.26

22 Refer for example Sydney Sportsman 4/8/1920 p. 1
23 Andersen Winners Can Laugh p. 134
24 Lillye Backstage p. 85
25 Ibid.
26 Britt, Interview with Peake, March 2000
While some suspected cases of stick tampering were reported, their extent and that of other measuring fraud has almost certainly been exaggerated. It seems true that in the nineteenth century some competitors possessed certificates that defied belief—Nat Gould wrote he had seen ‘good big horses running as 14.2.’ One explanation for this was that the racecourse owners, who were interested in having as many starters as possible at their courses, had encouraged liberality; another was that full-sized thoroughbreds were measured as two-year-olds and were eligible to race in 14.0, 14.1 and 14.2 races for a year, even after they had long outgrown those categories. It must be thought unlikely however that Tom Watson, the measurer from the 1890s, who Naylor described as ‘scrupulously honest’, and who had years of experience of the peccadilloes of trainers, was gullied by the simple deceptions described in the Lillye stories. Nevertheless club committees decided conducting measuring sessions in hotel courtyards was perhaps to invite the planning of plots. In 1899 Kensington dropped Friday morning hotel measuring. After 1907 Watson performed the office for the ARC at Pick’s Hotel on Tuesday mornings, and later on Thursday mornings at Rosebery racecourse, a location that offered fewer distractions than hotels.

**Programming**

By 1918 race meetings on ARC courses resembled late twentieth-century racing much more closely than did the AJC racing of that era. Most ARC races were sprints, there were shorter intervals between races, and many more races. Although the ARC framed seven-race meetings they usually grew, as a result of divisions, to a program of more than double that number. It was soon clear that while the 1906 gaming legislation had reduced the number of meetings, it would not retard the total of races run, for the drafters of the legislation had not been prescient enough to limit the duration of race meetings, and longer programs

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27 In July 1931 the ARC ordered remeasuring for all certificates issued in the previous month when signs the stick had been tampered with were detected. *Sydney Morning Herald* 21/7/1931 p. 7
28 Gould *op. cit.* p. 108
29 *Ibid.*; *Sydney Sportsman* 14/1/1920 p. 1
30 *NSW Parliamentary Papers* 1924 vol. 4 p. 806
more than offset the dates lost. In 1905 there had been three pony meetings, and between 15 and 20 races, each week. The total number of races at the average 1.25 meetings held from 1907 usually well exceeded that figure.\textsuperscript{32}

Despite the numerous races, ARC meetings usually did not commence until midday, and Rufe Naylor praised the ARC for its ability to keep meetings of 17 races,\textsuperscript{33} with a race every 25 minutes, on schedule. In order to achieve this they had introduced a rule that the horses must be in the saddling paddock at least seven minutes before the start of a race. ARC officials harried licensed persons from the boxes to the birdcage and onto the track.\textsuperscript{34} The pace was much more frenetic than at genteel registered meetings that rarely included more than six races, stretched across the afternoon. Not surprisingly, gentlemen accustomed to the leisurely tempo at Randwick were bemused, when they attended ARC meetings, by the constant ebb and flow of horses in the saddling enclosure. ‘With such a number of events, the sport is robbed entirely of its chief attraction—that is the opportunity to stroll around and inspect the candidates while being dressed,’ observed ‘Musket’.\textsuperscript{35} Few racecourse gamblers would have shared his gentrified sentiments.

Large fields were an outstanding feature of pony racing between the world wars. The increased number of starters after 1907 was a result of a still-growing equine population, and the restrictions on the number of pony meetings. A comparison of the number of unregistered starters for the years 1908 (7,223) and 1923 (11,489) illustrates this growth. The average number of starters per meeting was about 100 in 1908 but 160 by 1923. Further extrapolation demonstrates that average race fields grew from the range 10–12 in 1908 to 12-14 by 1923.\textsuperscript{36} Moreover the

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{31} An important exception to this generalisation were two-year-old races, which while not unknown on the pony courses, were not run every day and bore none of the importance given the age group in modern racing
\item\textsuperscript{32} Figures for 1906 are not used because the inflationary effect of the pony wars made them atypical
\item\textsuperscript{33} The first instance of a 17 race meeting occurred at Ascot on 30 June 1920
\item\textsuperscript{34} NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 805. Naylor was quite effusive in his praise of the ARC before the Select Committee. This did not save him from being warned off Victoria Park in 1931: Minutes of the Victoria Park Racing and Recreation Grounds Co Ltd Committee; re birdcage rule see Referee 4/3/1908 p. 5
\item\textsuperscript{35} Referee 22/9/1920 p. 6
\item\textsuperscript{36} NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 pp. 791-92
\end{itemize}
standard deviation of field sizes in unregistered racing was much smaller than in AJC racing, which featured very large fields for major handicaps but very small ones for WFA events and jumping races.

Consistently large fields at a venue are usually indicative of a successful racing administration. They are of greater interest to most punters, not least because they provide a greater intellectual challenge, and often, larger dividends. Races that are run at high speed as a result of horses drawn wide attempting to cross forward to avoid being caught out, and thus covering extra distance, have less crowding and consequently less interference. It is less vital to be racing in or near the lead under a fast tempo and there are many more positions in the field from whence a race can be won. This was important in pony racing as it offset the natural advantage enjoyed by leaders on some of the tighter racecourses. All of these circumstances culminated in a higher percentage of competitive and compelling contests than were seen on registered racecourses. The AJC allowed no races less than six furlongs, and many races at Randwick were very long and comprised of small fields. They were usually run at a very slow pace and were often ‘won a long way from home,’ with the winner not infrequently cantering to the finish. The champion horse Carbine, for example, won a Randwick Cumberland Plate of two miles in almost five minutes—a time about 90 seconds slower than his 1890 Melbourne Cup victory. Clive Inglis recalled long weight-for-age contests with two or three starters in which the competitors left the barrier at walking pace, so reluctant were the jockeys to lead, which was perceived as a decided disadvantage. The odds laid on such races were often very short and discouraged betting.

A causal relationship is sometimes suggested between large fields and race accidents. Cases such as the calamitous 1885 Caulfield Cup, in which 16 of the 41 starters fell, are cited in support of this view. But a significant number of fatal injuries have been incurred in small fields, and indeed, while a lone horse was

37 Gould op. cit. pp. 108-109
38 Clive Inglis, More Horsesense, Sydney, C. Inglis, 1959, p. 163
39 Cashman (ed.) Australian Sport Through Time p. 83
being worked on the track.\textsuperscript{40} It is likely that the more influential factors are the dimensions, contour and surface quality of the track. Stewards at the first Rosebery racecourse limited fields to eight starters but, as chapter six will illustrate, it was a notorious killing field.

**Prize money**

Most trainers who gave evidence to the 1923 Pony Racing Select Committee complained of what they judged inadequate prize money available in unregistered racing. Yet prize money at the pony courses by the 1920s matched or exceeded that provided by the registered proprietary courses.\textsuperscript{41} It would continue its growth from the trifling amounts given at early unregistered meetings to the £1,000 cup races of the late 1920s.

If early pony racing prize money was modest, its overheads were also small (especially for owner-trainers who stabled their horses in their backyards) and most races required no nomination fee. In 1891 the prize money for standard events at Botany and Lillie Bridge was £10, at the SDPC £25 to £30, and at Rosehill and Canterbury pony meetings £30. By comparison the minimum prize money for an AJC-registered horse meeting at the suburban courses was £60. The economic slump of 1892 ensured that most purses did not exceed these levels for the rest of the decade.\textsuperscript{42} However, fierce competition between the pony clubs forced prize money increases in the new century, and an unofficial minimum

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\textsuperscript{41} ‘With the exception of Randwick, there are occasionally richer handicaps to be won at the tracks named [the ARC racecourses] than at any of the registered courses in Sydney’; *Referee* 16/1/1918 p. 1 Kingsley himself had acknowledged in an open letter that the prize money in unregistered racing exceeded that provided by the registered proprietary clubs; *Sydney Sportsman* 12/11/1919 p. 7. Rosehill liked to identify itself as the ‘Caulfield of Sydney’ yet its prize money was miniscule compared to that of the VATC, which conducted Caulfield, despite the fact that it enjoyed most of the Saturday preliminaries to the AJC autumn and spring carnivals.

\textsuperscript{42} The Melbourne Cup illustrates the dramatic fluctuations in prize money that could coincide with boom and bust economies. Tarcoola’s cup of 1893 had prize money of £13,124 but in the following year it plummeted to £5,000, then to £3,524 in 1898, before it began a slow recovery in 1899. The prize money given for Tarcoola’s Cup was not matched until 1925, after which it crashed once more, with the onset of the Great Depression to £7,200 in 1931, and to a low of £5,200 for Hall Mark’s 1933 Cup. It recovered to £10,200 in 1939, but World War II caused a sequence of ‘austerity’ cups. The prize money of the 1893 Cup was not exceeded permanently until after 1947. Ahern *op. cit.* p. 520
disbursement of £100 per meeting became standard. The previously unstable Brighton club stayed in the market with difficulty but under Joynton Smith lifted prize money per race from £10 to £15 or £20 to meet the threshold. In 1903 Kensington, applying the leverage belonging the ‘principal club’ of the pony association, imposed on Rosebery and Brighton a minimum purse of £20 for each race.

A further economic slump compelled the Associated Clubs to reduce prize money in November 1905, but after the formation of the ARC in 1907 it began to steeple. From £13,475 annual prize money increased more than threefold by 1914 to £46,000, which represented an average of about £640 per meeting.\textsuperscript{43} This clearly exceeded the growth in AJC prize money in the same period.\textsuperscript{44} The more ambitious intentions of Victoria Park’s proprietors were a factor in this inflation but even allowing for that, this was a period of remarkable growth. In the same period crowds grew steadily despite the cost of admission almost doubling.

Prize money continued to grow quickly during and immediately after World War I, as table 4.2 on page 161 illustrates. To boost purses further the ARC made sweepstakes, raised by levying nomination and acceptance fees, standard for all races from about 1918. Trainers viewed this initiative cynically, as they believed that the race clubs were faring well enough to be able to find still more additional prize money themselves.

In 1919 the ARC stipulated a minimum daily disbursal of £900 prize money, or well over a £100 a race before divisions, although in practice they had achieved these marks some years earlier. In the 1919-20 racing season the ARC (including Victoria Park) distributed £82,529 prize money of which it contributed £75,755.\textsuperscript{45} In the 1920-21 season the Victoria Park Racing Club provided £25,571 prize money, a figure exceeded by the AJC alone.\textsuperscript{46} The continuing growth of prize money is demonstrated in the figures for 1924, during which ARC clubs contributed £97,250 added prize money. The total grew to £111,000 with the

\textsuperscript{43} Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 50
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. p. 50
\textsuperscript{45} Sydney Sportsman 4/8/1920 p. 1
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid. p. 187
addition of sweepstakes. This expansion caused the Herald to identify 1926 as ‘the most prosperous in the history of the ARC, as well as most other clubs.’

The recently repatriated Rufe Naylor expressed surprise at the extent to which purses for pony racing had grown.

In 1924 the AJC secretary C.W. Cropper estimated that average prize money for Rosehill meetings was £1,200, and for the other registered proprietary clubs somewhat less. The pony clubs usually matched or exceeded this daily prize money. However, as they ran more races and divisions, the slices of the cake were sometimes smaller. When a programmed contest—say a 14.2 handicap worth £120—was run in divisions the prize money was divided as well. If the race were run in two divisions, the purse for each was £60. In later years an additional 50 per cent was added so that in this example each division would be run for £90.

Trainers and owners argued that each division should retain the original prize money of £120, regardless of how many divisions were run. They felt justified to make such ambit demands because they believed—incorrectly—that the clubs were siphoning off profit in enormous dividends to shareholders, and to fund cups races.

The expectations of the pony trainers were unsustainable. No racing club could afford to budget so elastically. If the ARC had addressed the problem of demand outstripping supply, it would likely have conducted ballots of nominations rather than have no ceiling on daily prize money. This would have been a serious matter for the connections of the most poorly performed horses, which would have been regularly excluded, as they were barred from racing almost everywhere else. Pony racing supported a greater number of ‘inefficient’ (or small-string) trainers than registered racing, a subsidy that had to be born in part by the larger stables.

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47 Sydney Morning Herald 13/1/1933 p. 9
48 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 805
49 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 799
50 T.D. Kingsley told the 1923 Select Committee that a standard meeting disbursed about £1,200 prize money (another witness suggested £1,365 per day or more than £98,000 annually), but that during 1923 daily prize money was pared to £1,000 and that £200 was siphoned to a fund to pay for the four annual cup days. NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923, vol. 3 part 2 p. 1291, 1294; 1332; NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p 804
The Sydney pony clubs conducted few feature races before 1910. Their estimation of the promotional value of bonanza-type purses differed from that of John Wren in Melbourne, who had introduced two £1,000 races and several other features of £500 and £250 in 1907. He then startled the racing community by promoting a £3,000 race at Ascot, in the erroneous belief that his race would attract a top-class ‘open’ field. While it were true his racecourses were licensed under the new Victorian gaming act, but he was incorrect in assuming the VRC would not be able to bar horses that had competed at unregistered meetings. In June 1910 Wren staged the Albion Park (Brisbane) 2000 for the extraordinary purse of £2,000 to mark his entry in unregistered racing in Brisbane.\textsuperscript{51} However, the ARC provided prize money for regular races that was much superior, a policy that provided a more even distribution of income to its pony community.\textsuperscript{52}

The attitude of the Sydney pony clubs on prize money allocation changed over the next decade. In 1912 the larger purses offered, for races such as the Kensington and Victoria Park Cups, were of £500, and were programmed for galloways, or were open to all heights, and additionally Kensington programmed a spring cup in November worth £350; the prize money for this race reached £750 by 1914. This prize money was as good as any in Sydney, other than Randwick; for example, Rosehill’s principal WFA race, the Rawson Stakes, was worth just £300 in 1912. By 1918, while drawing massive attendances, all ARC courses gave at least one £1,000 cup race a year, a prize double that for Moorefield’s principal race, the Peter Moore Cup. Victoria Park staged two £1,000 races at the Boxing Day and New Year’s Day meetings, 1917-1918.\textsuperscript{53} Throughout the next decade the ARC maintained an exorbitant level of prize money for their cup races, reaching a peak of £1,200 for the Rosebery Summer Cup of 1925. By comparison in the 1929-30 racing season the Melbourne Cup carried prize money of £12,422, the AJC Derby £9,535, the Rosehill Guineas £1,228, the Canterbury Cup £1,172, the W.S. Cox Plate £1,100, the Peter Moore Cup had increased to about £1,000 and the Rosehill

\textsuperscript{51} Wren adopted the policy of staging a race offering staggering prize money whenever he entered a new market
\textsuperscript{52} Buggy \textit{op. cit.} pp. 146, 159
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Referee} 17/10/1917 p. 6; Freedman & Lemon \textit{op. cit.} p. 411
Cup was worth £565. The Grafton Cup, New South Wales’ richest country event, was also valued at £1,000.

While the prize money on offer was generous, the conditions of the ARC cups would puzzle modern racing administrators, as the clubs failed to extract much marketing advantage from their large investments. The race conditions were of handicaps open to all comers, from the best all-heights horses to maiden ponies. The clubs accepted all nominations and programmed as many divisions as were necessary. For the Rosebery Cup of 1928 more than fifty horses and ponies accepted and the club programmed five heats, with 10 or 11 starters in each. The cup divisions were the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th races on an eleven-event program. The run-off, contested by the divisional winners, came five minutes after the last race. Bookmakers started betting on the run-off as soon as the field was finalised.

The ARC, when it divided races, did not jib at dividing races, as the practice filled out a program without causing a commensurate increase in added prize money. When a race was divided contestants other than those in the first division carried 7 lb in addition to their original handicaps. When three or more divisions were run, the winners competed in a ‘run off’ at the discretion of the stewards, an option they invariably exercised. Run-offs were generally not popular with independent owners, as their horses might win a division, but lose the run off, and they would

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54 ‘The Australasian’ Turf Register 1930, published by the proprietors of the Australasian, passim
56 Subsequent scratchings did not cause redraws, so that one division might eventually have ten runners, but another five only
57 NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1264
58 This is the same logic that causes race clubs to raise weights for handicap races in which the original top weights are scratched after acceptances
(Illustration 4.1) Merle dead heats with All Gab at Rosebery…

(Illustration 4.2) …but easily wins the run-off conducted after the last scheduled race. This race was run on the Rosebery track as it was before the 1928-29 renovations. Merle’s jockey Alby Callinan displays his ‘trademark’—silks rolled to the elbow. In the background are houses of the unregistered racing stables precinct that lay between Rosebery and Ascot racecourses. (source: Hadley album, AJC Library and Archive)
receive as little as £5 prize money. Conversely some trainers took advantage of the fact that in the case of maiden races, only the winner of the run-off was deemed to have broken its maiden status. As a result some horse horses that ran in maidens had in fact won a number of races.\textsuperscript{59} Run-offs also decided races declared dead heats. The ARC, perhaps wisely, abandoned run offs in 1929.

The ARC used a method called ‘tops and bottoms’ to divide races, whereby nominations in weight order were divided horizontally into divisions. After the 1933 amalgamation the AJC allowed the ARC and Victoria Park handicappers to continue the tops and bottoms system of divisions. Its obvious facility in producing more even fields appealed to the AJC’s own proprietary clubs, who could hardly be denied the same privilege. However some critics thought the tops and bottoms system ‘an open invitation to owners to restrain their horses until they are drawn a satisfactory division.’\textsuperscript{60} The AJC never reconciled itself to the method and in 1938 insisted that the odds and evens method be adopted by all registered clubs.\textsuperscript{61}

The Kensington Cup of October 1914 provides a case study of how the ‘tops and bottoms’ system worked. There were 109 acceptors, who competed in five divisions, the winner of the last division carrying number 91 saddlecloth. The system caused the perverse and invariable corollary that the first division contained the best-performed field of the day, rather than the run-off. It also encouraged dishonest connections to run their charges dead for months before the Cup to increase the chance of it starting in an easier heat.\textsuperscript{62}

The 1928 Rosebery Cup demonstrates the unsatisfactory outcomes this method for dividing races could encourage. Two superiorly credentialsd all-heights horses, Seaplane and Selwyn, clashed in the first division; thus only one could qualify for the run-off. The prolific pony winner Prince Bruce, which had won a 14.2 handicap as odds-on favourite with 9 st 12 lb on the preceding Wednesday, won the second division at 6 to 1 carrying 8 stone. The Furrier had lost his maiden

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Lillye \textit{Backstage} p. 85}
\footnote{Sydney Morning Herald 10/7/1936 p. 15}
\footnote{Painter & Waterhouse \textit{op. cit.} p. 71}
\footnote{Sydney Morning Herald 13/1/1933 p. 9}
\end{footnotes}
status just a few months earlier and was weighted to carry 7 st 5 lb. Fortunately for his connections he was the first horse weighted in the fourth division—rather than the last horse into the third division—which made his task much easier. He won his division very narrowly, but ridden quietly. The unimpressive heat-win of The Furrier, coupled with his ordinary earlier form, prompted bookmakers to bet outsider’s odds of 12-1 in the five-horse run-off. He won it comfortably.

Other ARC Cup results of 1928 left most punters equally bemused. Poorly performed horses made the run-offs and moreover won them. The unheralded Swiftspear, ridden by George Meddick, won the Ascot Cup in March, beating Selwyn. One month earlier the Kensington Cup went to Magsman, weighted to carry 7 stone 12 lb. These generally unlooked-for wins prompted the Daily Telegraph’s racing writer to wryly rework an old aphorism; ‘The ARC big events are not always to the swift.’ Such upset results in high profile races have probably contributed to the orthodox view that lesser pony races were even more likely to be fixed.

After World War I the ARC programmed more middle-distance and staying races. This change was indicative of its gradual appropriation of the conventions of registered racing. It was also a response to the increasing number of rather slow all-heights horses coming into unregistered racing. By the 1920s, the distance handicap, of between a mile and 11 furlongs, was usually the last and main race of the day. It incorporated the name of the racecourse—for example, the Ascot Handicap—in its title and provided more prize money than the shorter races, although occasionally it was matched by the flying handicap. At the same time the ARC increased the prize money differential between restricted and open-heights races. By 1928 a typical all-heights race was worth £250 and a pony event £175.

The proprietary clubs were more exposed to the travails of the Great Depression than the AJC, which had a healthy surplus of funds and did not hold a fiduciary responsibility to shareholders. Pony racing prize money contracted in response to revenue losses that came in the wake of the economic downturn, but the ARC maintained the record levels of the late 1920s for the first several years of its
onset. In these straitened times the prize money given for the pony cup races suddenly seemed absurdly munificent. The ARC lengthened the distance of their cup races as they reduced prize money, as if to wring out a better economy rate. The Ascot Cup of 1934 was run over the conventional cup distance (in registered racing) of one-and-a-half miles, whereas it had been a five-furlong race, but the prize money of £500 was half that of pre-depression days.

Once more pony trainers accused the ARC of parsimony. In 1932 Bob Skelton claimed they had slashed annual prize money from £125,000 to £23,000, or from about £1,730 to £320 per meeting.\(^{64}\) Both of Skelton’s figures was wildly inaccurate. More disinterested sources suggested that total prize money stood at £85,400 in 1930 and £48,500 by 1932.\(^{65}\) Between 1930 and 1934 the AJC had cut prize money from £171,000 to £81,000, which represents a not dissimilar ratio.\(^{66}\) Moreover, the ARC still regularly bettered the prize money given by the suburban clubs. The nonsense of Skelton’s figures is illustrated by the prize money distributed at a Rosebery meeting on 25 February 1933. The Rosebery club allocated £620 to the all heights races alone, including £163 for the Rosebery Handicap, which was run without divisions.\(^ {67}\) Other sources have been as misleading as Skelton. Boulter cites figures in \textit{Forty Years On} intended to demonstrate the inadequacy of the prize money of the pony courses compared with the suburban clubs and the AJC. However his figures were taken from 1939, by when, after a decade of depression, and with eviction notices issued by the government, ARC prize money had contracted dramatically; for example, it had fallen at Victoria Park from £12,333 in 1933 to £8,011 in 1938.\(^ {68}\) Boulter’s 1939 figures do not convey the long-term relativities of prize money.\(^ {69}\)

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\(^{63}\) \textit{Daily Telegraph} 26/2/1928 p. 3
\(^{64}\) Freedman & Lemon \textit{op. cit.} p. 497
\(^{65}\) \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 13/1/1933 p. 9
\(^{66}\) Painter & Waterhouse \textit{op. cit.} p. 75
\(^{67}\) \textit{The Australasian Turf Register} 1933 p. 419 and \textit{passim}
\(^{68}\) \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 12/5/1939 p. 15
\(^{69}\) Boulter \textit{op. cit.} p. 8. Boulter’s unreferenced figures are £300 for a Canterbury Saturday flying and £225 for a 2-year-old handicap, and £125–£140 for a ‘typical pony club’ flying and £125 for a 2-year-old race. Boulter does not indicate if these figures were for Wednesdays or Saturdays.
Programming, Conducting

Class and height

In 1900 the journalist Henry Roulston told a New South Wales parliamentary committee that the generic phrase ‘pony racing’ was misleading and that many unregistered races were in fact open to horses of any size.\textsuperscript{70} In later years this anomaly was even more pronounced. The changing relativities of restricted and all-heights races that occurred over time in registered racing reflected the growing supply of inferior but fully-grown thoroughbreds to unregistered racing. Whereas in a typical nineteenth-century meeting there may have been four, five or even six individual races for graded heights, after the turn of the century races for 12 hand and under ponies disappeared and 13 hands races became rare, as did 14.0 and 14.3 races after World War I.\textsuperscript{71} By 1933 the ARC most often programmed just the single 14.1 or 14.2 handicap it was required to provide under the terms of their registration with the AJC. It was usually the first race of the day, the position traditionally assigned to events of least interest. The mainstay of ARC meetings was all-heights restricted class racing—maidens, novices, trials, encourages, and perhaps an open welter or flying handicap. Consequently, by the beginning of World War II, ARC programs closely resembled the STC mid-week meetings that commenced in 1954.

Under AJC registration, for the first time brush hurdle races and jumpers’ flat races were run regularly on ARC racecourses, and the same pool of slow horses that turned out on the AJC tracks contested them. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Kensington club had experimented with Galloway hurdles, but these had been held irregularly and as something of a novelty. There had also been experiments with pony steeplechases at Forest Lodge in 1903.\textsuperscript{72} Rather more concerted was an effort by Victoria Park in 1910 to popularise unregistered steeplechasing, with £200 prizes, on a two-mile steeple course, that featured the traditional stone wall and water jump. The club described the spectacle, with justification as ‘a distinct departure in unregistered racing.’\textsuperscript{73} These races, which

\textsuperscript{70} NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 Vol. 6 p. 1156  
\textsuperscript{71} The Sportsman noted the scarcity of 14.1 and especially 14.0 races in 1919; Sydney Sportsman 30/7/1919 p. 1  
\textsuperscript{72} Referee 10/6/1903 p. 5  
\textsuperscript{73} Referee 29/6/1910 p. 6
were afforded partial recognition by the AJC, were championed by Joynton Smith, who was very involved in the day-to-day administration of his racecourse. At about the same time Victoria Park began to program open two-year-old races and restricted-heights maidens.

**Starting and judging races**

On race days, as the examples provided by racing secretaries demonstrated, full-time staff of the pony clubs had numerous additional duties. The two responsibilities most critical for the conduct of the meeting were those of the starter and the judge. Thomas Watson, the measurer for most of the period in which restricted heights racing took place, became on race day the cynosure of all eyes as starter, as did other practitioners such as Jack Deeble and Dr Lamrock. The best-known judges were R.C. Hungerford, the secretary of the NSWTC, who was judge at Kensington and Rosebery until the 1920s and Dudley Allsop, a former AJC trainer and member of a famous racing family, who succeeded Hungerford on all ARC courses in the 1920s.\(^74\)

\(^74\) Brown *op. cit.* p. 94; re Allsop refer Pollard *Racegoer’s Companion* p. 15-16
Table 4.2: Indicative pony racing programs 1890—1942

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>course</th>
<th>day and date</th>
<th>pony races</th>
<th>all height</th>
<th>least per race</th>
<th>most</th>
<th>total prize money</th>
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<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>Fri 19.2.1890</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>£20</td>
<td>£30</td>
<td>£110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lillie Bridge</td>
<td>Tues 28.1.1890</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>£10</td>
<td>£15</td>
<td>£90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosehill (pony meeting)</td>
<td>Fri 19.9.1890</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>£30</td>
<td>£60</td>
<td>£235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moorfield</td>
<td>Mon 28.1.1895</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>£30</td>
<td>£40</td>
<td>£190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington</td>
<td>Thurs 9.5.1895</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>£20</td>
<td>£30</td>
<td>£150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Mon 9.6.1895</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>£12</td>
<td>£15</td>
<td>£63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Wed 28.2.1900</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>£25</td>
<td>£30</td>
<td>£175</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest Lodge</td>
<td>Mon 26.2.1900</td>
<td>3 plus trot</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>£12</td>
<td>£15</td>
<td>£63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington</td>
<td>Wed 14.6.1905</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>£20</td>
<td>£55</td>
<td>£200</td>
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<td>Epping</td>
<td>Fri 24.3.1905</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>£20</td>
<td>£22</td>
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<td>Sat 19.2.1910</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>£30</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>£100</td>
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<td>£700</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ascot</td>
<td>Sat 17.1.1920</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosebery</td>
<td>Wed 12.5.1920</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>£120</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td>£880</td>
</tr>
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<td>Victoria Park</td>
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<td>£125</td>
<td>£200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kensington</td>
<td>Sat 1.8.1925</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>£150</td>
<td>£225</td>
<td>£1,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosebery</td>
<td>Wed 12.3.1930</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>£150</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td>£1,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Park</td>
<td>Sat 23.8.1930</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>£130</td>
<td>£180</td>
<td>£895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Park</td>
<td>Wed 17.4.1935</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>£66 (divs)</td>
<td>£100</td>
<td>£708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington</td>
<td>Sat 23.2.1935</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>£75 (divs)</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td>£1,100</td>
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^A^ excludes annual cup meetings  
^B^ run on the old Liverpool (Collingwood) racecourse  
^C^ most races for galloways (15.0)  
^D^ Denotes AJC-registered meeting  

Source: Constructed by the author from newspaper reports

(Table 4.2 illustrates the gradual decline in the number of restricted heights races at pony racecourses, and how the minimum prize money for a race had reached £100 by 1915. By 1930 it had climbed to £150 for a normal meeting and £175 for the annual cup days.)

In earlier forms of Australian horse racing, in which two or three horse fields predominated, the finish rarely caused the judge difficulty, but with the impetus for sweepstakes and handicaps races, faster-paced races and the emergence of large fields, interpreting the charge to the line often challenged the capabilities of
the unaided human eye. Pony racing innovated attempts to aid the judge to correctly identify place-getters in close finishes, or at least to provide some technological support to which that much-challenged official could refer in his defence.

In 1920 the ARC experimented in photographing race finishes, using not a strip of exposures taken as the horses pass the post, which is the current method, but a manually operated individual film-frame camera. As this could prove absolutely misleading if wrongly aligned or if the exposure was mistimed it was soon abandoned. There were also proposals for the use of motion pictures, which required less precise timing, but they were not brought to fulfillment. Other less technology-dependent tools were tried; in the 1920s the Ascot Club strung a rigid wire from the winning post to the judge’s box to provide an aid in the assessment of close finishes. Such a device was fairly common on American racetracks at the time, but although Rufe Naylor praised the Ascot wire, it remained a unique innovation within Sydney before World War II, although it was later adopted at Randwick and Canterbury.

For most of racing’s history there have been proposals for how better to affect the start. One of the reasons that harness racing has lagged behind the turf in popularity have been the reservations in gamblers’ minds about the various means of starting trotting races, and the demoralising experience of bets being lost before contests were properly under way. In galloping races the start is also important, especially in large fields. Watson, the ARC starter, was very well paid, but his duties were very demanding. He was supported not by an army of attendants to steady runners from super-structured barrier stalls, as is the case in the modern era, but by perhaps a single assistant who primed the spring-barrier, as well as the clerk of the course.

In the late-nineteenth century, a horse’s proximity to the inside rail at the start was determined by how many runners had preceded it to the barrier, but by the early

75 This is why one sometimes sees strange distortions of horses’ limbs in photo finish prints. Andersen Winners Can Laugh. p. 197
76 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 806
77 Refer chapter six
Programming and conducting pony racing

(Illustration 4.3) The start of a race at Brighton racecourse, circa 1900. The starter, mounted on a horse at far right, has his hand on the lever that will activate the two-strand Gray patent starting mechanism. He has two assistants; an official on foot, and the clerk of the course mounted on a grey horse. The race, of about five furlongs, starts from the near the furlong mark at the top of the straight, and has drawn a capacity field of ten starters, one of whom is standing side on. Course infrastructure evident in the photograph includes the paddock grandstand (far left), semaphore board (mid left), the perimeter fencing (middle distant) and what is probably the inner flat male lavatory (mid right), in front of the barrier. (source: A Place of Pleasure: Some Notes on Lady Robinson's Beach, State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales)

(Illustration 4.4) Finish of a race at Ascot, circa 1934. The pines and chimney of the pumping station are beyond the back straight. The wire strung from the finishing post was to aid judgement of the finish (source: Hood Collection, State Library of New South Wales)
Programming, Conducting

twentieth century Sydney pony jockeys drew a barrier marble from the starter after they had weighed out to ride to determine their positions.\(^78\) The result of the draw was simultaneously made known to owners, trainers and the public as the horses went to the barrier. The problem inherent for punters in this method, though it was a major advance on the previous arrangement, was the last-minute crush in the betting ring it caused. As the warning bell rang, a swell of punters surged to secure vantage points from which to watch the race. The ARC persisted with a post-weigh out draw even after the AJC switched to announcing the barriers before jockeys climbed the scales, but finally the ARC began to list barrier positions before betting commenced, to allow patrons to make a more considered price assessment and investment.\(^79\)

The pony era ended before the concept of the transportable starting machine was imported from the United States (it was first used by the STC at Canterbury in 1946),\(^80\) and all races were started under problematic manual or semi-manual circumstances. There existed possibilities for gaining a fair or unfair advantage over competitors that mostly disappeared with the coming of the enclosed barrier. At first pony racing adopted the customary system devised by Admiral Rous, wherein the starter, standing alongside the jockeys and horses, dropped his flag to signal the start. An assistant some 100 yards down the course raised a second flag to indicate false starts. Within ten years, however, the starting machine of Alexander Gray was installed at most Sydney pony tracks—at least a year before it appeared at registered Australian courses, and decades before the introduction of starting machines in Britain. Lemon has suggested ‘it was pony racing with its need for quick, orderly starts that supplied innovations such as the automatic starting barrier which was soon put into common use.’\(^81\) However while pony racing was certainly the populariser of the machine, in the 1890s most meetings consisted of five or six races only, so the pressure to keep marathon programs running to time was not as intense as it became in later decades. Nor did the

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\(^{78}\) For determination of starting positions see Clive Inglis, *Horsesense*, Sydney, Halstead, 1950 p. 114; *Referee* 15/7/1914 p. 5
\(^{79}\) *Referee* 8/7/1914 p. 1
\(^{80}\) The STC installed an experimental set of fixed barrier stalls at Rosebery towards the end of World War II. They were used for barrier trials
\(^{81}\) Hutchinson *et. al. op. cit.* p. 43
Programming, Conducting

(Illustration 4.5) The start of a 4 1/2 furlong race, on the pre-1928 Rosebery layout, takes place at the point of the turn into the back straight. The inside rail of the five furlong chute is behind the horse at far right. The hill in the background is the location for the Rosebery outer. The clerk of the course, at left next to the starter’s ladder, is in perfect hunting attire. (source: Sydney Sportsman 5/11/1919, State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales)
prototype starting machines immediately bring order. The decision to experiment with them was perhaps more a reflection of the risk-taking nature of the racing entrepreneurs and their comfort with modernity.

Gray had raced ponies—indeed, had almost been broken financially following them—and concluded that the flapping of the starter’s flag often distracted them. He was moved to design his machine when his jockey son Reuben received a £5 fine for allowing his mount to step over the white chalk line that marked the start.\(^{82}\) The Gray-starting machine had its first testing at pony meetings at Canterbury in February 1894. The prototype consisted of a single strand at about the height of the horse’s head that was attached to a spring at either end. When the device was activated the barrier sprung up and away from the horses. It was a far from perfect solution to the problem of starting, as horses often became entangled, particularly later when the number of strands in the barrier was increased. Additionally, starters were not confined and largely immobilized, but continued to walk up to line. Nevertheless Gray’s machine provided a significant improvement on the flag start, as it rendered sneaking a head start more difficult, though it remained by no means impossible.\(^{83}\)

As Gray was demonstrating his machine to race clubs several other ‘patent’ starting mechanisms appeared on pony racecourses. The Kensington club tested three different models—those of Messrs Gray, Power and Miller (subsequently the starter at Ascot). At Lillie Bridge the Spencer Brothers devised a machine with two rigid arms that snapped back onto the rails. A few years later Jack Deeble produced his own starting machine. In Victoria, there was an entirely separate range of backyard-engineered machines. But in Sydney Gray’s machine established a monopoly.\(^{84}\) By the 1920s the single strand barrier had evolved into a spring-powered five-strand device designed by Johnson and Gleeson that resembled a strongman’s chest expander. One or another of these machines, all

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82 Inglis *Horsesense* p. 252  
83 Hutchinson et. al. *op. cit.* p. 67  
84 *Referee* 14/2/1894 p.1, 26/9/1894 p. 5; the VRC initially rejected not only Gray’s machine but the entire concept of mechanical starting devices; Inglis *Horsesense* p. 253
developments on the Gray model, provided the means of starting races until the end of unregistered racing.\textsuperscript{85}

Watson, like his ARC colleague secretary Underhill a large and formidable man, matched the longevity of the most entrenched racing secretaries. His career began when in 1887 he replaced Jack Hegerty as starter at Randwick and on the other registered racecourses. Thus he witnessed the birth of unregistered racing as an official of the AJC and presided at its last rites in 1933 as a stalwart of the ARC. His unregistered career began at the inaugural Kensington meeting of 1893 and expanded when he accepted the post of starter at Rosebery in May 1897 and Brighton in March 1898.\textsuperscript{86} However the AJC ultimatum later in 1898 compelled Watson, along with Benson, the judge at Randwick, and Robert Fleming the secretary of the Newcastle Jockey Club, and several others, to chose to give up unregistered racing or forfeit his registered stipends.\textsuperscript{87} In 1904 he resigned from the AJC when Kensington, Epping and Rosebery Park offered to double his existing salary to £1,000, although he had the additional responsibilities of measurer for the unregistered clubs.\textsuperscript{88} Securing his return was a major coup for unregistered racing. Twenty-nine years later, soon after the AJC amalgamation, Watson retired as ARC starter—leaving the way for the AJC’s Jack Gaxieu to perform that function on all metropolitan courses—but he continued as measurer, by that era a less demanding role, for some years.\textsuperscript{89}

Watson was an accomplished horseman who as a youth had, like A.B. Paterson, ridden in cross-country events at Rosehill and despite his 17 stones in maturity always rode to the barrier on a snow-white pony of only 14 hands. He wore a large ‘soup strainer’ moustache and the broad, flat-brimmed Stetson hat associated with the Earp brothers of Tombstone USA. He was one of nine sons of George Watson of the VRC (known as ‘the prince of starters’), several of whom

\textsuperscript{85} Pollard Racegoer’s Companion p. 543
\textsuperscript{86} Referee 2/6/1897 p. 5; 9/3/1898 p. 5
\textsuperscript{87} Referee 4/1/1899 p. 5
\textsuperscript{88} Referee 6/7/1904 p. 5
\textsuperscript{89} Minutes of the Victoria Park Racing and Recreation Grounds Co Ltd Committee, unpaginated, AJC Library
followed their father into racing. Although his paternal connection helped Watson gain early appointments, his efforts as a flag-starter were often criticised, especially by the *Referee*. The starter in fact faced an almost insurmountable challenge to single-handedly control the numerous dramas and political power plays that took place behind the barriers before most races. Without an unyielding physical restraint before horse and jockey, breaks at the start were annoyingly frequent. Watson like his father was noted for irascibility but the shuffling *leger-de-main* jockeys employed to gain an advantage while milling at the start might have tested the humour of the most phlegmatic man. The *Sydney Sportsman* reported ‘it is no uncommon occurrence to see horses that have drawn, say, number 15 post position edge in, and start from say number six…given a little delay, or a restive field at the machine and it can be safely stated that every trier in a race has bettered its position.’

It was extremely difficult for the starter to monitor or police such creeping. He had not only to restrain jockeys seeking a fly start, but also remonstrate with those hanging back or wheeling around. In frustration he shouted abuse and fined recidivists. Bob Maxwell, the ex-Melbourne pony jockey and fast getaway exponent, seemed in particular to irk Watson, who was always pleased to fine and harangue him for real or imagined offences. Once Watson attempted to fine him over a race in which he had not ridden. However in his long career Watson became educated in all forms of barrier trickery and was rarely outwitted in later years. His large salary was a mark of his status as Sydney’s leading racing official.

**Stewards**

Race clubs appoint stewards to oversee the activities of licensed personnel such as jockeys, trainers and bookmakers before, during and after a race meeting. In the nineteenth century stewards were honorary—usually drawn from the

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90 Another son, Godfrey, was starter at Flemington in the early twentieth century, while George jnr. was the measurer for Melbourne pony racing; *Referee* 14/7/1906 p. 3
91 *Referee* 20/3/1889 p. 1
92 *Sydney Sportsman* 9/2/1926 p. 6
93 Britt, interview with Peake, March 2000
committeemen of the club or racing association—or in the case of proprietary clubs, drawn from a board of senior administrative staff.  

For many years, as the 1900 Racing Association Bill hearing demonstrated, participants in racing had been calling for the employment of professional (or stipendiary) stewards, to replace honorary officials, who almost everyone considered incompetent. They were criticised in particular for the ad hoc manner in which they observed races and conducted inquiries. On both pony and registered racecourses stewards observed races together in a huddle in the grandstand, drawing each other’s attention to incidents in the running. This propinquity helps explain the remarkable unanimity of opinion that was customary in their assessment of races; Frank Morris ingenuously asserted he could recall only one disagreement in his twenty-two years as a steward on the question of whether a disqualification was warranted. There may have been consensus in the stand, but this one-dimensional view of the running of races also contributed to some egregious injustices, such as the AJC’s handling of the Mora case, which had in fact sparked the 1900 bill.  

In 1901 unregistered racing in Sydney had reacted to the need for stipendiary stewards, while the AJC continued to rely on committeemen until August 1904. By 1907 each of the member clubs of the newly constituted ARC nominated a steward who would officiate on a panel; they were drawn from those who had previously worked for the Kensington association and Ascot. Joynton Smith, who had been alienated from the future members of ARC while racing at Epping in 1906, independently hired the veterans Skuthorpe and Franks for the 1908 opening of Victoria Park, but ultimately a three-man panel officiated at all Sydney pony meetings. The arrangement had the ARC’s R.S. Turner installed as chief steward at all courses except Victoria Park, where Jim Donohoe jnr took over.

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94 As an example refer to the account of the first meeting at Kensington in the Referee 21/6/1893 p. 5
95 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 783
96 Refer chapter seven
97 Referee 10/8/1904 p. 1; it should be noted however that the ARC stewards continued to watch races from the stand until the 1920s
98 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1298; In 1924 R.S. Turner’s salary was £800 per annum
Frank Morris resigned in March 1923, two years after he had become a director of the Kensington company. In the late 1880s he had been a leading driver at the SDPC and worked as handicapper at Brighton.\textsuperscript{99} At the 1923 inquiry he was accused of having defaulted on bets while bookmaking at the SDPC in the 1890s. It was further suggested that he regularly bet at the Victoria Park races while acting a steward but Morris refuted the allegations. Consequently his reputation was equivocal but the unpredictable \textit{Sportsman} surprised in defending him in retirement; ‘He was instrumental in bringing about many of the reforms which have placed Sydney pony racing on the high plane on which it now stands and while he ruled with an iron hand...there was always fairness in all of his decisions.’\textsuperscript{100}

After World War I Herbert ‘Horseshoe’ or ‘Lucky’ Collins, the incumbent test cricket captain and member of the first AIF victory test team, was seeking a career in racing and was able to gain the appointment to replace Morrison on the ARC stewards panel. It was suggested that Collins had his cricketing connection to thank for his selection, and that he had long been recognised as a ‘mug punter’ in the ring. The journalist Parker of the \textit{Sportsman}, when asked his opinion of Collins, replied that as a steward he made a good cricketer.\textsuperscript{101} Collins found it difficult to suppress his desire to continue gambling while a steward; in any case he soon gave up his stipend to take up the more appealing vocation of bookmaking, although his career in that field was also brief.

If Collins was regarded as something of a cameo appointment, the other ARC officials of the 1920s, Turner and Donohoe were, like Underhill, renowned as tough, professional and informed stewards. While accusations of corruption were made against Morris and Donohoe, Turner was universally regarded as an untouchable.\textsuperscript{102} But, despite the undoubted acumen and experience of the ARC stewards panel, its continued concentration in the grandstand allowed jockeys an opportunity to ride foul at the far points of the course, with little danger of

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{99} Brown \textit{op. cit.} p. 39
\item\textsuperscript{100} NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1319; \textit{Sportsman} 13/4/1926 p. 6
\item\textsuperscript{101} NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 818
\item\textsuperscript{102} For allegations against Jim Donohoe refer NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1320-22; for Burke as AJC chief steward refer Lillye \textit{Backstage} p. 161
\end{itemize}
The clubs eventually acknowledged the need to build observation towers at key points around the outside perimeter of the track. An early victim of the new posts was the jockey Alf Stanton, whom the steward in the back straight overheard asking fellow riders the rhetorical question, ‘How will this be when we let it go?’

The penalties meted out by stewards in that era were invariably punitive. Moreover, the conditions of disqualifications virtually forced trainers to dispose of their stables. Most charges laid against jockeys related to not allowing horses to run on their merits (rather than the careless riding charges that are prevalent in modern racing), and for those the least penalty a licensed person could expect was six or twelve month disqualifications. High-profiled licensed persons who received long suspensions included the jockeys Callinan—disqualified for three years in 1921—Reed and Stanton and the trainer Skelton. Because of the severity of sentences guilty verdicts were invariably appealed, despite the requirement for appellants to pay a fee into an account for distressed jockeys. ‘In 99 cases out of 100, however guilty the person may be, he lodges an appeal,’ Frank Morris told the 1924 Select Committee. In a similar number of cases, the appeal was dismissed. Trainers complained there was little hope of a successful appeal, because the board that heard them consisted of senior shareholders from the four ARC clubs; Joynton Smith from Victoria Park, Jerome Dowling (Rosebery), John Edwards (Kensington) and William Tilly (Ascot), who naturally tended to support their employees’ original decisions.

The ARC encouraged the impression that they were more proactive in risk managing malpractice than the AJC. They routinely verified the identity and past race form of all newcomers to Sydney pony racing. A racing writer of the late 1930s recalled: ‘The ARC used to insist that the nominator of any horse that had been racing outside the metropolitan area must give its last three performances and details of wins of that horse. This same regulation effectively prevented horses from other states or from minor country centres from getting the best of the

103 Inglis _Horsesense_ pp. 163-164
104 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 Vol. 4 p. 784
105 Ibid. p. 787
handicapper.’ After the 1933 amalgamation the AJC abandoned several safeguards that the ARC had used, including having every horse photographed, for purposes of identification, before it being allowed to start in races under ARC jurisdiction.106

The equine participants of unregistered racing

All thoroughbred horses are descended from three Arab stallions—the Darley Arabian, the Godolphin Arabian and the Byerley Turk—that were brought to Britain from the Mediterranean Middle East in the later part of the seventeenth century.107 These stallions have been identified as the descendants of a pure desert breed known as Kehilans.108 After their establishment in Britain the stallions were bred to the sturdy native mares, which added the characteristics of endurance and strength to the brilliant speed of the Arabs. In time the products of this cross came to be known as thoroughbreds. The British mares which contributed to the foundation of the thoroughbred—which was recognized as a distinct breed no later than the end of the seventeenth century— included various Moor, Welsh, New Forest, Connemarra and Cumberland ponies, palfreys and cobs.109 The Arab roots remained apparent in the large eyes and nostrils and generally refined head of the thoroughbred.110

Early essays in the breeding of horses and ponies in Australia were opportunistic, ad hoc and unregulated, and resulted in a population of half-bred horses and ponies, which were wanted primarily for transport and farming rather than racing.111 The first thoroughbred sire imported to Australia, named Rockingham or Young Rockingham, arrived from England in 1799, but he and his successors had been preceded by a motley collection of other breeds, including some that arrived with the First Fleet in 1788 that have been identified as cape horses, and

106 The Newsletter 19/12/1945 p. 1
107 http://www.discover-racing.com/horseracing/racehorses.cfm
111 The contestants of races in Sydney before 1850 were mainly Arabs. The first champion of the Australian turf, Jorrocks, was part Arabian in blood, and Arab mares founded several families in
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which probably possessed some Basuto pony blood.¹¹² The consignment may have included some Timor ponies; at any rate that breed was quickly established in Australia. Jack Pollard has suggested that races contested by Timor ponies were taking place as early as 1833, near Fremantle, Western Australia. He further suggested that Shetland and Exmoor ponies were freely crossed with larger breeds and were significant contributors to the equine population in Australia.¹¹³ Welsh ponies were introduced early and in good number to the colonies. John Macarthur imported two Welsh pony stallions, and the stock-take of the Australian Agricultural Company conducted on 30 April 1831 recorded 57 Welsh ponies among a total of 277 horses.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, the genes of Asian ponies were probably the most preponderant among Australian ponies. These various small equines provided the foundations of the stock used in nineteenth-century unregistered racing. This is demonstrated by the currency for races for 12 and even 11 hands ponies—an unwelcome intrusion into legitimate racing, William Lovell Davis believed, and he described them as ‘a miserable class of pony’. His Canterbury pony club did not program races below 13 hands.¹¹⁵

It may seem self-evident that the primary difference between what was known as pony racing, and thoroughbred racing, was that contestants in the former were smaller. Yet this statement is too simplistic an explanation of an unexpectedly complex situation. It is tempting to indulge in the symbolic possibilities that lie in the juxtaposition of the finely bred thoroughbred of the English tradition—tall heir of the charger and the Arab, status symbol of the rural aristocracy, infrequently called on to perform, and otherwise pampered—with the humble urban pony, the workaday, undersized, unkempt and ambling servant of the merchant and the tradesmen, suddenly pressed (like ‘Radish’, the equine cartoon hero) into racecourse duty, as the respective contestants of registered and the Stud Book. In the 1890s the champion Lillie Bridge 12.2 pony, Marabeau, was the produce of an Arab sire; Referee 3/10/1894 p. 5; Pollard Racegoer’s Companion pp. 26-7 http://www.walerhorse.com/whsa/informationkit.htm (The official site for The Waler Horse Society of Australia Inc). Accessed 20/10/2004
¹¹² Pollard Racegoer’s Companion p. 428
¹¹³ Yarwood reckoned the total number of horses in Australia in 1834 at 14,000, a four-fold increase from 1817, consisting mainly of saddle and light harness horses of Arab blood. Yarwood op. cit. pp. 32, 34
¹¹⁴ NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1265
¹¹⁵
unregistered racing in Sydney, but this would be grossly misleading. Very few—if any—of the small beasts that worked the streets of Sydney ever competed concurrently in pony races, although a significant number had second careers in restricted class races at harness racing meetings, particularly in tradesmen’s and butchers’ trots.

In fact, while the phrase *pony racing* continued to be used without qualification, the phenomenon it was associated with had undergone profound change. As Roulston suggested, many events run under the banner of pony racing were open to horses of all heights. Additionally, the 14.2 racing ponies of the twentieth century, referred to colloquially as ‘forty and twos,’ were not significantly smaller than the fully-grown horses of the nineteenth century. Extrapolating from a calculation made by Admiral Rous, in 1903 Sir Walter Gilbey estimated that horses in Britain had grown from a standard height of 14 hands in 1700, to 14.3 hands in 1800, and 15.2 hands in 1900. Yarwood has proposed almost identical figures for the English hunter, a horse of mostly thoroughbred blood that became the standard mount of the British cavalry in the nineteenth century. These figures demonstrate that ARC ‘restricted heights’ racing did not really constitute racing on a miniature scale.

Confusion on the size and nature of equine participants in unregistered racing has been increased by the contemporary usage of the word *galloway*. Until the 1920s unregistered metropolitan programs were described as meetings for ‘ponies and galloways,’ even though the galloway breed was almost certainly extinct long before regular pony racing began in Sydney. The explanation of this anomaly is semantic change. In Britain, the uses to which the term *galloway* had been put had become increasingly imprecise. At first they pertained to a ‘a certain race of little Scottish horses called Galway [or Galloway] nags; which...hunt the buck

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116 Although many no doubt retired from the racecourse into such work
118 Harry Reed, interview with Laurie Dillon 1980, University of NSW Archives
120 Yarwood *op. cit.* p. 28
exceedingly well.’

121 They were natives of the shores of the Solway Firth in southern Scotland, and reportedly resembled the more familiar Welsh cob.

122 According to another authority, ‘the original Galloway was between thirteen and fourteen hands in height, of a bright brown or bay, with a neat head, black legs, peculiarly deep and clean. It had a remarkable sure-footedness and stoutness, with a fair amount of speed.’

123 It was clearly quite a small breed. In 1715 the Earl of Stair observed that the galloway breed was nearly extinct, but very highly valued.

124 By 1900 native galloway blood had disappeared except for some alleged remnants on a few remote Scottish islands. However, some time earlier in England galloway had begun to be used to describe beasts of a particular height and confirmation, rather than a breed. A nineteenth-century authority wrote: ‘The word “Galloway” has gone out of use, yet it was a convenient word to express what was too big for a pony, too small for a Yorkshireman or Leicestershireman’s idea of a horse and more active, more slim, than the stocky, weight carrying cob.’

125 Obviously the term had not gone out of use in Australia (at least among racing administrators), where it was used, as it had been in England, to define height rather than breed.

In late Victorian and early Edwardian Sydney the more affluent pony clubs such as Moorefield and Kensington named their races carrying larger prize money, open to horses of 14.5 and 15 hands, galloway handicaps. Their contestants had the best public profile and before the AJC ban of 1898, the better-performed galloways, such as the champion Fitzroy, occasionally contested black type thoroughbred handicaps, including the Toorak Handicap and even the Melbourne Cup.

126 Several were switched, it was thought permanently, in 1898 to registered racing. However most were not competitive at that level and returned to the pony courses within a few months. Kensington in particular had missed the presence of

122 Gilbey op. cit. pp. 96-97
124 Sidney op. cit. pp. 42-43
125 Ibid. pp. 224-25; Sidney’s description is rather at odds with Gilbey’s
126 Referee 7/6/1893 p. 5
the good galloways and encouraged their return from AJC tracks in January 1899 by programming monthly galloway races carrying £50 prize money.\textsuperscript{127}

In 1895 the Kensington club changed the height restriction on galloway races from 14.5 to 15 hands. The decision not only illustrated how plastic a concept ‘galloway’ was, but also radically altered the make-up of fields in galloway races, which thereafter became the almost exclusive domain of small but genuine thoroughbreds. ‘Daystar’ wrote:

\begin{quote}
    The old style of galloway has gone completely out of date. Nothing but well bred ones are now any good. The ranks of galloways have long been recruited from the best studs in the colonies, undersized fillies especially being handed over to the pony trainers either untried or after failure in horse racing…very few of inferior breeding are left in the higher classes. A galloway must be bred as well as a Melbourne Cup horse.\textsuperscript{128}
\end{quote}

The liberalisation of heights in unregistered racing was a boon for thoroughbred breeders, for at the end of the nineteenth century there had been a large increase in the horse population in general, and the thoroughbred sector in particular.\textsuperscript{129} Breeders had sought to maximise their returns-on-investment by increasing production. Inevitably a good percentage of this produce was inferior in speed, conformation and size. The AJC did not program races for such animals, and breeders were left with many horses whose costs they could not recover. It was these often small thoroughbreds that increasingly were the contestants of unregistered races.

Bloodhorse breeders did not however deliberately breed small thoroughbreds for the pony-racing sector. The AJC committeeeman Adrian Knox told the 1900 Racing Association Bill Select Committee: ‘If a man can breed good thoroughbreds, which will sell for fair prices, with a view to racing among horses at registered meetings, he is not likely, under present circumstances, to devote his attention to breeding ponies, which will notoriously have very much less value, and have to race for very much lower stakes.’ ‘No breeder breeds for the sake of breeding [racing] ponies’ commented Andrew Farthing rather more succinctly. Several other witnesses made the same point, but the Committee seemed slow to

\textsuperscript{127} A prize significantly greater than the standard figure at that time. \textit{Referee} 11/1/1899 p. 5.  
\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Referee} 19/12/1894 p. 1
grasp it. Not even the promoters of unregistered racing claimed they were seeking to improve the ‘pony’ breed. Yet, at the same hearing Knox unexpectedly conceded pony racing was useful for disposing of undersized thoroughbreds produced by ‘good, honest breeders’.\textsuperscript{130} In 1915 he put this sentiment into practice by selling his horse Stimulus (by Malster) to interests that raced it on ARC racecourses.\textsuperscript{131}

Between the miniature and galloway classes in unregistered racing were the 14.0, 14.1, 14.2 and 14.3 hand categories, many of whom in other circumstances might been described as walers, that celebrated item of nomenclature coined in Calcutta in 1846.\textsuperscript{132} A waler was broadly defined by the equine historian A.T. Yarwood as an Australian horse exported in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for military and sporting purposes. In particular, walers were sent to India to serve as army remounts, polo and pig-sticking ponies, and as racehorses. Although they also came to be highly regarded for military and recreation purposes, they gained immediate pre-eminence on Indian racecourses, and at the Calcutta Cup meeting of 1849-50, walers won almost every race they contested, easily beating Arab and English-bred entrants.\textsuperscript{133} While, however, walers shared a common physique, character, and temperament, they are not usually regarded as a distinct breed; it has been pointed out that ‘Waler is just a nickname for a NSW stockhorse…breed from a station mare which had a thoroughbred sire put over it. The mare could have a bit of semi-draught. She could be a bit of Timor pony, Welsh pony…’\textsuperscript{134} (Timor pony blood had indeed provided a very important infusion.)\textsuperscript{135}

In the later nineteenth century breeders who intended to breed walers for sale as military light horse used pony race mares to serve as an outcross to the station blood.\textsuperscript{136} Australian-bred 14.1 and 14.2 ponies were much in demand during the

\textsuperscript{130} \textit{NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900} vol. 6 p. 1207
\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Referee} 3/2/1915 p. 5
\textsuperscript{132} Yarwood \textit{op. cit.} p. 15
\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Ibid.} p. 122
\textsuperscript{134} Hayes \textit{op. cit.} pp. 109-10
\textsuperscript{135} \url{http://www.walerhorse.com/whsa/informationkit.htm}, This web site analyses the ancestry of the waler at considerable length
\textsuperscript{136} \url{http://www.geocities.com/walering/page11.html}, Accessed 20/10/2004
Boxer Rebellion and Boer War campaigns. During the 1900 Racing Association Bill hearings, much was made of the experience of A.B. Paterson as a war correspondent in South Africa. His 14.2 pony had carried him throughout the war while the hunters ridden by British journalists faltered. Some of the 1900 committee members proffered this utility as justification for the continuation of pony racing. Yarwood does not discuss the involvement of walers in Australian pony racing in his work, probably because the term was generally not used for Australian horses in Australia. The ideal height for a waler was between fourteen and fifteen hands, the same as the larger ponies and ‘galloways’ that competed on pony racecourses. Given these similarities in blood and confirmation, it is logical to deduce that galloway racers were in reality ‘walers’ that had remained in Australia.

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While there was a discernible trend towards taller participants in unregistered racing in the late nineteenth century, racing for smaller ponies of mixed breed continued at the lesser pony racecourses for some years. The race book described many of the diminutive starters at a Forest Lodge meeting on 12 January 1903 as being of ‘unknown pedigree.’ However the overall preponderance of thoroughbred blood in unregistered racing eventually caused the extinction of miniature racing. The so-called ‘Lilliputian’, ‘Midget’ and ‘Tom Thumb’ handicaps for ponies under 12 hands disappeared along with the smaller racecourses to which they were best suited by 1907. Races reserved for 14.0 and 14.1 ponies became increasingly rare, although some of them could compete effectively in 14.2 races given the weight allowance. Eventually even the ‘galloway’ classification proved too restrictive for unregistered racing, and it was replaced by all-heights racing. By the late 1920s, nearly all unregistered races were for 14.2 ponies or else open to all heights. These changes were further evidence of a drift towards a ‘registered’ style of racing.
The achievements of unregistered horses rarely came to the attention of laypersons, but outstanding ponies gained admirers among journalists and other keen followers of racing topics. Edgar Britt said that this interest was engendered by the anomaly that while the contestants in pony races were smaller than the full-sized thoroughbreds, they were often obliged to carry larger weights, which appealed to those who admired courage in horse racing. Weight carrying ability rather than success in feature races was the mark of class in unregistered racing. In 1920 there was an unusual circumstance wherein three 14.1 ponies acknowledged among the best ever to appear in Sydney—Precious Dust, Lady Liddell and Jack Marsh—raced concurrently on the ARC racecourses. Despite much speculation as to which was the best—Lady Liddell was described as a ‘miniature Poitrel’ and ‘wonder mare’, but Precious Dust has been rated the best pony to race in Australia—and prompting of challenges issued in the press, they rarely competed against each other. Rather they became celebrated for carrying large weights outside their heights class and for being able to win all-heights races with weights well above the minimum.

The competitive performances of the best ponies in top class registered racing gives lie to the idea that all unregistered horses were substandard, which was promoted by likes AJC chairman of the 1920s Sir Colin Stephen: ‘the horses that run at the registered courses…are a much better class than those which drift into the ponies,’ he said. ‘The best of the ponies drift back into the horses after a bit, but they are never champions. They might win a welter or two. The unregistered courses are the outlet for bad horses.’ Here once more is exposed an AJC chairman’s annoyance at unregistered racing providing a safe haven for poorly performed horses (which he presumably would have preferred be dispatched to the glue factory). Stephen suspected the one or two events reserved in his era for ponies on unregistered programs were a smokescreen for the real business of the day—second-class all heights racing.

139 Britt interview with Peake March 2000
140 Sydney Sportsman 17/11/1920 p. 6, 24/11/1920 p. 6, 15/12/1920 p. 6
141 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 832
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It was true that unregistered racing provided sanctuary to a host of AJC rejects, underachievers and family black sheep. The presence of these refugees caused the overall standard of equine performance to fall considerably below that of registered racing. Kensington secretary Patrick O’Mara told the 1900 Racing Association Bill Select Committee ‘at the present time we are running representatives of every stallion in New South Wales, either imported or otherwise.’ The journalist Dexter (‘Pilot’) told the 1912 Totalisator Royal Commission that some of the best equine blood in Australia competed at the Sydney pony courses. Leading sires including Moorefield, Duke Foote, Malster, Merv, Linacre, Tressady, Wallace, Magpie and Positano, and the 1896 Melbourne Cup winner Newhaven, all owned by AJC breeders, provided numerous starters and winners on the unregistered metropolitan racecourses with their undersized and less-well-regarded stock. In 1918 Moorefield, whose progeny won 45 races, was the leading sire on ARC tracks in advance of Merv, with 36. Both were also leading sires in registered racing, but there was a considerable diversity besides them in unregistered racing, as 219 sires produced winners, including many who were known only to their connections.

Many horses that raced in ARC restricted class all-heights races had once belonged to optimistic AJC owners with visions of feature-race success, but they had brought disgrace to their pedigree through ignoble performances at Randwick. Such failures made up most of those banished to unregistered racing. Better-performed importations, such as Dollar Dictator, the 15.5 hand winner of the 1915 Perth Cup, who was given to the leading Sydney pony trainer D.C. Collins in 1918, had mostly either suffered injury or illness, or were greybeards that could no longer compete at the registered level.

However, the quality of the contestants of unregistered racing was in one sense immaterial, as few had any prospect of entering the breeding barn. Most unregistered male racehorses were gelded. There were several reasons for this; Australian racing men have resorted to gelding more readily than their

142 NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1277
143 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1912 vol. 4 p. 527
144 Referee 2/1/1918 p. 5
counterparts in the United Kingdom or India; geldings are reckoned easier to handle than stallions and less likely to be distracted from racing; and some advantage during races may also be gained as geldings are not subjected to squeezed testicles while running. The additional growth that results when colts are gelded may also provide some advantage. So unregistered horses were routinely gelded despite the possession, in many cases, of valued bloodlines.

In the earlier period of unregistered racing pony-sized males had somewhat better prospects of becoming a sire. A rare conjunction of outstanding ability, sound conformation and good bloodlines might secure a future as a sire for an unregistered pony if it had chanced to avoid gelding long enough to display ability on the track, and a well-conformed galloway could be used to breed ponies for competition at agricultural shows and for domestic buggy purposes. Adrian Knox said of the champion galloway Fitzroy: ‘there is no more perfect horse…he raced among the ponies for years…I would as soon breed from him as any bigger horse.’\(^{145}\) Fitzroy had impressed Knox with his efforts in registered racing in races such as VRC Australian Cup.

As a consequence of their lack of stud potential unregistered racers were made to compete repeatedly while they remained sound. When in full training, some, the smaller ponies in particular, raced at most meetings, which might result in five starts in a fortnight. It was also far from unusual for a horse to race twice in one day, although this became an almost unheard-of practice on metropolitan courses after World War II. Dick Wootton’s galloway Zulander won the first race ever run at Kensington, and also the last race there on opening day, then the first race at the Rosehill pony meeting held at Kensington the following day, before running third in the last race that day—four starts for three wins in little more than 24 hours. Spells were brief and rare and very few metropolitan unregistered horses ever cropped grass in an agistment paddock. Rather they were left to mope around the stable or yard until it was possible to return them to full training. Official barrier trials—unhandicapped practice events without betting or prize money used to fit horses in race conditions without over-extending them—were practically

\(^{145}\) *NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900* vol. 6 p. 1207
unknown during the pony era, and most horses having their first start after a break were in need of the run.

The endurance of restricted heights unregistered competitors in particular was testimony not only to solid conformation and constitution but also to the good racing surfaces of the pony racecourses, which were discussed in the previous chapter. The 14.0 hands pony Selina raced in Sydney during 10 consecutive seasons until 1909; Glen Syce, which won on Rosebery Cup day in May 1928, contested a 14.2 handicap at Ascot in December 1934, while the 14.1 champion Scooter, which was proposed as Sydney’s representative in a January 1935 match race against Melbourne’s 14.1 pony, ran third in the last pony race conducted on an ARC racecourse, on 22 August 1942.

After the 1933 amalgamation the equine stars of registered racing were free to compete at the previously quarantined ARC racecourses. In practice the ARC were restricted in attracting that calibre of horse by having lost all but four Saturday dates—generally, running feature races midweek was not a viable practice. However the WFA Sir Herbert Maitland Stakes, run annually over 7 furlongs at Victoria Park on a Wednesday in August-September, was programmed to provide a lead-in to the AJC spring carnival and in particular the Epsom Handicap. In 1934 it attracted a field of champions that included Peter Pan (who won the race) and Chatham (who finished second as odds-on favourite) but also Rogilla, a Caulfield and Sydney Cup winner, and the great sprinter-turned-stayer Lough Neath. Chatham won that spring’s Epsom before Peter Pan won his second Melbourne Cup. Sydney’s ARC courses had become part of the system feeding the nation’s great races. Thereafter notable horses in the making often raced through the restricted grades on them. The winner of the 1943 Melbourne Cup, Dark Felt, for example, had won a novice handicap on the third-last day of racing at Ascot, on 8 August 1942.146

Owners and trainers had several options for the disposal of unwanted unregistered horses. Those not yet expended by the stress of racing could be sold to India, where a thriving restricted-heights racing circuit existed. Vendors often received
surprisingly good prices from agents representing Indian buyers. The aged 14.1 pony Barney, who was regarded as one of the best-ever exports, was bought for 800 sovereigns. But most unregistered competitors were vendored locally at the horse bazaars or less formal auctions. Some found new careers hauling commercial vehicles, with the police or the military, or as hacks or polo ponies. In most cases however these occupations represented a suspended sentence, for the ultimate fate of the majority was the knackery.

Conclusions

Unregistered race meetings in the period of ARC control were extremely popular with racegoers because they provided frequent races on which the betting markets were usually quite open. Their promoters compensated for having been restricted to Wednesdays and Saturdays by staging marathon programs of up to nineteen races starting as early as 10.30 am, often consisting of large fields of 20 or more. If the number of races and starters defines the market, unregistered racing was the largest provider of racing product to Sydney.

Before the restrictions brought by the 1906 gaming legislation took hold, pony racing in Sydney was a free-for-all that supported up to eight metropolitan meetings a week. Kensington as the ‘principal’ club had tried to regulate racing dates, but in this objective unaffiliated renegades and newcomers foiled it. In this formative period clashes with registered racing were usually avoided. Further government intervention in 1932, 1937 and 1942 brought more reductions in the number of pony race dates.

As a result of the allocation of dates in its last nine years (when it was under AJC control), pony racing is usually depicted or remembered as a mid-week sport. However, one third of all meetings from 1907 to 1933 had been run on Saturdays. It is important that this statistic is recognised, as the attendance of the public and bookmakers, prize money paid, and the very atmosphere, mood and behaviour of race day crowds is very different on Saturdays to Wednesdays, regardless of venue. Saturday racing, with the prospect of a non-working day to follow, is a
rather more joyous thing, and midweek stereotyping undoubtedly has affected the reputation of pony racing. The regular conduct of Saturday pony racing during the ‘golden’ age of racing in fact led to important changes in the social aspects of the sport, which will be analysed in chapter five.

Large fields, long programs and open betting, all indicators of good racing health, were corollaries of the 1906 gaming legislation for unregistered racing. The more attractive meetings these characteristics provided, and the outlawing of betting shops, brought more people to the ARC racecourses, and much of the consequent additional gate money was used to sharply increase unregistered prize money, which between 1900 and 1920, grew fastest of any sector in racing. This spectacular growth, it must be acknowledged, largely dispels accusations of extreme profit siphoning and excessive dividends that have been levelled at the ARC. The prize money offered for each of the ARC cups in the 1920s exceeded that for the feature races of the registered proprietaries, and matched the purse for the Cox Plate. Nevertheless these same cups represent perhaps the least rational aspect of pony racing programming, as the large prize brought little marketing advantage, and the outcomes of the odd race conditions often caused dissatisfaction among connections, the press and the public. The few other uncharacteristically ill-considered administrative practices of the ARC included its method of dividing races, and the insistence on run offs for most of them (a particularly unsatisfactory resolution of maiden divisions), and automatic handicapping, which encouraged inconsistent form and the pulling up of horses in several circumstances. The increasing imposition of taxation and plateauing attendances began to anchor prize money in the 1920s, and it depreciated in response to the severe trauma caused by the Great Depression of the 1930s—although the contraction was not as great as was suggested by subjective witnesses such as pony trainers, and not so much greater, in percentage terms, than reductions overseen by the AJC.

Officials charged with conducting on-course activities became fully professional in the early 1900s. Thus unregistered pony racing recognised the need for full-time stipendiary stewards several years before the AJC, and posted them around the course while registered stewards remained in the grandstand, struggling to
overcome their myopia with field glasses. Many of the leading stewards who worked in registered racing from the 1930s until the 1960s had learnt their trades on pony racecourses.147 There are intriguing implications in this, given the orthodox view that pony racing under their control was corrupt.

‘Pony racing’ was an appropriate nomenclature for the activities that took place on most unregistered racecourses in the 1890s. However in the twentieth century the share of restricted heights in overall programming rapidly declined and the smaller classes of ponies virtually disappeared from racecourses. Further changes to classes and conditions included a gradual increase in the distance of races, and elaborations on the basic product that included the programming of more jumping and 2-year-old races. All of these developments were evidence of the drift towards registered-style racing. By the 1930s ARC meetings closely resembled the post-war STC midweek racing that were to satisfy most of Sydney’s restricted-class racing requirements.

The equine participants of unregistered racing were originally eclectic and motley, although few hauled tradesmen’s carts between meetings, as has been supposed. Those that raced in the larger 14.2, 14.3 and galloway classes were virtually identical to the station-bred horses that were exported as walers, and this association was sometimes cited as a justification of pony racing. However in the twentieth century full-blood thoroughbreds, including the smaller and weaker produce of sires owned by AJC breeders largely replaced the original sturdy half-caste horses.

Few unregistered racehorses became celebrated for their deeds, although a number of restricted heights gallopers were admired by racing men for their abilities to shoulder enormous weights. Few male unregistered competitors had prospects of an early retirement and a stud career, and the majority of horses—male, female or gelding—were raced unsparingly while they remained sound. From 1933 the ARC were at liberty to program for the best horses of registered

147 Three ARC officials—R.S. Turner, Jim Donohoe jr and Jack Burke—subsequently became chief of stewards with the AJC
racing, but the scarcity of Saturday dates in the new regime, and depression-related revenue problems, made doing so largely impractical.

This chapter has demonstrated that the racing orthodoxy has placed a misleading emphasis on pony racing as it was in the 1930s. It was in many regards an atypical period, as AJC rules and supervision applied, and it coincided with an extreme collapse in prize money and attendances, was mostly restricted to Wednesday meetings, and saw a great diminishment in the relevance of restricted-heights racing (at the same time, there has been a tendency overall to place too much significance in the description 'pony racing'). To provide a more accurate memory of pony racing it should be treated as a continuum that extended from 1888 to 1942 whose apotheosis occurred during the independent ARC period of 1906 to 1933.

While some aspects of the conduct and programming of racing discussed above do demonstrate the primacy of Randwick, they provide no basis for discounting the ARC jurisdiction of unregistered racing, which was far from a haphazard enterprise. Indeed the organisational skills required to conduct meetings of up to 19 races of large fields in five hours probably did not exist in registered racing in that time.
Chapter five

Unregistered racecourse enclosure, admission, attendances, social classes and behaviour

This chapter proposes typologies of racegoers at unregistered racecourses, identifies in what numbers they attended meetings, what motivated them to go, and what they did at the racecourse. It examines the revolutionary impact of the enclosed racecourse and variegated admission pricing on attendances and behaviour. The origins, and subsequent establishment, of racecourse enclosure and gate money in Britain are traced and juxtaposed with analogous developments in Sydney. The chapter compares the popularity of pony racing with that of registered racing. It plots the course of admission price changes at registered and unregistered Sydney venues, to determine if pony racing was a discounted admission-cost sport, and if it had a niche market among the ‘working class’, as most commentators have suggested.¹ It analyses photographic images, contemporary commentary and other evidence to identify the constituency of pony racing attendances. Further, the chapter investigates whether a dichotomy existed between the followers of registered and unregistered racing, and if there were behavioural dissimilarities between them. In broad terms it seeks to identify pony racing’s place in the context of the social history of horse racing, which, measured cumulatively, has been the most attended spectator sport in Australia since white occupation.²

¹ See preface page 15
² Horse racing is currently the second most attended gate money sport in Australia on an annual basis, behind Australian Rules Football. When allowance is made for the earlier commencement of commercial horse racing and its ubiquity it must be assumed that in all probability it has accumulated the largest overall attendances. Refer Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4174.0 Sports Attendance, Australia, available at http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/e298cee24565c911ca256def007248ff?OpenDocument. Accessed 4/8/2004
Enclosure

In the second half of the nineteenth century Australian racing rapidly became commercialised. This was consistent with developments in British racing, although Mike Huggins’s recent suggestion that there were quite sophisticated commercial racing ventures in Britain by the early nineteenth century (somewhat earlier than previously supposed) indicates the process began in the Australian colonies many years after it did at the Empire’s centre. However, a rapid catch-up by Australian racing began towards the end of the gold rush decade of the 1850s, to the extent that the widespread implementation of enclosed racecourses began only marginally later than in Britain, where what Huggins described as ‘upper-class turfites’ established, in late Georgian Britain, companies that organised profit-making meetings, which were however still mostly conducted on unenclosed rural racecourses. Most remained once-a-year events, as the inability of agrarian workers of the surrounding districts, who made up most of the attendance, to save sufficient money for more than one day annually of festive indulgence, ruled out an expanded calendar. There were few urban racecourses.

The prerequisite for the full commercialisation of sport was a means by which promoters could exact an entry fee at a venue, and the willingness and ability of a sporting public to pay it. In order to bring about the second condition, promoters had to ensure their attraction could not be witnessed for free, or at least that opportunities to do so were limited and were physically uncomfortable. The enclosure of grounds achieved this, as fencing not only prevented free entry, if it were opaque it precluded people seeing inside. Ideally, horse racing is conducted on large tracts of land, but the cost of enclosing such land is prohibitive, and this was a contributing factor in the determination of promoters to cram early Australian proprietary racecourses into 20 acres, or even less area.

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3 Huggins op. cit. chapter 6; Cashman also contends that in the 1830s and 1840s Australia lacked the ‘middle class entrepreneurs’ who were the ‘leisure providers’ in Britain; He distinguishes these from ‘publican promoters’. Richard Cashman, ‘Violence in Sport in Sydney prior to 1850’ in John O’Hara (ed.), Crowd Violence in Australian Sport (ASSH Studies in Sports History no. 7), Australian Society for Sports History, Campbelltown NSW, 1992, p. 2
4 Huggins op. cit. pp. 10, 18-19, 40
Enclosure, admission, attendances, classes, behaviour

In England, attempts to establish small gate-money courses between 1826 and 1837 failed. Even courses located in extremely dense urban areas, like the Hippodrome in the London suburb of Bayswater, (1829), which seemed to promise an abundance of clientele, were unsuccessful. Most of the enclosed English racecourses that ultimately proved successful were those in the hinterlands of London and large regional centres, such as Manchester.\(^5\)

The first enclosed suburban proprietary course to prove an enduring success was Alexandra Park, London, which opened in 1868 and conducted six meetings a year. It was by British standards a miniscule track, but Londoners used to cramped conditions in most other aspects of their lives did not resent the intimacy of ‘Ally Pally’ (as it was known), and at least it was well appointed and fully fenced. Alexandra Park provided the inspiration for the early Melbourne proprietary courses Croxley and Hurlingham Parks. It was the only racecourse in metropolitan London to survive to the mid-twentieth century.\(^6\)

An entirely different paradigm for nineteenth-century commercialisation of racing, and one that had no parallel in Australia, caused the transformation of the most prestigious and long-established unenclosed English racecourses such as Doncaster, Ascot and Goodwood into modern ventures. The changes made however were intended to facilitate survival rather than to generate profit. The need to provide greater added prize money to compete with the new meetings, and meet other expenses, led to the establishment of grandstand committees and companies, usually by entities independent of the operators of the racecourse, though both consisted mostly of local businessmen. These grandstand companies sold subscriptions and shares that provided a mixture of dividends and viewing rights, while a proportion of the revenue was paid to the race committees.\(^7\) While technically these racecourses remained unenclosed until well into the twentieth century, in the wake of the successful establishment of grandstand reserves, organisers enclosed other sections of the racecourse that racegoers wished to enter, such as the betting ring and the saddling paddock. Meanwhile, many

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5 *Ibid.* p. 152
6 *Ibid.* caption to illustration facing p. 145
7 *Ibid.* p. 151
Enclosure, admission, attendances, classes, behaviour

traditional racecourse operators, who were unable or unwilling to enclose their courses, went out of racing.8

Sandown Park, which opened near London in April 1875, was the first of the fashionable enclosed ‘park’ proprietary racecourses that changed the face of British racing. It was soon joined by a field of imitators—Hurst, Haydock, Kempton and Lyndhurst Parks—mostly situated within a short rail excursion of London.9 These were the paradigms for the larger registered proprietary courses built in Sydney (and Melbourne) from the mid-1880s until the end of the Edwardian era. Several of these, in particular Rosehill in Sydney and Epsom in Melbourne, had capital of many tens of thousands of pounds.

While Sandown quickly became part of the fashionable London ‘Season’, more generally enclosed racecourses turned the focus of race attendances away from fairground-type diversions that had no direct connection to racing, and towards the betting ring and the track. This fundamental change was an even more pronounced outcome of enclosure in Australia, where the transition from open racing caused less dislocation than in Britain, because traditional festival-type meetings in the colonies had shallower roots, and Australian squatters lacked the long tradition of patronage of race meetings of the British landed gentry.10 This lack of baggage enabled enclosed courses to become normative and to spread more quickly than in Britain, despite their slightly later introduction. The major racecourses of the principal or leading Australian clubs including Flemington, Randwick and Morphetville, operated as open courses for only a few years. By 1861 the Albury, Ararat, Avoca, Bendigo, Castlemaine, Geelong and Flemington racecourses had all been ‘fenced in’.11 This categorisation does not necessarily establish that entire courses had been perimeter fenced—this did not happen at Randwick, for example, until the 1880s, although it had for some time been recognized as an enclosed racecourse—but it does indicate that an admission

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8 Ibid. p. 130
9 Ibid. p. 124
11 The Victorian Ruff 1861 op. cit. p. 114. Clubs could only fence enclosures after the Crown had formally issued them a grant for the operation of the course.
charge applied to all points of the course where services were provided. Later, at proprietary courses such as Kensington, perimeter fences were completed before first meetings were held.

Enclosed racecourses in Australia sprang up virtually complete, like prefabricated frontier towns. Public grandstands were a fundamental feature of them that Australian racegoers quickly came to expect free of charge, once they had paid their general admission. Full railing of the important courses soon followed their establishment. Most of Australia’s leading racecourses provided fully realized public facilities and plant before their British counterparts.  

The development of proprietary racing as an almost exclusively metropolitan commodity in Australia represents another significant divergence from the British model (in Sydney the departure was even more marked inasmuch as those racecourses closest to the GPO and accessible by street transport such as trams, rather than railway, proved the more successful). Additionally, Australian proprietary racecourses were also raced on much more often and throughout the year, rather than in rotating seasons, as was the British practice. While in Sydney in the early twentieth century a course such as Epping raced 77 times annually, the busiest English park course was used on perhaps eight or ten occasions.

**Admission**

It is difficult to identify the point in time at which Australian organisers began to charge a general admission to race meetings, although Cashman has suggested that Thomas Shaw took gate money at meetings on Petersham racecourse in the 1840s. O’Hara concluded Shaw charged vehicles and saddle horses rather than a general admission and Hegelby decided this probably applied at most racecourses. Prior to full enclosure, ‘admission fees could be charged but were limited by the degree of fencing already existing; if a fee was charged at all it could only be enforced on those who had to use the access roads, in other words.

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12 Freedman & Lemon *op. cit.* p. 289. Clubs whose courses lay on crown land or public domain sometimes were challenged for levying gate money. When in the 1880s the Parramatta club reorganized its meetings it encountered this problem, as later did the SDPC at the Agricultural Ground. Evidently Parramatta’s tenure of the racecourse was different from Randwick, where neither the government nor the trustees took issue with the AJC charging admission.
Enclosure, admission, attendances, classes, behaviour

horsemen and vehicles.14 Certainly it would have been almost impossible to
charge a general admission before saddling paddocks and betting areas, at least,
were fenced. At Randwick meetings in 1860 the course was unenclosed but a
charge of three guineas applied to entry to the grandstand,15 and by 1862 the
public entering on foot paid what was known as the ‘pedestrian’s shilling.’16

At the earliest Sydney pony meetings around 1890 at the SDPC, Lillie Bridge and
Botany, persons could enter the racecourse precinct at little or no cost. It is not
clear if the Botany track was enclosed, but the main intent of the promoters was to
attract custom to the hotel located within 25 yards of the course. The SDPC was
able to survive with low admission charges because it had few overheads.
However, its modest levies reflected its relatively rude product.

Pony meetings on registered racecourses and at the purpose-built courses from the
mid-1890s onwards provided three distinct levels of accommodation—leger,
paddock and members, with differentiated admission costs. This realization
immediately throws into doubt the assumption that pony racing was the exclusive
province of a homogenous group of impecunious ‘battlers’. By choosing to
reproduce the familiar nomenclature of the AJC in their public enclosures, these
second-wave pony clubs aligned themselves with the class-based traditions,
conventions and discriminations of registered racing.

The basic 10s paddock admission charged at ARC racecourses by 1910 was
approximately one sixth of the male average weekly wage, and far beyond the
rational means of low-income earners.17 Nevertheless more than a third of the

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13 Cashman Paradise of Sport. p. 24, O’Hara A Mug’s Game p. 37
14 Helgeby op. cit. p. 15
15 Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 108
16 Andersen Tattersall’s Club, chapter two, unpaginated. Despite this Painter & Waterhouse
suggest that the ability of the AJC to charge admission was not formalized until the AJC Act 1873
was passed. It seems that the AJC auctioned off the right to collect the money to a third party, in
the manner it did catering rights; Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 112; Hegelby op. cit. p. 16
17 In Melbourne in 1890-91 a skilled artisan might earn £8 a week and a labourer £2 10s. Cannon
The Land Boomers pp. 9, 22-23. In 1898, at the end of five years of drought and depression, the
average male wage provided £98 pa, or £1 10s per week; T.A. Coghlan, Wealth and Progress of
New South Wales 1901-02, Sydney, Government Printer, 1902. p. 836. By 1915 the annual figure
for the Australian male had risen to £146, or almost £3 a week; G.H. Knibbs, The Private Wealth
tradesman could earn more than £6 a week, a semi-skilled hand about £5, and an unskilled
labourer, the male basic wage of around £4; Macintyre op. cit. p. 221
Enclosure, admission, attendances, classes, behaviour

attendance was able to meet the paddock admission at unregistered meetings. Moreover there were hundreds who found a six guinea annual membership, which at Victoria Park entitled entry to all pony, trot and coursing meetings and the members’ grandstand, as well as two complementary ladies’ tickets for each meeting.\(^\text{18}\) The Victoria Park members’ area was a penthouse—small, exclusive and lavishly appointed, in the manner of a gentlemen’s club. It reflected the pretensions of the working-class-born managing director, Joynton Smith, who while welcoming all with the ability to pay to the impressive leger and paddock enclosures, had ensured his well-to-do membership of merchants enjoyed a degree of comfort that at the least matched Randwick.\(^\text{19}\)

At the other end of the admission scale, racegoers could enter the Randwick infield flat, from where they could watch races from positions close to the finishing post on slightly raised ground, for a shilling. There they could bet with licensed bookmakers, and later, the totalisator. The Randwick flat ultimately offered other basic facilities such as toilets and catering and in later years became a free enclosure. Pony companies provided no free areas and soon increased the cost of leger admission; by 1900 it had reached three shillings.\(^\text{20}\)

Those who could not pay to enter the leger were compelled to brave conditions at unsupervised assembly points outside the racecourse grounds known as ‘outers’. The outer, which represented the antithesis of enclosure, was situated on a natural or man-made elevated position that negated the screening effect of the high perimeter racecourse fences. From among the outer rank-and-file, men with more bravado perhaps than ability to meet liabilities set up as unlicensed bookmakers. They were willing to accept any bet no matter how small.\(^\text{21}\)

In Sydney, outers operated beside Brighton, Kensington (on Randwick Oval, usually within a copse of trees which overlooked the turn out of the home

\(^{18}\) Referee 16/11/1911 p. 5
\(^{19}\) Town & Country Journal 15/1/1908 p. 47
\(^{20}\) Although Harry Reed recalled that because Kensington stood on leased crown land, ‘If you came in early and got in the middle of the racecourse they couldn’t really put you out’; Reed interview with Dillon 1980 p. 3
\(^{21}\) It is unclear how betting markets were framed in the outer. Prices were either ‘tic-tacked’ (i.e. relayed by sign language) from the course, or the outer bookmakers set their own, no doubt very compressed, betting markets
In this photograph of Victoria Park in May 1928 the ‘outer’ attendance can be seen on the sand hill above the fourth-last horse.

The enlargement at left shows the one-hundred-or-so patrons of the outer and its location behind the four-furlong post in the back straight—from whence they enjoyed a good view of the start of the race. (source: Hadley Album AJC Library and Archive)
Enclosure, admission, attendances, classes, behaviour

straight), Rosebery (on sand hills later displaced in the construction of The Lakes
golf course), Victoria Park (on a huge mound of cinders near the home turn, or on
sand hills beyond Dowling St, illustrated on page 133a) and Forest Lodge-Epping
(on a rocky prominence at the end of the back straight). Despite their illegality
and lack of disguise, outers established a permanency beyond the dreams of two-
up school operators. The outer at the unregistered Albion Park racecourse,
Brisbane, became such a fixture it boasted its own rickety grandstand. When the
race club raised the fence to block the view, outer regulars added a second deck to
the stand.22 Outers even attracted hawkers. On hot days at seaside Brighton, they
wandered the sand hills of the outer selling ice cream and ginger beer.23

The outlandish behaviour sometimes noted of outer crowds has become
synonymous with pony racing, a putative association that has caused distortion of
the portrayal of the paying clients, as the distinctions between the two have
become blurred over time. The contemporary press itself promoted prejudice. In
1903 the Sydney Daily Telegraph blamed the pony courses for the unwelcome
loungers that gathered at their boundaries: ‘[they] draw to them or their vicinity
the rascality of the metropolitan district—outside the fence “two up schools”
while away the time between races. Card-sharpers, spielers of every type, men of
prey without disguise, gather about them and make the place abhorred by rational
and decent members of society.’24 Yet beyond screening their grounds there was
little the racing companies could do to discourage outers—it was the
responsibility of the police to enforce the street betting laws that these gatherings
flaunted. Nevertheless the human flotsam lapping around the periphery of the
pony racecourses clearly flavoured opinions of the activities and people inside. It
is evident that the outer fulfilled a somewhat similar function as the open heaths
of the unenclosed racecourses of the British tradition.

22 Collins & Thompson op. cit. p. 41
23 Inglis Horsesense p. 140; Outers did not attract the type of gentrified non-payers associated
with the Flemington car park on Melbourne Cup day
24 Daily Telegraph 5/9/1903. The citation as arranged here appears in Painter & Waterhouse op.
cit. p. 46; The late-Victorian press had a range of pejorative apppellations they reserved for the
perceived seedy followers of racing, such as urgers, coat-pullers, fixers, bites, no-hopers, loafers,
magsmen, tick-tackers and bums. This selection is from Buggy op. cit. p. 4
The fabliau character of the outer and its frequenters appealed to recorders of racing folklore such as Bert Lillye and David Hickie. Lillye retold the following story of an enterprising outer bookmaker:

‘taking the knock’ was commonplace on ‘the outer’, so the smart punters always bet with the bookmaker who looked the slowest runner. One desperate bookie turned this to his advantage one day at Kensington...this day the bookie arrived on crutches, with one foot in plaster. Naturally he did a roaring trade and for the first five races...results favoured him. But then the rot set in and favourite after favourite won. Eventually the bookmaker ran out of money, but decided on one desperate gamble against the favourite in the next race. The punters, unaware that there was no more money in the bookie’s bag and realising that he could not run, moved over to the fence and cheered home the favourite. Halfway up the hill in the home straight the favourite raced to a winning lead, but the bookie had moved faster. He had torn off the fake plaster, tossed aside his crutches and was running for dear life...with enough start to deter any punter from giving chase.  

This amusing anecdote is contrapuntal to the obscene death of the Flemington flat bookmaker Donald McLeod, who in 1906, was kicked senseless as he sought to issue IOUs on the result of the Grand National Steeple. Incidents of such riotous behaviour were much more likely in free and largely unsupervised gathering points such as the outer and the flat. For this reason there was an additional element of risk for punters—and bookmakers—who operated on outers, as there was no prospect of appealing to police or betting supervisors for safety or support in the event of trouble.

Table 5.1 illustrates the progress of admission costs at pony racecourses to parity with registered racing. It demonstrates that the assumption of later-day commentators that pony racing was a comparatively inexpensive recreation is true only of the earliest years. In 1923 it was pointed out that ‘you can see a Melbourne Cup run for what it costs you to see the ponies’, a situation ‘Cardigan’ described as ‘rather farcical.’ By 1910 ARC male paddock admission matched that at Randwick, at 10s, and the leger entry exceeded Randwick’s by a shilling (remarkably, admission prices set at Randwick in the 1880s remained unchanged until inflated by the introduction of a Federal Entertainment Tax in 1917). By September 1920, on the introduction of the State

25 Lillye Backstage pp. 84-5
26 Cashman Australian Sport Through Time p. 124
27 However it was also not unknown for under-capitalised leger bookmakers to default after a run of successful favourites, although in the ARC era they were at least required to lodge a £50 surety, or be guaranteed by the bookmakers’ association
28 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1316
Table 5.1 Sydney racecourse admission prices 1890 - 1935

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Racecourse</th>
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<th>SAT</th>
<th>Paddock female</th>
<th>FET</th>
<th>SAT</th>
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<th>FET</th>
<th>SAT</th>
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<th>SAT</th>
<th>Leger total</th>
<th>Flat</th>
<th>Child (paddock)</th>
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<td>1915</td>
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<td>1915</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>10s 10d 3s 2d</td>
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<td>1925</td>
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<td>1930</td>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>10s 11d 3s 2d</td>
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<td>1935</td>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>10s 11d 3s 2d</td>
<td>14s</td>
<td>6s 3d</td>
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source: compiled by author from various racebooks and newspaper advertisements

Notes

1910 admissions for Rosehill include first class train fares to the paddock and second class to the leger
FET = Federal Entertainment Tax (1917); SAT = State Admission Tax (1920); * included trainfare, $ included tram and trainfare

page 193a
Admission Tax, gents paddock prices rose to 14s at Randwick and the ARC, and by the end of the decade had reached 15s, exactly three times the incorrect figure given by Hickie.\(^{30}\) Female paddock entry at ARC racecourses (8s 6d) exceeded the equivalent at Randwick (7s).\(^{31}\)

Consequently the steepling popularity of pony racing from the beginning of World War I cannot be attributed to lower admission prices.\(^{32}\) This conclusion does not suggest however that demand from patrons in the face of admission increases was inflexible—Underhill reported that when the federal and state governments introduced their turnstile taxes many patrons offset the rise by forsaking the paddock for the leger.\(^{33}\) By 1934 the effects of the Depression had forced a reduction in the paddock admission charge of one shilling in response to a continuing decline in attendances. This initiative did not halt the slide however and at the urging of the government the ARC again reduced the cost of entry in 1938. This decision, and the slow improvement in economic circumstances, coincided with a resurgence in attendances before the war.

**Attendances**

Reliable attendance figures are not available for the early years of unregistered racing in Sydney. The only sources are the estimates of journalists. For slightly later periods quantitative indicators, including the strength of tramcar fleets serving the courses, and betting turnover, may be used to supplement the journalists’ estimates.\(^{34}\)

Unregistered pony meetings in the early 1890s at places such as Botany and Liverpool probably drew attendances of between 500 and 1,000 people. The majority of racegoers at Botany meetings were commuters who arrived on the
Enclosure, admission, attendances, classes, behaviour

trams, which ran along the northern shore of Botany Bay. Woodlands racecourse lay a short distance only from Liverpool railway station but the trip from the city was long. The more central courses of that era, Lillie Bridge and the SDPC, attracted patronage that regularly exceeded the 1,000 mark.\(^{35}\)

The coming of Kensington coincided with large increases in pony racing attendances. Its 1893 opening meeting drew an estimated 3,000 people and through 1894 its meetings regularly attracted between 1,500 and 2,000 spectators. The first meeting at old Rosebery Park also attracted between 1,500 and 2,000 curious racegoers, while the opening meeting at Brighton drew 1,000, a healthy crowd given the relative isolation of the location. Rosebery attendances continued to exceed those at Brighton but fell well short of the Kensington standard.\(^{36}\)

Growth in attendances across racing was inevitable in the circumstances of the early twentieth century. The population of Sydney had reached almost half a million by end of the 1890s, growing to about 900,000 by 1921;\(^{37}\) more time was available for leisure, disposable income had increased, and transport infrastructure had improved immeasurably. Nevertheless many found the growth in attendances at unregistered racing astonishing. In 1912 ‘Pilot’ (Dexter) informed the Totalisator Royal Commission hearing ‘the interest in pony racing has increased. The attendances at race meetings like Victoria Park and Kensington are simply phenomenal compared with...ten years ago.’\(^{38}\) He produced betting estimates that suggested pony racing generated the most wagering of any form of horse racing— (£2,250,000) ahead of the AJC and others at Randwick: (£2,200,000) and AJC proprietaries (£1,600,000).\(^{39}\) While the pony racecourses staged many more races than the other bodies, ‘Pilot’s’ figure demonstrates what a large slice of the racing pie they provided. At the same hearing the journalist Spencer Cornford estimated that typical crowds at various Sydney racecourses were: Randwick (AJC) 35,000;

\(^{35}\) Greg Brown credits SDPC trotting meetings in the late 1880s with attendances up to 3,000; Brown \textit{op. cit.} p. 35; the \textit{Referee} estimated the attendance at Lillie Bridge on Saturday evening 25/1/1890 at 2,000; \textit{Referee} 29/1/1890 p. 1
\(^{36}\) re Kensington \textit{Referee} 21/6/1893 p. 5; Rosebery \textit{Referee} 13/3/1895 p. 6; Brighton \textit{Referee} 18/12/1895 p. 5
\(^{38}\) \textit{NSW Parliamentary Papers} 1912 vol. 4 p. 527
\(^{39}\) \textit{Ibid.}
Enclosure, admission, attendances, classes, behaviour

Randwick (Tattersalls) 25,000; Randwick (City Tattersalls) 22,000; Rosehill 6,500; ARC courses 4,000; Moorefield and Canterbury 3,500. He estimated 638,000 people each year attended registered race meetings while 288,000 went to the ponies.\(^{40}\) As Cornford was an official of several proprietary clubs his figures should be afforded some credence, however even as he spoke developments were rendering them out of date. Ascot, in particular, was enjoying such a growth in patronage it moved its delighted chairman Herbert Garratt to propose a toast ‘to pony racing’ in champagne.\(^{41}\) For the first time on 2 February 1913 the Ascot siding could not accommodate all the racecourse trams deployed and some cars were diverted to the old Rosebery Park siding at Gardener’s Road.\(^{42}\)

Pony meeting attendances increased exponentially during World War I. Despite civil and parliamentary calls for the curtailment of spectator sports, and emotive recruitment and conscription propaganda that sought to embarrass male civilian racegoers, unregistered racecourses filled to overflowing. Twice in 1918—at Ascot, and Victoria Park—meetings drew crowds estimated to have exceeded 15,000, and one source credits the pony courses with attendances ‘approximating 17,000.’\(^{43}\) The £1,000 Victoria Park Cup meeting held on New Year’s Day 1918 drew 12,000, even though the traditional Randwick Tattersalls’ meeting was taking place less than a mile distant, and the second conscription referendum, for which votes could evidently be made on-course, was held the same day.\(^{44}\) Attendances grew to such an extent that they far exceeded comfortable capacity of the racecourses, especially the older ones. The photograph of the Kensington meeting of July 1917 reproduced on page 207a illustrates the remarkable density of crowds at ordinary weekly unregistered meetings. The enclosures at Rosebery on 7 December 1918, when the record for an unregistered meeting totalisator turnover was broken again, were so tightly packed that patrons had to move outside the course to find standing room, while at a Kensington Wednesday meeting in 1919 ‘many had no view whatever of the racing, while the density of racegoers in the betting ring made it a matter of difficulty to move from one

\(^{40}\) NSW Parliamentary Papers 1912 vol. 4 p. 524
\(^{41}\) Referee 24/4/1912 p. 5
\(^{42}\) Keenan op. cit. p. 88
\(^{43}\) Barber op. cit. p. 61
\(^{44}\) Referee 16/1/1918 p. 1
Enclosure, admission, attendances, classes, behaviour

bookmaker to another. 45 ‘Argus’, reflecting on the extent of a crowd at Rosebery in November 1919, found it hard to credit that another race meeting had taken place the same afternoon, and described the public enclosures at Ascot in October 1920 as ‘rammed, jambed [sic] and crammed to their utmost.’ 46 The popularity of pony racing can be appreciated when comparison is made with the premiership-deciding match of the 1918 Sydney Rugby League competition, unopposed by rugby union at that stage of the war, which, on a fine Saturday, drew an attendance of 10,000 at the Sydney Cricket Ground. 47

Great interest in pony racing held both midweek and on Saturdays continued immediately after the war. ‘Musket’ estimated that 16,000 people attended the Victoria Park meeting of 14 July 1920, when the totalisator took more than £18,000. 48 An even larger number must have attended an Ascot meeting some weeks earlier where punters invested £23,000. 49 Keenan suggested that the number of trams deployed for pony racecourse duty peaked between May and October 1923. He nominated the Prince of Wales’ birthday meeting in late June, on which 72 cars made the outbound journey before being laid up for the return leg, on which another 48 cars supplemented them, as the busiest ever. However in February 1934 the Assistant Chief Tramway Commissioner asserted several deployments had exceeded these figures, including that for an Ascot meeting, which had been serviced by 180 carloads (out and back) and Kensington by a peak of 136 cars. 50 The Ascot figures indicate an attendance of about 15,000 to which must be added several thousand who arrived by other means. 51

45 Referee 11/12/1918 pp. 1,5; re Kensington Referee 13/8/1919 p. 6. The extremely cramped conditions seem to have been accepted in good spirit by unregistered racegoers
47 Ian Heads, South Sydney: Pride of the League, Melbourne, Lothian, 2000, p. 29
48 Turnover is an indicator of attendances but there are other factors which can influence totalisator turnover, such as the number of races on the program, the size of the fields, whether open betting races or short-priced favourites predominated, etc.
49 Referee 21/7/1920 p. 6
51 These figures are at odds with Joe Andersen’s estimation that by the 1920s pony crowds averaged about 8,000. Perhaps they were based on Underhill’s estimates given at the 1923 Pony racing Select Committee. Underhill said an average meeting during the period 1923-24, based on ticket sales, would muster about 2,100 to the paddock and 4,150 to the leger; a total of 6,250. This represents an enormous decline from the late war years. Possibly Underhill’s figures are explained by the impact of the POTA strike of that year. NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 pp. 787, 829; Andersen Winners Can Laugh p. 135
In 1923 the AJC chairman Colin Stephen estimated that attendances at suburban meetings (i.e., registered proprietary meetings) had quadrupled in the first two decades of the twentieth-century. Nevertheless, from the early 1900s until the 1920s pony race attendances grew relatively faster than those at registered meetings. The growth differential between the lesser registered proprietary clubs and the ARC was widest during World War I, when it was first said that pony racing was more popular than horse racing on Saturdays. ‘Registered racing has gone ahead in many respects during the past few years, but its progress everywhere has been slow by comparison with that of unregistered racing,’ commented the Referee in 1918. In 1919 it noted that ‘clash’ Saturdays provided the best test of popularity and ‘as a rule nowadays the average registered club in Sydney suffers when opposed by one of the unregistered division,’ and ‘some of the pony clubs would find it extremely difficult to accommodate racegoers if there were no registered racing on Saturdays [in opposition].’ It attributed pony racing’s ascendancy to the ARC’s efficient administration: ‘close attention to all matters of racing detail, have assisted unregistered racing to get such a strong hold that in the matter of attendance it scores against proprietary registered racing when there is a clash.’ Clash meetings were of such concern to the registered proprietary clubs that they petitioned the AJC for relief, which referred the matter to the Chief Secretary, without any immediate effect.

On occasions even midweek ARC meetings exceeded turnover at registered Saturday programs. In June 1917 a Kensington Monday meeting generated £5,402, which exceeded the amount bet (£4,460) at Rosehill, the leading proprietary club, two days earlier. At a Wednesday meeting at Victoria Park on 15 June 1921, punters invested £16,701 10s on the totalisator. The following Saturday at a non-clash Canterbury meeting, what was described as ‘an almost, if not a record, crowd’ for that course bet £15,401 15s on the machine. Data collated by the Sportsman for the month of December 1919 illustrate the relativities of betting turnovers at Sydney racecourses:

52 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 829
53 Referee 16/1/1918 p. 1
55 Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 63
56 Referee 27/6/1917 p. 1
Table 5.2 totalisator turnovers December 1919

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of meetings</th>
<th>Number of meetings</th>
<th>When conducted</th>
<th>Average totalisator turnover</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Randwick summer carnival</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Public holidays</td>
<td>£45,654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered proprietary</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Wednesdays and Saturdays</td>
<td>£14,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered proprietary</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Saturdays</td>
<td>£6,512</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trotting</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Mondays</td>
<td>£3,113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Source: Sydney Sportsman 14/1/1920 p. 1*

The ARC clubs average turnovers for the month more than doubled that of the AJC proprietaries, despite the latter having the advantage of racing exclusively on Saturdays.

By 1918, unregistered meetings turnover had grown to the extent that an Ascot meeting on 31 August held a non-Randwick record of £18,264 10s. At Ascot on 31 March 1920 a new record of £23,099 was set but this was exceeded in turn at the 1921 Victoria Park Prince of Wales birthday meeting, when the totalisator held remarkable takings of £29,279 15s, a figure comparable with the Tattersalls meetings at Randwick. At the corresponding meeting in 1920 the attendance was estimated at 25,000 by Sydney Sportsman and 30,000 by Smith’s Weekly, which was identified as the largest ever turnout at a New South Wales racecourse other than Randwick. As the 1921 meeting turnover was the larger its attendance may have even exceeded the 1920 figure. It is very probable that these meetings represent the high-water marks of unregistered racing’s popular appeal, and they were not to be exceeded away from Randwick before those held at Rosehill during World War II, at a time when the number of race days was severally restricted.

What factors, in addition to those identified by the Referee, might have caused many to prefer pony racing to the product of the registered suburban racecourses? After all, the registered proprietaries enjoyed the considerable advantage of the

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57 Referee 4/9/1918 p. 4
58 Referee 31/3/1920 p. 6, 29/6/1921 p. 6
participation of the much higher-profile AJC jockeys and trainers at their courses, as well as some of the best horses, although the absolute cream was mainly saved for Randwick. Possessing close-to-city locations was an important factor in favour of pony racing, but it is significant that, in the Referee’s estimation, during 1889-90 when both nascent pony meetings and horse racing were held at Rosehill and Canterbury, the former often drew larger attendances.\(^\text{60}\)

The advantage in overall attendances that ARC pony racing enjoyed was in part due to the disproportionate drawing power of its leger reserves; why that should have been so is not clear, as an identical or even greater admission was charged as in registered racing. A stronger betting ring in ARC leger enclosures, and at some, better facilities, may have been factors. And while it may have been true that ‘long programmes are not conducive to prosperity among backers’,\(^\text{61}\) the double-figure fixtures provided by the ARC appealed to racegoers as better value-for-money than the five or six races run at registered meetings, in particular to those avid followers with insatiable appetites for racing and gambling. A person of this humour must have been responsible for the following lines, written at the peak of pony racing’s popularity:

On race days from the city far,
I’d travel with some dear old cronies,
All eager as true sportsmen are,
To win a fortune on the ponies.

My cobbers talked of nought but horse—
Of horse at Redfern, horse at Mascot,
Nor ceased they till we reached the course,
To revel in the joys of Ascot.\(^\text{62}\)

The mounting anticipation of the committed horseplayer as he approached a racecourse on race day, anticipating the catharsis of the first bet, was unmatched in the world of spectator sports.

**Social class and gender**

In England, the emergence of commercialisation and proprietary racecourses changed the constituency of racing. ‘Park’ racecourses had a smaller population

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\(^{60}\) *Referee* 15/1/1890 p. 1
\(^{61}\) *Sydney Sportsman* 12/1/1926 p. 6
of patrons but benefited from a more regular hard-core clientele among it. Vamplew suggested that Sandown was an outstanding success because it attracted women and the urbanised working class to its meetings, two sectors that hitherto had been lightly represented in the demographics of most racecourses. Yet Sandown was rather an aberration.63 The females it attracted were mostly of the privileged classes, escorted by males who were members of the club. It did not at all represent typical British enclosed racecourses as they came to be. For ladies the attraction of Sandown was its clubs, or discreet reserves, for there in a respectable environment they could socialize with their peers. Vamplew gave less reason why he believed the working class had became an important factor, or even if its attendance was encouraged: ‘it may be that the Sandown Park executive was not attempting to tap the working-class market in any depth, since its minimum admission charge before 1914 was never below half a crown,’ he surmised. Possibly Sandown sought to exclude the less restrained working-class elements accustomed to paying sixpence to barrack at professional football matches.64

At the earliest Australian pony meetings the importance of the racing and betting was paramount and they provided none of the carnival aspects of once-a-year regional meetings in the English rural tradition, such as numerous food and drink booths, amusements and sideshows, fighting, gaming and picnicking, which had likewise proven attractive to young revelers, females, children and men with their families in the early Australian colonial period.65 The nascent pony meetings of Sydney and Melbourne, with their primitive infrastructure and lack of auxiliary services in fact represent the most complete adoption of the ethos and practices of the model enclosed racecourse, as a venue for gambling, and little else. Consequently they attracted a highly specialized clientele.

There was a high degree of homogeneity among the followers of early Sydney pony racing. Most were initiates of the brethren known as ‘sportsmen’, a

62 Sydney Sportsman 5/1/1918 p. 6
63 Vamplew The Turf pp. 39-40; Huggins argues that at other enclosed British racecourses there was an increase in the relative representation of males, gamblers and regular followers of the turf at the expense of women (and children). Huggins interpretation is consistent with the Australian experience of proprietary racing. Huggins op. cit. p. 124
64 Refer Vamplew The Turf p. 41
65 Hegelby op. cit. p. 24
somewhat dubious epithet of the era whose origins lay in traditional British field sports such as hunting and riding, but which had come to be applied (often ironically) to speculators on the turf and other handicapped gambling mediums, the physiology of many of whom suggested they took no active part in any sport. They were the successors of ‘the fancy’ of convict Sydney, who in addition to horse racing had sought to support themselves by betting on boxing and cockfighting contests.\textsuperscript{66} Before the birth of regular proprietary racing in the 1880s, during the week sportsmen concentrated on pedestrian and cycling race meetings, and frequented harbourside hotels to witness and discuss professional sculling events, but they largely abandoned these for the concentration of gambling activity available at the racecourse. The ‘Sportsman’ was the target market of the eponymous sporting weeklies published in Melbourne and later Sydney.

The early devotees of unregistered racing were relatively small in number; they were well known to each other and, like larrikins, affected something of a manner of dress—‘hard-hitter’ felt hats, short, tight coats, moustaches and sometimes riding leggings. The racing journalist ‘Pilot’ observed, ‘There is very seldom any change amongst the patrons [of pony racing]…it is the same old contingent week after week, and the only wonder is where they get the money to keep going’\textsuperscript{67} (Gould similarly recounted that hundreds of men seemed to permanently follow racing in Sydney and that ‘how they live is a mystery to most people’).\textsuperscript{68} Many of the contingent, the more successful of which might today be termed professional punters, sought to make at least part of their living from gambling, and no doubt attended most registered Saturday meetings as well as pony meetings. ‘Early Bird’, compared their constancy with the regular habits of religious congregations—sometimes he heard the cry ‘church is out’ as the contents of the early midweek racecourses spewed from the exits after the last race, jockeying for tram or train seats.\textsuperscript{69}

Victorian and Edwardian pony followers were enthusiastic and persistent gamblers, although by modern standards they were starved of form data, as

\textsuperscript{66} Sydney Gazette 21/2/1833 cited in Waterhouse Private Pleasures p. 23
\textsuperscript{67} Referee 28/8/1895 p. 1
\textsuperscript{68} Gould op. cit. p. 9
\textsuperscript{69} Referee 22/7/1891 p. 1
Enclosure, admission, attendances, classes, behaviour

chapter three demonstrated. Despite this disadvantage, they were well educated in the nuances of their sport, expert in the use of arcane racecourse odds and fractions and could quickly calculate the return on a bet, which enabled them to verify the figures called by bookmakers as they scribbled betting tickets. They knew the relative abilities of jockeys and the strike rates (in broad terms) of stables; many knew trainers, big punters and commission agents by sight, and which of them could be followed with confidence in the event of a betting plunge. For the well-connected, access to information from stable insiders helped make up for the lack of objective data.

Analysis of unregistered pony racing attendances

Martin Sharp has analysed photographs of early twentieth-century attendances at cricket matches at the SCG and suburban rugby matches, as a means of proposing socio-economic stratifications that existed in different parts of the ground.70 Sharp examined the headwear of the people of the photographs, on the basis of the theory that hats are reliable indicators of the status groups, and in some cases the occupations, of their wearers.71 Male members of upper-level status groups monopolized the ownership of the shiny top hat, and even they mainly kept them for important formal occasions, often preferring the less formal Homburg for sports attire. Bowler hats were generally a respectable middle-class item (shunned, for example, by John Wren) and were even acceptable to the more progressive among the British aristocracy and the privileged in Australia. The boater or straw hat, which was particularly favoured during the warmer months, was also a decidedly middle-status-group style. It enjoyed a particular currency among male clerical workers. The Panama also became popular with this grouping before World War I, although it was regarded as less appropriate for the office.72

70 Martin Sharp, “A Degenerate Race”: Cricket and Rugby Crowds in Sydney 1890-1912’, Sporting Traditions, May, 1988, No. 2, Australian Society for Sports History, Campbelltown NSW, pp. 134-149. The photographs, which do not appear with the article, seem to have been taken in the early twentieth century, although no dates are provided
71 Sharp op. cit. p. 136
72 Sharp draws this conclusion about the popularity of boaters with clerks based on the evidence presented in Eric Russell, Victorian and Edwardian Sydney from Old photographs, Sydney, John Ferguson, 1975; see also Elizabeth Scandrett, Breeches & Bustles: an Illustrated History of Clothes Worn in Australia, 1788-1914, Lilydale, Vic., Pioneer Design Studio, 1978 and Cedric Flower, Clothes in Australia: a Pictorial History, 1788-1980, Kenthurst, N.S.W, Kangaroo Press, 1984, for general discussion of the association between different sectors of society and particular headwear and other apparel. For discussion of the association of hats and classes refer Hilda
Identification of poorer socio-economic groupings in Australia is more difficult than in the United Kingdom, where the cloth cap was virtually *de rigueur* for workers, and formed a readily identifiable mantle over fans on the terraces at football matches. The cloth cap *en masse* is mostly absent in Australian images of large gatherings of the period, although there are exceptions. Strikers, presumably miners, photographed at a meeting at Broken Hill in 1909 almost all wear cloth caps. In horse racing strappers and stable hands often signalled their subservient status by wearing caps.\(^{73}\)

Sharp found that top hats and bowlers dominated the SCG Members Stand photographs. The Northern Stand, situated next to the Members’ at the fashionable Paddington end of the ground, was ‘inhabited’ by bowler and boaters (as well as well-dressed women). The Brewongle Stand—which Sharp classified as ‘similarly well to do’—was largely the preserve of the boater. Outer-ground patrons were less easily classified. Sharp identified boater-wearers and ‘less elaborately dressed workers’ in roughly equal numbers, as well as the odd bowler-wearer.\(^{74}\) He does not explain how he identified workers, but presumably he counted those that were either bareheaded or wearing headwear he judged of plebeian appearance. The only other possible identifiers, in the circumstances, may have been shirtsleeves, or the absence of collars and neckties. Sharp compiled a socio-economic map of the ground from his analysis.

Sharp’s methodology can be applied to photographs of unregistered and proprietary racing attendances, and extended upon, for unlike the cricket attendances, who were mainly seated in stands or reclining on the Hill and thus had their lower bodies obscured, the pony racegoers are mostly captured standing or walking.

\(^{73}\) Connell & Irving, *op. cit.* p. 194. Affluent golfers and hunters often wore cloth caps with their Norfolk jackets, but these had a different appearance to the cap of the English worker

\(^{74}\) Sharp *op. cit.* p. 137
Enclosure, admission, attendances, classes, behaviour

Photographic analysis of proprietary racing attendances

To assist the visual analysis that follows the photographs relating to the text have been annotated thus: F denotes a female; S a serviceman; W a person of working-class appearance; SP a person of ‘sportsman’ appearance; Y a youth; H identifies a hardhitter or bowler hat; B a Boater; P a Panama. Other specific annotations are identified in the text.

Rosehill

The photograph of Rosehill on page 205a is probably from the early 1890s. Although it is not apparent if it was taken during a registered meeting or an unregistered pony meeting, it contains a predominance of the inveterate racegoers of the sportsmen-type that have been associated in this work with the early period of pony racing. They are wearing, almost universally, bowler or hard-hitter hats and tight-fitting, short coats. This was not uncommon apparel at that time, but followers of the turf, including the Earl of Derby and Edward, the Prince of Wales, who rather popularised the look among them, particularly favoured it. 75

Kensington (mid 1890s)

The photograph of Kensington (at page 205b) was taken several years after the Rosehill image. Judging by the protective frames that are in place around the small trees, and the generally pristine appearance of the infrastructure, it may have been taken at a very early meeting, although the full occupation of the shady seat below the fig at centre suggests a warmer afternoon than July (the month Kensington opened). The man leading the horse somewhat resembles Richard Wootton, the trainer of the first winner at Kensington. The view is of the section of the paddock reserve behind the official stand, one of the quieter zones on a racecourse. The rather plain horse in the picture, which has recently raced, is parading on the path between the raceday stalls at left and the saddling paddock, whose northeastern perimeter is defined by the picket fence at right.

Enclosure, admission, attendances, social classes behaviour

(Illustration 5.3) The paddock enclosure at Kensington racecourse circa 1896. The extensive perimeter fencing is evident. (source: University of New South Wales Archive)
Enclosure, admission, attendances, classes, behaviour

The dress of the racegoers is less homogenous than of those at the Rosehill meeting. The bowler hat has still the numerical ascendancy, but there are several straw boaters, what appears to be a high hat, some felt hats of a homburg-like style, and several rather shapeless soft felt hats. Their owners are young men of a vaguely larrikinish appearance.

There are in fact several youths and boys captured in the photograph. Two are involved in commercial activities; one is in uniform (Y) and resembles a commissionaire or delivery boy. The other, of working-class appearance (W), is manning a stall vending fruit or pies, but has turned his back on it to either admire the horse or to stare at the photographer. There are one or two men of the sportsman type present, in particular the individual in the swallow-tail coat and rakishly tilted bowler, and his walrus-mustached companion.

Brighton (circa 1900)

The photograph of Brighton on page 206a shows the infield enclosure, which cost just one shilling to enter. The figures in the foreground, which appear rather downcast, may be moving to an exit following the last race. The figures at left are wearing ties and are soberly dressed, but the three at right (W1, W2, W3) and background (W) may be representatives of the disreputable type that were referred to by Crick and Farthing (see below) as habituates of the secondary pony racecourses that existed before the coming of the ARC. All lack neckties; W1 is in shirtsleeves and braces, while W1 and W2 are wearing workingmen’s (or larrikin’s) flared trousers. Their headwear also appears to be of a rather jaunty style. Rather surprisingly, one female figure can be identified in the background of the photograph.

Victoria Park, Kensington, Ascot and Rosebery 1916-1918

A remarkable attendance in the leger enclosure at Victoria Park in December 1916 is captured in the photograph on page 206b, which appears to have been taken immediately after a race, the result of which has set most studying their race books. The photograph has been taken at the end of the leger that was most distant from facilities and the winning post, which is usually less well frequented.
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(Illustration 5.4) Part of the attendance at the Brighton racecourse infield or flat, circa 1900. The three figures at right may represent the rougher element present at the lesser pony racecourses commented on by contemporary commentators. (source: A Place of Pleasure: Some Notes on Lady Robinson’s Beach, State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales)
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(Illustration 5.5) The st. leger enclosure at Victoria Park racecourse on Saturday 2 December 1916. Some hard studying of race books is taking place. (source: Referee 6/12/1916, State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales).
The prevalence of boaters is indicative of summertime conditions and perhaps a large white-collar worker presence. There are four bowlers discernable, and most of the rest of the men are wearing felt hats. There are no men in uniform. A solitary female figure can be identified, an indication that, at that time, the leger was still definitely off-limits to ladies. Despite it being the cheaper enclosure and high summer, suits and high collars are very evident. It is here in the leger, if there were an overt working-class presence on the racecourse, that it would be expected to manifest itself. In fact there are four (distinguishable) figures that might be posited as having a working class cut; a figure in a cloth cap (marked W1 in the photograph) and a tieless man in a vest wearing a floppy felt hat (W2), who has something of the appearance of the orthodox paradigm of pony racegoers proposed in the preface. The other workmen types are annotated W3 and W4.

The photographs taken from the Kensington saddling paddock in 1917 that are reproduced on page 207a, and in particular the image at the top of page, are remarkable for the density of the crowd in both the paddock and the leger, which rivals anything seen at a Melbourne Cup. One man has climbed atop the picket fence (X), perhaps to escape the crowd-squeeze. Several females can be identified, and two members of the AIF are leaning on the birdcage fence.

The 1917 photograph of Victoria Park on page 207b could easily be mistaken for a contemporary panorama of Randwick racecourse. In the foreground are racegoers in somewhat looser formation than in the other photographs in this selection, moving from the paddock lawn to the betting ring and other facilities at the rear of the stand, but this circumstance allows closer analysis. The people depicted are very well dressed. The men are mostly wearing three-piece suits and an array of fashionable hats including several panamas and a number of boaters. Predominant however are the fedora-style felt hats with flat, wide brims and prominent high hat bands that were often favoured in that period by the rural well-to-do. The women annotated ‘F’ below the stanchions of the grandstand are dressed sumptuously in picture hats, boas and full-length gowns. A solitary boy is captured, demonstrating the Victoria Park club’s divergence from the ARC’s ‘no children’ policy (see below).
An incredibly dense crowd fills both the leger and paddock reserves at Kensington racecourse in October 1917. The roof of the paddock grandstand had lifted off during a storm some weeks previously. The press box is the enclosed structure at right, on the verandah of which a man is astride the rail. Two soldiers in slouch hats lean on the picket fence of the saddling enclosure. Several females are among the paddock attendance (source: the Referee October 1917 State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales)

(Illustration 5.6)

(Illustration 5.7) Kensington saddling paddock July 1917 (source: Referee 25/7/1917, State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales)
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(Illustration 5.8) The paddock enclosure Victoria Park Saturday 20 October 1917 (source: Referee 24/10/1917, State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales)
The paddock-betting ring, located on the lawn before the grandstand, is the subject in the photograph (page 208a) of what a *Referee* sub-editor described as a ‘record crowd’ at Ascot in June 1918. There are approximately 100 bookmakers’ stands ranked in five rows, between which trawl schools of punters. Again, it would not be expected that many women would frequent this space, but four bold ladies can be seen on the northern fringe of the ring. Two members of the AIF—one wearing a slouch hat and the other a peaked service cap—can be identified. There are one or two boaters (and a racy Panama with the brim curled up on one side favoured by a bookmaker), but their relative small number is probably due to the winter season. There is one tieless man (W1) in the centre of the picture who contrasts with the well-dressed crowd surrounding him. The once-standard bowler hat has all but disappeared; replaced for the most part by felt hats. This was a portent of fashion to come. In the 1920s the heterogeneous deployment of headwear found in these photographs vanished as Trilby and the Fedora felts were adopted for social and work wear by all status and socio-economic groups. The homogenous appearance of male racegoers in that era is evident in the image taken from a newsreel shot at Kensington reproduced on page 209a.\(^{76}\)

Two unusual events have been captured in the next photograph on page 208b, which was taken at Rosebery in December 1918. One of the jockeys (J) has lost his irons and is riding ‘straightback’, while a solitary figure in the saddling paddock (white A), who is presumably an ARC official and perhaps Jack Underhill, has propped his back against the judge’s box, and is looking away from the finish. This is rather surprising behaviour.

In general commentary on the content of this selection of photographs, it can be asserted that, with the partial exception of the Rosehill ‘sportsmen’ and Brighton infielders, each of the attendances (in particular those taken during World War I) bear a respectable middle-class appearance, and in the case of the 1917 Victoria Park paddock, the dress is decidedly affluent. There seems to be less differentiation between the paddock and leger enclosures than Sharp identified.

\(^{76}\) *Large Crowds attend the Associated Pony Racing club’s meeting: Sydney N.S.W (1924)* (film), Screensound Australia Archive, title number 240982, access number SOV002003(1)
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(Illustration 5.9) The paddock attendance, Ascot racecourse June 1918. Five rows of bookmakers are in operation. The totalisator is situated between the leger and paddock grandstands (source: Referee 19 June 1918, State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales)
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(Illustration 5.10) The paddock is in the foreground of this photograph of Rosebery taken on Saturday 7 December 1918, when a record crowd attended. The leger stand and totalisator are in the distance. The jockey of the horse finishing sixth (J) has lost his irons. The judge is leaning out of his box, holding binoculars to his eyes, is viewing the finish. The ARC official on the other side of the box (white A) is looking the other way. (source: Referee 11/12/1918, State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales)
between the Paddington end of the SCG and the Hill. The headwear evident in the racing photographs, if the conclusions of specialists in that area of research are correct, supports a reading of self-conscious respectability for the pony racegoers captured. Even if it be argued that in this era people tended to overdress when going to the races, indicating status that possibly exceeded that granted their stations in life, it must then be conceded that attendance at unregistered meetings was regarded as an occasion at which it was necessary to ‘keep up appearances’, no less so than at registered meetings. At any rate the images refute the orthodox suggestion that the ARC pony racecourses were exclusively the haunts of an insalubrious ‘needy and greedy’.

Midweek attendances

A particularly intriguing aspect of the analysis of class and unregistered racing is the conundrum posed by the constituency of midweek attendances. The fulminations of establishment figures add spice to the question. Adrian Knox damned midweek racing for luring ‘loafing men’ away from work. Similarly Thomas Willis, who wrote for the antagonistic *Sydney Mail*, averred in 1900 that ‘it is not so much the breed of horses you have to consider as the breed of men, and the class of men that pony racing lets in—men who ought to be at work; a lot of brats of boys and women and children go to these pony meetings.’

At the beginning of the next severe economic depression, L.K.S. McKinnon observed there were ‘working men who lose a day’s work to attend’ pony meetings. The assertions of Knox, Willis and McKinnon suggest behaviour among workers that is difficult to credit, for while gamblers, notoriously, do not always make decisions in their own best interests, it is difficult to believe many waged labourers would turn down work for the double jeopardy (loss of pay, likely loss of bank) that a day’s racing represented, especially in the midst of the crippling depression. The available data suggests Willis’s assessment of the attendance of women and children was a gross exaggeration, but the venom evident in his statement is instructive. The Australian Government did not begin making cash unemployment benefit payments until 1944, by when proprietary racing in Sydney was virtually defunct. Very few of the unemployed can have paid to enter race meetings.

77 For Knox’s ‘loafing men’ comment refer Painter & Waterhouse *op. cit.* p. 39; Willis refer *NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly* 1900 vol. 6 p. 1200; my italics.

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(Illustration 5.11) A paddock attendance at Kensington of the early 1920s. Soft felt hats of Fedora style and sac suits are almost universal among the males, giving the gathering a very homogenous appearance. (source: Mayfair Gazette [newsreel], Large Attendances at ARC meeting, Sydney, Screensound Australia Film Archives)
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depressions of the 1890s and 1930s. Nevertheless, off-the-cuff generalizations such as these, made by influential men who notwithstanding had probably never attended a pony meeting, have contributed to unregistered racing’s depiction as a sport of labourers and lower tradesmen.  

Henry Harris, who assessed the public at meetings with the keen eye of a racing company director, did not accept that Sydney racegoers were divided into mutually exclusive registered and unregistered camps. He insisted that the people at Kensington were identical to those at Randwick, except for the addition of retail trade workers who received Wednesday as their half-holiday rather than Saturday. ‘From my experience, you will see a crowd there [at Kensington] as good, as cleanly [sic], and as tidy as on any racecourse in the colony,’ he insisted.  

It is certain that many of the people who attended every registered Saturday meeting, and who were not committed to regular employment, including large and habitual gamblers such as Rufe Naylor, Andy Tindall, Ned ‘Skinny’ Moss and Eric Connelly, also attended unregistered midweek meetings. There is support for this interpretation in the observation that attendances at unregistered meetings were markedly smaller around Melbourne Cup time; the inference is that many ARC regulars went south for the spring carnival. Moreover I believe, on the strength of the photographic analysis undertaken above, and other evidence, that unregistered meetings were clearly not anathema to a large proportion of the middle class who had flexible employment commitments. In 1896 the Town and Country Journal had suggested that while pony racing was not favoured by the ‘aristocratic portion’, it ‘meets with a lot of patronage and attention from the

78 Mackinnon Melbourne Sun 21/8/1929  
79 Somewhat paradoxically, midweek racing in the earlier colonial period has been said to have been ‘organised for the leisured elite’; see Wray Vamplew, ‘Australians and sport’, in Wray Vamplew and Brian Stoddart (eds), Sport in Australia: A Social History, Cambridge University, 1994, p. 14  
80 NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1270, 1272. When Edgar Britt first experienced pony crowds thirty years after Harris made his statement, the jockey found them little different from those at other racecourses; Britt interview with Peake March 2000  
81 Sydney Sportsman 10/11/1920 p. 6
middling classes.' Huggins has argued that the attitude of the middle class, at least in Britain, was much less homogenized (that is, less universally opposed to racing in general) than has previously been supposed.

Many regular pony patrons of the southern Sydney courses evidently lived in the affluent Eastern Suburbs. Harry Reed was asked if Kensington racecourse ‘would have attracted a certain type of person or persons from a certain area. Was it a local’s racecourse?’ He replied no and added that many racegoers came from Bondi Junction by tram and even in hansom cabs. In 1920 A.B. Paterson commented on how the Kensington carriage paddock was ‘packed with expensive motor cars,’ which obviously did not belong to the indigent locals of Redfern or Surry Hills. There was one Sydney racecourse only with a particular local following. The residents of the working-class suburbs around Lillie Bridge came to regard it with the same familiarity they had for the corner public house. Many of them never attended meetings at other racecourse. This, however, did not apply to the ARC courses.

Shift workers also contributed to ARC midweek attendances, as did workers whose employment pattern was ‘broken’; that is, those who experienced periods

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82 Town & Country Journal 15/8/1896 p. 37. Assumptions embodied in the orthodoxy that pony racecourses were inappropriate venues for respectable persons are further challenged by visits paid them by touring English sports teams. Stoddart’s 1894 English Ashes team, both the amateurs and the players, celebrated their defeat of the Australians at the SCG the previous afternoon at a Kensington Wednesday meeting. On 27 November 1907 the Rosebery club entertained the representatives of the Marlylebone Cricket Club on its new racecourse, and the Englishmen paid another visit there on 23 February 1912. On 1 June 1910 Joynton Smith hosted members of the Northern Rugby Union team at Victoria Park, and after the war several members of the 1920 team attended a Wednesday meeting, once more at Kensington. Visits by the King’s representative in New South Wales provided even better publicity for the pony entrepreneurs. In 1903 New South Wales Governor Sir Harry Rawson and his party visited the premier Kensington racecourse. In 1926 Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair made a similar vice-regal visit to Victoria Park, and after the war several members of the 1920 team attended a Wednesday meeting, run to mark the passing of Jim Donohoe Snr. In 1920 the Prince of Wales himself attended the Prince of Wales Stakes program at Victoria Park. No doubt these sporting and vice-regal visitors were the invited guests of the race clubs; Referee 26/12/1894 p. 1, 21/10/1903 p. 5; 27/11/1907 p. 5, 22/2/1912 p. 5, 2/6/1920 p. 6; re JD Cup Screensound Australia Archives, film, Governor visits Victoria Park, title number 66986, access number AVC0012116[1]; Sydney Sportsman 14/12/1926 pp. 2, 6, re visit by Prince of Wales refer Sydney Sportsman 23/6/1920 p. 6
83 Huggins op. cit. p. 11
84 Reed interview with Dillon 1980 p. 4
85 Sydney Sportsman 25/8/1894 p. 1
86 Referee 21/3/1894 p. 5. The peculiar relationship of the Glebe racecourse with the locality was still apparent until the late twentieth century when most racing followers abandoned the track for hotels and clubs.
of seasonal unemployment between fixed-term jobs. This category included a considerable percentage of the working population, including well-paid categories such as artisans and stevedores. However, in the ARC era the best-placed group to attend mid-week race meetings, apart from retail workers, was the growing band of clerks and government employees based in the city and it is logical to deduce their presence in large numbers. They could join a tram at Bent St or Railway Square at lunchtime and be on course in time for the second or third race. Their morning commuting time enabled the reading of press anticipations, and these no doubt occasionally whet an appetite that found the prospect of an afternoon’s racing more appealing than hard slog over a ledger. Their smart office attire also fits the appearance profiles proposed by the Referee photographs. There is the problem of understanding how they would have attained leave for the afternoon to attend the races, as paid recreation and sick leaves either lay in the future or the provisions were ungenerous, and flexible working hours did not exist, but this problem applies equally to most other groups whose members were both compelled to work a full day and had sufficient income to enter the racecourse (or indeed Sharp’s SCG), and yet, seemingly, where there was a will there was a way, as large numbers clearly did manage it.

Men from the lower-middle classes, one generation removed from livelihoods inevitably involving manual labour, who had been fitted for office work by the reforms that had brought compulsory education in the later-Victorian era, filled most of the new clerical positions. Peter Stearns has suggested:

The lower middle class is best understood as a new group, separate from older propertied groups. It was distinctly not working class, either in conditions or aspirations, though individuals and groups...might sympathise with the labour movement. White-collar work appealed to the age-old distinction between manual and nonmanual labour. Clerks were able to dress well on the job; indeed they were typically required to dress rather formally.

The expansion in their number and general extension of literacy in the population had cost those who worked in offices some of their previous status. Beverley Kingston has pointed out ‘In 1860 clerical workers were a privileged group living close to the bourgeoisie. By 1900 they, along with all others who depended on

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87 Macintyre op. cit. p. 46
89 Stearns op. cit. pp. 228-29
their education and good manners for their jobs were more respectable but not necessarily as well paid as the working classes.\footnote{90} Less imbued with notions of a work ethic, more likely to read Conan Doyle than John Bunyan or Adam Smith, they were less absorbed by vocation than the middle class, and even more addicted to the new cult of leisure.\footnote{91} To many of them the racecourse was a very compelling space.

After the boom years of World War I and the early 1920s, attendances at pony meetings plateaued and thereafter began a gradual decline. The distinctions made previously between registered and unregistered racing product became increasingly less valid as the generation of gambling sportsmen thinned and was replaced by a larger pool of more casual and less erudite followers of pony racing, who attended meetings less religiously. Following AJC registration, the residual differences between Wednesday (mainly ARC) and Saturday (mainly AJC) attendances were those dictated by work commitments or indeed the ability to find work. The \textit{Workers Weekly} spoke of those incarcerated in unemployed camps on Botany Bay being subjected to ‘the disdainful glances of a well-fed, well-dressed bourgeoisie as they pass on their way to Moorefield or Ascot race courses.’\footnote{92}

\textbf{Women, children and racing}

The number of women present on Australian racecourses and the welcome afforded them has fluctuated considerably since the inaugural Hyde Park meeting of 1810, which they attended in good number.\footnote{93} In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the VRC Oaks meeting, run on the third day of the Melbourne Cup carnival, has been promoted as a festive occasion for young single women in particular, to such good effect that in 2002 it achieved the once unthinkable and supplanted Cup Day as the most attended day of racing on the Australian calendar.\footnote{94} The success of Oaks day has encouraged numerous imitations,
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particularly in Sydney by the AJC and STC, to the extent that the ethos and purpose of racecourse attendances, at least at major meetings, have been remarkably altered, and celebratory behaviour of pre-industrial intensity has again become customary. However, in the late Victorian and Edwardian period in which pony racing was consolidated, the attendance of women at race meetings was restricted away from the racecourses of the principal clubs, where they were welcome if escorted by gentlemen. Randwick carnivals were well established as occasions on which the affluent flaunted their wealth. In Melbourne the VRC secretary Bagot had encouraged the attendance of ladies of the Establishment at Flemington, particularly during Cup week, in order to add to the sense of a grand occasion.  

Somewhat lower-status females could come to the races on the bow-wave of respectability created by the presence of the dames and belles of society. At pony programs this social pretext did not exist. Few ‘respectable’ women attended weekly race meetings, at which gambling activities predominated, and the secretaries attempted to keep ‘loose women’ off their courses.

The pony racecourses of the nineteenth century, with the exception of Kensington, were utilitarian and supplied no stages for fashion display, or areas reserved for women where they could share each other’s company while their escorts placed bets. In 1903 the *Daily Telegraph* critiqued ‘the women who mingle sparsely with the crowd are plainly bitten by the gambling mania, are mostly plainly dressed and—well, plain.’

In Melbourne, the few women who attended ‘Wren’s pony races’ at plebian Richmond did not bother to dress for the occasion. Clearly the prevailing sentiment was that pony racecourses were not suitable environments for females, and those who did go to them risked rancor and opprobrium. Especially if unescorted, they were suspected of base intentions, including, in addition to gambling, seeking to cadge drinks or solicit sex.

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95 Hayes *op. cit.* p. 171  
96 Gould *op. cit.* p. 11  
97 Painter & Waterhouse *op. cit.* p. 46  
98 Hayes *op. cit.* p. 80  
(Illustration 5.12) Two women queue to collect from the Victoria Park paddock totalisator payout window in the mid-1930s. The totalisator allowed women to transact with an anonymous clerk. (source: Hood Collection, State Library of New South Wales)

(Illustration 5.13) The Victoria Park totalisator in 2003, converted for use as construction office for a residential development. The pay out windows shown in the photograph above are visible between the palm trees, ground floor.
The concept of females haggling with bookmakers did not rest easily with the sentimentalised (male) image of the Victorian housewife and mother. Most males were as equally perturbed to find a female in the betting ring as to collide with one in a public bar doorway. A feminine side wager for a pair of gloves laid in the grandstand between races was allowable at Randwick, if it were conducted discretely. Similarly sweeps it was believed provided ladies with a harmless interest in the racing but transactions that involved taking odds and making rational selections, rather than reliance on chance, were frowned upon. The sports writer Robert Mostyn commented that ‘numbers of women go to the races to see the dresses and the horses, and some of them are very good judges of horses. They are all right if they go there for that purpose, but I do not believe in them betting.’

In Victoria, the 1906 gaming and betting legislation made racecourse betting by women illegal. At Randwick, a local AJC rule excluded women from betting areas, although it was not enforced very rigorously. Much of the energy that drove the anti-totalisator movement was generated by a belief that the pari-mutuel betting system would make gambling easier for women, as it would allow them to make transactions with anonymous clerks instead of bookmakers.

A ticket seller’s return for two turnstiles at the premier Edwardian track, Kensington, in December 1903 indicates a minute female attendance. Of 496 tickets sold, 18 only were bought for women and 12 for children. This represented a ratio of 25 men to every woman. By comparison the attendance at a Saturday meeting at Rosehill the following season included about 800 women, a ratio closer to 10:1. A much higher percentage applied at Randwick. Joynton Smith did not admit women to the Epping flat, where most of the rough characters and bad language were presumably centralized, but he allowed them in the paddock,

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100 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1912 vol. 4 p. 508
102 Levien’s original New South Wales totalisator bill excluded women from being users; later the provision of a tote window devoted to women was considered. NSW Parliamentary Papers 1912 vol. 4 pp. 504, 512; see also O’Hara A Mug’s Game chapter five
103 Waugh op. cit. p. 11; Referee 16/3/1904 p. 1
where the admission charge of 2s 6d helped keep out the coarser male element.\textsuperscript{104}

While very few women attended the Epping races, only a slightly larger number attended the seaside courses like Brighton and Botany that offered approved diversions such as promenading on the foreshore.

As the twentieth century progressed, and the suffragette movement and World War I loosened some of the bonds that had hitherto encumbered them, more women began to appear on both registered and unregistered racecourses. During the 1921-22 season 8,738 women entered the Kensington paddock compared to 48,467 men—a decreased ratio of 6:1, largely due to the 1917 introduction of the totalisator.\textsuperscript{105} As the \textit{Australian Women’s Weekly} asserted in 1934, those who had cited the possibility of increased female wagering when speaking against the introduction of the betting machine had been proven correct.\textsuperscript{106} Nevertheless the possibility of association with the more respectable pony racecourses of the ARC period could still cause trepidation to reserved women. This is evident in the attitude of two who wished to travel to Mascot airport to witness the arrival of the aviatrix Amy Johnson in 1930, and were advised to take the special tram to Ascot racecourse, which terminated very near the old aerodrome buildings. They would not, horrified at the prospect of being observed stepping from a pony racecourse tram.\textsuperscript{107}

The emergence of women as a permanent and significant element in pony racecourse demographics encouraged the improvements in viewing, catering and dining arrangements, particularly in the tearooms, that were described in chapter three. The Victoria Park club in particular became active in attracting female patronage by resurrecting some of the attractions of racing as a festive occasion that had not been transported to enclosed pony racing. In 1909 it promoted a ladies’ day on which a female ticket holder won a diamond bracelet.\textsuperscript{108} It generally promoted a number of extra-mural diversions and entertainments. Its

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Referee} 29/6/1904 p. 5
\textsuperscript{105} Kensington club Papers Mitchell library document box 1681. Underhill testified there were no more than 250 to 270 women in the paddock at ARC meetings during 1923-24, but he may have deliberately understated all categories of attendances before the pony Select Committee; \textit{NSW Parliamentary Papers} 1924 vol. 4 p. 788
\textsuperscript{106} Jennings \textit{op. cit.} p. 3
\textsuperscript{107} Keenan \textit{op. cit.} p. 93
\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Referee} 16/6/1909 p. 2
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racecourse featured extensive and well-maintained lawns in front of the paddock grandstand, where M. De Groen's Vice Regal Band—a familiar feature of Randwick meetings—played popular marches and waltzes as ladies perambulated between races.\textsuperscript{109} As well as tearooms females favoured the grandstand, especially in the paddock, where seating was provided, over other parts of the racecourse. The photograph of Rosebery on page 208b supports this view. The paddock was still regarded as the only proper place for women, and no discount was offered to the leger. Despite this the cheaper enclosure, which had once been an exclusively male reserve, contained an increasing number of women. In the aftermath of the Rosebery leger stand collapse of 1928, more than half of the hospital admissions were female.\textsuperscript{110}

During the 1917-18 season Victoria Park promoted a ‘Monster Christmas Picnic Racing Carnival’, which drew the large crowds referred to above. This promotion exploited a new angle on the marketing of unregistered racing in Sydney and focused to an unprecedented degree on the possibility of racing as a festive family outing, evoking images of the (English) Derby at Epsom, and, in the Australian context, the Oakbank carnival in the Adelaide hills at Easter. A piece of doggerel in the sporting weeklies promoted the meeting:

\begin{quote}
At VP on BOXING and NEW YEAR’S DAY
There’s a bumper Sports meeting for young, old and gay.
Put up your shillings, record your vote,
Both at the turnstile and at the Tote.
There’s plenty of fun and amusement to get,
Sports for the children, the adults can bet.
Through submarine causes that none understand.
THE DERBY’S ARRIVED HERE FROM ‘MERRY ENGLAND.’
If you want some excitement, fun and a lark,
On Boxing Day come to Victoria Park.
RACES and SPORTS and fun in galore,
And Flying EXHIBITS by men from the war.

All kinds of AMUSEMENT and SPORTS you will see
From-a-merry go round to the English Derby;
SIDE SHOWS and WILD MEN and BEASTS are on view,
And all can be seen for a shilling or two,
The grown-ups pay—’tis a Charity Spree,
The youngsters (god bless them) are admitted free.
….Roll up at VP there’s nothing to fear.
There’s no Referendum to fight over here. \textsuperscript{111}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{109} Referee 16/6/1912 p. 6
\textsuperscript{110} Daily Telegraph 7/5/1928 p. 5
\textsuperscript{111} Referee 26/8/1908 p. 5, 19/12/1917 p. 5
These multifarious amusements were intended to appeal to wives and children, but it was the male parent who had first to read the advertisement and decide if he would treat his family.

The photograph of the Kensington meeting reproduced on page 205b shows several boys. Two are working but at least two others are clearly members of the public. In the mid-1890s Kensington allowed children to enter for 2s 6d, but there is no indication of if they were allowed into the ‘third tier’ courses such as Lillie Bridge. The presence of children at race meetings was at that time considered problematic. The curmudgeonly secretary of the West Australian Turf Club responded to a suggestion that children be admitted at half price ‘double would be better if it kept them away.’\(^{112}\) In his evidence to the 1900 Racing Association Bill Select Committee hearing, AJC Chairman Henry Dangar said that very few children were seen during the year at Randwick, a situation of which he evidently approved.\(^ {113}\) Nevertheless the AJC continued to provide for them, largely because many of its country members coming to the city for the Easter Show brought their children with them. Tolerance of children became even more grudging in unregistered racing and in 1912 the ARC—though evidently not Victoria Park—barred them completely, an action which no doubt had some effect in retarding the growth of female attendances.\(^ {114}\)

Nevertheless the suburban pony racecourses continued to attract children, if for no other reason than to contest their exclusion, but also as a consequence of the fascination that horses commonly engender among the young, and at any rate racecourses were exciting places in an era that provided a limited number of activities organised at that level. Children found means to infiltrate racecourse perimeters, and the employees of the clubs were sometimes their confederates; ‘During the Depression years, we [the local children] would queue up outside the gates at Rosebery and they’d let us in after the second last race. We’d run for the bars—they’d line up all the half full soft drink bottles and we’d help ourselves to

\(^{112}\) Freedman & Lemon *op. cit.* p. 370
\(^{113}\) NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1257
\(^{114}\) Referee 27/11/1912 p. 5.
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the leftovers. It was the same with the sandwiches and pies, and occasionally a hot dog or two’, one beneficiary recalled.\(^{115}\)

Developments on the track were often of direct economic concern to the local women and children who lived in the streets surrounding the courses of the ARC era. For Rosebery meetings in the 1920s a large number regularly gathered on the sandhills at the back of the course, adjacent to the ‘outer’, to watch the races. Many were the dependents of trainers and their staff, and the fates of stable representatives probably had a direct bearing on the following week’s grocery lists. We know of these gatherings because in November 1920 it was reported that the racehorse My Millie had escaped on the way to the barrier and plunged headlong into a crowd gathered outside the course, ‘scattering the womenfolk in all directions.’\(^{116}\)

**Behaviour**

**Influence of the AIF**

The spike achieved in unregistered racing attendances towards the end of the second decade of the twentieth century was not unrelated to the co-occurrence of World War I. Perhaps the primary reason for this was a hedonistic humour among those young men who had, for whatever reason, declined to enlist. Rather than take up the austerity demanded by fervent imperialists, or even the symbolic restraint that had been advocated by the federal government and the press, members of this group seemed intent on celebrating their absence from the front, and congratulating themselves for not succumbing to the white feathers symbolizing cowardice thrust upon them by young women, and other propaganda. Racing was by common consent among the most agreeable of wartime indulgences. The great enthusiasm of the ‘shirkers’ for it more than made up for the loss of racegoers who had volunteered to fight.\(^{117}\)

\(^{115}\) *Sun Herald* 24/3/1985 p. 99
\(^{116}\) *Referee* 10/11/1920 p. 6
\(^{117}\) McKernan has suggested that attendance patterns were uneven and that at ‘middle class’ sports attendances fell, at least initially, in support for the war. McKernan also identified smaller attendances at race meetings in the early period. In the later period of the war, as people grew weary of the war effort, they were clearly on the rise, especially at unregistered meetings. *McKernan op. cit.* p. 98
Other factors contributed to increased wartime attendances. Perhaps to nullify criticism that their racecourses were havens for the irresolute, the ARC sought to salt its attendances with a significant presence of men in uniform by admitting them at half price (i.e., at 5s 6d at the end of the war). This inducement attracted many servicemen, but as the photographs analysed above suggest, they constituted only a small percentage of attendances during the war. Until October 1918, when the AIF began to grant leave in Australia to survivors of the 1914 contingent, there were a comparatively small number of repatriated wounded and recent recruits able to take advantage of the discount. However, the ARC retained the half-price policy until at least 1920, and although I have been unable to find photographic evidence, it seems certain that the AIF must have had its greatest presence on pony racecourses during 1919-20, and that it was a considerable one. Certainly ARC secretary Underhill identified the repatriation of servicemen and their expenditure of back pay and a war service gratuity of one shilling and sixpence for every day of service—granted as a bond in 1920 but readily convertible to cash on the black market—as the cause of the surge in attendances at that time. As almost half of all eligible men had volunteered to serve during 1914-1918, clearly there must have been a large AIF presence among the followers and practitioners of pony racing between the world wars, and certainly there are similarities between the wry accounts of Captain Bean and others of the resourcefulness and wit of the Anzacs in the gullies of Gallipoli and Lillye’s tale of the inventive plaster-cast bookmaker on the Kensington outer. They belong to a mythical view of the Anglo-Australian of that era, promoted by organs like Smith’s Weekly, to which other adjectives such as ‘laconic’, ‘knockabout’ and ‘egalitarian’ are often applied.

Many members of the AIF proved reluctant to lose contact with their mates after the war and corporate identity was maintained by regular battalion reunions, in

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119 *NSW Parliamentary Papers* 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1313; *NSW Parliamentary Papers* 1924 vol. 4 p. 788; re war service gratuity see Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 105
120 Ibid. p. 117
121 Bean *op. cit.* passim. The *Anzac Book* portrays some of the self-consciousness of the AIF and its distinctive idea of humour; *The Anzac Book: Written and Illustrated in Gallipoli By the Men of Anzac*, London, New York, Toronto Melbourne, Cassell, 1916
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particularly on Anzac Day, by the formation of returned servicemen’s leagues, and by such devices as the AIF pages (‘the soldier and sailors parliament’) published in each issue of Smith’s. The return to civilian conditions in Australia instilled in the soldiers’ solidarity but also self-consciousness and a sense of ‘Otherness’. After the war the diggers were feted as Australian heroes and role models, but they were also, according to McIntyre, sometimes treated as little better than murderers and although, officially, they were supposed to receive preference in employment, the reality was often very different. These rejections and denials fostered a gang (or perhaps, a push) mentality among them; a notion that they were differentiated from the rest of society and perhaps above some of its restraints. Some used their military training to take the law into their own hands. Thus returned servicemen disrupted the 1919 Red Flag and Peace Day activities in Brisbane and Melbourne respectively, and as late as 1921, a squadron of diggers chased Bolshevist speakers off the Sydney Domain.

The AIF’s sense of ‘Otherness’ and self-consciousness had been promoted during the war by the ways in which they were physically and culturally differentiated from other troops. Although the uniform of the infantry was similar to the drab khaki battledress of the British tommy, the distinctive slouch hat that was worn universally away from the front line made them immediately identifiable to both friend and foe. They were commonly taller than the Europeans, especially the British, and those recently arrived from Australia and the Middle East were often deeply tanned; a strange sight to English eyes. This bronzed, athletic bearing caused the English journalist Ashmead-Bartlett to make extravagant comparisons with classical heroes who had millenniums earlier also fought in Asia Minor.

The Australians’ accents and use of English were self-consciously eccentric. They were proud to be a force consisting entirely of volunteers, among the best paid of the combatants, and in their own estimation (and certainly many others), a corps elite of shock troops.

122 McIntyre op. cit. p. 186; Thomson op. cit. p. 110
123 Ibid. p. 115
124 McIntyre op. cit. p. 187
125 Thomson op. cit. p. 53; McIntyre op. cit. p. 151

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On their return to Australia some members of the AIF proved eager to play up to the larrikin-digger persona. Many chose to retain parts of their uniform, in particular the slouch hat (even when not attending the races.) They were always ready to form an illegal school to play two-up, the gambling game that had become the great diversion of Australian soldiers whenever not under direct fire. Gambling at horse racing was similarly regarded as an appropriate expression of Anglo-Australian habitus. During the war whenever opportunities arose the Australians organised race meetings, with horses as contestants if available, or donkeys, other quadrupeds or humans when not.\textsuperscript{126}

The AIF quickly reasserted its enthusiasm for racing on returning to Australia. This popularity is unsurprising, for risking cash represented a minor matter after the ‘supreme gambles’ they had regularly taken at the Front.\textsuperscript{127} In country districts soldiers established ‘diggers’ race clubs that staged annual race meetings-cum-reunions, and which also raised funds for ex-servicemen’s organisations.\textsuperscript{128} In the cities there was no need to organize additional meetings. As the process of demobilization was staggered, mainly because of a shortage of suitable transport ships sailing from England, successive waves of the 170,000 servicemen stationed in the northern hemisphere at war’s end arrived in Sydney until early in 1920.\textsuperscript{129} For a time these men were able to regularly attend unregistered meetings, including the majority that were conducted on ARC racecourses on Wednesdays, but also the Richmond and Menangle pony races on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Before long, most recognised the imperative of finding a source of revenue and sought regular employment (although many had been unfitted for their previous work). However a number, similarly to Herbert Collins, took to bookmaking on ARC racecourses, while others sought to earn their keep through betting.

\textsuperscript{126} Hutchinson \textit{et. al.} \textit{op. cit.} p. 81; re AIF obsession with gambling refer O’Har\textit{a Mug’s Game} pp. 157-59. The Australian War Memorial images databases contain references to several race meetings conducted by the AIF during World War I, including that of the ‘Dinkum Diamond Race Club’ (2\textsuperscript{nd} division AIF) in 1917; refer image ID no. E05054, \url{www.awm.gov.au}. Accessed 1/8/2004

\textsuperscript{127} O’Har\textit{a Mug’s Game} p. 159

\textsuperscript{128} Refer for example \url{http://www.une.edu.au/geoplan/Tenterfield_sportbeginnings.htm#Racing} for Tenterfield Diggers’ Race Club (although its establishment followed World War II.) Accessed 26/9/2004. There remain numerous diggers’ race clubs in regional Australia

\textsuperscript{129} Macintyre \textit{op. cit.} p 185
Some of the riotous AIF behaviour identified above was replicated on Sydney racecourses. At a Friday Richmond pony meeting in 1920 the rider of Bob Skelton’s pony Raydex, Wagner, protested successfully against the winner Howard Lass. The outraged connections of the deposed horse assaulted Wagner and the veteran steward Henry Skuthorpe during a scrimmage that took place outside the committee room, in which Skelton also became involved. Meanwhile several opportunistic diggers, who had entered the course through a hole in the fence, joined the melee and robbed Skelton of £160 and a gold watch. For good measure they robbed several more people on course and at the railway station, where they joined comrades playing two-up (the prevalence of two-up schools in and around racecourses in this era is another reliable indicator of a substantial AIF presence). Two hard-pressed police constables momentarily arrested one offender before his mates rallied and forced his release.\textsuperscript{130} The AIF behaviour evidenced in this incident recalled the notorious ‘Battle of the Wozzer’, during which AIF troops wrecked a street of Cairo shops and assaulted their owners,\textsuperscript{131} and an incident at the Liverpool army camp in 1916 in which the citizen soldiers of the AIF called a ‘strike meeting’ with their officers, became intoxicated, jumped a train to Sydney and engaged in a melee with military police on Central Station. Each case examples a capacity for mob mentality.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{130} Referee 18/8/1920 p. 6
\textsuperscript{131} Two separate incidents in Cairo during 1915 during which Australian troops rioted. C.E.W. Bean \textit{Anzac to Amiens}, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1946, p. 75; Gammage \textit{op. cit.} pp. 39-40
\textsuperscript{132} Gammage \textit{op. cit.} p. 28n
Criminal activity

The banditry indulged in by the diggers at Richmond was not unprecedented. Racecourses have long been identified with both hardcore and petty criminals who find the racecourse environment of a fast and free exchange of cash well suited to their callings as pickpockets, confidence men, money launderers and ‘coat-pullers’ (tipsters), and while Sydney pony racing lacked a Squizzy Taylor, there is no doubt it attracted a criminal element. John ‘Chow’ Hayes, Sydney’s best-known mobster, told David Hickie he attended many pony meetings as a young man, at which he practised a scam in which he sold ‘pass-outs,’ which allowed reentry to the course, to people arriving at the gates (Hayes claimed he knew of holes in the paling fences at all the ARC courses which enabled him to re-enter the course four or five times an afternoon—the person issuing the pass-outs must have been a very credulous—or timid—fellow). Some commentators have suggested that criminals and other undesirables were disproportionately represented at pony racecourses, particularly in the early period. Some polemicists depicted them like kasbahs, insalubrious quarters frequented by a malevolent underworld, into which decent citizens wandered at their peril. In 1890 the parliamentarian W.P. Crick observed, ‘If I were asked where the greatest collection of blacklegs and thieves could be found, I would say at a race meeting of the Driving Park Club.’ ‘I would be afraid to go to some of the places where they carry on pony racing. I would not like to take anything in my pocket,’ said Andrew Farthing in 1900, probably with Forest Lodge in mind. In 1908 ‘Milroy’ (Tom Willis) of the Sydney Mail implied a significant criminal presence: ‘the better class of sportsmen do not patronise pony racing, yet one bookmaker told the AJC stewards the other day that he handled a quarter million [pounds] a year. Where does the money come from? Ask any well-informed detective.’ The ARC was accused of admitting known criminals for the sake of the gate money. However The Town & Country Journal at least supported Henry Harris’s judgement of his clients, insisting that it was not true that Kensington meetings

133 Hickie Chow Hayes p. 61
134 NSW Parliamentary Debates, vol. 45 June session 1890; cited in Brown op. cit. p. 39
135 NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1240
136 Sydney Mail 8/8/1908 p. 117; NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1319
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attracted a discernable element of undesirables. In fact criminals were really much more active on the trains travelling to suburban and provincial courses. There is a nice logic in this; the dippers evidently had little faith in the betting ability of their victims and liked to strike before they had had a chance to lose their money at the track.137

The concentration of crowds that occurred on enclosed courses, while in one regard making the work of criminals such as pickpockets easier, also facilitated their capture, if clubs set out seriously to do so.138 Secretary Underhill, as well as the ARC racecourse detective Mr. Jackson and his assistants, diligently patrolled the grounds on race days, and even the Sportsman complimented their efficacy.139

Criminal or rowdy behaviour, if it were detected, could be more easily controlled than in free areas or on unenclosed courses. On some occasions when ‘dippers’ were especially active, particularly within large crowds, the ARC notified the police force, which dispatched patrols to round up known offenders.140 None of these deterrents suggest why criminals would have believed it to be to their advantage to concentrate their efforts on ARC racecourses.

Unregistered racecourses prior to the ARC era had been noted for the presence of rowdies as well as criminals.141 The 1890s was a decade of unusually turbulent social and economic conditions and responses. Radical industrial activism and intensive social proselytizing categorized it. The early effects of the depression and other hardships led to expressions of dissatisfaction such as the shearers’ and stevedores’ strikes and the birth of the mass union movement among those who sold their labour.142 Socialism and republicanism were advocated in publications of dissent such as The Bulletin, The Tocsin, The Boomerang and The Worker, and William Lane’s utopian ‘New Australia’ experiment in Paraguay rejected Australian society absolutely.143 There were incidents of hoolganism among young males and stories of gangs of working-class toughs terrorising decent

137 Town & Country Journal 29/2/1896 p. 37
138 Huggins op. cit p. 138
139 Sydney Sportsman 18/6/1919 p. 1
140 Sydney Sportsman 14/9/1926 p. 26
141 Huggins op. cit. p. 18-20
142 Kingston op. cit. pp. 275-76, 304; Connell & Irving op. cit. 195
143 Clark op. cit. p. 100
citizens engaged in genteel recreations such as riverside picnics appeared in daily newspapers.\textsuperscript{144}

Nevertheless reports of regular disturbances at Sydney pony racecourses emanated from the SDPC and Lillie Bridge alone. At both these venues the crowds were piled above the narrow racecourse and literally hung over the outside fence, and this propinquity to the competitors may have influenced behaviour. At the SDPC patrons had on occasion disrupted races by running onto the track and opening umbrellas in the faces of competitors.\textsuperscript{145} Like the Melbourne pony courses it most closely resembled, Lillie Bridge provided relatively poor facilities and had small, cramped enclosures amid a somewhat claustrophobic, dusty environment. It was located close to the city centre and attracted numbers of bell-bottomed, stiletto-heeled larrikins and push members who in the 1890s mostly lived in inner-city working-class suburbs. Many of the notorious ‘Liver’ push worked at the abattoirs in nearby Glebe.\textsuperscript{146} Larrikins took motiveless pleasure in chafing general racegoers at Lillie Bridge, but were also implicated in more outcome-oriented incidents, such as turning off the lights or throwing objects at competitors when they judged the course of a race was not favouring their selections.\textsuperscript{147} Such incidents, in combination with jockey safety issues, caused the Lillie Bridge racecourse to close permanently in 1898, after several moratoriums, until its reincarnation and reopening as Forest Lodge.\textsuperscript{148}

It has not been suggested that such poor racecourse behaviour was linked to alcohol consumption. Despite being a major issue in the broader society, heavy drinking was not the preoccupation of general admission racegoers it became in the late twentieth century, or had been at earlier publicans meetings on open racecourses. The characteristics of earlier festival meetings of the 1830s and 1840s in the English tradition, where display and conspicuous consumption, as well as violence, had been important expressions of the holiday mood of the

\textsuperscript{144} Edmond Marin la Meslee, \textit{The New Australia}, Melbourne, Heinemann Education, 1979 (1883), p. 67
\textsuperscript{145} Brown \textit{op. cit.} p. 41
\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Ibid.} p. 53; re ‘Liver Push’ refer Connell & Irving \textit{op. cit.} p. 255
\textsuperscript{147} Painter & Waterhouse \textit{op. cit.} p. 46; James Hollege, \textit{The Great Australian Gamble}, Sydney, Horwitz, 1966, p. 121. Bob Mead tells an almost identical story of the lights being extinguished at the Wollongabba, Brisbane, night pony races; Lillye \textit{Backstage} p. 80
\textsuperscript{148} Brown \textit{op. cit} p. 51; Painter & Waterhouse p. 46; \textit{Referee} 20/12/1899 p. 5
mainly once-a-year crowd,\textsuperscript{149} had not translated to weekly racing on enclosed urban racecourses. In general behaviour at racecourses at which there was a preponderance of committed male gamblers was more restrained than at earlier courses, and meetings that drew a more mixed attendance of genders and classes.

Researchers have found evidence of similar comparatively restrained consumption of alcohol at other major late Victorian and Edwardian metropolitan spectator sports. Cashman concluded that while alcohol was on sale at colonial cricket matches it was only ‘a minor cause of disorder’.\textsuperscript{150} Huggins concluded that major disturbances at nineteenth-century British race meetings were rare, especially on enclosed racecourses. It has been argued, at least for British racing, that with the extra funds generated by gate money, organisers had less need to rely on booth rentals, and that this aspect of a day’s racing was retarded for the sake of easier crowd control. These theories may explain why the binge drinking prevalent at Australian stadiums and racecourses in the later twentieth century and in the first half of the nineteenth century was not a factor during the pony-racing era of enclosed racecourses, for as in England regular healthy gate takings may have obviated the need to promote bar sales.\textsuperscript{151}

Edwardian attendances may have been sober but they could find their voices readily enough when roused. Suspected malpractice by participants, and the perceived errors of officials, have been the most common catalysts of demonstrations across the spectrum of sport, and racegoers were among the most reactive of spectators. The Sandgate Handicap riot (see below), and the pitch invasion that occurred during the 1879 England-Australia cricket match, are salient examples of the outrage unpopular decisions made by sporting officials can engender.\textsuperscript{152} One the same afternoon at Ascot and Kensington in 1906, the

\textsuperscript{149} ‘The races [at the Sandy Course in 1835] seemed little more than a distraction from the main intent of “the mob”, which was to get drunk at the booths and gamble their wages on pea-and-thimble games’, Painter & Waterhouse \textit{op. cit.} p. 12. Cashman found there was ‘a surprising amount of violence’ at both organised and unorganised sport in early colonial Sydney. He cites a report of an 1845 meeting at the Petersham course at which ‘The whiskey…at the close of the day overcome rayson stones were picked up fences broken down and points of honour [sic] decided in the approved Tipperary style.’ Cashman ‘Violence in sport’ p. 2

\textsuperscript{150} Richard Cashman, \textit{`Ave a Go, Yer Mug! Australian Cricket Crowds from Larrikin to Ocker}, Sydney, Collins, 1984, p. 34

\textsuperscript{151} Vamplew in Cashman and McKernan \textit{Sport in History} p. 316; Huggins \textit{op. cit.} pp. 13, 134

\textsuperscript{152} Cashman ‘\textit{Ave a go Yer Mug}’ p. 5
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Referee noted, ‘there was something approaching a riot at each place owing to the spectators differing from the judge as to the result of the race.’ At Ascot in 1907 the owner of Alice Moorefield was so vociferous in his condemnation of the judge’s decision against his mare that the stewards fined him £5.\textsuperscript{153} A similar disturbance occurred at Victoria Park on 10 June 1914.\textsuperscript{154} However in each case the line denoting ‘riot’ was not crossed.

Physical exchanges such as occurred during the Richmond AIF melee were unusual on racecourses, and virtually unknown on Sydney metropolitan pony racecourses. The racing public never challenged the authority of the pony racing clubs in the way that Brisbane racegoers did the Queensland Turf Club (QTC) in the aftermath to the Sandgate Handicap at Eagle Farm racecourse in 1887. On that occasion the honorary starter for the QTC failed to signal a false start to a race, despite having abjectly bungled his task. Once it became evident that the stewards (also honorary) had let the result stand, and that there were to be no refunds, a section of the crowd in the public area, which was identified subsequently by the press as ‘working class’, tore down the paling fence separating it from the Committee reserve, attacked the judge’s tower, threw down the posted numbers and performed several other minor acts of vandalism, and, with evident symbolism, occupied the grandstand reserve.\textsuperscript{155} A semblance of order was not restored before forty-five minutes had passed. In a paper on the incident, Bryan Jamison argued that ‘the riot emanated out of the classed processes constituting the operation of the turf in colonial Queensland.’\textsuperscript{156} Jamison contends the riot itself was prompted by a ‘rational attempt to redress a grievance,’\textsuperscript{157} that the rioters had used it to express dissatisfaction with the amateur ethos and methods of the QTC, which had caused the bungling, and further that it may be better

\textsuperscript{153} NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 passim. Such gripes are still often heard on racecourses where even the evidence of sophisticated photo-finish equipment fails to dissuade bettors that their horses have not won or run a place, as the case may be. Objectivity is rare on racecourses and the judges were in the best position available to make a decision; Referee 18/7/1906 p. 5, 17/6/1914 p. 5
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} A similar incident took place at the proprietary Hurlingham racecourse, Melbourne, a year later. It was also sparked by the judge’s decision, which caused ‘an infuriated gang of low-typed individuals to hurl missiles and smash glass.’ See Freedman & Lemon op. cit. p 380, citing the Leader 14/1/1888
\textsuperscript{156} Jamison op. cit. p. 18
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid. p. 33
understood as a ‘class conscious act, following certain popular conventions, rich in the symbolism of popular protest.’\textsuperscript{158} Jamison suggests that the real target of the protesters was the squattocracy that held hegemony in all aspects of colonial Queensland life, including the QTC and of course, the legislature.

Several aspects of the Eagle Farm riot are pertinent here. One is the evidence of a significant working-class presence among the attendance at Eagle Farm, which was a principal club course like Randwick. Jamison does not clearly identify what part of the course the rioters were occupying during the race, though it seems to have been an enclosed area adjacent to the committee enclosure, which would place it in the paddock—an enclosure normally regarded as beyond the means of workers—on a modern racecourse. Another is that the actions of the rioters were largely symbolic, involving the occupation of areas usually reserved for the elite, such as the members’ grandstand; there was little damage to property and no serious injuries inflicted. Finally, much of the resentment that fed the riot was caused by the perceived contempt for the public’s interests displayed by amateur, privileged-class, honorary officials. Based on this evidence it can be concluded that the underclasses in Brisbane were fully aware of the symbolic significance of grandstands and reserved areas, and that the Sydney proprietary clubs may have to thank their early decision to use paid officials as judges, starters and stewards for the relatively peaceful conduct of their meetings.

The only violation on a grand scale of enclosure boundaries on a Sydney racecourse occurred at Rosebery racecourse, but the emotion that caused a section of the attendance to leap the fence was panic rather than anger. On Saturday 5 May 1928 the Rosebery Cup meeting was in progress on a rather unpleasant day, on which an important meeting at Rosehill was also taking place. Despite the clash a very large attendance was in at Rosebery and up until the running of the Trial Stakes well-backed horses had been faring well and few people had left the course. A large squadron of young men gathered in the leger betting ring on the lawn in front of the stand to watch the race. The less mobile female and elderly elements had already taken sheltered positions in the stand, which, it will be

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid. p. 38
recalled, possessed no seating. Witnesses testified it was already at, if not beyond, its capacity.

Just prior to the advertised race time a squall of unusually heavy rain swept into the faces of the men on the lawn. They retreated *en masse* onto the walkways and lower ramparts and aisles of the grandstand, forcing the incumbents to concentrate in the centre. Following immediately upon a loud crack, the lower-centre decks of the stand collapsed several feet into the tea room below, as a result of which many were thrown from their feet and seriously injured. Those men who had most recently sought shelter from the rain quickly evacuated by the most direct means, even if that meant climbing over the injured. Many were not content upon reaching the apparent safety of the enclosure lawn, but jumped the fence onto the course proper to avoid any after-crush. They may have believed there had been an earthquake. The *Herald* and the *Telegraph* criticized these decampers for the lack of concern they showed for injured females and the elderly. Yet while their behaviour may have failed the standards of masculine courage of the time, it expressed none of the social or political implications suggested for the Eagle Farm riot.\(^{159}\)

**Conclusions**

The commercialisation of sport that gained way in the late nineteenth century was dependent on sports entrepreneurs obtaining enclosed grounds and being able to charge gate money. In England, most early attempts at commercial racing failed, and those that survived were located mainly in the hinterlands rather than the cities. In Australia, the move to enclosed racecourses that charged gate money occurred more easily than in Britain because of the shallower roots of ‘open’ racing. Moreover in Australia proprietary racing remained primarily a metropolitan phenomenon, a development consistent with the pace and extent of urbanization in this country, where it led the world.

There has been significant misrepresentation of the cost of admission charged at pony racecourses, which while initially minimal quickly reached parity with that

\(^{159}\) *Daily Telegraph* 7/5/1928 p. 5; *Sydney Morning Herald* 7/5/1928 pp. 11-12
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of registered racing, and occasionally exceeded it. Every member of the public who entered the gates of a pony course had paid an admission fee. Impecunious followers of pony racing were required to risk the outer, the unsupervised vantage point outside the perimeter of the racecourse. The uncouth behaviour that has been attributed to outer habituates has come to flavour perceptions of pony racing and its paying clients.

Attendances at early Sydney pony meetings were small but from 1893 the more viable Kensington racecourse regularly attracted several thousand patrons. Attendances began to steeple in the years prior to World War I, and during the War they began to test the capacities of the older racecourses. Remarkably, midweek ARC meetings often outdrew those at AJC-sanctioned Saturday meetings. The proximity of the pony courses to the city and longer settled areas and public preference for street transport over railways were contributing factors to this ascendancy but the valued ARC product, which included numerous races, open betting markets and exciting contests, as well as excellent facilities, was also an important determinant of popularity.

British enclosed ‘park’ racecourses had broadened the population of racing attendances by attracting middle-class women and better-paid tradesman and artisans. However early Sydney pony ventures relied on a small but faithful core of erudite sportsmen, who attended meetings each week and knew many of the human participants, and evidently attempted to make at least part of their living from racecourse gambling. In the ARC period from 1907 inveterate racegoers provided a smaller percentage of attendances, but there was a much larger pool of casual patrons, including an increasing number that previously had restricted themselves to registered racing. This pool consisted largely of the burgeoning body of lower-middle-class office workers that were able to reach the unregistered racecourses from the central business district within 10 to 25 minutes. Other important elements of unregistered racing attendances, particularly on Wednesdays, were retail-trade workers, shift workers, people employed in industries in which broken work was common, the middle classes that enjoyed flexibility in their vocational arrangements, and professional followers of the turf.
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Attendances at unregistered race meetings peaked during World War I, despite the loud calls from politicians, the military and protestant church groups for it to be boycotted. Pony racing clearly had a larger following among the middle-rank social classes than has been allowed.

The ratio of males to females in Australian racing attendances has fluctuated considerably. Women appeared in good numbers at Georgian festive meetings and were accepted at the major principal club meetings of the later nineteenth century, if escorted by a male. However they were barely tolerated at most pony racecourses before World War I. The partial emancipation brought by the suffragette movement and the war, the introduction of on-course totalisators, and the normalization of pony racing encouraged a greater female presence. When the ARC, and in particular Victoria Park racecourse, recognised females as legitimate racegoers, they upgraded facilities at their courses at the points where females tended to congregate, such as tearooms, and provided some extraneous attractions including musical performances. Despite the change in attitude towards women, children remained unwelcome in most circumstances. Members of both these marginalized groups gathered beyond perimeter fences to discreetly observe events at those pony racecourses where that was possible.

The first AIF was a significant presence on unregistered Sydney racecourses from the later years of World War I and immediately after, as some of its members took a short honeymoon before resigning themselves to workaday responsibilities. Racing was an approved Anglo-Australian pastime that complimented the ANZAC self-image of the daring but pragmatic risk-taker. The facilities of the ARC racecourses were well adapted to the purpose of hosting informal reunions of units recently returned from Europe and the Middle East.

A substantive criminal presence has been posited for Sydney pony racing, although less emphatically than for Melbourne. In fact recurring criminal and anti-social behavior seems to have been restricted to the inner-city SDPC and Lillie Bridge racecourses of the late nineteenth century; otherwise most of what was regarded as questionable occurred outside the racecourse fence. There is no evidence that excessive drinking affected the behaviour of pony patrons and the
few sensational incidents that occurred lacked the broader social implications that Jamison has construed for Eagle Farm’s Sandgate handicap riot. Overall fully enclosed pony racecourses were easier to police than those that had free areas, such as Randwick and Flemington.

Modern commentators have erred in classifying pony racing as a working class sport and have contributed to incorrect assumptions about the people who were paying patrons, and their socio-economic circumstances. Although a variegated pricing policy existed that provided stratification of people across enclosures, photographic evidence does not suggest a down-at-heel appearance among patrons in the cheaper ARC racecourse enclosures—although a mixture of social classes might have shared earlier flats and legers, when ‘sportsmen’ dominated both public enclosures. In the 1890s the Kensington club, and in the ARC era Victoria Park in particular, were able to take positions closer to the elite end of the horse racing market. Attendances at the Victoria Park leger during World War I had an eminently respectable appearance and paddock patrons bore badges of affluence and membership of high status groups.

As the unregistered and registered racing product underwent convergent evolution, so too did any remnant distinctions between their patrons disappear. After the 1933 amalgamation, the differences between pony clubs and other racing were mainly determined by the ability of different sectors of the community to attend meetings on Wednesdays, on which once more the majority of pony meetings were held, and seasonal factors (such as the Randwick autumn carnival-RAS Royal Easter Show nexus).
Chapter six

Human competitors of pony racing

It has become possible for Australian jockeys in the modern era to amass large fortunes. The pitfalls that prevent or delay most from the achievement of this outcome, if in the first place they possess the necessary ability, courage and interpersonal skills, are the powers of suspension that lie with stewards and appeal boards, the fickle hearts of trainers and owners, working lives that are punctuated by debilitating injuries, and even sudden and violent death, despite advanced protective equipment. Trainers are the other principal human agents in horse racing. Many were once jockeys themselves. They have a less hazardous, if equally problematic, involvement in the sport or business. The most successful are granted associate, and in recent times, full membership rights in the upper-status groups of racing society (constituted of the squattocracy, elite professions and capitalists), including access to the exclusivity of the racecourse members’ stands, where they may network with existing owners and attract potential new clients.

This chapter examines the much less glamorous circumstances of pony jockeys and trainers, for whom the possibility of achieving wealth was remote (though not without precedent), although they were subject to the full gambit of risks enumerated above to an even greater degree. Many were the parents and grandparents of the leading trainers of the late twentieth century. Many desired to move into registered racing, and this chapter examines the extent to which they were quarantined from it, and if exclusion caused them to exhibit ‘class’ consciousness. It considers their contributions to the development of modern racing. For this purpose, and to provide some concise record of their achievements, the careers of some prominent pony jockeys and trainers are discussed.

The orthodoxy of unregistered racing implies that chicanery was widespread among its human competitors. The extent to which jockeys, trainers and their associates attempted to defraud race clubs and the public is also considered here.
Human competitors

Jockeys

In the nineteenth century pony riders, although largely anonymous individuals, were regarded corporately as an unsavoury vocational grouping with connections to the underworld. Jockeys in general had low status and were identified as the boon companions of pariahs such as starting-price bookmakers and prostitutes, as well as the spielers, touts and coat-pullers who loitered around the stables and hotels of the racing suburbs, and for whom the racecourse was the temple of worship. Because of these associations the frequent deaths of jockeys aroused little public sympathy. A.B. Paterson admonished society’s hard-heartedness in the poem Only a Jockey, published following the track death of a fourteen-year-old boy.¹

Victorian and Edwardian pony riders were denied even that shred of respectability that an AJC or VRC licence gave. With the exception of Kensington, the Sydney pony clubs were much less selective about whom they licensed to ride. Unlike the AJC, whose riders from the 1880s invariably served apprenticeships, the pony clubs did not oversee rider education. Pony racing did not initiate apprenticeships until April 1914,² and many pony riders were clearly self-taught. It was accepted that neither were they very intelligent; the steward Jim Donohoe was happy to agree with a leading question put at the pony racing inquiry that insinuated they were mostly dullards.³

In the 1890s the exemplary careers of Tom Hales and Tom Corrigan, whose courage and incorruptibility were eulogised in the press and in verse by bush poets such as Paterson, had done much to help the public image of registered jockeys.⁴ However the income available legitimately to early pony riders, who had to deal with limited riding opportunities caused by the factionalism within the sport, small fields, low prize money and the absence of a losing riding fee, was limited and encouraged fraud. ‘None of our Sydney jockeys are rich men,’ pronounced

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¹ Paterson Off Down the Track p. 42
² Referee 8/4/1914 p. 5
³ NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 pp. 790, 810
Human competitors

‘Daystar’ in 1894, ‘far from it. They make moderate incomes, no more…they do not average two mounts a week …the present [payment] system is bad, and is an inducement to jockeys to have recourse to turf tactics…this causes people to lose confidence in them’. He added ‘It is a premium on dishonesty to inadequately pay a jockey for his services.’

The Referee, in most matters well disposed to unregistered racing, grumbled about the disingenuousness of the riders. John Norton’s Sydney Sportsman (1900) was less reserved:

Notwithstanding the fact that the names of several ‘stiff’ [pony] riders have been published in the column of the Sydney Sportsman…a few of the case hardened ‘lads’ continue in their devilish doings even under the very noses of our so-called pony stewards…scarcely a meeting goes by without deliberate pulling being much in evidence.

Nor did the Sportsman resile from naming names: ‘[Sam] Whitbread rode a beautiful race—at the finish, when the race was all over, and beyond doubt,’ it once observed. Comments such as these could be found in most early issues of the Sportsman, which nevertheless acknowledged that the cause of the riders’ duplicity was the meagre returns available to them from honest endeavour.

An improvement in unregistered jockeys’ reputations and incomes coincided with the formation of the ARC. The riders may have had short-term misgivings about the new calendar, which reduced weekly meetings from five to one or two, but this lost opportunity was ultimately more than compensated for by the introduction of losing riding fees in 1907 equal to the AJC schedule, and the guaranteed receipt by riders of five per cent of prize money. The ARC began the collection and registration of these payments from trainers on behalf of jockeys on race day, whereas previously no guarantee of payment existed, especially if the rider could not corner his debtors before they left the course. There was however still no guarantee of receiving a winning bonus; ‘Most times you got no extra for riding a

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5 Referee 22/8/1894 p. 1; 29/8/1894 p. 1
6 Sydney Sportsman 17/10/1900 p. 4
7 Although the Sportsman continued to be libellous
8 Referee 1/5/1907 p. 5, 15/5/1907 p. 5. The ARC reduced acceptance fees to partially offset the increased cost to owners of losing riding fees
Human competitors

winner and often the jockey had to split the riding fee with the trainer’, one rider recalled.⁹

From the late Edwardian period there were more opportunities for pony jockeys to ride than was ever previously the case, and many more than existed in metropolitan registered racing.¹⁰ There was an average of one and a half pony meetings a week with between eight and seventeen races a day, usually of large fields. Registered racing, apart from public holidays and the spring and autumn carnivals, was restricted to Saturdays, on which at most six races were run, and small fields were not uncommon, so that only the top five or six riders could expect engagements in the majority of races.¹¹

As unregistered jockeys’ incomes rose, the temptation for them to accept dishonestly come-by supplements was somewhat assuaged. ARC officials monitored licensed persons much more closely than previous administrations, particularly while they were in and around betting rings. This stewardship, and the improved conduct of racing, helped the public standing of pony riders. Yet a stigma never entirely left them: ‘when you rode at these places, you were classed as a [sic] ARC—an undesirable, really,’ the pony rider Harry Reed recalled.¹²

Those who gained a living from unregistered racing felt their separation from mainstream racing keenly and expressed group-consciousness through the formation of unions and associations. An early example was the Unregistered Jockeys Association—which emerged in 1894 and supported incapacitated jockeys by payments of 10s a week—and the Pony Owners and Trainers Association (POTA) and its forebears. Among the association’s benefits were annual picnic days that were attended by jockeys, trainers, and their families. In the Edwardian era picnics were held on the grounds of the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel, but in later years they took place at the rural Menangle Park racecourse. In 1907 Hugh

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⁹ Lillye Backstage pp. 136-137
¹⁰ The Referee believed leading pony jockey George Russell ‘is perhaps making much more money at the ponies than he would with the limited opportunities he would receive at the horses’; Referee 12/7/1916 p. 5
¹¹ A situation that is replicated in 21st century Sydney as a result of a preponderance of small race fields and an oligarchic dominance of the industry by two very large stables
¹² Harry Reed, interview with Laurie Dillon 1980 p. 3, University of NSW Archives
Human competitors

McIntosh, the leviathan of Sydney sports promotions who made his fortune promoting the Burns-Johnson World Title fight at Rushcutter’s Bay in 1908, provided the catering for the pony trainers and jockeys picnic at the Banks Hotel, at which Joe Killorn demonstrated his jockey’s agility by capturing the greased pig. McIntosh had begun his association with sports commerce by selling meat pies at pony meetings when a young man.  

Unfavourable perceptions of them, such as the ones recalled by Reed, help explain why a significant number of pony jockeys attempted the highly problematic switch to registered racing, despite the boom in unregistered racing. There were two means by which they (and trainers) could achieve it. The less difficult route was to await periodic AJC clemencies—those occasions on which it threw open the Alison Road gates to the prodigals of unregistered racing, as it did in 1898, 1907, 1917, 1930 and 1932. On each occasion the AJC allowed about one month for penitents to abandon unregistered racing before the gates were again secured. Between these amnesties, ARC licensed persons had to stand down for six months before applying for admission to registered racing.

Movement between unregistered and registered racing

The beachheads for pony aspirants seeking fame and material plunder in registered racing were the Randwick spring and autumn carnivals, from whence the heights of the promised land of the Melbourne spring—and in particular, the Melbourne Cup—could be discerned. The 1890 Melbourne Cup carried a staggering £10,000 purse, which matched the most lucrative prizes of England, such as for the Sandown Eclipse Stakes. A successful Cup jockey would anticipate receiving about £1,000—perhaps fifteen times the average annual payment to workers—from a liberal owner.

Frank Kuhn established the paradigm for a pony jockey’s move to registered racing in 1897. A clever rider and natural lightweight, in 1899 he finished second in the Melbourne Cup on Francis Foy’s horse, Voyeu, in a state bordering on

13 ScreenSound Australia Archives, film Horse trainers picnic day Menangle Park, title number 58224, access number avc006411(1)
Human competitors

(Illustration 6.1) The style of a pony jockey of the late nineteenth century. Frank Kuhn finishing second on Voyeu (no. 9) in the 1899 Melbourne Cup. The straight back riding style invariably appears strange to the modern eye but Kuhn’s state of near unconsciousness, evident in the way his head has rolled to the left, makes it seem even more surreal. (source: Inglis, Horsesense)

(Illustration 6.2) Eight years later former pony jockey Bill Evans (black jacket, white sleeves), although also near collapse, manages to maintain his form as Apologue easily wins the Melbourne Cup. Evans is riding in an advanced form of the ‘crouch’ style, while the riders of the second (bands, on inside) and third horses persist with the ‘straightback’ method. The other jockeys are perhaps are in the middle stages of evolution. The paddock stand section of the crowd includes a large proportion of females. (source, King, Australia’s First Century)
Human competitors

unconsciousness, which almost certainly cost his mount the race. His indisposition was due to a weeklong bout of influenza.14 At the AJC spring meeting of 1901 Kuhn rode eight winners, including the winner of the Epsom Handicap, and the Metropolitan on San Fran. The two finished second in the Melbourne Cup of that year and the following autumn won the Sydney Cup. These achievements ensured Kuhn’s acceptance by registered owners and trainers. He enjoyed further notable success at the VRC autumn carnival of 1903, but in March he died following a shooting accident.15

The 1907 AJC amnesty enabled a number of pony jockeys to follow Kuhn’s lead, and to demonstrate that the graduation to registered racing was sustainable. The most prominent of them, Myles Connell, Bill Evans, Fred Williams and Joe Killorn, each had had experience with horses from infancy, abundant riding ability, and a phlegmatic character that enabled them to deal with the initial hostility of AJC rivals.

Connell is recognised as one of the leading registered jockeys of the first quarter of the twentieth century, but is rarely now identified as a onetime pony rider. He was born at Arulen in 1881 and rode when a teenager at registered bush tracks such as Cooma. In 1899 he came to Sydney to ride at AJC meetings and joined the small stable of Andy Gollan, while boarding at Peter Moore’s Moorefield Hotel. He was unable to attract rides from larger stables and was about to leave Sydney when he met the unregistered Ramsgate trainer Sid Knight, who persuaded him to try the pony circuit, on which he rode first on 11 October 1900, at Brighton. He immediately became a leading unregistered rider. In 1904 Connell won the last race on the last day of regular racing at Brighton with the galloway West Key. He continued to ride successfully at pony meetings until 28 May 1907, when he achieved a double at Kensington. The next day he applied for an AJC licence.16

14 Inglis Horsesense p. 52
15 Referee 18/3/1903 p. 1; The Kuhn surname was carried by a number of people in pony racing. L Kuhn finished third behind Frank in Meriwee’s 1899 Melbourne Cup. The twin brothers Phil and Arthur Kuhn, successful unregistered riders in the early twenties, shared the unique experience of dead heating twice on the same horses in the same contest; the first division of the Rosebery Cup of 1920, and its re-run. Refer Sydney Sportsman 6/10/1920 p. 6
16 Daily Mirror 18/5/1979 p. 46. In his career Connell rode one winner in every four rides, an almost unrivalled success rate
Connell experienced great success in his return to registered racing. In 1909 he won the AJC Champagne Stakes on Malster and dead-heated for the Caulfield Cup on Blue Brook. He was among the leading riders throughout the war and immediately after, and won many feature races including the 1920 Epsom on the champion Greenstead and 1921 AJC St Leger and Derby on Salitros, both of which were trained by Fred Williams. Connell retired in 1924 but kept up an interest in racing by training a small stable. He was one of the few jockeys of his time who invested well enough to provide for a comfortable retirement. Among his property portfolio were the first residential cottages built in Barker St, to the south of Kensington racecourse.

Bill Evans rode in Melbourne pony races at the age of eleven in 1893, and in the famous Rosehill Cup of 1896, in which 47 horses started. He was the leading pony rider for five years in Sydney before he left for India, where he rode 128 winners in eight months. On learning in 1907 that the AJC had lifted its ban on former pony riders Evans and Fred Williams, who was also in India, immediately set out for Sydney. Evans was an instant success in registered racing and won the 1907 Melbourne Cup on Apologue for the leading trainer Ike Earnshaw, who had trained ponies before becoming private trainer for Samuel Hordern. Evans had fasted excessively to make Apologue’s weight of 7 st 9 lb and, recalling Kuhn’s experience, fainted while unsaddling. When 15 minutes had passed officials, concerned by an increasingly restless crowd, gathered up Evans with his saddle and saddlecloth and placed him on the scales, where he made the correct weight.

This was Evans’s only ride in a Melbourne Cup but he had a successful decade in registered racing. In 1916, he rode in all heights races on ARC courses, despite the automatic disqualification from AJC racing this brought. Within a few weeks of his return the ARC stewards suspended him for six months. He appealed unsuccessfully, and thus his return to unregistered racing was far less propitious.

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17 Pollard Racegoers Companion pp. 162-163
18 Reed, interview with Dillon 1980 p. 3, University of NSW Archives
19 Collins & Thompson op. cit. p. 96-97
20 Referee 6/5/1914 p. 1
21 Ahern op. cit. p. 144
than his departure ten years earlier had been. He did little further race riding at the
ARC courses but continued to be associated with racing.\textsuperscript{22}

Fred Williams rode in the earliest pony races at the SDPC. Though he became a
rider of note in AJC racing he was not as successful as Connell or Evans. However
he was well respected for his conduct and was able to obtain an AJC license on his
retirement in 1910 to train a few leased horses. He was immediately successful and
topped the table of AJC trainers in the 1919-20 racing season and thereafter trained
some of the best horses between the wars, including the champions Chatham,
Pantheon and Vaals, and had leading racing men such as Ned Moss and Theo
Marks as clients. Clive Inglis, of the famous auctioneering family, rated him the
best trainer he had ever seen.\textsuperscript{23}

Joe Killorn rode at Sydney pony meetings in the early 1900s before moving to
Melbourne where he became the leading rider at Ascot and Richmond, at which
courses it was not unusual for him to win six or more races in an afternoon. After
the 1907 amnesty he began registered riding in Sydney and had many major
victories including the 1920 Doncaster Handicap, riding Sydney Damsel. He ran
second in the 1919 Melbourne Cup on John Brown’s colt Richmond Main and rode
Salitros, the unplaced favourite, for Fred Williams in 1920.\textsuperscript{24}

Between amnesties, despite their aspirations to transfer to registered racing, few
pony riders dared take a six month break, but three who did were Bill Barnett,
George Russell, and sometime later, Andy Knox. The gambles of two were
vindicated, the other not. Rather cruelly for Russell and Knox, they had all but
completed their quarantine, in 1917 and 1932 respectively, when AJC amnesties
were unexpectedly declared.

Barnett was a leading unregistered rider on the ARC tracks in the second half of
the Edwardian decade who in his best year had 59 victories. In 1907 he rode the

\textsuperscript{22} Evans’s son and grandson, each also named Bill, became trainers, the latter having success at
Rosehill in the 1980s
\textsuperscript{23} Inglis \textit{Horsesense} p. 123; Inglis \textit{More Horsesense} p. 64
\textsuperscript{24} Inglis \textit{Horsesense} p. 191
Human competitors

winner, Sandy, of the first race run on the new Rosebery track. After finishing third in the ARC premiership behind Harry Dove and Sam McDonald, Barnett obtained an AJC riding permit in September 1910. He adapted quickly to registered racing. The following spring he became a major carnival participant when he won the Rosehill and Caulfield Guineas with Woolerina and the Caulfield Cup with Lady Medallist. In the 1920s he rode with success in India and England.

Barnett’s departure left the unregistered field to the likes of Walsh, Dove, MacDonald, T. Moulden and Ernie Tanko, but the newcomer George Russell soon eclipsed them. He had won Wren’s ‘Ascot 1000′(Melbourne) in 1912 and 1913, but after causing a fall at Ascot (Sydney) on 29 August 1914, he received a one-year disqualification. After the suspension Russell became the leading rider of the mid-war years. One observer rated him the best jockey over all distances in New South Wales. He attempted to switch to AJC racing during the 1917 amnesty, but could not establish himself, and along with Dove, W. Cross and B. Porter, who had also exploited the amnesty, he returned to the ARC in 1918. MacDonald also defected for a time but returned to the ARC in 1921, which magnanimously forgave the unfaithfulness of the riders.

In the early post-war years a new generation of riders, which has been made familiar to students of racing history by the writings of Bert Lillye and David Hickie, came to the fore on Sydney’s pony racecourses. A number of them, including George Meddick, Albert Wood, Harry Reed, Albert Callinan, Fil Allotta and Andy Knox, had come from registered racing. Richard Zuccini, who rode at the pony courses in the 1930s, was an American jockey. Their motives for deciding to ride in unregistered racing, which was still considered *infra dig* among AJC jockeys, were usually financial, often a response to the more frequent opportunities available because of the higher ARC weight scale and more numerous races. They replenished the existing stock of unregistered riders that included Ernie Henry, Alf Stanton, Harold ‘Cock’ Griffiths, Harry Mears, George Browne, Fred Taylor, Ernie

25 Collins & Thompson *op. cit.* p. 77
26 Referee 2/3/1921 p. 4
27 ‘Once Again’ in Referee 12/7/1916 p. 5
Sounness, Jim Simpson, George Scholl, George Young, the Heterick brothers, Fred Hood and Ted McMenamin, who was briefly apprenticed to Bob Skelton.

The indigenous and introduced unregistered riders competed vigorously in their own premiership in the 1920s, without any one achieving long-term dominance. Among the several causes for this were the comings and goings of jockeys between registered and unregistered racing, the punitive suspensions and disqualifications of the period, the absence, for the main, of large stables and thus decisive retainers, and war service. Despite these circumstances Ernie Henry became the first jockey on either side of the racing dichotomy to win 100 races in a season, in the last race of the 1923-24 unregistered season, at Victoria Park.\(^{28}\) Yet his century represents an average of fewer than 1.5 winners at each of the 72 meetings.\(^{29}\) As meetings with 10 or more races were customary at least 700 races (but probably many more) were run during the season. The sixth leading rider, Harold ‘Cock’ Griffiths, averaged just one winner at every third meeting. Wins were widely distributed among a large pool riders and pony racing supported many more marginally successful and probably part-time riders than registered racing. In 1912 there had been 62 riders with at least one win during the season. Intense competition for rides among this large pool of unregistered riders may explain their readiness, discussed below, to follow owners and trainers instructions, even when they disregarded the rules of racing.\(^{30}\)

The frequently interrupted and relocated career of Harry Reed was typical of the experience of many jockeys who rode on ARC racecourses. He began his riding career at Kensington in 1912, and then rode at Bathurst and Orange before beginning an AJC apprenticeship with Joe Burton at Randwick in 1917. After having difficulty obtaining rides in registered racing, in 1919 he returned to ARC racing, where he remained until 1921, riding occasional winners for Bob Skelton. Thereafter he returned to bush riding and did not resume in the city until 1933, with some sporadic success but again he had difficulty obtaining rides. He rode his last winner at Moorefield in 1939 when he was 41, but he retained his licence until

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28 Cook interview with Bennetts 1981 p. 12
29 In the late twenties Skelton’s son Robert jr. supplanted Henry as stable jockey
Human competitors

(Illustration 6.3) Faultlessly attired ARC jockeys at Kensington, 1919, wearing the fashionable new baggy jodhpurs. The photographer appears to have arranged for senior jockeys to stand, boys to be seated. (source: Sydney Sportsman 3/12/1919, State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales)
1945 and rode trackwork at Kensington every morning. Bob Skelton jr. rated him the strongest jockey he ever saw. While he is indelibly linked with Kensington racecourse and pony racing, he took part in unregistered racing for little more than 24 months in total and most of his 500 career winners came on country tracks. Reed is best known for his post-racing activities and employment with the University of New South Wales, where he became something of an institution. When its construction commenced on the old Kensington racecourse in 1946 Reed gained employment as a nightwatchman, and later as caretaker, porter and gatekeeper, in which roles he was well known to staff and students. Near the end of his life Reed made several contributions to the archives of the University, including a racing saddle, photographs and oral history. A portrait of Reed as a young man hangs in the foyer of Basser College.31

Several of the jockeys who came to unregistered racing had previously achieved podium finishes in the best Australian races.32 George Meddick rode the winner of the 1914 Melbourne Cup, Kingsburgh, a well-connected horse owned by the future VRC chairman L.K.S. Mackinnon, bred by the leading bookmaker Sol Green and trained by Isaac Foulsham. He was an apprentice at that time and weighed just 5 stone 10 lb. A few months earlier, on 6 August 1914, Meddick had ridden Lady Antonio to win the first race run at the new Menangle course. In 1915 he rode the second horse William the Silent in the Caulfield Cup.33

After the 1914 Melbourne Cup the rider of the runner up, Albert Wood, insisted that Kingsburgh would not have won but for Meddick, who had, like Jim Pike, served his apprenticeship with leading Randwick trainer Bill Kelso, a skilled master of jockeys.34 He remained among the top five AJC riders throughout the war and in 1921 he obtained a prized license to ride in ARC restricted height races. Meanwhile he continued to ride feature winners on registered racecourses,

30 Associated Racing Clubs, Australian Pony and Galloway Racing Guide 1912-1913, Sydney, Ross Brothers, 1913, passim
31 Sun Herald 27/11/1983; Reed interview with Dillon, 1980, University of NSW archives, p. 2 and passim
32 Melbourne Cup-winning trainers also came to pony racing. Etienne De Mestre, who won four, including the first two with Archer, won an all heights race with a horse called Release at Brighton on 23/10/1896
33 Sydney Morning Herald 7/8/1914 p. 12
including the City Handicap in Adelaide. On 9 June 1926 at Kensington Meddick relinquished his AJC licence to concentrate on unregistered racing, after he had won that day on Island King. He became one of the leading pony riders of the late 1920s and continued successfully in unregistered racing, until the 1933 amalgamation.

Following his second place in 1914, Albert Wood settled his mount, Garlin, in the middle stages in a perfect position to win the 1915 Melbourne Cup, but he like many others have done succumbed to the pressure of the occasion and made his run too early. Garlin weakened to finish unplaced. Wood was very distressed with himself and his costly mistake and as he unsaddled he apologised profusely to Garlin’s owner, who accepted the tactical error with remarkable equanimity. The owner was John Wren, who had backed the horse to win an enormous amount of money.35 Wren had met Wood through his pony-racing connections in Sydney, where Wood had ridden between 1910 and 1913. Wood continued to be a prominent registered rider well into the 1920s.

In 1919 going to unregistered racing offered Albert Callinan, for whom increasing weight had made registered flat racing difficult, a welcome alternative to jumping races riding, which, in the structure of Australian racing, offered at best only a handful of rides a week and which amounted, according to A.B. Paterson, to a suspended death sentence.36 Callinan’s brother Steve had won the 1897 Melbourne Cup, and he was runner-up himself in 1915 in the second-most important Australian race, the Caulfield Cup. Callinan immediately gained the support of trainers and became the pre-eminent unregistered rider of 1920. He subsequently overcame the setback of a three year suspension and showed such remarkable skill on resuming his career that in 1926 he was praised as ‘the recognised [Jim] Pike of the ponies.’37

34 Ahern op. cit. p. 174
35 Buggy op. cit. p. 54
36 Australia does not have a distinct cross-country season as England has, where winter programs consist entirely of hurdle races and steeplechases; Paterson Off Down the Track p. 34
37 Sydney Sportsman 8/6/1926 p. 6; Pike was the champion registered jockey of the period
Andy Knox began his career in registered racing auspiciously with a win in the 1920 Canterbury Cup, which the Prince of Wales presented him. Knox spent most of the 1920s in pony racing, with great success, but returned to the AJC shortly before the 1933 amalgamation. He was another one-time pony rider who won a Melbourne Cup, on the 100-1 outsider Old Rowley, in 1940. He had appeared certain to win the Cup at his first attempt in 1932, but Peter Pan, after being passed several lengths by his mount Yarramba, famously rallied to deny him. Knox was appalled, as Yarramba’s owner, the massive punter Darcy Eccles, had promised him the entire first prize. Despite his 1940 success, and two wins in the Caulfield Cup in the 1930s, Knox did not emulate Miles Connell’s comfortable post-racing existence. The AJC disqualified him for two years following an incident at Newcastle in August 1944. On appeal the Committee increased the disqualification to ten years.\textsuperscript{38} Thereafter he maintained himself driving a Sydney cab until his death.\textsuperscript{39}

Ernie Henry, the leading rider of the mid-1920s, once rode eight winners in one day at Victoria Park. Henry, who had like many pony riders been born in the rural districts, formed a fast friendship with Albert Callinan. Clive Inglis wrote:

> Among the regular racegoers they were popularly supposed to be very much hand in glove with each other. One day, the betting market suggested that a horse which Henry was riding was not expected to win, as his price blew in the betting ring in an ominous manner. Accordingly the stewards took action and substituted Alby Callinan for Henry.

> As Alby came out to mount the horse, a character in the crowd lining the fence shouted to the stewards: ‘You mugs—you take off Ned Kelly and put on his brother Dan.’\textsuperscript{40}

Callinan’s mount finished a conspicuous second. As he returned to scale, the same humourist was in position on the rail with his head bowed and hat over his heart. Callinan was unable to resist asking what it meant. ‘I always show respect to the dead,’ the man replied (in racecourse argot ‘dead’ is a reference to those entrants whose riders are not in earnest).\textsuperscript{41} The assumption of collusion between jockeys

\textsuperscript{38} AJC Calendar December 1946 p. 36
\textsuperscript{39} Sun Herald 7/1/2001 p. 74
\textsuperscript{40} Inglis Horsesense p. 119
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid. This is a well-known racecourse anecdote told by several writers and was also the basis of a famous cartoon by Emile Mercier
Human competitors

was widespread and people believed agreements reached milling behind the barrier decided results as much as athletic performance and luck in running.

Alf Stanton was the principal ARC jockey-informant of Hickie and Lillye, to whom he recounted his association with the mid-1920s pony champion Prince Bruce in 38 of his 41 wins.\(^4^2\) He rode 1065 winners in his career, mostly on pony racecourses, although he had isolated successes after World War II while in full-time employment independent of racing. He left school when 13 and received a permit to ride two days after his fourteenth birthday, on 22 October 1919.\(^4^3\) Stanton enjoyed a wunderkind apprenticeship and rode 10 winners before the end of the calendar year, at a time when apprentice jockeys received few opportunities. As a mature rider he was rated the equal of Darby Munro in the use of whip.\(^4^4\)

Stanton entered pony racing as marathon programs became commonplace. He recalled having 16 rides in one day at Ascot, for three winners and five seconds. His before-tax earnings on that day must have exceeded £30, which was about six times the average male weekly wage. The losing riding fee had increased by the 1920s to £1, less 2s 6d for insurance. Jockeys received five per cent of prize money, though the ‘gentleman’s agreement’ that usually secured them 10 per cent and certainly existed post war, was apparently still not customary.\(^4^5\) In 1908 the Victoria Park club increased jockey’s fee to 10s for races of greater than £50 stakes.

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There are indications that the risk of death or serious injury was much greater in early pony racing than it was in registered racing. Statistics on early fatalities were not kept and their number cannot be deduced from the contemporary press, as deaths were not always reported. Often the only reference to a life lost was notice

\(^{42}\) Stanton shares the unusual distinction with champion Melbourne jockey Roy Higgins of having played a role in a major Australian motion picture. His vehicle was the 1936 Ken G. Hall film *Thoroughbred*, a thinly veiled retelling of the Phar Lap legend. The equine hero of the film wins the Melbourne Cup but is shot by criminals as it passes the post. Stanton plays its jockey, ‘Midget’ Martin

\(^{43}\) Lillye *Backstage*. p. 130; fourteen was the minimum age for jockeys at that time but some years earlier Frank Wootton had ridden at age nine. No doubt some jockeys continued to falsify their dates of birth

\(^{44}\) Andersen *Winners Can Laugh* p. 181

\(^{45}\) Lillye *Backstage* pp. 136-137
of a fundraising event in favour of the widow some weeks later. Yet these announcements appeared regularly enough to demonstrate that pony race riding in the era of small racecourses with tight bends, rigid hardwood running rails, uneven surfaces, untrained riders, half-educated horses, minimal surveillance by stewards, lack of protective clothing and primitive first aid was incredibly dangerous. Skull fracture was the most common cause of death in both registered and unregistered racing, a reality that ultimately prompted the racing clubs to incorporate the compulsory wearing of protective skullcaps in the rules of racing. Introduced by the ARC at Ascot on 12 January 1918 (18 months before the AJC), the earliest skullcaps were made of compressed cardboard lined with satin, a meagre enough protection against sharp hooves. They lacked chinstraps and tended to fly off in accidents. In the USA, struggling jockeys removed the lining and crown of these prototype skullcaps to make them lighter, and thus rendered them almost useless. Similar practices were probably common among ARC jockeys.

Contemporary opinion was that the tight circuits at several unregistered locations made pony riding the most dangerous form of horse racing, although Canterbury Park, which was not much larger than the pony racecourses, was the scene of several deaths. ‘If you were to go out and see some of these “multy” little courses, you would agree that the proprietors should be convicted of manslaughter for permitting people to race there,’ said the journalist Andrew Farthing in 1900. W.P. Crick agreed: ‘Take up the paper on any day in the week, and you will see where some boy has been done to death on a little wretched place called Rosebery Park or Lillie Bridge, which is not big enough to play cricket on.’

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46 *Referee* 26/12/1917 p. 6. Although Lemon says the AJC did not introduce skull caps until the late 1930s, the *AJC Rules of Racing 1924* states that approved skull caps were compulsory from 1/6/1919. Freedman and Lemon p. 482. Skull caps did not become compulsory in Britain until the 1950s.

47 Protective goggles did not reach Australia until the early 1950s, improved fibre-glass skullcaps with chin straps appeared at the end of that decade, and reinforced vests in the mid 1990s.


49 In 1897 the chief secretary, in response to questions on the safety of unregistered racecourses responded that four jockeys had died at Canterbury, a registered course, between 1894 and 1896; *Brown op. cit.* p. 53

50 *NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly* 1900 vol. 6 p. 1240

51 *New South Wales, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (First Series), Session 1900 (Fifth Session of the Eighteenth Parliament) in six volumes*, vol. CV, comprising the period from 22
Human competitors

The first Rosebery Park course was especially deadly, and was the equivalent in equine racing of the murderous Maroubra Speedway of the 1920s. On the first day of racing at Rosebery in 1895 the jockeys J. Elliot and G. Fewings were killed and seriously injured respectively in separate accidents. These tragic events brought a paragraph only in the Herald and Referee’s general account of the opening day. Many deaths ensued at Rosebery—G. Clayton in February 1896, T. Gardiner in a hurdle race in May 1897, T. Rooke later the same year, P. Maughlin in June 1899, J. Allen and W. Cohn in May 1901, and T.W. Adams in June 1905. At the inquest into Adams’s death the coroner belatedly raised the safety record of the Rosebery course, but his seems to have been the last fatality there before the course closed in 1906.

Fatal accidents were not restricted to Rosebery. John Driscoll Jr, whose father had won the 1867 Melbourne Cup on Tim Whiffler, was killed at the SDPC in November 1890 when a dog ran onto the track, and W. Cartwright died at Forest Lodge in June 1902. Accidents were less common at Kensington, but the prominent rider E. Julius died there in September 1906.

The move to larger racecourses that followed the 1906 gaming and betting legislation brought a decline in pony jockey fatalities in the ARC era, to the extent that the safety record of their racecourses was soon superior to that of registered racing. The ARC ran approximately 15,000 races between 1908 and 1925 for only three fatalities (including Sydney Griffiths, 16, who died after a fall at the Ascot three-furlong post on 22 September 1917 and W Moore at Rosebery in 1925), whereas between 1917 and 1924 the AJC received 17 death compensation claims.

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August to 25 September, 1900; Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly, Sydney, William Applegate Gullick Government Printer, 1901, p. 2999
52 Peter Luck, A Time to Remember, Richmond Vic., William Heineman Australia, 1988, p. 50
53 Sydney Morning Herald 13/3/1895 p. 6; Referee 13/3/1895 p. 5
54 Referee 12/2/1896 p. 1, 2/6/1897 p. 5, 16/2/1898 p. 5, 7/6/1899 p. 5, 15/5/1901 p. 5, 12/7/1905 p. 5
55 re Driscoll Referee 26/11/1890 p. 1; Cartwright Referee 15/7/1902 p. 5, Julius Referee 3/10/1906 p. 5
56 Daily Telegraph 25/9/1917 p. 3; NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 790, p. 798; NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1295. In the 1920s the ARC compensated the family of jockeys killed riding £150
All of the jockeys riding in Sydney formed one pool for the first time when AJC amalgamation ended unregistered racing at Ascot on Wednesday 4 January 1933. The press speculated on the likely fate of the former unregistered riders. A *Telegraph* writer expressed qualified optimism: ‘While the standard of riding at the ponies was not equal to that on registered courses, horsemen such as R. Maxwell, G. Browne, L. Sharpe, W. Matthews, D. Clinton and R. Skelton [jr.] should not have any difficulty in securing mounts.’\(^57\) The ARC attempted to help its former licensed persons by lifting all disqualifications prior to amalgamation, so that all could come to the new regime with a clean slate.\(^58\) Initially the ARC riders saw the merger as an opportunity for them to break into feature racing, but they were quickly disabused of that hope.

Edgar Britt was a registered apprentice when the amalgamation occurred. He found the frenzied and hand-to-hand conflict of pony racing and riding had created tough, cunning and ruthless jockeys. He said of Andy Knox: ‘He had a few tricks from his pony days. One was that if you had him on your inside, on the rails, and had him racing tightly, he would appeal for a little room. If you took no notice you promptly received a sharp dig in the ribs from Andy’s elbow.’\(^59\) When racing on smaller racecourses Knox, whose nickname was ‘Basher,’ deliberately rode under the necks of horses closing on him at the home turn, before cutting back to the rails, an artifice that sometimes cost his pursuers a half to two lengths.\(^60\)

Britt was the first AJC rider to win at one of the previously unregistered courses, at Rosebery on 11 January 1933. His ride was Gippsland, trained by Tom Murray,\(^61\) on which Britt had won at a registered Canterbury meeting the previous week. There was much confusion in the first days of unification and few of the AJC faction competed at the Rosebery meeting, but by the following Wednesday all of the AJC riders took bookings. Britt spent most of the remaining days of the pony racecourses overseas, but he rode on them between northern hemisphere racing seasons and won a race on Turbulent at Kensington in March 1934.

\(^{57}\) *Daily Telegraph Turf Supplement* 7/1/1933 p. 1
\(^{58}\) Ibid. p. 4
\(^{59}\) Britt interview with Peake March 2000
\(^{60}\) Ballantine & Trengrove *op. cit.* p. 154
\(^{61}\) Father of Pat Murray, trainer of the ‘cult’ racehorse Tails from 1969 to 1972
The immediate consequence of open racing for riders was chronic overcrowding in the jockeys’ rooms. At the first unrestricted AJC meeting, at Canterbury on 7 January 1933, AJC jockey Milton Sullivan wryly observed a shoehorn was required to get in the door.62 Maxwell, Browne, Henry, Thomas, Hickey, Hornery, Coutts and Cariss were among the ARC jockeys who rode but none won, which prompted the Sydney Truth to peremptorily declare that the AJC jockeys would dominate the newcomers, and the Telegraph soon also had reservations about their prospects.63 Thereafter registered trainers rarely engaged the former unregistered jockeys and increasingly the former pony trainers abandoned their old associates for the AJC riders Munro, Cook, Brit, Bartle, Pike, and their colleagues. In response to their ostracism Brit believes the ARC jockeys became even more desperate to ride winners, to increase their marketability, to the point of dangerous recklessness.64 He also thought that because they had often previously ridden on smaller courses where horses had to start their runs well before the turn, they accelerated prematurely at Randwick.65

It is difficult to apportion explanation for the failure of the pony jockeys to be assimilated in registered racing between deficiencies in their skills and lack of opportunity. It would seem that, at least when riding in restricted heights races, the ARC riders were less adaptable than AJC riders, perhaps because of their grounding in the straightforward sprint contests that constituted most races, in which nearly all were committed to try for the lead. The consequences of this unanimity of purpose were exacerbated by the circular contour of some courses, which made making ground difficult. Only a few specialists, including the heroic Prince Bruce, were able to regularly win unregistered races from the rear. Consequently few pony riders learnt patience. In the later unregistered period, on bigger courses like Victoria Park and Rosebery, ARC jockeys had somewhat more opportunity to display finesse, but most races remained mad dashes featuring vigour a la outrance.

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62 Sydney Truth 8/1/1933 p. 3
63 Sydney Truth 8/1/1933 p. 2.; Daily Telegraph 19/1/1933 p. 2
64 Britt interview with Peake March 2000
65 The existence of Victoria Park with its long straight somewhat undermines this theory
Human competitors

There was more scope for praxis for registered jockeys, some of whom established signature riding traits; Pike was noted for hands-and-heels finesse, Breasley, for ability to find impossible rails runs, Munro, for strength with the whip. Others expressed their tactical ability in stop-and-start WFA races consisting of select fields of horses and riders. Most were noted for having a ‘good seat’ in the saddle. By contrast, many unregistered riders, including Henry, who was nicknamed ‘Jerky Joe’ by Bob Skelton, had untutored techniques that accentuated flying elbows and poor balance. Perhaps for this reason many appear to have ridden with their stirrup leathers several notches lower than was the fashion in AJC racing. Aberrations in style were not lost on the public, especially in defeat. After the amalgamation, when a sloppy former pony rider was ranged alongside a perfectly-balanced equestrian like Jim Pike, who poetically buried his face in the flowing mane of his mount, the disparity was as gross as that between fly angling and ‘line and pole’ tuna fishing.

Riders with pony experience were nonetheless esteemed for their ability at the barrier. The *Sydney Morning Herald* argued some few years before racing became ‘open’ that: ‘There is comparatively just as much talent among the ARC lads especially if it is a matter of getting a horse away from the barrier for a short sprint.’ Britt acknowledged that the ARC jockeys, especially the former Melbourne rider Bob Maxwell, excelled in this aspect. George Lambert, an early Melbourne pony rider who later won an Australian Cup, VRC Derby and Oaks,

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66 *Sun Herald* 14/4/1985 p. 97
67 When regular metropolitan pony racing began in Sydney all jockeys rode in ‘straightback’ style, wherein the stirrup leathers are extended to the full length of the jockey’s legs, and consequently the jockey’s back was straight and perpendicular to the horse’s, while the hands were held quietly over the withers. It was not possible from this position to ride in the style that came to be known as ‘hands and heels’, nor offer much encouragement to the horse, other than to wield a very long whip, which the rider’s upright position made necessary. There is argument as to which country, and indeed which jockey, introduced the so-called ‘monkey on a stick’ style of riding, but in Australia it seems to have been Leslie Hewitt or James Barden, both registered riders, by 1905, and it is probable that the new method took hold first in registered racing. Frank Kuhn has also been identified as an early crouch exponent, but in the photograph on page 238a of the 1899 Melbourne Cup he is clearly riding straightback. Lemon suggests that Kuhn rode San Fran in a crouched style in the 1901 Melbourne Cup; but this seems too early; Freedman and Lemon *op. cit.* p. 409. The photograph of the finish of the Apologue’s 1907 Melbourne Cup shows former pony rider Bill Evans is clearly riding crouch style, while his two nearest competitors are straight backs. Evans may have learnt the crouch seat in India.
68 *Sydney Morning Herald* 31/12/30 p. 12
69 Ballantine & Trengrove *op. cit.* p. 157
Human competitors

emphasised the grounding pony jockeys received: ‘you must get well away in pony races, for there is very small chance of winning from behind.’

By 1939 most ARC jockeys had literally been ridden out of town. When unable to secure metropolitan opportunities, they concentrated on provincial courses like Richmond and Menangle, where, however, the prize money rarely exceeded £10, a tithe of what they had ridden for before the Depression. World War II and the discontinuation of provincial and restricted heights racing coincided with career’s end for most of the former pony jockeys, although a handful, like Harold Griffiths, struggled on with infrequent and often hopeless mounts; when he won a metropolitan race in 1939 many racegoers were surprised to learn he still held a licence. Most jockeys left the racing industry, although some gained employment as strappers or stable hands. Unfortunately, much of the last meetings of the ARC committee was spent considering numerous calls for aid from the Distressed Jockeys Fund, including several from those who had once been leaders in their field.

Dealing with change had come more easily for riders who had retired from riding some time before the merger; in addition to Connell, Williams and Evans, Fred Hood, Fil Allotta and Frank Dalton—who was badly injured during a Canterbury pony race in 1895—all had commenced notable careers as AJC trainers.

Trainers

The sector of pony racing that was most readily distinguishable from its registered equivalent was that constituted by the hundreds of backyard trainers of the South Sydney district, who prepared most of the equine participants. Their circumstances were more difficult than those of AJC trainers, there were more of them, their stables were smaller, and they seem to have enjoyed less respect from officials than AJC counterparts. They were not encouraged to loiter and socialise in the members’ reserve areas of the racecourse; rather, any trainer who did not have a

70 Herald and Weekly Times op. cit. p. 107
71 Associated Race Club [sic], Minute Book 1941 to 9 April 1945, AJC library
(Illustration 6.4) The winner of the 1932 semi-classic races AJC Hobartville Stakes and RRC Rosehill Guineas Bronze Hawk wins the 1933 Kensington Spring Cup as a four-year-old in the first season of ‘open’ racing. He is ridden by the AJC jockey Maurice McCarten. Registration of the ARC clubs meant the former unregistered riders thereafter won few of the big ARC races. The insert at top shows the race in progress on the Kensington turn; the winner is lying second, about to ease off the rail. The two-storey building in the background is ‘The Castle’, the stable and home of ‘Baron’ Bob Skelton (source: Hadley Album, AJC Library and Archive.)
Human competitors

starter in the next race was likely to be chivvied out of the saddling paddock by the ARC secretary Underhill. 73

The pony trainers who gave evidence to the 1923-24 Select Committee spoke of a hand-to-mouth existence, while the secretary of their association, T.D. Kingsley, insisted that 95 per cent of his members were habitually broke, living off loans from other trainers and bookmakers, until such time as they could train a winner. Some had not done so for more than five years, and one became so excited after finally ending a losing streak that he had to be restrained for his own safety. 74 ‘You have to back a winner with the books, or get out of the game,’ Kingsley insisted. 75 He might well have added that trainers sought to make the win coincide with the securing of favourable odds. It was said that some trainers ran their horses dead for years, like some Stawell Gift winners, in order to obtain a favourable handicap and odds for the event selected for a big plunge. 76 When trainers risked their money they were reputed to go to extraordinary lengths to enhance the prospects of success. In a race at Kensington ‘there was a betting plunge on a horse that was renowned for its waywardness at the start. Just as the field came into line, a man dashed out from behind some bushes and crashed a stockwhip on the rump of the horse, which was problematic at the start. He shot off like a rocket and no one ever found out the identity of the whip wielder’, but a desperate trainer or one of his strappers would be the obvious candidates. 77 Kingsley’s dire assessment was supported by the Sydney Sportsman which noted ‘few men in the pony game…know how to make the business pay with a very limited string,’ if they did not bet. 78 Between wins many trainers had to supplement their income with odd jobs like rabbit-ohing. This was due not to poor prize money, at least in the boom

72 The Sportsman noted ‘At the present time there are more persons obtaining a livelihood at the ponies, and more ponies racing than there are persons or horses at horse racing. Collectively they are not so well fixed for worldly goods as the horse section; Sydney Sportsman 5/11/1919 p. 1
73 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1321
74 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1292 and passim. Kingsley, in common with many of the witnesses to this inquiry, gave inconsistent testimony, for soon after making the ‘95 per cent broke’ statement he insisted the trainers had enough money to establish their own racecourse
75 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1291
76 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p 1292-3
77 Lillye Backstage p. 86. If this story is true it probably took place at the five-furlong start at the furthest corner of the course
78 Sydney Sportsman 6/4/1926 p. 6
years from the beginning of World War I to the onset of the Depression, but to the number of stables between which it was shared.

As Kingsley suggested, members of the training community supported each other financially during bad times. The POTA, whose constituency was mainly small-string trainers, and which had a considerable presence in the racing suburbs, had advocates such as Joe Gander lobby the government against the ARC, whom they regarded as the common enemy. The trainers believed the establishment of a non-proprietary principal club, constituted similarly to the AJC, would do much to put right the wrongs of unregistered racing, as they perceived them. POTA member Milton Richards suggested that if there were five racecourses, of which one were non-proprietary—racing once a week in opposition to the alternating four proprietary clubs—several of the latter would fail, which he felt would bring rationalisation. However, the expectations of the POTA were somewhat fanciful. While non-proprietary pony racing might have brought increased prize money, it would almost certainly also have ended the careers of many of the less successful POTA members. It was because AJC-registered trainers were expected to meet higher standards and tighter regulation there were fewer of them licensed than in unregistered racing. 79

Kingsley was certain a switch to non-proprietary racing would bring a reduction to trainers’ overhead costs. He estimated it cost between 30s and £2 a week to keep a beast in a pony stable. He listed other costs that had to be met variously by owners or trainers, including the 10s 6d nomination fee, £1 for acceptances, £1 jockey fees and £1 5s to have horseshoes fixed and removed. The nomination and acceptance fees, as well as providing sweepstakes, was intended to discourage trainers from entering starters just ‘in for a run.’ Similarly a late scratching fee of £3 10s safeguarded the race clubs from fields falling away on race days, in the event for example, of a heavy track. In addition to these race-day costs, trainers had to pay 10s a month for their licences and 7s for each horse to use the ARC tracks for training (the equivalent training fee at Randwick was 10s). Trainers aired complaints against these costs at frequent public meetings of the POTA, and

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79 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 pp. 1296, 1318
Kingsley went so far as to place a full page *J’Accuse* aimed primarily at the ARC in the *Sydney Sportsman*.  

By the 1920s pony racing provided a living for thousands of people—jockeys, strappers, trainers, farriers, bookmakers and officials—who mainly lived in those south-eastern suburbs—Kensington, Randwick, Mascot, Rosebery, Waterloo, Zetland—within which five of Sydney’s eight racecourses, and the majority of its stables, were located. The propinquity of all four ARC courses allowed most trainers to avoid float charges by walking starters to each track. Although the racecourses were mainly islands surrounded by seas of undeveloped land when opened, communities of stable retainers and dependents grew up around the properties of the larger scale trainers. The stables brought something of a rural flavour to an otherwise urban existence, which was especially welcome in those suburbs as they became increasingly industrialised and dominated by factory chimneys, numerous small hotels and corner shops. The sheer size of the ARC racecourses (up to 112 acres) ensured they had a significant impact on the suburbs and people that surrounded them. As John Ryan noted, ‘racehorses were an everyday sight on the streets, moving back and forth on the training tracks.’  

In South Sydney a strong sense of community developed, as did pride in the area as the undisputed home of Sydney racing. These were loyalties that supplemented allegiances to district sporting clubs, in particular the iconic rugby league team, the South Sydney ‘Rabbitohs’.

The largest communities of unregistered racing people existed around Kensington and Victoria Park racecourses and they overlapped that of the Randwick trainers. The Victoria Park precinct occupied the triangle formed by Dowling and Lenthall Streets and Todman Avenue to the east of the course. A smaller satellite community existed in the sprawling suburb of Mascot, particularly in the back streets between Ascot and Rosebery racecourses, and in the Lauristion Park.
Human competitors

estate. A man who lived in Randolph St, which was adjacent to the four-furlong mark of the Rosebery racecourse, in 1985 recalled that every third or fourth house in Mascot had a stable in the backyard. The equine inmates performed the same function, in the eyes of the inhabitants, as the occupants of the fowl pens; they provided a small, not entirely reliable but very welcome supplement to the resources of the household.

Additionally, the construction of the racecourses contributed to the development of communities and infrastructure in that locality, in particular by bringing the tramlines that were built to serve race-day crowds, which also hastened residential development by providing faster workday access to the city. An economic multiplier effect meant that the creation of new racing suburbs and the expansion of existing ones enhanced the employment opportunities for a number of affiliated tradespersons and service providers based in the pony racing precinct including veterinarians, farriers, produce merchants, saddlers and harness makers. The establishment of trainers’ stables also created a market for high street businessmen such as butchers and bakers. Moreover the regular race meetings became important sources of casual employment for the people of the local community, providing work for three or four days a fortnight to turnstile operators, gate and bar attendants, race book sellers, totalisator and bookmakers’ clerks, cloakroom attendants, dining and tea-room waitresses. In addition, the pony courses were an important leg in the circuit of sporting venues at which sellers of post-race favourites such as pies and frankfurt rolls could tempt customers streaming from the exits.

The appeal of the quasi-rural lifestyle of the suburban racing stable compensated most trainers and their staff for the economic difficulties they faced, and it provided an opportunity for men who knew and loved horses to continue to work with them as they rapidly disappeared from most other aspects of urban commercial and domestic life. A number of family pony stables, with names familiar to racegoers of the late twentieth century such as Rolls, Guy, Foy, Chaffe,

83 STC files, ‘Trainers’, Mitchell Library
84 Sun Herald 24/3/1985, p. 89
85 Refer Waugh op. cit. p. 31
Denham, Horan, Killian, Hanneybel, Stanton, Watterson, de Arman and Suttle, saw their businesses through the difficulties of the Depression. In fact a large pool of trainers with modest capital bases survived in pony racing because the equine talent was broadly (if thinly) distributed. Sydney pony racing resembled more closely the racing paradigm in the state of Victoria (where a large number of owner-trainers still exist) than AJC racing.86 With the notable exception of Bob Skelton, whose team ranged at times up to 60, in the 1920s and 1930s no trainers had very large teams, although Charlie Rudd had success with a stable of a dozen or more horses. Many of the 230-odd trainers of the 1920s had just two horses, and most were owner-trainers. They had to strive to keep at least a pair racing regularly, as ultimately the ARC stopped issuing licenses to work a single horse, a move intended to impose some degree of rationalisation that was nevertheless harsh on the backyard operators, and trainers winding down towards retirement.87 Yet despite the lack of big stables, there were many more ponies and horses in training to race on unregistered courses than on AJC tracks. In 1923 it was estimated that there were about 1,000 unregistered ponies and horses in training, approximately double the number registered with the AJC.88

There were many fewer independent owners in unregistered racing.89 The scarcity of ‘outside’ owners is demonstrated by the entries for a novice handicap at Ascot in 1914, as 47 of 69 were listed in the race book as ‘trained by owner.’90 Even this description is slightly misleading, as many of the beasts raced by the trainers were in fact leased from the owner, who received a third of prize money—the same arrangement under which Phar Lap raced for trainer Harry Telford.

Most owners active in AJC racing coveted the social capital consequent on a win at Randwick, especially in a race such as the AJC Derby. Hardly any depended on racing as a source of revenue. Very few, according to AJC secretary C.W.

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86 There are some obvious similarities in the structures of pony racing and the domination (until recently, at least) of greyhound training by owner-trainers
87 The POTA also thought that the ARC should grant retired trainers free racecourse admission and other modest benefits; NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1295
88 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1292
89 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1297
90 Ascot Racecourse and Recreation Grounds Co., Official Race Book July Meeting 1914; AJC archive
(Charlie) Cropper, other than Ernest Clarke and John Brown, garnered prize money that exceeded their costs—and most of the other big owners did not attempt to cover their operating costs through gambling.\(^91\) They expected to lose money in ownership, treating it as a means of wealth display and conspicuous consumption.

No social capital accrued in winning races at Lillie Bridge or Botany, in fact, a reasonably respectable person may have wished to suppress knowledge of his ownership, which added to the currency in *noms de turf* in unregistered racing. This was a disadvantage that was difficult for early pony racing organisers to overcome, but Kensington tried, and was at least partially successful. As prize money increased in the ARC era and pony racecourses like Victoria Park were able to convey much of the glamour traditionally associated with thoroughbred racing, the pool of stable patrons increased, but pony racing remained primarily the domain of the owner trainer.

Perhaps the main appeal to outside owners in racing unregistered ponies and horses was the putative access to ‘stable secrets’ that ownership entitled. How forthcoming such privileged information ever was is rather moot, as pony trainers were noted for their reticence concerning likely winners, and it was bad business to compromise the betting market of one owner for another. Nevertheless many new owners hoped to gain benefit from their patronage of a trainer in the betting ring. Frank Morris believed there were hardly any pony owners who did not bet.\(^92\) Moreover, it was expected that they be able to produce evidence they had supported their charges, as inability to do so in the face of questioning by suspicious stewards was considered grounds enough for disqualification. Some claimed to support their horse at every start, even if they gave them no hope, merely to have a defence ready if questioned.\(^93\) Yet in 1898 *Pilot* said of pony owners that few ‘are burdened with a superfluity of cash.’ (presumably he had non-bookmaker owners in mind.)\(^94\)

\(^{91}\) NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 800
\(^{92}\) NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 pp. 784, 808, 814
\(^{93}\) NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 pp. 1297-8
\(^{94}\) Referee 16/2/1898 p. 5
The forerunner in unregistered racing of T. J. Smith, the prolifically successful post-war Randwick trainer whose career began at Kensington in 1942, was the controversial Robert Skelton, known as ‘the Baron’ or ‘Baron Bob’. He was the embodiment of the phrase ‘colourful racing identity’ before it became merely a euphemism used by the press to identify a mobster, although for decades Skelton was indeed a plentiful source of copy for racing journalists. He was a participant in at least three racecourse brawls and a minor riot at the Richmond races, and was a weekly visitor to the stewards’ room, from whence, like a Saturday cinema-matinee hero, he routinely escaped seemingly hopeless entrapments. His two-story home and stable, known as ‘the Castle’, which dominated the skyline on Barker St, overlooking the back straight of Kensington racecourse, was like Smith’s ‘Tulloch Lodge’ as much campaign headquarters as training establishment. Skelton was so dominant in the years between 1918 and 1925 that his career needs to be seen, again like Smith’s, as atypical. It is important this is appreciated, for he is the source of much of what is known or supposed about pony trainers.

Several canons of the literature of Australian racing concern possibly apocryphal exploits of Skelton. One suggests he once misled the ring by having a leading jockey change his name by deed poll; another relates how he sold a block of ice to finance a day at the course, and won an enormous amount. Although some of these stories have probably grown in the telling, there is no doubt Skelton enjoyed devising gothic schemes aimed at obtaining a better price for a horse that had been prepared to win. His brinkmanship tested the ARC’s rules of racing and he constantly flirted with suspension. Among his more straightforward devices was the bogus sale of horses that had been racing in poor form to a close associate, such as Barney Goldstein. The horses often won at their next starts in new colours, after being heavily commissioned. Later the horse would return to Skelton’s

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95 Refer for example Sydney Sportsman 30/11/1926 p. 6; refer also chapter five
96 See photograph on page 253a
(Illustration 6..5) The Machiavellian ARC trainer Bob Skelton appears to resent the attentions of the photographer. (source: Hickie, *Gentlemen of the Australian Turf*)
Human competitors

ownership. Another often-told parable is said to illustrate how he escaped censure over a first-to-last performance by his horse by pointing out that test cricketer Herbert Collins, at that time an ARC steward, had recently scored a duck directly after a century—which he said amounted to the same thing as his horse’s inconsistent form. Skelton was twice suspended for twelve months in 1919, but on both occasions appealed successfully to the usually unresponsive ARC appeals board. He was always on a war footing to engage with bookmakers and sometimes their skirmishes become more than intellectual. In 1933 he was escorted from the course after assaulting a bookmaker who had chafed him over an unsettled debt.

In the 1920s Skelton’s ascendancy among pony trainers was even more pronounced than premiership statistics suggest, as many immediately below him were in fact AJC trainers who, by the anomalous rules of the time, were allowed to race their smaller thoroughbreds in restricted heights races on ARC racecourses. Unfortunately for ARC trainers this border hopping did not apply bilaterally. AJC trainers who profited from the opportunity included Joe Burton, Joe Cook (the friend of William McKell) and Chris O’Rourke, a steel-grey headed veteran Randwick trainer who made numerous successful raids on the ARC racecourses with horses like Little Lady, the champion 14.1 pony of the mid 1920s, while continuing to prepare feature-race winners on AJC tracks. John Donohoe, an AJC trainer and member of the family associated with Victoria Park, had the 14.0 flyer Valora. Donohoe was also the master of the champion rider Billy Cook who was, coincidentally, the first AJC apprentice to gain a permit to ride in ARC restricted heights races.

Skelton was a plumber before he became first a pony punter, then an owner and finally, a trainer, by at least 1916. He even dabbled in bookmaking for a short

98 Sydney Sportsman 30/11/1926 p. 6
99 Hickie Gentleman of the Australian Turf p. 104
100 Sydney Sportsman 11/6/1919 p. 3, 3/9/19 p. 3
101 Sydney Truth 9/7/1933 p. 2
102 Inglis Horsesense p. 116
Initially he trained only a small number of his horses, preferring to send most to outside trainers such as Charlie Rudd. To a degree he owed his success to a deal he made with Les Bower, the racing manager of the leading registered owner John Brown (who raced under the name ‘J. Baron’), for Skelton to lease the undersized produce of Brown’s studs, particularly the progeny of champion sire Wallace, to race on the pony tracks. For this association Skelton was originally nicknamed ‘Baron junior.’

Skelton owned and trained in order to gamble. One of the earliest of the assaults on the betting ring for which he became noted occurred on 28 July 1920 at Kensington, when he prepared four winners, The Student (12/1), Smart Scribe (7/1), Precious Dust (10/1) and Prince Elect (4/5).

Skelton was a loner and no disciple of Jeremy Bentham, and he resisted attempts by the POTA to make him place the corporate interests of his brother trainers before his own, yet by 1923 he had somehow become an unlikely president of the POTA. He resigned after a bitter dispute with other delegates in which they accused him of using POTA membership fees to pay gambling debts. The ARC was inevitably drawn into this argument. The POTA requested that the ARC reject nominations received from outside the POTA membership, a proposal clearly intended to isolate Skelton. The ARC received legal advice that they could not refuse an entry unless the nominee had been found guilty of malpractice or a breach of the ARC rules of racing. When they advised the POTA of this, the trainers called a strike. The first boycotted meeting happened to include the rich Rosebery Cup. Despite a picket line at the ARC office Skelton and a handful of other non-POTA trainers were able to make sufficient entries for the meeting to go ahead, although it drew a much smaller attendance than usual. Skelton won every race except for the Cup. The POTA strike continued at a second meeting at Ascot four days later, but thereafter the resolve of its members faltered and the strike petered out. Several of Skelton’s

103 Skelton was identified as a racehorse trainer in 1916 in Sands Sydney, Suburban and Country Commercial Directory for NSW, Sydney, John Sands, 1916 (Mitchell Library Microfiche); re bookmaking refer Sydney Sportsman 27/10/1920 p. 6
104 Hickie op. cit. p. 107
105 Inglis Horsesense p. 58
106 Penton op. cit. p. 85
107 Hollege op. cit. p. 49
fellow trainers and the editor of the *Sportsman*, Sam Mackenzie, believed that for a time after the POTA strike Skelton entries received generous handicaps and other favourable treatment from the ARC.\(^{108}\)

While enmity towards Skelton, rather than economic or industrial conditions, was the direct cause of the strike, it was nevertheless an expression of class-consciousness and the trainers’ dissatisfaction with the way in which they believed financial surplus generated by unregistered racing was divided. During the strike the trainers promoted a meeting of their own at the provincial Kembla Grange racecourse, from which the proceeds were directed to a mining disaster relief fund. It was moderately successful, but Kingsley argued that the ARC had coerced the customary providers of raceday services, including some bookmakers and Ross Brothers the race book suppliers, to decline to do business with the POTA.\(^{109}\)

Despite his frequently reported betting successes Skelton became insolvent in 1933. This did not end his career, however, and he continued to be one of the best-known faces on Sydney racecourses until the late 1950s. While he was a student of form, he also sometimes gambled most irrationally, in the manner of what are known as ‘mug’ punters: ‘Bob was so keen to have a bet, when he felt lucky, that, on one occasion, when Rufe Naylor refused to bet him an even thousand on the favourite...he offered to bet the bookmaker the same amount to the same odds that the favourite wouldn’t win,’ recalled Joe Andersen.\(^{110}\) He liked to bet on the fluctuating odds during the running of a race, as he, other gamblers and bookmakers gathered in the area reserved for licensed persons in the grandstand. He died almost penniless but had sustained himself in some comfort off the bounty of the racecourse for almost 40 years; a long career denied most who follow that vocation.

Before 1933 pony trainers may have aspired to follow the successful transfers of some jockeys into registered racing but in general, it proved more difficult for them, possibly because of the capital needed to establish a suitable stable near a

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\(^{108}\) *NSW Parliamentary Papers* 1924 vol. 4 p. 824  
\(^{109}\) *NSW Parliamentary Papers* 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1294-95  
\(^{110}\) Andersen *Winners Can Laugh* p. 159
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registered racecourse. It was not unknown, however, and indeed, Richard Wootton not only established himself in registered racing, but quite remarkably, became the premier trainer of England in the Edwardian decade. His career thus ranged from dusty Lillie Bridge to the verdant Newmarket heath. Wootton remained a straightforward character that did not seek to disguise his beginnings on the pony tracks of Sydney from his British clients. He had been a very active participant in Sydney pony racing and arranged benefit race meetings for the relicts of several deceased jockeys before he left for England via South Africa in 1898. Wootton’s elder son Frank became the leading rider in England, while his second son Stanley became in turn the leading trainer and breeder. It was he who sent the stallion Star Kingdom to Australia in the 1950s, an importation that proved the most significant initiative ever made in Australian breeding.111

Ironically, the 1933 transfer to AJC racing proved much easier for pony trainers than for jockeys, possibly because competition was less direct and trainers were able to keep their existing stables and clientele, as the ARC racecourses could henceforth serve as a base from which to race at any meeting in Australia. Lillye identified Bob Meade, Tom Clune, Bob Abbott, Ted Hush, Tom McGrath, Eiver Walker and Morrie Anderson, all of whom became very successful in registered racing, as pony trainers who received AJC licenses in 1933. ‘No matter what stigma people apply to “Pony Racing,”’ he observed, ‘there is no doubt that it produced many highly skilled and astute trainers.’112

Fraud and malpractice

The discourse of pony racing has propagated the belief that fraud and malpractice was more prevalent within it than in AJC racing, mainly because of an assumption that the participants, particularly the trainers, were unable to support themselves by entirely honest means, a theory given some support by the trainers themselves, although paradoxically T.D. Kingsley, critical as he was of proprietary racing stewards, insisted pony racing was as clean as any other form of racing.113 Certainly it is possible to point to contemporary accounts (especially in the

111 Inglis More Horsesense p. 56
112 Bert Lillye AJC Racing Calendar March 1996, p. 13
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Sportsman) that identify and denounce putative sharp practices, and the orthodoxy of pony racing has accepted this view.\footnote{114}{NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1293 See for example virtually any 1926 example of the weekly Sydney Sportsman column ‘Peeps at the Ponies’}

There is little doubt that, at least in the early period, many observers had reservations about the integrity of the human participants of pony racing. Even journalists writing on professional cycling, which had become a byword for corruption, felt justified to speak condescendingly of (Melbourne) pony racing.\footnote{115}{Western Mail 1/7/1898 and Austral Wheel, February 1899, cited in Jim Fitzpatrick, ‘The Spectrum of Australian Bicycle Racing 1890-1900’, in Cashman and McKernan eds Sport and History p. 332-33 See also Ripley op. cit. passim}

Yet pony racing survived the numerous slanders made of it and indeed flourished, while cycling and other handicapped professional sports such as pedestrianism, sculling, and trotting, which were similarly targeted, withered, primarily due to the loss of public support.\footnote{116}{Referee 10/4/1918 p. 4}

Except for during the Great Depression a large and habitual core of bettors never failed to enthusiastically support pony racing regardless of external accusations of corruption against it. Perhaps its followers accepted disingenuous performances as one of the inherent variables of the game, which, after all, could act to the advantage of the speculator as well as his detriment, if he were prescient or lucky enough. In any event, there is evidence to suggest that following favourites on pony courses was at least no more perilous than doing so at registered venues. In the first three months of 1918, 40 of 128 favourites were successful on ARC courses.\footnote{117}{Referee 10/4/1918 p. 4}

This return is consistent with the accepted horse-racing wisdom that over time one in every three favourites will be successful.

New forms of fraud continue to evolve in racing but nonetheless it is possible to identify several categories of it, and the typical practitioners. At the most basic level is a jockey working alone to ‘pull’ a heavily supported horse without the connection’s knowledge, in reaction to stimulus—bribery or blackmail—usually from a third party such as a bookmaker. Such unilateral incidences were much rarer than popularly supposed, as they placed the jockey’s association with a stable

\footnote{113}{NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1293}
\footnote{114}{NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1293 See for example virtually any 1926 example of the weekly Sydney Sportsman column ‘Peeps at the Ponies’}
\footnote{115}{Western Mail 1/7/1898 and Austral Wheel, February 1899, cited in Jim Fitzpatrick, ‘The Spectrum of Australian Bicycle Racing 1890-1900’, in Cashman and McKernan eds Sport and History p. 332-33 See also Ripley op. cit. passim}
\footnote{116}{Referee 10/4/1918 p. 4}
\footnote{117}{Referee 10/4/1918 p. 4}
in grave risk. A jockey might also ride foul to try to prevent another horse from winning by impeding the rider by pulling a leg to unbalance him or otherwise interfering with him, or by the simpler expedient of knocking his ride down (tactics like these could be resorted to with relative impunity before stewards had access to observation towers and patrol films). Two or more jockeys—perhaps the entire field—might collude to fix a race, at their own initiative or at the suggestion of a bookmaker laying a particular result. External agents—drugs, batteries—can be introduced to either inhibit or enhance performance. In the most dramatic circumstances of fraud, a better-performed horse may be substituted to run for another.

There were other more simple means to ensure a starter did not win when not wanted. Jockeys sometimes weighed in overweight or underweight, or even jumped off, but while foolproof such incidences naturally aroused extreme suspicion among officials and were rare. A more discreet method was to present a horse to race in disadvantageous gear. In the 1890s ponies usually raced unshod but sometimes a trainer whose charge would not be ridden to win would send it out in heavy work shoes. At a Canterbury pony meeting in 1894, alert punters lining the saddling enclosure noticed the well-backed Saxon Girl was thus shod. They vociferously pointed this out to officials—one so loudly he was put off the course—who ordered that the shoes be removed. The horse still was beaten, which rather denied the episode its proper moral outcome. In 1897, the Associated Clubs ruled that ponies and galloways were henceforth barred from wearing shoes in races, although tips and plates could be allowed if approved by stewards in advance.

118 At Victoria Park on 8 July 1941 Ted McMenamin rode the first horse home. It was discovered at the weigh in that he had not carried a 7 lb lead bag. In the meantime someone had prematurely sounded the correct weight signal and many punters collected. Some bookmakers were surprised to find a few punters returned their winnings. Cecil Cripps, Racetrack Ring-ins and Rorts, Chelsea Vic., Vetsport Promotions 1989 p. 95
119 Referee 12/12/1894 p. 1
120 Referee 13/1/1897 p.1
Was presenting a horse not fit enough to win, with the purpose of ‘running a bye’, a form of fraud or merely a case of *caveat emptor*?\(^{121}\) Developments of this nature were usually signalled clearly enough by a concerted easing of the horse’s price, and experienced observers readily understood the implications. Occasionally matters did not pan out as expected, especially if it transpired that *nobody* in a race was trying, although this was rarely the case. Once a trainer was said to have told Alby Callinan that his charge was resuming from a long spell and not fit enough to win. But ‘when the favourite ran off the course, Callinan’s mount was left in front with no challengers. After he won the race easily Callinan told the trainer the horse must have been fitter than expected. “Like hell it was,’ the trainer replied, ‘there just weren’t any other triers in the race.”’\(^{122}\)

A.B. Paterson recalled of Lillie Bridge:

> Everybody went there and a man could win two or three thousand pounds over a race...but bad times [the depression of the 1890s] came and there was no money about—things got hotter and hotter till they fairly sizzled. You people that go out to the races now and think you see some hot things—well, you never saw anything until you saw Lillie Bridge...I’ve heard young Spencer say to a field of riders at the start, ‘Now, there’s eight of you and, if I don’t see two triers, out you all go.’\(^{123}\)

Drawing on such experiences, in 1917 Paterson published *Done for the Double by ‘Knott Gold’*, a short prose parody of Nat Gould’s racing melodramas of the 1880s. The climax of the story takes place on a pony racecourse unflatteringly named ‘Pulling’em Park’, where trainers and bookmakers colluded to defraud the public. That Paterson refers to 13.2 hand pony races actually places the story considerably earlier than 1917 and identifies it with Lillie Bridge rather than the ARC courses and era, although this distinction was probably lost on most readers.\(^{124}\)

In general controls over outright fraud became more sophisticated under the ARC administration from 1907, as they had in Melbourne pony racing under John Wren a year earlier. In conducting the research for this thesis I have not found more...

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121 A cricket term for a score where the ball does not hit the bat and is thus regarded as something less than a legitimate transaction, used in the racing jargon of the pony period to refer to participation in a race that the horse’s jockey did not seek to win.

122 Pollard *Pictorial History* p. 136

123 Paterson *Off Down the Track* pp. 154-5; his statement provides an indication of the strength of the betting ring at Lillie Bridge

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reports of verified breaches of the rules of racing at ARC courses than at those of the AJC, although there were many more insinuations about the ponies in dubious sources such as the *Sportsman’s* salacious racing gossip column. The most audacious and often recounted frauds, the notorious episodes masterminded by the trainer ‘Grafter’ Kingsley (brother of T.D. Kingsley), who tunnelled under jockeys’ scales and had boys attach weights as his riders weighed in, in fact occurred at the AJC-registered Moorefield, Wallsend and Newcastle racecourses. A fraud of this nature may have even taken place at halloed Flemington.\textsuperscript{125} But this type of colourful anecdote, involving elaborate or desperate schemes and a wily trainer, is of the type now most commonly identified with pony racing. Increasingly such tales have become associated with the stock character of ‘Baron’ Skelton, largely as a consequence of the oral folk tradition of unregistered racing and the writing of Lillye, Hollege and Hickie.

Speculation that jockeys and trainers used batteries, known as ‘jiggers’, to illegally improve horses’ performances, in particular on pony tracks, arose periodically. Occasionally there were disclosures and punishment, as in the case of W. Kenny, who was disqualified for life for being found in possession of a battery at Ascot in April 1917, and another at the Richmond (Melbourne) track in the post-Wren era.\textsuperscript{126} However most accusations, such as those that appeared on the front page of the *Sydney Sportsman* in 1926, were uncorroborated and vague, and the naming of names and convictions were rare. The *Sportsman* story claimed two types of battery were in use; a hand-held model resembling a compass in which the contact points were pressed into the horse’s neck or shoulder; and a more powerful model in which the coil and battery sat under the pommel of the saddle, connected to a switch and contact point concealed under the fork or flaps. The *Sportsman* article overlooked a third type, in which the prod was sited in the butt of the jockey’s whip. It might be assumed the small hand-held models were more popular with jockeys, as they could be jettisoned in case of misadventure and were untraceable, which was hardly the case with whips and saddles.

\textsuperscript{125} For a full account of Kingsley see Hickie *Gentleman of the Australian Turf* p. 46; for possibility of weight frauds at Flemington see Hayes *op. cit.* p. 179
\textsuperscript{126} *Referee* 4/4/1917; Cripps *op. cit.* pp. 113-16
The *Sportsman* speculated that:

…more than one of the ARC riders are using the little electric devices to good purpose…There are circumstances sufficiently suspicious to warrant the whole matter being thoroughly probed. But it may be assumed that the ARC, which is alive to its responsibilities, will take instant action and do everything in its power to rid the sport of any corrupt practices…In June last year “Truth” and “Sportsman” wrote of the use of batteries on pony courses, and the information on which that article was based was supplied by a pony owner who frankly admitted that in the past he had authorised his jockeys to use the battery…Mention was made of the fact that some of “Baron” Skelton’s horses had been given an application of the juice, without the “Baron’s” knowledge of course, but the crime was never sheeted home.\(^\text{127}\)

In 1985 Skelton’s stable jockey Ernie Henry recalled stewards strip-searching him at a Kensington race meeting in the 1920s, evidently looking for a battery of the hand held type.\(^\text{128}\) It may be that the *Sportsman’s* article had triggered this search. It implied an ongoing and well-established tradition of battery usage, but *Truth* and *Sportsman* were sensationalist publications that did not hesitate to make salacious allegations despite holding little or no evidence. Similarly in 1930 the sometime pony jockey W. James claimed that horses were prevented from doing their best on ARC courses and that batteries were in use. James, co-incidentally, had recently been suspended for two years over other matters.\(^\text{129}\) No doubt there was usage of batteries on Sydney’s pony courses, but whether it was widespread, or indeed exceeded similar malpractice on registered courses, is difficult to assess because so few licensed persons were ever caught out.

‘Ringing-in’ is the practice of entering a horse for a race under the name of another, less well-performed horse, ideally of a similar appearance. Again, there is nothing more than folklore to suggest that it was more prevalent on pony racecourses than elsewhere. The ring-in is one instance of racecourse fraud that can hardly be attempted without the connivance of the trainer. The ring-ins that have been exposed are perhaps most remarkable for the naive optimism of the perpetrators and the clumsiness of their preparations; but certainly there must have been more efficient operations that were successful in escaping detection by officials, and of which nothing are known. The most famous ring-in (or series of

\(^{127}\) Sydney Sportsman 17/8/1926 p. 1
\(^{128}\) Sun Herald 14/4/1985 p. 97
\(^{129}\) Sydney Morning Herald 3/9/1930 p. 9
ring-ins) before the notorious Fine Cotton case of 1983,\textsuperscript{130} occurred when the well-performed Sydney horse Erbie was substituted for three different horses at New South Wales, Victorian and South Australian registered racecourses through 1933-34.\textsuperscript{131}

Ring-ins were exposed from time to time on Sydney’s pony tracks, and the Malster Jolly case, the most extensively reported of them, may be considered typical. On Wednesday 12 September 1928 a mare presented under the registration of Malster Jolly easily won the second division of the Maiden Handicap at Victoria Park. ‘Backers seemed well informed’, commented the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 14 September, with studied understatement. Stewards had reached a similar conclusion after examining betting sheets. They visited the stable of the trainer W.E. Crockett after the races and checked the horse, which they found identical to the animal depicted on the accompanying all-heights certificate, which had been issued the previous Thursday. According to ARC records at her only previous run Malster Jolly had been unplaced at a number nine meeting five weeks earlier. Though stewards suspected a ring-in they did not impound the horse. When they returned next day it had vanished, and trainer Crockett declined to suggest where. No one came forward to claim the prize money. On 18 September the ARC announced that the horse that had raced as Malster Jolly was in fact the well-bred Victorian mare Supremacy, a past winner at Sunbury, Ballarat and Werribee. Malster Jolly was, like Erbie, disqualified *in absentia* for life, as were the registered owner and trainer. Although on course bets made on Malster Jolly were paid, some SP operators were able to cancel cheques before they were cashed, upon hearing of the stewards’ enquiries.\textsuperscript{132} A more grisly case occurred at Rosebery when a horse registered in the name Bellbird was rung-in for King’s Reward. Suspicions were not raised for some time but the prize money remained uncollected by the connections, who after collecting their winning bets,

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\textsuperscript{130} Hayden Haitana, *Fine Cotton & Me: the Confessions of Hayden Haitana as told to Graham Bauer*, North Ryde, N.S.W, Angus & Robertson, 1986, passim

\textsuperscript{131} Penton *op. cit.* p. 110

\textsuperscript{132} *Sydney Morning Herald* 14/9/28 p. 14, 18/9/28 p. 11, 24/9/1928 p. 15
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disappeared. The partly burned body of the unfortunate horse was discovered in bushland some time later.133

These stories feature characteristics common to most known ring-ins. First, despite the precautions of the plotters, there are always well-informed track regulars who seem to know before the race exactly what is going on. Secondly, the principals invariably are allowed sufficient freedom in the course of the investigation to disappear, and thirdly, a large number of innocents are allowed to lay bets when they have no chance of winning, or even of having their stake refunded.

Ultimately analysis and comparison of fraud and other malpractice that occurred on Sydney pony racecourses must remain inconclusive. There are no reliable statistics and newspaper reporting was unsystematic and subjective. It may be said that despite hearsay, there were few if any more exposures relating to unregistered racecourses than there were to registered ones. Further, as chapter four demonstrated, many of the officials charged with policing malpractice on the pony racecourses were given senior positions with the AJC in the post-amalgamation period. It must be assumed that it examined their careers in unregistered racing and were more than satisfied with their performance.

Conclusions

Pony jockeys were not highly regarded members of racing or broader society at the end of the nineteenth century. However the heroic deeds and honest examples of a few registered champions and the establishment of the ARC, with its better administration and surveillance, had a positive effect on unregistered riders’ reputations, and certainly their incomes and physical well-being. Early pony racecourses were dangerous places on which to ride. But the larger racecourses and closer stewardship of the ARC helped decrease riding fatalities in unregistered racing. Thereafter the safety record of the unregistered courses, aided by innovations such as scull caps, improved until it clearly bettered that of the AJC.

133 Andersen Winners Can Laugh p. 176
Despite these advances the possibility of still greater income and prestige tempted many pony riders to try registered racing, in particular at those times the AJC declared periodic amnesties. The success and acceptance of jockeys like Frank Kuhn and Myles Connell helped the image of pony racing, particularly when a significant number of the émigrés proved that they could compete effectively at the top level in the Melbourne Cup and other classic races. The establishment of a better racing product on unregistered courses further helped the reputations of the human competitors. Subsequent migrations of pony riders, while not as successful as the first, periodically passed the frontiers between the two empires of racing, while several famous registered jockeys were prepared to forsake Randwick and Flemington for the smaller but more plentiful rewards of unregistered racing. Several of these as well had figured in Melbourne Cup finishes.

While individual pony jockeys had been able over the years to assimilate in registered racing, when the 1933 amalgamation forced ARC riders into a common pool with their AJC counterparts the latter quickly gained the mastery, although the contest was somewhat inequitable. Despite their aggression and skill at the barrier, a lack of tutoring and uncouth riding styles denied many pony riders acceptance, and most were forced to become racing fringe-dwellers concentrating on provincial meetings. The reduced opportunities brought about by World War II restrictions delivered the coup de grâce to the riding careers of nearly all of them.

Trainers were the most socio-spatially distinctive sector of pony racing, and their circumstances were more difficult than those of registered equivalents. Nevertheless large communities built up around the stables of those trainers established on the margins of the new racecourses of the early twentieth century, giving rise to the unique racing suburbs of South Sydney. In turn the presence of the racecourses and stables created considerable employment and business opportunities, primarily for local residents. Most of the stables, especially those of an essentially back-yard nature, were run by so-called owner-trainers, although the majority of horses were really held on lease. Pony racing, which supported a large number of marginal jockeys and trainers, was in economic terms, inefficient. Outside owners were rare, although this scarcity decreased somewhat before the
onset of the Depression, in the wake of the increasing normalisation and respectability of unregistered racing.

Training for unregistered racing provided a means for horsemen to keep working with livestock in an increasingly urbanised and industrial environment. Trainers offered each other camaraderie and financial support and were industrialised as the POTA, primarily the organ of small-string trainers and an important social presence in the unregistered horse-racing community. One of the key platforms of the POTA was the creation of at least one non-proprietary pony club, a revision it believed would aid members financially. It does not seem to have recognised that measures of rationalisation would have forced many out of the industry. Ironically pony trainers, who had previously moved into registered racing with much greater difficulty than jockeys, fared much better in the open-racing structure of the post-amalgamation period. It is rather singular how many jockeys and trainers famous for deeds at Randwick and Flemington had backgrounds in pony racing, and it demonstrates the important part it played in the supply of skilled human competitors to registered racing.

The man known as the quintessential unregistered pony trainer, ‘Baron’ Bob Skelton, is the source of much of the folklore of artfulness associated with the sport. Though his imaginative bending of rules and eccentric behaviour have been inflated to mythic proportions, he unquestionably enjoyed enacting schemes that gave him an edge on bookmakers and fellow trainers and gamblers. In reality Baron’ Bob Skelton’s career was distinctly atypical of the experiences and behaviour of most pony trainers.

The material presented in this chapter indicates an eagerness on the part of some of the more successful and ambitious pony jockeys and trainers to transfer to registered racing that was probably motivated in equal measure by the lure of the exponentially greater prizes of the principal clubs’ major races, and a desire for social advancement. There is evidence of some condescension towards pony jockeys by AJC colleagues that was due more to such factors as vocational training and riding styles than socio-economic backgrounds. Overall licensed pony jockeys and trainers may have been more prepared to test rules to gain even a slight
advantage, despite the dangers represented by competent and punitive stewards. This ‘flexible’ mentality was due perhaps more to structural factors within unregistered racing than lower levels of prize money. In the case of the trainers, the absence of a revenue stream in the form of training fees from outside owners contributed to this mentality. Nevertheless, the orthodox view of the human competitors of pony racing outlined in the preface—that they belonged to a lower status group, bore a sense of ‘Otherness’, and were more ready to resort to desperate measures than their registered counterparts—appears to bear some amount of credence. How often unregistered jockeys and trainers moved beyond petty hi-jinx and into outright fraud is almost impossible to quantify because of the need to rely on unsystematic and subjective newspaper accounts of it. However there is no obvious disparity in the reporting of convicted misdemeanours between the two brands of racing, and indeed the most celebrated cases of fraud occurred on registered racecourses.
Chapter seven

Opposition, suppression, war and the end of Sydney pony racing

Throughout its existence, opponents both within and outside the turf world campaigned resolutely to suppress if not end pony racing in Sydney. The AJC leveraged its primacy in racing and connections in the New South Wales legislature to that end. Other parties, who held moral objections to all forms of horse racing and its twin shibboleth, gambling, concentrated much of their offensive on the section of the line held by unregistered racing, whose several singular features, which both registered racing and nonconformist Protestantism found objectionable, sometimes brought about unlikely alliances in the ranks of its enemies.

This chapter examines the often-strained relationship that existed between proprietary racing and the racing, political and social establishment. It traces the intrusions of the three levels of government into the affairs of twentieth-century pony racing in particular. It considers the impact of radical Protestant opposition and lobbying. It demonstrates the decisive consequences of the occupation of the pony racecourses by military forces during wartime. It questions how well the authorities managed the disposal of the assets of proprietary racing, in particular the seven racecourses. It also provides a definitive record of the stages in the dismantling of unregistered proprietary pony racing, to determine if it expired from natural causes, a concept that’s time was past, as the orthodoxy implies, or whether it is appropriate to speak of political opportunism killing it off.
Suppression and end of pony racing

Pony racing and the AJC to 1933

Before World War I, pony racing, especially of the type provided at places like Lillie Bridge and old Rosebery Park, was anathema to the AJC. Conservative elements in registered racing (or virtually the entire administration) believed these places had more in common with sideshow alleys than their understanding of a legitimate racecourse.

The cause of the principal club’s enmity cannot be ascribed to commercial rivalry, as the pony clubs rarely competed directly with Randwick. Indeed, the management of the ARC obligingly suspended its racing for a fortnight around the AJC carnivals, partly for commercial reasons, but also to allow total focus on Sydney’s most important racing dates, which they no doubt attended themselves.

Pony racing simply seemed to offend the sensibilities of the AJC, in particular the long-serving secretary Thomas Clibborn, and Adrian Knox, who proclaimed it his

1 Several of the themes and conclusions of this chapter have been either presented or suggested by Painter & Waterhouse in *The Principal Club*, including: the AJC’s (in particular Clibborn’s and Knox’s) hostility to proprietary racing and its concern that it allowed poor horses to continue racing in the city; the AJC’s responsibility for the coming of unregistered racing and its abnegation of control over it; the good reputation of Kensington in the 1890s; the connection of pony racing with illegal gambling; the AJC’s partnership with wowsers in opposition to pony racing; and the legitimacy lent pony racing by the 1906 *Gaming and Betting Act*. *The Principal Club* also illustrates that ‘pony racing’ was a misnomer, and that bad feelings existed between the ARC and the POTA. Painter & Waterhouse *op. cit.* pp. 32-39, 44-47, 51, 65-68. Lemon also identifies the AJC of the 1890s as a conservative and pompous body whose opposition to pony racing arose from those characteristics; Freedman & Lemon *op. cit.* pp. 403-04. O’Hara traced the activities of the NSW Parliament and radical Protestantism that affected gambling in NSW. Those that had implications for pony and proprietary racing, in particular legislation and committee recommendations, are treated similarly here, and the discussion draws much on O’Hara’s work. O’Hara *A Mug’s Game* pp. 139-145, 180-183

2 However the reaction of the AJC to proprietary racing entrepreneurs is consistent with that hypothesised by Max Weber for traditional organizations challenged by new entrepreneurs who introduced new methods of marketing. Weber says ‘its [the new ethos] entry on the scene was generally not peaceful. A flood of mistrust, sometimes of hatred, above all of moral indignation, regularly opposed itself to the new innovator. Often—I know of several cases of the sort—regular legends of mysterious shady spots…have been produced’. T.S. Clibborn thought of the proprietary men in these terms. Weber describes his new entrepreneurs as ‘men who had grown up in the hard school of life, calculating and daring at the same time, above all temperate and reliable, shrewd and completely devoted to their business, with strictly bourgeois opinions and principles.’[my italics] This sketch is consistent with what we know of the pony racing entrepreneurs, particularly the extremely ascetic lifestyle of John Wren—though Wren of course was Catholic. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London, George Allen, 1976, pp. 66-71

3 On the other hand in Melbourne John Wren staged his richest race the ‘Ascot 1,000’ on the Wednesday between the Melbourne Cup and the VRC Oaks days
‘avowed object to suppress [it.]’\textsuperscript{4} He described the equine and human participants of pony racing as ‘useless brutes and loafing men.’\textsuperscript{5} Nat Gould likened AJC lamentations about pony racing to squatters discussing the rabbit plague.\textsuperscript{6}

Nor was the AJC’s objection to pony racing, which by several measures was more significant in Sydney than in other Australian cities and overseas, based entirely on organisational issues. Its many sprint races of six furlongs and less provided a sanctuary for the inferior horses that the AJC wished to banish from metropolitan racecourses. For its part the AJC did not program races for older horses at less than six furlongs, a more strident position even than that taken by the VRC, which barred races under five furlongs. The AJC committee believed that all racehorses worthy of the name should be able to run a strong middle distance.\textsuperscript{7}

The AJC’s rancor towards pony racing was largely generated by considerations of status, and by snobbery. It had become the central racing authority as a result of a feudal relationship that had developed between it and regional racing clubs, mainly as a consequence of the eagerness of the latter to refer difficult matters to the metropolitan club for rulings.\textsuperscript{8} A sense of noblesse oblige visited the AJC, as did the belief that its wealthy amateurs should oversee racing, as they were privileged to be able to treat it as a full-time (and unpaid) pastime. To seek to make private income from organising racing was, it held, distasteful and nouveau. The AJC as a status group based on landed privilege claimed the right to administer Sydney racing and would be, consistent with Max Weber’s interpretation, ‘threatened to the roots if mere economic acquisition could bestow the same honour’ on outsiders.\textsuperscript{9}

The appearance in the 1890s of a group of upstart hoteliers and entrepreneurs, which had caused racecourses to spring up like mushrooms, dislocated the AJC’s model of the proper conduct of racing. Its reaction—to impose bans and punitive

\textsuperscript{4} NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1193
\textsuperscript{5} Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 39
\textsuperscript{6} Gould op. cit. p. 108-9
\textsuperscript{7} Painter & Waterhouse op cit. p. 35
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid. p. 24
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disqualifications on participants in unregistered racing—was alike with virtually all patrician organisers of amateur sport throughout the British Empire in the late Victorian age, when confronted by professionalism, although its rhetoric was more spiteful than most.

There were degrees of hostility. At the 1900 Racing Association Bill Select Committee hearings Adrian Knox, the future AJC chairman (1906-1919), though implacably opposed, could at least discern different types of pony racing: ‘there is a very great difference in the way in which pony races are conducted.’ He said. ‘For instance, I understand that pony racing at Kensington is extremely well conducted…but there are pony races (at other places) that are not very well conducted.’

But the fundamentalist Clibborn addressing the 1900 parliamentary committee expressed universal scorn:

Clibborn: I do not believe in pony racing in any shape or form. It has created a class that never existed years ago.
Committee: A class of horses?
Clibborn: Of men, too. You go and have a look at them some day, and you will come back with the same opinion.

The AJC’s irritability betrayed its awareness that it had handled the emergence of pony racing poorly, although the first decision made, which ultimately proved significant, came before it had became a real issue. In 1883 the AJC opened a register of all racing clubs that had adopted AJC rules, an action that necessarily also created unregistered racing. At first the AJC did not automatically disqualify participants at unregistered meetings, unless the meeting had been advertised—a category of racing that mostly consisted of the remaining publican-backed meetings. Smaller, local unregistered meetings of a picnic nature were absolved.

In 1900 the trainer and commission betting agent S.R. Kennedy claimed the AJC had contributed as much as anyone to the proliferation of pony racing. It had expanded the exclusions begun in 1883 and ‘brought in a lot of rules…to

9 Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 2 vols, eds G. Roth & C. Wittich, Berkeley, University of California 1978 (1924), p. 936; the AJC’s distaste for pony racing was more accentuated than the English Jockey Club’s to equivalent movements, such as ‘flapping’ meetings
10 NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1207
12 Painter & Waterhouse *op. cit.* p. 28
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disqualify everyone who had ponies.’ In trying to suppress pony racing within its own empire the AJC created a black economy of owners and trainers, many of whom were marginal practitioners who had been forced out of registered racing, and who came to appreciate the freedom that outlawry brought.\textsuperscript{13} The three crucial AJC decisions alluded to by Kennedy were those to: deregister SDPC pony meetings; to ban the training of ponies at Randwick but not at the registered proprietary courses; and to not prevent pony meetings becoming established at Rosehill, Canterbury, Warwick Farm and Moorefield.\textsuperscript{14}

Before 1888, the SDPC had programmed trotting meetings only, which did not arouse the interest of the AJC. In March of that year however it began to stage pony-gallops meetings and at its request the AJC agreed to register it, allowing the club to conduct races for ponies 14.5 hands and less under AJC rules. It was the only nineteenth-century pony club to be thus registered, albeit briefly.\textsuperscript{15} The AJC committee almost immediately regretted giving succor to the SDPC. In February 1889 it withdrew its registration, an official remarking primly that ‘the Rules of Racing were not meant to apply to trotting, pony and galloway races.’\textsuperscript{16} Once more developments in Melbourne racing synchronised rather uncannily with those in Sydney, as the VRC cast out the Sherwood Park pony syndicate in the same month, and similarly created unregistered metropolitan racing in Victoria.\textsuperscript{17}

A corollary of the AJC decision on the SDPC was the exclusion of pony races from the programs of other registered meetings, where they had begun to proliferate. However the AJC’s new rule did not prevent the registered proprietary clubs from conducting \textit{unregistered} pony meetings on their tracks; nor were (until a year later) AJC-registered jockeys and trainers prohibited from participating in pony and galloway races.\textsuperscript{18} These oversights gave the registered proprietaries welcome latitude to stage more meetings, for racing dates had since the 1889 season been subject to AJC approval. The clubs believed that the AJC

\textsuperscript{13} NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1269
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. p. 1222
\textsuperscript{15} Brown \textit{op. cit.} p. 35
\textsuperscript{16} Painter & Waterhouse \textit{op. cit.} p. 36
\textsuperscript{17} Freedman & Lemon \textit{op. cit.} p. 379
\textsuperscript{18} Painter & Waterhouse \textit{op. cit.} p. 30
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(specifically, secretary Clibborn) kept the best dates for itself and the renters of Randwick, while leaving the less favourable summer and winter dates to the proprietaries. Clibborn was not a popular man outside the AJC. The nineteenth-century STC, of which he was also secretary, was suspected of being a proprietary club in all but name, its meetings staged principally for the financial benefit of Clibborn and its other salaried officials. The AJC committee allowed him to stage horse auctions on Randwick racecourse, an extremely advantageous arrangement that seemed to violate the racecourse trust provisions. Many of Clibborn’s rival horse traders, coincidentally, had interests in proprietary racing.¹⁹

The serendipitous alternative provided the registered proprietary clubs by pony racing became even more attractive when in 1890 the AJC imposed further conditions on registered meetings, including the need to provide added prize money of at least £400. Previously, in 1889, it had denied the registered proprietaries several of the racing dates they had sought, including some that would have led to clashes with the Hawkesbury club.²⁰ The most surprising aspect of the development of pony racing is that the AJC continued to allow its conduct at the registered proprietary tracks, although from 1893 it prevented licensed owners and trainers from keeping ponies or galloways in their stables ‘for racing purposes’.²¹

In 1898, as it grew increasingly impatient for the demise of pony racing through natural causes, the AJC evoked the scripture that a man cannot serve two masters. It ruled that, from 31 August, pony meetings on registered racecourses would cease, and that race club employees with a foot in either camp must choose to follow one brand of the sport and abandon the other. Those who stayed with unregistered racing would, to Clibborn’s mind, be cast out of Randwick forever. The consequence for AJC clubs that continued to harbour dissenters would be deregistration.²² Simultaneously the AJC lifted disqualifications on unregistered animals, jockeys and trainers, believing that many would apply for AJC licenses. It struck a reciprocal arrangement with the VRC that barred unregistered horses

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¹⁹ NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 pp. 1269, 1272
²⁰ Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. pp. 33, 35
²¹ Referee 19/7/1893 p. 5
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from crossing into Victoria to compete. AJC bookmakers were barred from unregistered racing and licensed trainers were warned not to stable ponies that had raced on the unregistered circuit. These moves were intended to mortally wound the pony companies, or at least the less sound ones such as Brighton and Lillie Bridge. 23

Those pluralists who had enjoyed a comfortable living on income derived from both brands of racing received the AJC’s ultimatum without favour, as their extramural activities often paid them better than their registered stipends. However, apart from the loss of some key staff, the AJC move of 1898 did not prove very harmful corporately to pony racing, and indeed benefited Kensington by removing its direct competition, the pony meetings of the registered clubs. While the AJC had succeeded in ending pony racing on registered racecourses—Moorefield was set to stage the last until 1933 on 31 August 1898, but foul weather caused its abandonment; consequently the last was held at Canterbury on 24 August 1898—public support for pony racing did not abate at all. ‘Pilot’ noted that, ‘though those bodies [the AJC and VRC] may prevent trainers and jockeys registered under their rules from actively participating, they have yet to devise a means of keeping the public away.’ In fact, AJC-licensed personnel also continued to attend pony meetings as spectators. Ultimately the AJC committee advised several, including Richard Wootton, that their constant attendance at pony meetings was in ‘bad taste.’ 24 In response A.B. Paterson wrote verses lampooning the AJC’s handling of the issue:

Come all ye bold trainers attend to my song,
It’s a rule of the AJC
You mustn’t train ponies, for that’s very wrong
By the rules of the AJC.
You have to wear winkers when crossing the street
For fear that a pony you’d happen to meet;
If you hear one about, you must beat a retreat—
That’s a rule of the AJC. 25

22 NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1182
23 Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 39
24 Referee 10/1/1900 p. 2; NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1185
The AJC believed unregistered racing would disappear immediately if the government adopted its call to deny it betting. Clibborn predicted that deprived of bookmakers the ponies would play to empty seats overnight. While conceding that betting was also an integral part of registered racing, the AJC executive iterated that the purpose of the racecourse, or ‘convincing ground’ as it was medievally styled, was to identify the best stallions and mares for the breeding barn—despite Admiral Rous, the most influential British racing administrator of the nineteenth century, having discredited this dogma. The AJC posited that the contrived Darwinism of the racecourse identified contestants possessing the most desirable attributes of the breed. The importance of the horse for military purposes and transportation in Clibborn’s era was still cited to justify the continuance of registered horse racing, in response to the challenges of the anti-gambling lobby; but that justification’s expiry date was rapidly approaching. While gambling might be tolerated as a regrettable by-product of the legitimate turf, the Establishment considered it an indefensible vice elsewhere.

A prescient Melbourne writer observed that racing without betting was like eating an egg without salt. Less figuratively the Canterbury secretary W.L. Davis maintained that ‘there is only one man in a thousand who goes to a race meeting who can thoroughly enjoy it without having a sovereign on.’ Adrian Knox insisted that there was a concentration of this select few on the AJC committee, most of who, he claimed, never bet on races. In truth most people who followed racing, registered or otherwise, bet on the results.

When the AJC recognised that it had failed to control pony racing by ostracism, it sought to use the means at its disposal to make it, in Clibborn’s words, ‘so uninteresting that people would not go to see it.’ The best chance of achieving this lay in legislation and from 1899 the AJC directed most of its counter-pony-racing energies into lobbying government and attacking it before parliamentary enquiries. ‘I cannot tell you what a great dislike I have for this pony racing. I

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26 NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1172
28 Raymond Spargo, Betting Systems Analysed, Melbourne, Research Publishing Co., 1933
29 NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 pp. 1260, 1209
30 AJC Annual Report 1898; citation in Freedman & Lemon op. cit. p. 404
think ponies are nothing but instruments for gambling,’ testified the AJC chairman Henry Dangar in 1900. Like his predecessor W.A. Long, Dangar was a member of the squattocracy and the Legislative Council and campaigned vigorously in Macquarie St against pony racing. Adrian Knox, who helped draft a totalisator bill that would have excluded unregistered clubs from having the machine, supported him. As the Clibborn era ended in 1910 it was evident to all that, unless barred by legislation, proprietary pony racing was likely to continue in Sydney indefinitely.

The AJC eventually conceded that it had lost the opening phase of the war against unregistered racing and prepared to consolidate its line and make some form of terms with the enemy. Soon after Clibborn’s departure, its committee amended AJC Rule of racing no. 6 to allow registered jockeys to ride in restricted heights races of 14.2 hands and less at unregistered meetings. In the same year the ARC began to recognise AJC disqualifications. In 1916 the AJC Committee member Harry Chisholm openly attended an Ascot meeting in preference to one at Canterbury, an action that would have been unthinkable a decade earlier. The conduct of the ARC, which in so many aspects of its administration mirrored the approach of the AJC, and its achievement of legitimacy of a sort, had been instrumental in the near-normalisation of relations between the two bodies.

By 1923 Charlie Cropper, the secretary of the AJC, was able to describe relations between his club and the ARC as ‘exceedingly cordial,’ and he and secretary Underhill of the ARC often visited each other’s offices. This courtesy had been maintained despite the 1921 appointment of the ARC’s Sir Joynton Smith as chairman to the racing reform board proposed to succeed the AJC. ‘Pilot’, while pointing out that the creation of such a board would bring change neither administration wanted, attested that no friction existed between the two organisations.

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31 NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1900 vol. 6 p. 1255
32 Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 38 and appendix
33 Referee 20/7/1910 p. 1; 5/7/1916 p. 5; NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 802
34 Refer chapter two
35 Referee 9/3/1921 p. 2
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The AJC and ARC continued to share the running of racing in New South Wales through the remainder of pony racing’s years of greatest popularity and were able to avoid major disagreement. But the Depression had a devastating effect on mid-week racing, when the ARC held most of its meetings, and during its course it surrendered the hard-won equality it had achieved with the AJC. Few workers employed casually dared miss a full day of work to risk the double jeopardy implicit in attending a mid-week race meeting, while the unemployed surely would have struggled to raise admission costs. Further, in the 1930s many people gained access to the new comprehensive radio coverage of race meetings. This, coupled with the major expansion of the daily racing form in the press, cultivated massive growth in SP bookmaking services. It became easier to place bets with off-course bookmakers in hotels or by telephone. Straitened punters saw the value in saving on tram fares and racecourse admission costs, which they could use for extra wagers with the local SP bookmaker.36

The Depression brought other adverse consequences for the ARC. The longer the economic downturn persisted into the 1930s the more did premier-to-be McKell’s hostility towards proprietary racing intensify. Many years later he recounted receiving a ‘mere £30’ after a horse he owned won a race at Victoria Park, an episode that evidently coloured his opinion of ARC prize money.37 If this figure is correct it must have been paid for a divided race run during the worst years of the Depression, for as has been demonstrated, ARC prize money in the twentieth century invariably much exceeded this figure, particularly at Victoria Park. McKell, however, also found fault with AJC racing; as O’Hara has suggested: ‘His motivation for [racing] reform included a labor man’s distaste for racing’s profits going into the pockets of company shareholders, and a dislike for the gentlemanly exclusiveness and snobbery of the AJC.’38 These prejudices led him to conceive the STC as a quasi state-body, and one with natural sympathies for the labour side of politics. It was very much his creation and he handpicked the first

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37 Christopher Cuneen, William John McKell: Boilermaker, Premier, Governor-General, Kensington NSW, University of New South Wales Press, 2000, p. 158
38 O’Hara A Mug’s Game p. 182
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board members. Until the late 1970s he continued to take a keen interest in the affairs of the club and his influence is still acknowledged in the annual running of the listed race the Sir William McKell Cup at Rosehill.\(^\text{39}\)

McKell’s 1930s assessments were a legacy of his own experiences but did not acknowledge the difficult circumstances faced by the proprietary racing clubs, or the industry best standards they had achieved in preceding decades. The average attendance at Kensington fell from 7,189 in 1929 to 4,064 in 1934. On-course bookmakers sometimes found it difficult to make a balanced book and many ceased business, and consequently Kensington’s bookmaker license-fee revenue fell from £6,280 to £3,235. Totalisator tax collections plummeted from £14,323 to £4,230. Idle totalisator clerks were instructed to close their windows and trawl the betting ring to generate some business. One unfortunate totalisator bettor who backed a winner at Rosebery received a dividend of 8s 6d for his 10s bet. He had been the only investor on the race.\(^\text{40}\)

In 1933 the pony race clubs, by that year deprived of all but one annual Saturday apiece, and witnesses to constant rumours in the press of government intervention and their imminent demise, were hardly encouraged to continue capital expenditure and maintenance, and it is indisputable that several pony racecourses fell behind in these areas in the later years of the Depression. A director of Victoria Park questioned ‘the wisdom of spending further moneys on improvements if there was the possibility of the property ceasing to be used as a racecourse.’\(^\text{41}\) Victoria Park’s position had been weakened further by the collapse in the popularity of its trotting meetings. In 1937 Joynton Smith told his fellow directors he hoped that the New South Wales Government was about to allow night trotting in the state. It was not, but it was with such vain hopes that the proprietary racing clubs sustained themselves during the difficult last decade of pony racing.

\(^{40}\) re Kensington figures refer McCoy op. cit. p. 40, from figures in Sydney Truth 14/7/1935; for punter losing on winner bet refer Andersen Winners Can Laugh p. 65
\(^{41}\) Minutes of the Victoria Park Recreation Grounds Ltd Committee, AJC library, unpaginated
It was not the Sydney pony clubs alone, however, that struggled during the 1930s. ‘Cardigan’ judged the downturn in racing as a statewide malaise; ‘In New South Wales, for some extraordinary reason, the sport has languished and executives have had a worrying time.’ At the same time racing in Victoria had flourished.\textsuperscript{42} It is worth noting that proprietary racing had continued to be an important element of racing in Victoria. If McKell was correct in identifying proprietary racing as the main agent of the woes of racing in New South Wales, the question is begged why it had not had a similar effect in Victoria.

On 1 January 1931 the ARC discontinued the practice of issuing licenses to six AJC jockeys to ride in restricted heights races under the terms of the 1910 agreement, not due to ill will but to protect the livelihoods of its own jockeys, which because of the effects of the Depression, were becoming increasingly problematic.\textsuperscript{43} Among the AJC riders who had benefited from this scheme had been Miles Connell, Jack Toohey, Jim Pike, Fred Hood, Jim Munro, Keith Bracken, Billy Cook, and Ted Bartle.\textsuperscript{44} While apprenticed Cook had won pony races on his master’s horse Little Marg, on which he had earlier had his first ride on a registered course at Canterbury.\textsuperscript{45} It is not known how the six jockeys were chosen but the permits were greatly prized, as apart from the financial rewards it was suggested that the AJC jockeys were able to take liberties while pony riding because the AJC did not recognise ARC suspensions they might incur.\textsuperscript{46}

In the 1930s there was little ideological disagreement between the ARC and the registered proprietary clubs; indeed together they formed the Metropolitan Racing Clubs Association to promote their mutual interests, and they even proposed a second non-proprietary principal club with which they might register.\textsuperscript{47} Previously however the ARC had provided damaging commercial rivalry to the AJC-registered clubs, particularly during the period of head-to-head Saturday

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{42} H.A. Wolfe in \textit{The Bloodhorse Breeders’ Review vol. XXVI}, London; British Bloodstock Agency Ltd., p. 205.
\bibitem{43} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 31/12/30 p. 12.
\bibitem{44} In his early pony-course appearances Cook was referred to as ‘registered Cook’ to distinguish him from an ARC jockey who shared his surname.
\bibitem{46} \textit{Sydney Sportsman} 11/5/1926 p. 9.
\bibitem{47} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 31/5/1938 p. 15.
\end{thebibliography}
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clashes. When pony racing boomed in earnest from the beginning of World War I the registered clubs began to lobby the AJC to act to relieve the pressure on them. Its response, delayed until 1922, was to buy Warwick Farm, and thus remove one player from the proprietary market. It immediately closed the course and funded an extensive upgrade, in particular of public facilities. When the course reopened the AJC invited the ARC to schedule its Saturday clashes with AJC Warwick Farm dates, leaving the remaining registered proprietaries with free dates.48

As the least popular and most remote proprietary course, Warwick Farm was not the ideal location at which to establish a second front against pony racing. The AJC had, in fact, explored the possibility of obtaining Victoria Park but considered the ballpark price excessive. If the AJC had bought Victoria Park in the 1920s it would now be Sydney’s fourth racecourse, rather than Warwick Farm. The majority of AJC members, then as now residents of the eastern suburbs, who have historically boycotted Warwick Farm meetings, would have approved. The pairing of Victoria Park and Randwick would have preserved an impressive near-city racing precinct.49

Pony racing’s registration with the AJC

In December 1932 the Victoria Park club triggered a rush for registration by the pony clubs when it sought unilaterally to affiliate with the AJC. The further reduction of their racing dates in August 1932 had exacerbated the harm done to the unregistered racing clubs during the Depression. Victoria Park appreciated the protection registration offered, though its advantage was immediately dissipated when the ARC members proper also applied to the AJC in January 1933. To facilitate its recognition of the pony foundlings on 4 January, the AJC lifted all existing disqualifications relating to unregistered racing and amended Rules 31 and 35 to allow pony racing on registered racecourses.50

The character of the pony tracks and the racing conducted there changed decisively after AJC amalgamation. The only remaining distinction between the

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48 Painter & Waterhouse *op. cit.* pp. 125-27
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newcomers and the existing registered clubs was that the ARC still raced mostly on Wednesdays, and ironically, at the AJC’s insistence, continued to program restricted heights races. The ARC had lost their enthusiasm for them and met their obligations at the bare minimum. By 1942 only a handful of ponies remained in training and their trainers tended to all accept whenever a restricted heights race was programmed.

The amalgamation ended unregistered racing in Sydney and placed administration of the sport solely in the hands of the AJC. The ARC remained in existence after the amalgamation, but merely as an association of racing clubs, not as a governing body of the sport, a loss of power similar to that experienced by the AJC following the establishment of the Thoroughbred Racing Board in 1997. The welcome the ARC received at Randwick was reserved; one member wanted to know why the prestige of the AJC, built up over many years, should be shared so readily with the ‘pony riff-raff.’

Existing registered clubs were also unhappy: ‘According to the shareholders [of Menangle] the AJC has not only made a truce with the pony clubs, but they have supplied them with food and ammunition in the shape of a lot of first class horses and first class bookmakers,’ wrote Paterson in the *Sydney Mail.* But the pony clubs had lost autonomy and identity and amalgamation marked the beginning of a swift descent into obsolescence.

**Government intervention and clerical opposition**

The Establishment of New South Wales, or at least its parliamentary representatives, adopted a laissez faire approach to horse racing in the second half of the nineteenth century, content to leave its stewardship with the principal club, the AJC, which it had played a large part in shaping. The issue of gambling, particularly as practised by the lower orders, generated considerably more interest in Macquarie St. O’Hara suggested that an act of 1876 was intended to ‘suppress betting houses and prevent mischief resulting from facility and publicity afforded betting and similar forms of gambling’, and to target in particular pre-post list

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50 *Ibid.* p. 71
51 *Sydney Morning Herald* 17/8/1933 p. 10
52 *Sydney Mail* 18/1/1933 p. 34
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betting, the markets for which were often posted in shop windows.\textsuperscript{53} Opposition to gambling had been growing among the moral guardians of society, particularly within the nonconformist churches, which by banning innocuous raffle-type fundraising purged themselves of any suggestion of association with gambling. The only conjecture in the minds of Methodist and Presbyterian moral crusaders was whether drinking or gambling was the greater evil. The opposition of the non-conformist churches was much more decided than that mounted by the Anglicans (though some of the latter’s publications were supportive), and obviously the Irish priests of the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{54} As has been noted previously, off-course betting in public areas, especially through the spectacular success of John Wren’s totalisator and its more modest equivalents in Sydney, had become associated in particular with weekday pony racing in the 1890s. This nexus had had the effect of bringing unregistered racing to the notice of the hot gospellers of Protestantism, and the advances the code made during the decade ensured it stayed with them.\textsuperscript{55}

Between 1890 and 1910 radical Protestantism increased its influence in parliaments from London to Melbourne. The National Anti Gambling League was formed in England to lobby against what it regarded as the alarming extent of working-class gaming and betting.\textsuperscript{56} O’Hara suggested that in Australia similar middle-class based groups were able to wield increased political power due to the cultural hegemony they had achieved at the expense of the landed gentry.\textsuperscript{57} The Australian puritans were additionally concerned that their compatriots were obsessed with sport and ‘hypnotised by pleasure.’\textsuperscript{58} O’Hara further suggested that with the passing of the previously polarising issues of free trade and protection at the end of the 1890s, non-labour politicians needed new issues and structures to represent. In these circumstances the New South Wales Alliance, a lobby group representing extreme protestant opinions, gained influence with the Liberal and Reform Association, a body of state politicians drawn mainly from the old free-

\textsuperscript{54} O’Hara ‘The Australian Gambling Tradition’ p. 76; O’Hara A Mug’s Game p. 132-36
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid. p. 113, 130, 138; Buggy op. cit. pp. 61, 69
\textsuperscript{56} Huggins op. cit. p. 24
\textsuperscript{57} O’Hara A Mug’s Game passim
\textsuperscript{58} Manning Clark A History of Australia vol. V, p. 251
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trade faction. Joseph Carruthers, elected premier in the 1904 election, felt obliged by the support he had received from both groups to promote their agendas. Carruthers had shares in several proprietary racing clubs, but significantly, none conducted pony racing, although he later became a director of Victoria Park.

As a result of these and other influences, by the 1890s parliament’s detachment from the administration of racing began to crumble and pony and proprietary operations became the frequent subject of oration in the house. Most often parliamentarians deprecated those racecourses and clubs that raced for profit, brought to their feet either by their own offended sensibilities or at the urging of powerful establishment and religious lobbies. A smaller number of MPs represented the interests of the increasingly influential merchants and entrepreneurs from whence the organisers of proprietary pony racing had emerged. Others, such as the Progressive Party’s W.P. Crick and Sir Joseph Carruthers, the New South Wales Premier, seemed unsure where they stood on the issue. Crick, as has been demonstrated, sometimes targeted pony racing for vituperation, and urged its suppression at the 1898 AJC annual general meeting. At other times he was too fully occupied in vexing the AJC, which he did despite being a long-standing member and the winner of Randwick classics including the 1906 Champagne Stakes with Collarit, to bother with it. He drafted the 1900 bill that proposed to strip power from the AJC and create a racing association.

In the new century to this irresolute faction that were undecided about proprietary pony racing were added the parliamentary representatives of New South Wales labour. As was the case in the Victorian Parliament, Labor found it difficult to decide whether proposals to limit pony racing should be commended for decreasing a potent threat to the wages of workers, or be opposed for being class-based oppression that sought to deny workers ‘their’ sport. In general they had

59 O’Hara ‘The Australian Gambling Tradition’ p. 76
60 Though not chairman of the ARC as has been erroneously suggested; see Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 47
61 Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. p. 39
little sympathy with those frivolous pursuits that distracted members of the class from which they had risen from similar self-improvement. 63 Manning Clark said of them; ‘Labor leaders had the morals of Puritans. In art and literature their taste ran to the conventional.’ 64 Subsequently their opposition to racing companies hardened.

At the end of the nineteenth century government opposition to pony racing began to be expressed in the executive as well as the legislature. In 1896 the Department of Lands made application to the Land Court to oppose the extension of the Kensington racecourse lease. It alleged that George Rowley’s original lease application, which was approved for 15 years on 3 January 1890, had ‘mentioned cricket, archery and bowling grounds, pleasure gardens and places for amusement of the people, and he afforded no grounds for the expectation that the land would be used primarily for a racecourse,’—that Rowley’s application had in fact been disingenuous. The Crown also argued that pony racing at Kensington had attracted an undesirable element to the locality. 65 It is certain that Randwick Council numbered among the anonymous objectors to the extension of the Kensington racecourse and the Mayor Alderman McDougall openly opposed it. Despite these and other objections the New South Wales Government again extended the lease in 1900, 1906 and 1914. 66

In 1934, when the existing Kensington lease once more expired, Randwick Council and other local bodies including the local progress association, chamber of commerce, ALP, and the Parks and Playground Association, sought to have the racecourse converted to a recreation area. 67 In anticipation of this opposition the Kensington company had in 1928 purchased 50 acres at Byrnes’ Bush, south of Hale St, Botany, from the NSWTC, where it could relocate if necessary. It expected to be granted a licence for a new racecourse, despite the restrictions

63 Freedman & Lemon op. cit. p. 406; NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 p. 1330. The Labour Party of Britain, even more committed to the doctrine of self-improvement and non-conformist morality, had few qualms about supporting the suppression of street betting; Huggins op. cit. p. 199; for discussion of the attitudes of Carruthers and the Labor Party on gambling reform see O’Hara A Mug’s Game pp. 132-34, 141-43
64 Manning Clark, A History of Australia vol. V, p. 248
65 Waugh op. cit. pp. 27-29
66 Ibid. p. 29-30
imposed by the 1906 gaming legislation, because of the precedent set in the cases of the second Rosebery and Victoria Park courses. When however the government again extended the Kensington lease, the club set aside the Byrne’s Bush project.68

At the end of the nineteenth century a precedent in Britain law provided a further opportunity for Australian governments to attack proprietary racing. In 1895 the Kempton Park racecourse case tested whether enclosures on racecourses were ‘places’ as defined in the Betting House Act 1853; if they were it followed that betting in racecourse enclosures was illegal. An appeal to the Queen’s Bench against the initial decision, which had favoured bookmakers and betting, resulted in a reinterpretation of the 1853 legislation that seemed to suggest ‘that all (racecourse) betting could be seen as illegal, as a “place” seemed to cover anywhere a bet was made.’69 In the wake of this ruling the New South Wales government, under the thrall of British jurisprudence, instructed police to arrest on-course cash bookmakers, a persecution they commenced at a Canterbury pony meeting in May 1897. Magistrates subsequently prosecuted the bookmakers. Proprietary racecourses alone were raided, and those most often targeted were midweek pony meetings. Nevertheless the threat of prosecution cast a pall over all racing gatherings, even the Randwick winter meeting. Small investment punters (who were much more prone to cash betting than larger bettors) were most affected and demonstrated they were not prepared to pay to enter a racecourse if that did not entitle them to make bets without fear of prosecution, or assure them of bookmakers with whom to bet. As a result overt cash betting virtually disappeared from racecourses.70

The prosecutions of bookmakers continued for several weeks, and the total of fines was figured in thousands of pounds. Meanwhile the representatives of the establishment moved to protect their constituents’ interests. R.H. Levien (later to serve on the 1900 Racing Association Bill Select Committee) introduced a bill to amend the Betting House Suppression Act 1876 to exclude Randwick racecourse

67 Sun Herald 14/4/1985 p. 97; Waugh op. cit. p. 30
68 Brown op. cit. p. 67; Waugh op. cit. p. 30
69 Huggins op. cit. p. 222
and the registered proprietary racecourses from the local definition of ‘place.’ The AJC Chairman Mr Henry Dangar MLC spoke for the bill but it did not become law. However further developments in Britain diffused the issue and cash betting resumed at Canterbury on 7 July 1897, although the legality of all forms of gambling including racecourse cash betting remained in doubt until the 1906 gaming legislation provided clarification. The cash-betting crisis demonstrated with what alacrity the parliamentary enemies of proprietary pony racing would seize on opportunities to damage it.\(^\text{71}\)

**The Racing Association Bill 1900**

From 1900 a series of bills, commissions and committees investigated pony and proprietary racing directly, or as part of broader inquiries intended to lead to reform of the racing industry, often it appeared with the objective of asserting greater state control over it.\(^\text{72}\) Sometimes these initiatives led to new legislation or amendment of existing laws, but just as often they meandered into prorogations of parliament, or similar inconclusiveness. The 1900 Racing Association Bill proposed the replacement of the AJC as ruling body of racing with a statutory-constituted association that would represent all factions of the racing industry (except gamblers *per se*). While it seemed to challenge the primacy of the AJC, W.P. Crick, its sponsor, claimed rather that ‘the object of the bill is to take the control of racing into the hands of the government, so that we shall not have racing on every day of the week, and sometimes by night, on a little tin pot course where you can hardly swing a cat.’\(^\text{73}\) Nevertheless the immediate cause of the bill was the ‘Mora’ inquiry. John Fielder, the jockey-son of the respected trainer Sam Fielder, was disqualified for three years for allegedly pulling Mora at Randwick on Boxing Day 1899. Despite the testimony of all witnesses called that the boy had ridden a bad race, but was not guilty of malpractice, the AJC cancelled his license for three years. The boy, who was mentally retarded, had had to conduct his own defence against, among others, the eminent barrister Adrian Knox.

\(^{70}\) *Referee* 2/6/1897 p. 1  
\(^{71}\) *Referee* 9/6/97 p. 1; 14/7/1897 p. 1; 26/4/1897 p. 1. The British House of Lords on appeal reversed the original ‘Kempton Park’ decision; refer Vamplew *The Turf* p. 208  
\(^{72}\) Refer O’Hara *Mug’s Game* p. 227  
\(^{73}\) *NSW Parliamentary Debates* vol. CV p. 2999
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Parliament considered the Mora case when Crick petitioned the AJC unsuccessfully on the boy’s behalf. Nevertheless the case became celebrated and was used to promote the cause for the appointment of stipendiary stewards, though some AJC officials remained intransigent and, as though the heirs of Diogenes, argued it would be impossible to find three disinterested and honest men with the necessary ability to perform the function.  

The Committee’s main preoccupations were the advisability of replacing the AJC as principal club with an association that would represent regional, proprietary and suburban clubs; the legitimacy of pony racing; the surfeit of metropolitan racing and the problems it caused country racing; the Moro case and the practices of honorary stewards; and the supremacy of Melbourne registered racing over Sydney. Other considerations included the lack of a free admission area at Randwick, the STC’s bona fides as a non-proprietary club and racecourse betting by women and children.

The 1900 inquiry followed a preliminary parry of 1891, which O’Hara judged ‘the first attempt to take the rise of proprietary racing companies into account.’

Neither bill passed a second reading. The 1900 bill went to a select committee that tabled a progress report on 30 November that was in fact no more than a transcript of statements by the witnesses, who included Dangar, Knox and Clibborn of the AJC; Harris and O’Mara of Rosehill and Kensington and three registered club secretaries; a number of trainers including Sam Fielder, father of the jockey in ‘Moro’; several journalists and an employee of the Lands Department.

As the Committee failed to table any recommendations its immediate significance for unregistered racing was negligible, except as a warning of parliament’s interest in it. Nor did a 1902 Select Committee on the Lease of Kensington Racecourse cause interruption, but again pony racing was involved in controversy. When W.P. Crick became the secretary of the Lands Department he ordered an enquiry into the circumstances of the extension of the lease on

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74 NSW Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings 1900 vol. 6 pp. 1153-1157
75 Ibid. passim
76 O’Hara op. cit. p. 122
77 NSW Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings 1900 vol. 6 p. 1148
Kensington racecourse until 1918 by his predecessor T.H. Hassall, whom Henry Harris had ingenuously described as a ‘racing man.’\textsuperscript{78} Crick was of the opinion that the extension, which had been sought by the Kensington committeeman W.C. Hill, should have been referred to the Lands Department. The Kensington lessees had no objection to the matter being retrospectively referred to that body. Eventually it was decided that there was nothing improper in the extension of the lease and that the lessees ‘had acted in perfect good faith.’ Despite having ordered the inquiry it was over this matter that Crick was implicated in the acceptance of a £6,000 bribe from the Kensington Club.\textsuperscript{79} Another similar scandal implicating Crick and his administration of the Lands Department led to a royal commission and ultimately his resignation and subsequent expulsion from parliament in 1906.\textsuperscript{80}

**The Gaming and Betting Act 1906**

A bill to reform gambling and severely restrict pony racing seemed increasingly imminent in the first years of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, when the bill proposing the *Gaming and Betting Act 1906* was read many believed it would not be passed because so many people had come to rely on pony racing for their living.\textsuperscript{81} Many of the clauses of the Act resembled those approved latterly by the Victorian and British parliaments, in response to similar developments and pressures. The act paid the debt to the anti-gambling lobby owed from the 1904 New South Wales election. During readings both houses sought amendments, one of which would have made gambling illegal on all racecourses including Randwick. As an investor in proprietary racing Carruthers may have felt equivocal about the legislation; in any event he delegated responsibility for it to the Attorney-General, Wade, who carried it through to royal assent.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{78} NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1902 p. 160
\textsuperscript{79} NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings Legislative Assembly 1902 p. 147
\textsuperscript{80} Pike et. al. *Australian Dictionary of Biography* vol. 8 pp. 151-152
\textsuperscript{81} Referee 14/8/1906 p. 5
\textsuperscript{82} O’Hara *Mugs Game* p. 144
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The major provisions of the legislation that related to horse racing were that it:

- made betting shops and street betting, and betting by persons under the age of 21, illegal;
- reduced the number of metropolitan pony meetings to 72, while the number of registered metropolitan meetings remained unaltered;
- restricted metropolitan racing to Saturdays, Wednesdays and public holidays;
- provided for government licensing or closure of all registered and unregistered racecourses. Licenses were not be to given for racecourses under six furlongs, including existing racecourses;
- prohibited the building of new racecourses within 40 miles of the GPO, Sydney, a measure intended to retard further urbanisation of racing and;
- imposed a ceiling of 20 meetings on any club, and 24 on any racecourse.

The Labor Party initially interpreted the 1905-06 gaming bills and acts of the New South Wales and Victoria parliaments as manifestations of class-based bigotry. In Victoria it argued that the ‘workers’ racecourses’, and their leisure activities, had been unfairly targeted.\(^8^4\) Leaving aside the dubious assignment of ownership of pony racecourses to the workers, it should be noted that the government had made some concessions in the Victorian Act. The initial bill had proposed to outlaw courses of less than six furlongs, which would have caused the closure of Richmond and Fitzroy racecourses, but the relevant clause was deleted from the Act. Whether this amendment benefited pony racing in Melbourne is very debatable, as it allowed John Wren to retain the old, inferior racecourses, while better and larger venues were built in Sydney.\(^8^5\)

In New South Wales, where street betting was overall more prevalent than in Victoria, the representatives of labour, who pardoned it as ‘a harmless working-man’s recreation’, were concerned by the threat to it posed by any legislation

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\(^8^3\) The Statutes of New South Wales (Public and Private), together with a Reserved Bill; Passed during the Session of 1906, No 13, Gaming & Betting Act, Sydney, William Applegate Cullick, Government Printer, 1907, pp. 39-49
\(^8^4\) Buggy op. cit. p. 84
\(^8^5\) Ibid. p. 101
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sponsored by the conservatives. The future Labor leader William Holman told parliament that the poor man who wanted to lay a humble bet could not afford to enter a racecourse to place it. While Holman’s assertion, which implies that only the well-to-do went racing, was not entirely correct, it refutes the existence, in Sydney at least, of the ‘workers racecourses’ claimed by Victorian Labor; it thus adds weight to the differentiation of Sydney and Melbourne pony racing.  

As it transpired the 1906 New South Wales legislation consolidated pony racing. Government licensing of its racecourses gave it recognition and legitimacy, and in disallowing the establishment of any new racecourses within 40 miles of the GPO, the legislation provided the existing entrepreneurs, who immediately united as the ARC, with a monopoly over the lucrative metropolitan pony-racing scene for the foreseeable future—in fact, until the legislation was amended. The clarification of the street betting law erased doubts about its illegality and reoriented the gambling market in favour of the racecourse operators, as more law abiding, or more querulous, clients of SP bookmakers switched to on-course betting (or at least, those who could afford the admission did). When the implications of the legislation became apparent to racing entrepreneurs they began to entertain a long-term future for pony racing and were encouraged to make greater capital investments and to build more elaborate racecourses. This is what happened at Victoria Park and, to a lesser degree, Rosebery. Under the recently constituted ARC, and thanks in no small part to the 1906 legislation, the administration of pony racing was rationalised and the sport entered the twenty years of its highest profile and popularity.

Taxation

The 1906 legislation made the chief secretary, who henceforth licensed racecourses and approved racing dates, a significant power in the administration of racing in New South Wales. Moreover, the small fee that clubs paid in return for the racecourse licensing that it introduced was the trickle that became a torrent

86 McCoy op. cit. p. 38
87 The Gaming and Betting Act was amended in 1912 to remove some anomalies caused by the legislation that mainly affected trotting
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of revenue that the government came to divert from racing, which became an increasingly attractive target as new taxes could be introduced at little or no cost, as they were collected and accounted for by the race clubs themselves.

Several new racing taxes appeared during World War I. In 1915 the New South Wales government appropriated a percentage of lucrative bookmakers’ license fees. 88 By 1912 ARC paddock bookmakers paid a fee of £190 p.a., and those in the leger £94, rising by 1914 to £240 and £120 respectively. The loss of by the clubs of part of these license fees, and the introduction of other new taxes, brought the end of the period of greatest profit for proprietary racing. 89 The state government introduced a further flat annual fee of £20 for paddock bookmakers and £10 for those working the leger in 1916. By 1923 these fees had risen to £320 and £160 respectively. The government also introduced the much loathed and insidious stamp duty paid on bookmakers’ tickets. 90

In 1917 the federal government invited itself to the parasitical feast provided by the living body of horse racing. It imposed a federal entertainment tax on admissions paid at racecourse gates of 10d to the paddock and 3d to the leger. To avoid having to issue small change the ARC rounded up the charge to the nearest shilling and gave the difference to charity. In 1920 the News South Wales Government made the federal charge seem a trifle when it taxed racegoers 3s 2d to enter the paddock and 1s to the leger, increasing the total cost of entering a racecourse—embodying the club’s charges and federal and state levies—to 14s and 5s, respectively. 91 The ARC and pony racing became an important contributor to government coffers and it was complemented on its efficient accounting of turnstile and totalisator returns. 92 But each of these measures reduced the profitability of pony racing. Racegoers and indirectly the clubs received some relief when the federal tax lapsed in the early 1930s.

88 Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. pp. 74-75
89 Underhill claimed that ‘immediately the taxation came into existence the principal parts of the profits began to go’; NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 792
90 Freedman & Lemon p. 487
91 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 797; refer also to the table on page 193a
92 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 787
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The 1923-1924 Select Committee on Pony Racing

The 1923-24 inquiry proved to be a protracted and mildly sensational affair and transcriptions of the hearings ran to several hundred pages. The AJC, the ARC and the POTA were each represented by official and unofficial spokespersons and legal counsel. A number of witnesses, several clearly having axes to grind, appeared more than once. The members of the committee became active participants in proceedings and several representatives of the press became protagonists.93

The Sarajevo of the 1923 Select Committee On Pony Racing was the trainers’ strike of May.94 Some sensational events had ensued, including the assault of a jockey and the slaying of a racehorse.95 Subsequently Joe Gander and other POTA office holders succeeded in lobbying for a select committee inquiry into the pony racing industry, and it sat first in August 1923.96 Disaffected members of the POTA were the best-represented group before the committee, which quickly descended into a trainers’ gripe session. The press dutifully reported the often-lurid allegations of witnesses, which resulted in the hurried appearance before the Committee of people seeking to protect their reputations, or eager to corroborate previous testimony. The conduct of the inquiry (and much of the evidence) was discursive. Nevertheless the Committee clearly had an agenda it wished to follow that included investigation of the:

- adequacy of prize money and the livelihoods of trainers;
- constitution of boards to hear appeal against disqualifications, suspensions, fines and of licensed persons, and the severity of punishments;
- benefits of establishing a non-proprietary unregistered racecourse;
- integrity and fairness of ARC officials, and;
- administration of the jockeys’ distress fund.

93 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 vol. 3 part 2 passim; NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. passim
94 See chapter six
95 Freedman & Lemon op. cit. p. 492
96 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1924 vol. 4 p. 806; Sun Herald 24/3/1985 p. 99
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The question of race fixing was also raised but merely as a peripheral matter. No working jockeys, who were most likely to know if horses were being pulled, were called to appear before the Committee.\(^{97}\)

In addition to hearing witnesses the committee attended several pony meetings during its term to observe the sport first-hand, but the *Sportsman* was derisive and insisted that it saw only what ARC secretary Underhill, who acted as tour guide, had wanted it to see. In *A candid open letter to the Pony Racing Commission*, the journalist George Parker asserted that the Committee was never seen in the betting ring, but rather spent its time in less crucial and controversial sections of the course—notably the committee dining room. When questioned by the irate Committee, a rather flustered Parker admitted he knew nothing of pony racing and had been told what to write by his editor, Sam Mackenzie. The *Sportsman* and its stablemate the *Truth*, which maintained the vexatious vigilantism of the deceased founder John Norton, constantly pilloried the administrators of racing, both registered and unregistered.\(^{98}\)

The Committee tabled its final report and recommendations in August 1924. It found no fault in the management of pony racing. Nevertheless it accepted witnesses’ claims that race fixers operated with impunity while innocent men received disqualifications that virtually destroyed their livelihoods. It recommended that the ARC members be made non-proprietary clubs. When by 1925 the Government had shown no sign of implementing its findings its chair O’Halloran sponsored a private member’s bill incorporating the Committee’s recommendations, but he raised little enthusiasm among his colleagues. Ultimately the Committee had little effect, other than probably to leave a stain on the reputation of pony racing.\(^{99}\)

Several government initiatives launched between 1924 and 1936 had implications for pony racing. In 1927 a further amendment (following several of 1912) was made to the *Gaming and Betting Act* that allowed provincial clubs to apportion

\(^{97}\) *NSW Parliamentary Papers* 1924 vol. 4 passim
\(^{98}\) *Ibid.* p. 817
\(^{99}\) *NSW Parliamentary Papers* 1924 vol. 4 p. 773-74
their twelve annual meetings of trotting and galloping as they preferred; previously they had had to program six of each. Thereafter clubs such as Menangle and Richmond were able to concentrate their efforts on the turf. In 1931 the Labor Premier of New South Wales, Jack Lang, in responding to a failing economy, proposed that horse racing be restricted to Saturdays and public holidays. The implications for weekday-bound unregistered racing were obvious; ‘Racing men…were unanimous that the move would practically abolish racing under the rule of the Associated Racing Clubs.’ The Herald pointed out that this would place thousands more men on unemployment queues; ‘If it were the intention of Mr Lang to reduce pony racing, the move should be made at a prosperous time.’\textsuperscript{100} Lang however failed to act on his threat before having his own commission terminated by the News South Wales Governor, and within two years pony racing had been safeguarded in the short term by becoming part of AJC racing.

The 1933 amalgamation of the AJC and ARC did not require any amendments to the existing statutes. However, in 1932 the Victorian parliament had passed legislation that ended pony racing entirely and closed the Aspendale, Fitzroy, Richmond and Sandown racecourses. This legislation was a corollary of the 1928 Select Committee \textit{On Racecourses and Race Meetings}, conducted while the conservatives held power, which had concluded that the breeding of ponies for racing purposes was retarding breeding of army remounts and artillery horses (a finding that contradicted the opinions of several expert witnesses to the 1900 New South Wales enquiry.) The reasoning of the Victorian Committee placed greater significance in the continuing role of the horse in military service than proved warranted.\textsuperscript{101} In Queensland, a 1930 royal commission recommended restrictions on unregistered racing and an independent controlling authority, but the government took the opportunity to abolish all proprietary racing.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 2/3/1931 p. 9
\textsuperscript{101} Freedman & Lemon \textit{op. cit.} p. 478; \textit{NSW Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings 1900 vol. 6} p. 1141f
\textsuperscript{102} Waterhouse \textit{Private Pleasures} p. 169
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Racing (Amendment) Act, 1937 and Special Statutory Committee

The Racing (Amendment) Act 1937, and the statutory committee it engendered, caused for the first time in New South Wales the nomination by government of specific racecourses for closure. Clauses 15 and 16 of the act determined that after 31 December 1942 no licences would be issued for proprietary racing. The Stevens government’s main objective in the legislation was the suppression of illegal off-course betting, but it was thought expedient to diffuse any suggestion that it would coincidentally reward racing companies by increasing attendances. On 9 December 1937 Sydney’s seven racing companies petitioned against the clauses prescribing the end of proprietary racing and the re-distribution of race dates. Racing trainers opposed the proprietary clubs, which they still believed paid less prize money than they were capable of, and counter-petitioned in favour of the Act, which remained unamended.103

The statutory committee consequent on the Act was established on 11 March 1938. It had four members; secretary George Rowe represented the AJC but the ARC had no champion. The Committee’s instructions were to ‘investigate the function of race meetings with a view to determining a method by which the conduct and control of meetings may be vested exclusively in non-proprietary associations without occasioning undue hardship to any person.’104 In August 1939 it reported.105 O’Hara summarized their recommendations thus:

The committee concluded that there was little wrong with the existing structure of New South Wales horse racing. They found that prize money was fair and reasonable; that the proprietary clubs conducted their affairs properly; that racing was controlled efficiently; and that a simple change from proprietary to non-proprietary racing would not result in any appreciable change in the levels of prize money. They did, however, find that if the number of race tracks was reduced, those remaining would be able to offer substantial increases in prize money because of increased totalisator turnover and increased gate money. Their recommendations did not include the total abolition of pony racing, but they did recommend the delicensing of Kensington and Ascot.106

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104 Oseniaks op. cit. passim
105 New South Wales, Parliament, Legislative Assembly, Report of Committee upon conduct of race meetings and recommendations respecting control by non-proprietary associations reprinted in NSW Parliamentary Papers, 1939, Joint volumes of papers presented to the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly, vol. 8, Sydney, Government Printer, 1940, p. 805
106 O’Hara A Mug’s Game p. 183
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In spite of these generally favourable findings the Committee further recommended that: 107

- the surviving clubs should be made non-proprietary;
- fourteen days of racing be transferred from the pony to the horse clubs, and that Rosebery and Victoria Park receive 17 Wednesday and two Saturday meetings each a year;
- from 31 December 1939 the Richmond club be restricted to trotting meetings and Wyong to greyhounds, and the other provincial racecourses —Kembla, Gosford, Hawkesbury and Menangle—receive 12 meetings each, and that no new clubs be licensed;
- within 12 months all courses provide totalisator facilities with a minimum unit of 5 shillings or less, and;
- a racing compensation fund be established for the persons affected by the closure of the racing companies.

These recommendations were, like the 1906 legislation, intended to reduce and centralise horse racing in Sydney and its hinterland. George Breathour, the Ascot chairman, questioned why his club, which owned its land and which he insisted was in a better financial position than at least four other clubs, had been chosen to be delicensed. The Committee nominated Ascot’s rundown facilities and raceday traffic congestion as the reasons it had been picked out, although the proximity of the course to the burgeoning aerodrome may also have influenced them. 108 While the Committee’s recommendations had not been adopted before the onset of World War II changed entirely the context, they foretold the end of proprietary racing and influenced Canterbury to become a non-proprietary club in February 1939 and Rosehill similarly in March 1940. 109 Shareholders in those clubs received debentures to compensate them for forfeited stock.

107 Sydney Morning Herald 1/9/1939 p. 15, 4/9/1939 p. 15
108 Sydney Morning Herald 21/9/1939 p. 13; NSW Parliamentary Papers 1939 p. 809. The Committee also identified traffic congestion problems at Victoria Park and Rosebery
The impact of war on pony racing

Horse racing in Australia was curtailed during both world wars, but to a much greater extent during the 1939-45 conflict. Racing experienced trauma in several respects, but actions arising from the authorities’ beliefs that popular spectator sports distracted the people from the winning of the war, and the occupation of racecourses by the military for training camps and depots, were the most debilitating. Unfortunately for the race clubs their racecourses might have been designed to serve as military training camps, for they possessed much of the necessary infrastructure including roads, water, power, sanitation, offices, communications, stables, boundaries and gates, and open spaces for the erection of tents and drilling. The dining areas and kitchens below the grandstands were useful for preparing and serving meals.

The Sudan campaign preceded by three years the advent of regular pony racing, but the New South Wales Bushmen’s Contingents bound for the Boer War prepared at Kensington racecourse in 1899 and 1900. The walers of the mounted infantry and artillery were watered at the bore that formed a small lake near the turn from the back straight. In 1914 Kensington served as the recruiting station for the 1st Infantry Brigade, which mustered and trained there until 14 October. Racing and equine training was able to continue there and at Menangle, which the Light Horse occupied within days of its 6 August opening meeting; the trainers still used the tracks for training on week days and on race days soldiers pulled down their tents and route marched until the races finished (this cooperative arrangement was also observed in World War II but some Rosebery trainers displayed their respect for the army’s surveillance and signalling capability, as they preferred to smuggle their ponies across Gardener’s Road for pre-dawn workouts on the Australian Golf Course rather than train on the racecourse). In the opening weeks of the World War I the Light Horse sometimes used Rosebery

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110 Waugh op. cit. p. 21
Suppression and end of pony racing

racecourse as a parade ground, but occupied it fully in April 1916. Except for a meeting in June, there was no racing at Rosebery until the end of December.\(^\text{112}\)

For the first half of the war the federal government resisted calls from imperialists for the restriction of horse racing, which the latter considered a frivolous diversion in the Empire’s then current circumstances (racing had been discontinued in England in 1915 at all venues except Newmarket).\(^\text{113}\) Eventually in September 1917 Brigadier-General Lee, who had become the government’s military adviser on matters pertaining to the war effort, recommended a hiatus for mid-week racing from the end of the month.\(^\text{114}\) Consequently pony racing’s annual allocation of meetings shrank from 72 to 48, but in compensation it was listed to hold four opposed and eight unopposed Saturday meetings, though subsequently four of them were transferred to Randwick. Under the new arrangements the pony clubs were compelled to clash with Randwick on Boxing Day 1917, New Years Day, Anniversary Day and the King’s Birthday (3 June) 1918. Moreover, a six-week break in unregistered racing occurred between March and April 1918, as did a similar moratorium from October to November. The ARC jockeys and trainers, deprived of income from racing during these lengthy periods, were asked to make greater sacrifices than the registered racing community to the war. Racing at Randwick was largely unaffected.\(^\text{115}\)

By Christmas Day 1918, six weeks after the armistice in France, the military had relinquished control of racing dates. Midweek racing resumed at Victoria Park on 8 January 1919 but when the Spanish Influenza epidemic broke out in February, the Federal Government prohibited events likely to encourage large gatherings. Racing resumed at Ascot on 2 March but was cancelled again after the second appearance of the virus in April, and it did not resume until mid-May, causing the AJC carnival to be postponed a month.\(^\text{116}\)

\(^{112}\) Referee 28/6/1916 p. 5, 27/12/1916 p. 5
\(^{113}\) Vamplew The Turf p. 64
\(^{114}\) Daily Telegraph 13/9/1917 p.4; Sydney Morning Herald 13/9/1917 p. 6. A statement printed in both newspapers said that all unregistered racing was to be discontinued, but it seems its author had confused ‘unregistered’ with ‘unlicensed’ racing. See also Referee 19/9/1917 p. 3
\(^{115}\) Referee 19/9/1917 p. 6, 17/10/1917 p. 6. Despite these impositions ‘Pilot’ of the Referee felt the arrangements benefited the ARC because they received additional Saturday dates.
\(^{116}\) Referee 21/4/1919 p.1, 30/4/1919 p. 1
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Despite the impositions of the war and the epidemic the progress of unregistered pony racing was not retarded in this period, indeed, as chapter five illustrated, it coincided with the years of the sports greatest popularity in Sydney. With the nation under direct threat of invasion, and weakened by the economic conditions of the 1930s, it did not fare so well during World War II.

World War II

Rosebery racecourse joined ‘Truth’ as one of the first casualties of World War II. The military occupied it (and Warwick Farm) in October 1939, but racing continued until July 1940; thereafter the Rosebery club staged its meetings at nearby Victoria Park. From 1940 until August 1941 the recruits that formed the Eighth Division of the second AIF camped on the course and installed the large searchlights that scanned the sky on the night in 1942 when a Japanese submarine shelled Rose Bay and Bondi. The army continued its occupation at Rosebery until October 1946; it served as the 1st Australian Returned Stores Depot in the later period of the war.  

The investment of Rosebery and Warwick Farm racecourses did not exhaust the military’s needs for temporary bases and it occupied the other pony racecourses, beginning with Victoria Park in April 1942 (where it remained until November 1943) and Kensington the same year. The Second and Third Employment Companies occupied Ascot in 1943. The army conducted several war-related trials on lakes on the racecourse and established playing fields and later in the war Italian prisoners were incarcerated on the course.

Military occupation caused enormous damage to the racecourses. Heavy vehicles rutted and compressed course proper areas and brick-paved areas, running rails were dismantled, buildings were overlaid to fit army needs and other infrastructure was depreciated by excessive usage. When the army moved out it required some imagination to envisage the sites as past or future racecourses. Although the

117 Sun Herald 24/3/1985 p. 99; search lights refer When the War Came to Australia (video production), Sydney, Look TV Productions, c. 1991
118 Sun Herald 7/4/1985 p. 93
119 Australian War Memorial Photographic database www.awm.gov.au image no. 067575
Suppression and end

(Illustration 7.1) The effects of army occupation. The 1st Australian Returned Stores Depot at Rosebery racecourse in 1946, eastern end. The course proper, which was in continual use for training, is in reasonable condition, but the inside training track has been obliterated. The remnants of the inside track running rail are visible at middle left.

(source: Australian War Memorial image database images 126630 & 126629)
Suppression and end

(Illustration 7.2) The effects of Army occupation. The 1st Australian Returned Stores Depot on Rosebery racecourse in 1946, western end. (source: Australian War Memorial image database images 126627 & 126628)
Suppression and end of pony racing

Federal Government eventually paid compensation it was delayed for several years and was generally too little to have restored the racecourses to their pre-war condition, let alone provide for the standards of accommodation and infrastructure that would be expected in the future. These circumstances did much to discourage consideration of the resumption of racing.\textsuperscript{121}

Government was making provision for severe cuts in the amount and coverage of racing as the occupation of racecourses was taking place. In June 1940 a state government ministerial committee recommended that the calendar of racing dates be reduced from 111 to 69, mainly through the abandonment of Wednesday meetings. However as the so-called ‘phony’ war was just ending in Europe, and a sense of urgency had not yet reached Australia, the proposal was left in abeyance.\textsuperscript{122}

Unpropitious war developments undermined the position of the pony clubs over the next 18 months. At first Australia’s war exposure remained limited to sending troops to Europe and providing material, but the surprise attack on Pearl Harbour, the alarming capitulation of Singapore, the bombing of Darwin and the realisation that Australia was a Japanese objective, changed the war from a comfortably distant one to a struggle that might be fought on the streets of Sydney.\textsuperscript{123}

In 1941 Labor administrations succeeded the conservatives at both state and federal levels. In December Premier McKell reaffirmed the decision of his predecessor Mair not to licence proprietary racing clubs after 31 December 1942. In Canberra Prime Minister John Curtin was more alarmed by the Japanese presence on Australia’s doorstep than former leader Robert Menzies, and in addition to ordering home the infantry divisions he began to address the problem of manpower shortages, and to bring about the degree of austerity he believed the situation demanded. On Christmas Eve 1941, as Kensington’s last-ever race meeting was taking place, McKell responded to federal instructions to

\textsuperscript{120} Personal communication by Allen Windross March 2000
\textsuperscript{121} STC files, ‘Racing Compensation Fund’, Mitchell Library
\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 20/6/1940 p. 20
\textsuperscript{123} Chisholm \textit{Australian Encyclopaedia} vol. 10 pp. 460-64
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roll-back racing by suspending mid-week meetings. The pony clubs nominally lost 44 of their 48 meetings for 1942. At a conference that followed the government decision, the AJC conceded them two additional meetings, and the government subsequently granted them another ‘clash’ date, to give each club four meetings for the year. It was envisaged that most of the ARC meetings would be run during the winter off-season. It also seemed likely that the ARC clubs would be the main targets of any further restrictions imposed by the Federal Government. In short, as Painter and Waterhouse realised, ‘[wartime] restrictions did what the AJC’s own efforts over many years had failed to achieve; they drastically limited the activities of the pony clubs.’

The Sydney Morning Herald reported calls from some old hands, disgruntled by the restrictions, for unregistered racing to be revived, but secession by the proprietary clubs would have caused the New South Wales government to immediately delicense their racecourses. Any signs of insurrection were quickly repressed. When the proprietary clubs complained that it was no longer viable for them to keep their courses open for morning trackwork, McKell threatened to remove the remaining Saturday dates of any club that participated, in industrial terms, in a lockout.

In February 1942 the federal government announced the second stage of its racing restrictions. It banned the broadcasting of interstate races on racecourses—except for races of national significance—and severely restricted press reporting, including pre-post form analysis and next-day results. The number of races on any program was restricted to seven. In September, in a further gesture of austerity, the federal government announced that beginning from 3 October the first Saturday of each month was to be raceless. The Moorefield, Rosebery and Kensington clubs each surrendered a racing date to satisfy the requirement for the balance of 1942. The result of these restrictions

124 Sydney Morning Herald 23/12/1941 p. 9, 30/12/1941 p. 10; re meeting with AJC Sydney Morning Herald 3/1/1942 p. 13
125 Painter & Waterhouse op. cit. pp. 82-84
126 Sydney Morning Herald 25/12/1941 p. 3
129 Sydney Morning Herald 17/9/1942 p. 5, 18/9/1942 p. 15, 1/10/1942 p. 3-4
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(Illustration 7.3) Kensington under army occupation during World War II. Kensington was not retained for training during the war and the course proper has been completely obliterated, while several huts have been constructed alongside the ‘Whitehouse’ (i.e. the official stand) atop what was formerly the finishing. The difficulties that would be involved in refitting the location as a racecourse are evident—although there was no plan to do this at Kensington (source: Sun Herald 14 April 1985)

(Illustration 7.4) The New South Wales Contingent for the South African War in camp at Kensington racecourse in 1899. The waterhole was inside the course proper. It was subsequently filled in and now lies beneath the University of New South Wales Union Roundhouse (source: University Of New South Wales Archive)
was a lopsided ascendency of demand (from trainers) over supply (of races). In 1943, 19 of the 39 metropolitan meetings staged took place at Randwick, and most of the rest were at Rosehill, both spacious courses, which was as well, as field sizes had been inflated to enormous proportions.\textsuperscript{130}

By the time the federal and state governments had implemented the final round of their restrictions, the last races had been run on Sydney’s pony racecourses. Their last meetings were not commemorated, in the way that the tramline closures subsequently were, because no one knew at the time that they were to be the last. After the war, the 48 days of racing previously conducted by pony clubs were redistributed to the AJC, which gained the 12 Kensington dates, and the balance to the STC.

\textbf{Table 7.1: final meetings on ARC racecourses}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>course</th>
<th>date</th>
<th>last race</th>
<th>horse</th>
<th>jockey</th>
<th>trainer</th>
<th>SP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosebery</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Trial Stakes 10 fl</td>
<td>Glittering Flame</td>
<td>Vic Thompson</td>
<td>Gordon Douch</td>
<td>5/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10/7/1940</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Kensington Welter Mile</td>
<td>Gallop</td>
<td>Darby Munro</td>
<td>Ted Hush</td>
<td>4/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24/12/1941</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Park\textsuperscript{A}</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Victoria Park Hcp, one mile</td>
<td>Merimba</td>
<td>Ted McMenamin</td>
<td>Jack King</td>
<td>7/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14/2/1942</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascot\textsuperscript{B}</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Victoria Park Hcp, one mile</td>
<td>Treeten</td>
<td>Jim Duncan W</td>
<td>Gander</td>
<td>5/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22/8/1942</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: compiled by the author from various newspaper reports

\textsuperscript{A} One day prior to the fall of Singapore

\textsuperscript{B} By coincidence also the last day of racing at Ascot racecourse, Melbourne

Despite the end of racing on their racecourses the associated racing companies were not wound up for several years. Until August 1942 they each raced at Ascot, and thereafter at Randwick and Rosehill. Meanwhile, with the exception of Kensington they continued to function as training centres. The Ascot Racecourse and Recreation Ground Ltd conducted the last proprietary pony meeting in Sydney at Rosehill on 16 December 1944. The clubs lingered on for several years more while they finalised wartime occupation compensation claims with the government, and sought to dispose of their racecourses.\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{130} Painter & Waterhouse \textit{op. cit.} pp. 83-84

\textsuperscript{131} Painter & Waterhouse \textit{op. cit.} p. 87
Establishment of the Sydney Turf Club

William McKell accepted the opportunity provided by wartime restrictions to make good his resolution of the 1930s to end proprietary racing in New South Wales.\textsuperscript{132} The continuing parlous state of the war in 1943 allowed a relatively untroubled passage for the \textit{Sydney Turf Club Act} that in peacetime would almost certainly have been strongly opposed by the proprietary interests. The legislation authorised the STC to resume any of the soon-to-be unlicensed proprietary racecourses it judged suitable. It was improbable that, once the number of race clubs, each with its own course, declined from eight to two (not counting the Tattersalls clubs that leased Randwick), all nine racecourses that had been conducting thoroughbred racing would be retained, and so it proved. The increasing pressure for housing, industrial and educational facilities made the racecourses, large pockets of land situated in what were by then densely settled suburbs, attractive targets for development. The STC purchased Canterbury, Rosehill and Moorefield for Saturday racing, and several years later, in 1948, Rosebery—initially for use as a training track, but with consideration for its use for midweek racing when the government allowed its resumption.\textsuperscript{133}

Remarkably, the STC, like the AJC twenty years earlier, declined to buy Victoria Park, preferring four other racecourses, all of which, with the exception of Rosebery, possessed inferior racing tracks. Boulter suggested the STC rejected Victoria Park because there was little scope for expansion of the enclosures, although earlier plans suggest this could have been achieved by demolishing stables at the Tilford St end of the course.\textsuperscript{134} At any rate its enclosures were already the largest of any pony racecourse in Australia and it had been described as ‘roomy’.\textsuperscript{135} The Valuer-General had not recommended the STC acquire Victoria Park, noting ‘the course proper is large…but further expansion of the property is impracticable…the whole of the existing buildings would need to be

\textsuperscript{132} Refer Boulter \textit{op. cit.} p. V and chapter three above, and Painter & Waterhouse \textit{op. cit.} p. 88
\textsuperscript{133} For a full account of this process refer Boulter \textit{op. cit.} pp. 65-87
\textsuperscript{134} Minutes of the Victoria Park Recreation Grounds Ltd Committee, AJC library, unpaginated
\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Referee} 28/6/1916 p. 5
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demolished. However, vertical-facaded grandstands, like those built at Happy Valley racecourse, Hong Kong, could have provided accommodation for a Saturday crowd of the dimensions the STC had in mind (figures that were never in fact even approached). In the 1940s technology existed to build vertical stands, though the costs were comparatively high. Countering the disadvantages of cost and disruption was the great advantage of Victoria Park’s central location and its superiority as a racecourse.

In 1954 the Daily Mirror suggested an alternative explanation of the STC’s failure to purchase Victoria Park:

Probably a much better buy for the STC than any of the above-mentioned courses [i.e. Rosehill, Canterbury, Moorefield and Rosebery] would have been Victoria Park. Just prior to the sale of Victoria Park to the Nuffield interests, it was reported that unofficial negotiations were under way, but that a clash of personalities had occurred between on the one side Mr W.W. Hill and Mr Harry Tancred, representing the STC, and Mr W. Donohoe and Mr F. Donohoe, representing the Victoria Park Club. The result was the Donohoes got a good price by ignoring the STC and selling to the Nuffield interests, and the STC missed a golden opportunity.

The Victoria Park company sold its racecourse to Lord Nuffield on 21 September 1945. Earlier, in June, the STC had transferred the lease of Victoria Park established in January to the AJC, which had also considered its purchase as a venue for Saturday racing, although with little urgency. A condition of the sale to Nuffield was that the existing lease (to 1948) be allowed to stand and in fact the lease was further extended and trainers and horses did not vacate the course until August 1952. The Nuffield automobile complex did not become fully operational until 1960.

Ascot and Kensington racecourses were not seriously considered for acquisition by the STC. The New South Wales Government had made perfectly clear it did not intend that Kensington should continue as a racecourse and declined to extend the lease in November 1942. Initially it favoured the relocation of Sydney Hospital to the site, with an 18-acre strip parallel to Anzac Parade reserved for a station on an Eastern Suburbs railway, but decided instead to establish an

136 Boulter op. cit. p. 80
137 Daily Mirror 8/2/1954 p. 31
138 Sun Herald 7/4/1985 p. 93
(Illustration 7.5) A more detailed map of Ascot drawn in the late 1930s. The cinders track was used for the training of trotters. The hand drawn broken line indicates the course proper of the proposed new racecourse. The shaded areas represent proposed new grandstands. (source: STC Files ‘Ascot Racecourse’, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)
educational institution that ultimately became the University of New South Wales. Ascot was fated to fall beneath the east-west runways required at Sydney Airport to accommodate the larger civil aircraft that were a corollary of wartime advances in aeronautical design, and in March 1946 the STC informed the club that it would not be purchasing the freehold of the course. The Commonwealth Gazette of 11 September 1947 gazetted the federal government’s resumption of Ascot.

As pony track facilities closed, there were diasporas of displaced trainers, who while welcoming the demise of the proprietary clubs, deplored the closure of their racecourses. Most affected were those 30 or 40 remaining Ascot trainers who were moved first to Victoria Park in June 1948, then with the closure of that track on 31 August 1952, to Rosebery. On 26 May 1962 the STC had anticipated the transfer of the majority of the Rosebery trainers to Rosehill and Canterbury, but while a few did move, most did not want to leave the south eastern suburbs and asked for relocation to Randwick. Nearly all of them were accommodated, despite the already cramped conditions there.

The character of the suburbs of South Sydney was radically altered as their racecourses closed. With the trainers went the remnants of stock-related businesses, and much of the associated equine culture and the urban lungs that the racecourses provided.

Conclusions

The AJC and establishment racing, elements of the non-conformist church, some local business interests, and their representatives at different levels of government, opposed proprietary pony racing. There were also a number of pony owners and trainers who felt that their interests would be better served by a non-proprietary administration. The registered proprietary clubs had no issue, ideologically, with pony racing, but they resented the loss of revenue they

\[139\] A.H. Willis, The University of New South Wales: the Baxter Years, Kensington, NSW, University of New South Wales Press, 1983, p. 31; Sun Herald 14/4/1985 p. 97
\[140\] Commonwealth of Australia Gazette 1947, no. 173, Canberra, 11 September, p. 2650
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suffered as a consequence of their Saturday meetings clashing with popular unregistered meetings until 1933. These groups, in varying formations, were aligned against the sport.

The emergence of pony racing had complicated the feudal structure of horse racing in New South Wales, in which the AJC reigned as principal club and the regional associations and clubs, together with the registered metropolitan companies, were vassals. Despite this position of power the AJC did not react with sufficient commitment to either cast out or bring to heel pony racing during its first decade, when it remained vulnerable. In 1898, when the AJC sought to eradicate the sport, it found it too well established to be uprooted. When it became apparent its tactic of ostracism had failed, the AJC turned to its representatives in the New South Wales Parliament, who together with evangelical churchmen, caused the government to honour favours accrued in the preceding decade. At any rate the liassez faire policy towards racing accepted by successive governments of New South Wales became outmoded in the 1890s as the sport began to exhibit signs of gigantism. In 1900 there appeared in parliament the first of a series of inquiries, bills and acts, which while initially ineffectual were evidence of a persistent campaign being waged against unregistered racing. The parliamentary representatives of labour, mainly temperate disciples of the self-improvement movement, generally let their appreciation of the threat posed to worker’s pockets by excessive racing overcome their foibles over what appeared (to them) suspiciously like class-based oppression of pony racing, and did little to oppose proposed legislation.

The Gaming and Betting Act 1906, while successful in reducing the number of metropolitan race dates, actually strengthened the position of the existing pony clubs by providing them with a monopoly and by legitimising pony racing through licensing its racecourses. It also encouraged the building of new and better racecourses. This led to the twenty years of the highest profile and popularity achieved by pony racing. Nevertheless from 1916 its profitability

141 Departure from Ascot refer Pollard Companion p. 37, departure from Rosebery see STC files ‘Rosebery trainers’ Mitchell Library
began to decline as government realised the possibilities in the taxation of horse racing.

When it became apparent that the 1906 Act had failed to much harm pony racing, the AJC conceded the possibility of decisive victory had passed, and the territory separating registered and unregistered racing became uncontested. However, while the threat posed by registered racing ebbed, internal strife in the pony ranks later renewed government intervention. The 1923-24 Select Committee On Pony Racing was a response to the mayhem between the POTA, Bob Skelton and the ARC, and consequent POTA lobbying of government. It was inconclusive and its recommendations never enacted, but the accusations made during hearings and the exposure of the ill will between different factions of pony racing did its reputation some damage.

As the proprietary companies grew more conservative in the twenty-five years after 1906, and the ARC increasingly resembled a principal club of unregistered racing, a truce was established that ultimately enabled the AJC to accept requests for registration from the prodigal clubs (in response to damages suffered in the Depression), although many AJC members, and the shareholders in extant registered racing companies, mostly received them with hostility.

Successive governments of the 1930s prepared the way for the end of proprietary racing. From 1932 the Chief Secretary and the AJC’s policy of restricting the ARC for the most to Wednesday racing did them serious damage. The *raison detre* of restricted heights racing also gradually dissolved as mixed bred ponies disappeared and fewer small thoroughbreds were produced. The *Racing Amendment Act* 1937 proposed an end to proprietary racing, a development that naturally raised questions in the minds of pony club committees about the prudence of further expenditure on racecourse maintenance. The special statutory committee that was a corollary of the 1937 Act was the agency that for the first time in New South Wales nominated specific proprietary racecourses for closure, and it confirmed the plan to end proprietary racing.

The ARC were weakened by the Great Depression of the 1930s and prostrated by World War II. During the war, army occupation usually interrupted racing and
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damaged and devalued racecourse infrastructure. These circumstances made the post-war resumption of racing at affected racecourses very problematic. William McKell, whose animosity towards proprietary racing was fuelled by personal experience he interpreted unfavourably, and ideological opposition to entrepreneurial capitalism, took the opportunity provided by the closure of racecourses to ensure that proprietary racing would not survive the war. During the post war fire sale of proprietary club assets, the AJC and STC were both negligent in their failure to retain the excellent Victoria Park racecourse for racing.

Unregistered racing (in 1933) and proprietary racing (1945) did not end in Sydney because they was poorly organised, or because they no longer appealed or had lost the confidence of customers, as parts of the orthodoxy imply. While the immediate causes of proprietary pony racing’s cessation were war and depression,\textsuperscript{142} this chapter demonstrates that the underlying causes were philosophical opposition, particularly among labor politicians and the racing establishment, to the concept of racecourses returning profits to shareholders. That all of the pony racecourses ultimately disappeared, while, with the exception of Moorefield, each of the registered proprietary courses remains to the present day, may have been due to the co-incidence of their location in or adjacent to the electorate of an antagonistic premier of New South Wales. McKell’s influence on the STC was great and almost certainly was a factor in its somewhat puzzling racecourse retention decisions.

\textsuperscript{142} War and depression were clearly not the cause of the disappearance of pony racing in Melbourne (in 1932); refer Freedman & Lemon \textit{op. cit.} pp. 477-78
Chapter eight

Conclusion

The historical orthodoxy of pony racing continues to be promulgated in recent works, including a biography of Sir William McKell, published in 2000 by Christopher Cuneen, *Australian Gambling Comparative History and Analysis: Project Report*, (1999) a work produced by the Australian Institute for Gambling Studies for the Victorian Casino and Gambling Authority, and a chapter on Victoria Park racecourse that was part of the University of New South Wales *Histories of Green Square* project.

Cuneen accepts and reiterates several of the central planks of the orthodoxy:

On pony courses conditions for the punter were primitive, prize money was low and dishonest practices were suspected to be rife. Too many clubs meant that races attracted only two or three starters. McKell promised that his reforms would mean an increase in prize money and even an improved type of horse.¹

While these remarks may have been intended to refer to conditions during the Great Depression only, they were written without a rider to indicate this. Some of the assertions are absolutely misleading; races of two or three starters were all but unknown on ARC racecourses.

The authors of *Australian Gambling* assumed that the ARC clubs and racecourses already existed in 1889. They stated that pony racing took place only on weekdays, that it was prohibited from 1917 until the end of World War I, and that the sport went into severe decline immediately after the end of that war. It should be apparent from the preceding chapters that each of these statements is incorrect.²

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1 Cuneen *McKell* p. 156
Conclusion

The claims made in these two works demonstrate how currency lends legitimacy and that if an incorrect conclusion is reiterated often enough it is likely it will become accepted as ‘historical’ fact.

In the introduction to the *Histories of Green Square* chapter on Victoria Park the author proposed that racecourse had a particularly localised and working-class patronage, and that its history ‘tells us about how the people of Green Square area enjoyed and defended their leisure time…When faced with a challenge from outside their own social group, working people here adapted their culture on their own terms, and for their own purposes’. However the body of the work does not identify what the challenge to the purported working-class culture of racegoing at Victoria Park was, nor who posed it. Rather it focuses on the short-lived 1923 industrial action taken by the unregistered trainers against the ARC—that was really a result of a falling out between the trainers’ representatives and the renegade Bob Skelton—as an example of class struggle for control of the sport. Despite these issues this work presents fresh research and is a significant contribution to the discourse.3

In 2004 James Griffin published a new biography of John Wren. Inevitably it touched upon Wren’s involvement in pony racing, although it was somewhat peripheral to the central thesis of the work, and Griffin relies mainly on the judgments of it made by Buggy and Brennan. While he refers to pony racecourses as the ‘poor man’s courses,’ it is clear from the context that he was writing of the Melbourne courses only. Moreover he quotes a paragraph from the *Hawklet* argued that pony racing had been amenable to change over time—in this case for the better, under Wren’s management.4

Meanwhile the ARC and unregistered pony racing continue to be misunderstood and misrepresented. It is ironic (as well as erroneous), in light of the unfavourable

3 Erik Nielsen, ‘A Course of Action: Working Class Culture at Victoria Park Racecourse, between 1908 and 1943’, in Grace Karskens & Melita Rogowsky eds, *Histories of Green Square 2004* (PDF version), UNSW Printing and Publishing Services, 2004, pp. 71-77. While the trainers of the suburbs surrounding Victoria Park were certainly involved in the POTA industrial action the meetings affected took place at the Rosebery and Ascot racecourses
4 Griffin *op. cit.* pp. 160-62
opinions Premier McKell held of proprietary racing, that the Thoroughbred Breeders New South Wales Ltd. website should describe the ARC as ‘a non profit organisation which raced under the patronage of the Government’!

The establishment of the tenets of the orthodoxy of pony racing has been a cumulative process and is a result of later writers accepting earlier pronouncements on face value. This is a situation where, as the historian Ernest Scott once put it, ‘there has been on the part of authors a considerable amount of “taking in [of] each others washing.”’ It is appropriate, then, on the evidence of such laundry arrangements within the unregistered horse racing discourse, to give a concluding review of the orthodoxy, which is that it:

1 Attracted a homogeneous, male public of shabbily dressed, working-class ‘battlers’, the ‘needy and the greedy’ and ‘the quick and the dead’ that was inherently different to that of registered racing. Pony racing existed in isolation from registered racing—after a species of ‘peasants’ revolt’ had established it—and had little in common with it.

The gratuitous use of terms like ‘battler’ and ‘the needy and greedy’ has contributed to the formulation of the quintessential follower of unregistered racing identified in the orthodoxy, which also suggests that unregistered racing was patronised exclusively by members of the ‘working class’. Chapter five demonstrated manifoldly that this was not the case, and in particular refuted the vision of ‘shabbily dressed’ rabbles. I am wary of making the sorts of generalisations I have critiqued in this thesis, however, it seems that the writers who have provided the second-hand descriptions of unregistered pony racing imagined the type of proletariat sports exemplified in the Seabiscuit film scenes reproduced here in the preface, and in similar manifestations such as whippet racing in the English midlands and north—wherein the control and functionality of the sport lay indubitably in the hands of the owners, mainly cloth-capped miners and urban factory workers. Whippet racing can


validly be described as a working-class leisure activity. Prize money was relatively small, although the psychic income invested by the dogs’ owners was significant. Most of the contestants were family pets who slept at the foot of their masters’ beds, and the testing grounds did not approach the common understanding of what constitutes a racecourse. Few spectators lacked some financial or personal interest in one or other of the entrants. These arrangements were very dissimilar to the intense commercialization of unregistered horse racing in Sydney.7

Enclosed sporting grounds, although they provided variegated admission prices and cheaper enclosures that could be entered by workers (isolated examples of whom are identified in the photographs presented in chapter five), excluded the penniless loiterers and casual passers-by that had tended to congregate at sporting events in the pre-commercial period. In unregistered racing those who wished to watch the sport for free and perhaps bet in pennies with unlicensed bookmakers were banished to ‘outers’ located beyond the perimeter of the racecourse. Within the ARC racecourses, the mix of classes that occupied the leger enclosure must have approximated to the patronage of the SCG Randwick end, which, despite the regular presence of the stereotypical Surry Hills rabbitoh and barracker ‘Yabba’ (Stephen Gascoigne), has not been proposed as an exclusively working-class space. In its enthusiasm for the ‘battlers’ paradigm the orthodox view has excluded several sectors of Australian society that had important associations with unregistered racing, and has muddied the distinction between paying customers and ‘outer’ habituates. It is possible to propose more sophisticated and inclusive profiles of unregistered racegoers than the one identified in the preface to this work, but the divergences that must occur in a time span of fifty years, and in diverse locations, must be recognised as well.

First, it seems clear that several of the universalities enshrined in the orthodoxy are effectively valid. Unregistered racegoers were most predominately of Anglo-Celtic descent. The demographics and bigotries of Australian society of the time made this inevitable. While there was a considerable indigenous community in the South

Conclusion

Sydney district few could have found the cost of unregistered racecourse admission, even if they had been interested in activities that were foreign to their culture. For most indigenous people of South Sydney, the single association with pony racing that was possible was the free ride allowed them on the trams serving the ARC racecourses.⁸

The pony racegoer was almost equally as likely to be male as he was white, although this was somewhat less true from the 1920s. Despite the virulent opposition of nonconformist clerics to unregistered racing, there is no evidence that religious sectarianism influenced the following of one form or the other of racing in Australia.

Prior to the legislation of the *Gaming and Betting Act 1906* and the establishment of the ARC, a core of committed ‘sportsmen’ dominated the relatively small unregistered-meetings attendances. They went to as many of the daily meetings as their circumstances would allow, and attempted to make a living derived at least in part from successful racecourse wagering. They should be considered representatives of a cross-class status or interest group, rather than of a particular economic class, as they strove, so far as possible, to excuse themselves from any engagement with the processes of production. They shared a range of interests and values—mostly antithetical to the purported middle-class values of the day such as thrift and abstinence—and modes of dress and language, and lived in similar suburbs. On the fringes of the ‘Sportsmen’ set at some venues were elements that in their appearance, and occasionally their behaviour, exhibited the influence of larrikin sensibilities. The domination of unregistered racing attendances by these groups ended with the Edwardian decade.

By the mid-point of the ARC era, near the end of World War I, unregistered attendances had become less homogenous. The commentary that accompanied the *Referee* photographs in chapter five proposed that the appearance of the well-dressed racegoers at ARC racecourses matched that of the new army of white-collar workers of the CBD offices. No doubt among the racegoers in the cheaper enclosure there

Accessed 30/08/2004
are those who laboured with their hands but few advertised themselves by wearing work clothes, which indicates at least that they treated ARC race meetings as respectable outings demanding their ‘Sunday best’ suits and hats. Whatever other interpretation is made of the images they are clearly not suggestive of a ‘needy and greedy’ mob.

In 1919 Smith’s Weekly began publication and became the bible of the sports loving, literate, typically lower-middle-class office worker. In 1966 the former Smith’s journalist George Blaikie wrote a listing of the defunct paper’s pet likes and dislikes, which no doubt reflected those of most of its devoted readers. Here is a selection:

Likes: Australia; white collar workers; the White Australia Policy; Diggers; Australian success stories; Bertie Oldfield [the cricketer]; Billy Hughes.

Dislikes: Spivs; Military Police; Blackmen with white women; Red tape; Perversion; “Dagoes”; Communists; Bodyline.

It seems very like that the readership of Smith’s, the patrons of Sydney’s unregistered racecourses of the 1920s, and the white-collar workers of the repatriated AIF had many common members. Horse racing, like two-up, was an approved Anglo-Australian pastime that fitted the Anzac self-ideal of the daring yet pragmatic risk taker. The AIF, which returned from the northern hemisphere in waves through 1919 and the early 1920s, armed with back pay and a desire felt by the less severely afflicted to immediately revisit the suspended pleasures of civilian life, was an important element of the large unregistered attendances of the period. Unregistered racing was a pastime of the Anglo-Celtic Australian male mainstream—of all classes except the patricians of the AJC—that the AIF exemplified.

Despite its numerous ‘Dad and Dave’ and ‘Jacky Bindi-eye’ cartoons, Smith’s was very much an urban, and in particular, a Sydney phenomenon. It forms part of the contra to the bush influence on the Australian character that was identified by Russel Ward in The Australian Legend. Smith’s diggers were the putteed infantry, drawn mainly from the suburbs, rather than the light horsemen in leggings who were

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8 Lillye Backstage p. 85
9 Blaikie op. cit. pp.2-3
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typically the sons of squatters and selectors that were more likely to subscribe to the *Sydney Mail*. While the nineteenth century, on which Ward concentrated, contributed shearers, bullockies and bushrangers to the imagined white Australian male, in the twentieth century these types were joined, though not replaced by among others, city office clerks, Waterboard gang members, garbage collectors, wharf labourers and ‘chook’ rafflers. Moreover, there is an oral tradition of story telling in the tiled hotels of Sydney as well as the Bush, less celebrated perhaps than the campfire tales of Lawson, but nonetheless perpetuated by the stories of Dal Stivens, and in particular Frank Hardy’s Billy Borker yarns, set in a variety of landmark, mainly Sydney, hotels.¹⁰

Unregistered racing is a significant factor in the city/country dichotomy. As chapter two demonstrated, while pony racing several times became established in regional centres, it remained essentially a metropolitan-based sport. Most of its stables and public were located in Sydney. No powerful clique of rural-based breeders influenced its decision makers.

Like *Smith’s Weekly* (which relied on its particularly masculine sensibilities), unregistered racing never really determined how best to accommodate women. Until the early twentieth century it mostly ignored them, or excluded them from the cheaper enclosures. Thereafter it made half-hearted efforts to cater for them, but only Victoria Park was committed to encouraging their attendance.

The 1930s is the screen onto which pony racing and its followers have been projected. This is to an extent co-incidence. When journalists began to record anecdotes about it in the 1980s, most of their informants had memories that extended back little farther than to the start of the Depression. In the reconstruction of this period, the desperate culture and behaviour exhibited in the ‘outers’ of the Depression have been mixed up with that of the paying enclosures to create the ‘needy and greedy’ racegoers of the orthodoxy. In fact the photographic images of 1930s

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attendances (in both the paddock and leger) that were illustrated in chapter five continue to bear every appearance of the ‘respectability’ that was evident in earlier images.

Pony racing was not created in the wake of a ‘peasants’ revolt’ by the downtrodden elements of AJC racing—hard up trainers and jockeys—in emulation of the deeds of Watt Tyler and his followers. Nor did workers conduct it in the communal interest of workers. Rather it was the product of sports entrepreneurs who had graduated from other professional sports and who recognised the opportunity for a black economy of racing that had been created by the AJC decision in the 1880s to register clubs and to license personnel. Despite attempts by the AJC to quarantine its bastard offspring there remained a deal of contact between participants in the two spheres.

This thesis has demonstrated that the ARC was an efficient and innovative organisation that was recognised for its world’s best practices, which demanded high standards of behaviour of its licensed persons, and was jealous of its reputation. This is evident in all aspects of its administration but no more so than in its attention to detail, such as its insistence that jockeys present themselves on raceday with immaculate uniform and kit. It reacted more punitively than did the AJC to perceived breaches of the rules of racing. It employed full-time professionals as officials, who for many years provided a benchmark for the dilettantes of non-proprietary racing. ARC stewards were so highly regarded that in the post-amalgamation era several became chief steward of the AJC. The ability of the ARC to run programs of up to nineteen horse races in one day was without equivalent in sport administration at that time.

While the public might have believed that many of the human participants were disingenuous, attendances and betting turnover at pony racecourses expanded
 annually until the 1920s, while other sports that were contested by professionals, including pedestrianism, rowing and cycling, withered for want of public support. The product retained the confidence of its followers, despite the spiteful polemics directed at it by ill-wishers such as the *Sportsman*.

3. Was undercapitalised and provided poor and unattractive facilities, including small and often unsafe racecourses. All pony racecourses were of much the same (poor) standard, regardless of city, location and era. Criminals abounded on pony racecourses.

Definitions and assessments of pony racing need to be flexible enough to accommodate variations that existed in different eras, regions and racecourses. The pronouncements that have been made in the past have not been sufficiently discerning and the most salient example of this is the monotone depiction of unregistered racegoers, considered above. Another is the blending of aspects of Melbourne unregistered pony racing into the Sydney sector, where it was in fact much more significant and where its conduct was very dissimilar. The memory of pony racing in Sydney has been depreciated as a consequence. There has also been a lack of differentiation applied to the activity within Sydney. Despite the great dissimilarities that existed between Victoria Park in 1917 and, for instance, Lillie Bridge in 1890, each has been lumped into a broad and disreputable category labelled ‘pony racing’, even though the former was among the best and largest racecourses in the state, and often coveted by registered racing. The orthodoxy overlooks entirely the pony racing that was conducted on registered racecourses such as Rosehill and Warwick Farm. Even within the third-tier pony racecourses generalisation is problematic; Lillie Bridge had its admirers, no doubt, but it lacked the aesthetic charm of seaside venues such as Botany and Brighton.

The safety record of unregistered racing, although appalling before 1906, improved under ARC supervision to the extent that its racecourses were the scenes of far fewer fatalities than AJC equivalents. Similarly, the idea that all pony racecourses swarmed with criminals and larrikins is a consequence of the broadcasting of images of
particular incidents across the entire space of the phenomenon. All racecourses are beacons to criminals, in particular thieves, as large volumes of unsecured money are constantly changing hands, and the ARC racecourses were certainly no better than the rule in this regard, although their officials were noted for their diligence. Nevertheless Sydney pony racing was spared the symbolic embodiment of downtown sleaziness provided by the delicensed pony jockey Squizzy Taylor in Melbourne.

Final verdicts that have been passed on the facilities on ARC racecourses have largely drawn upon their condition in the post-racing period. By 1943 the courses were dilapidated following the retardation of maintenance programs during the Depression and destructive military occupation after 1940. This deterioration prompted some unfavourable assessments of the courses by the Valuer General, which were made much of by Boulter.

4  Was restricted to races for mixed-bred ponies including the haulers of tradesmen’s carts, or poorly bred and performed larger equines. In some cases a scarcely more flattering estimate is suggested of the human participants—the jockeys, trainers and officials

The misapprehension that tradesmen’s ponies participated in unregistered galloping races seems a result of confusion of it with trotting, to whose conditions—longer, much slower races in which harnesses were usually drawn—the working ponies were obviously much better suited. It is certainly true that mixed-bred equines were of significance in early unregistered racing. In later years, poorly performed (though not necessarily poorly bred) horses drifted onto the pony racecourses from registered racing. Almost every stallion with runners at Randwick was also represented on them by family black sheep.

The accreditation of unregistered racegoers with membership of an underclass and ‘otherness’ could have been directed with greater valiancy to the jockeys and trainers, who exhibited signs of class consciousness by forming their own associations and even, in the case of the trainers, by conducting strikes and their own meetings. Because of the relative inefficiency of the sector’s structure, which was a
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consequence of the hundreds of trainers with two or three horses each—not low prize money—many of the human participants struggled financially. Trainers lacked the vital revenue stream provided by independent owners and most were compelled to lease the horses they raced. Despite these conditions the trainers’ industrial body the POTA resisted attempts to rationalise unregistered racing.

Because of the number of races in which they could ride, and as a consequence of the introduction of a losing ride fee, the leading ARC jockeys, when they were not suspended or injured, were in a position to earn very good money. Perhaps because of the boom and bust nature of their income, and a lack of financial management acumen, few made adequate provision for their futures. Their circumstances worsened after the AJC amalgamation, when competition from AJC riders marginalised them and compelled them to concentrate on provincial and country meetings. Few were still riding on the eve of World War II. Ironically several former ARC trainers prospered in the open era.

5 Existed purely for the purpose of betting and contributed nothing to the development of racing

The centrality of betting in unregistered racing is unquestioned, particularly in the era of the ‘sportsmen’. At that time daily pony racing, with its unpretentious programming, catered almost exclusively for the gambling wants of this group. In its maturity however the ARC had a much broader attendance base that was somewhat less obsessed by gambling and regarded pony racegoing as a valid consumer leisure activity. By this later period the unregistered product and racecourses much more closely resembled those of registered racing.

Despite these changes the ARC remained driven by the practical necessities of commerce. Like other administrators of professional sports, including the New South Wales Rugby League and (years later) World Series Cricket, while it recognised and borrowed the best practices of the parent body, it also identified many areas in which lay scope for improvement. It introduced many innovations, of which the starting machine is one salient example. Moreover the emergence of unregistered pony racing
as a popular alternative accelerated the broader commercialisation of horse racing, not only through the merit of its own activities, but through competition that compelled the registered clubs to make their own product more attractive.

The unique significance of pony racing in Sydney has been grossly understated in the racing meta-narrative. Although restricted heights and unregistered racing both existed in England and other countries, and interstate within Australia, they did not coalesce to form the virulent phenomenon witnessed in Sydney. There, unregistered pony racing accounted for, by measures as significant as the number of human and equine participants and stables, betting turnover and attendances, and the number of races conducted, more than half of the total horse racing market. These circumstances created a duopoly within racing that was unique to Sydney—Melbourne and John Wren notwithstanding.

The ARC administration had an enduring impact on the Sydney racing calendar. Painter and Waterhouse identified part of its legacy in the establishment of the midweek restricted-class racing conducted by the STC that provided one half of the paradigm of racing in Sydney from 1954 until the late 1970s. It was the main factor in the differentiation of racing in Sydney and Melbourne in this period.¹¹

The most obvious contribution made by unregistered racing to AJC racing was in its function as feeder to registered racing of a significant number of officials, trainers, jockeys and, to a smaller degree, equine competitors as well.

6 Provided poor prize money

The attribution of poor prize money to unregistered racing is among the most egregious misrepresentations embodied in the orthodoxy. It seems primarily to be a consequence of the chance documentation of the protestations of an ill-informed and rather carping sector of the sport, the pony trainers. The POTA was able to gain the ear of the New South Wales parliament in the 1920s and, a decade later, of the leader of the New South Wales opposition, William McKell—who entertained imagined

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¹¹ Painter and Waterhouse *op. cit.* p. 72
injuries from proprietary racing, and was willing to entertain the worst calumnies against it. Criticisms that rely on prize money figures for the 1930s in isolation are disingenuous and ignore the decimating effect the Great Depression had had on ARC revenue. More sophistry is implicit in references made to the prize money paid by the ARC for divided races, when they do not make it clear that the race was a division.\textsuperscript{12} 

In the pre-depression period, when the ARC was autonomous, the richest prizes in unregistered racing matched those for prestigious races such as the W.S. Cox Plate and well exceeded the purses provided for set-weights and WFA races by the Sydney registered proprietary clubs. In fact, as a consequence of the fastest growth in prize money in all Australian racing between 1906 and 1920, the ARC was the most progressive administration in Australian horse racing and distributed more prize money than any organisation outside the AJC, VRC and VATC.

\textsuperscript{7} Did not generate large betting markets, and most bets were made in coins. It was serviced by a group of bookmakers of lower standing than those who worked on AJC-registered courses

During the ARC period AJC bookmakers were able to field at any non-clashing unregistered meeting. Consequently among the largest and strongest bookmakers’ rings ever formed in Australia were those found at ARC Wednesday meetings. While bets in coins could be laid on ARC racecourses—though few licensed bookmakers would accept ‘coppers’—the reflections of A.B. Paterson on Lillie Bridge demonstrate that pony race betting pools, even during the comparatively backward first decade, did not consist of a myriad of penny-ante transactions. Turnover figures for later periods demonstrate the relative strength of ARC rings.

There is no evidence of a socio-spatial dichotomy of AJC and ARC bookmakers. Each lived in the same suburbs and bore family names suggesting similar ethnographic backgrounds. Whether a bookmaker was licensed by the AJC or the ARC depended largely on vacancies at the time of application, and in the twentieth century more occurred in the burgeoning unregistered sector. A bookmaker’s relative

\textsuperscript{12} As McKell did.
status and success were better indicated by whether he fielded in the paddock, leger or flat enclosures than by whether he was registered with the ARC or AJC. Nor is there any evidence that ARC bookmakers, who deposited large sureties and who were closely supervised, were any less likely to honour their commitments than AJC bookmakers. Doubts recalled of the reliability of ARC bookmakers are probably once more cases where the folkloric traditions of the outer, where defaulting unlicensed bookmakers were apparently common, have infiltrated memories of the racecourses proper.

8 Drew large attendances, primarily because of cheap admission, but also because it placed a premium on entertainment and excitement

The identification of pony racing with cheap admission is one of the most readily dispelled misrepresentations of the orthodoxy. Only in the first decade, and only at some venues, was entry cheap compared to registered racing. During the 1906 pony wars cutthroat competition caused admissions costs to be more than halved to 2s 6d for a few months, but by World War I they had reached parity with entry to the Randwick paddock, and were greater in the leger. Moreover, unregistered racing did not provide the option of free access to the infield flat, as Randwick and Flemington did at various points in their histories.

The main reason why unregistered racing outpaced the growth of attendances at registered meetings in the period 1910 to 1923 was the perception of racegoers that the ponies offered better value for money, even though there was admission price parity. Meetings consisting of frequent races, large fields and close finishes that were often exciting to witness were the main attractions, and the ARC relied on these, for the most part, to occupy the crowd (Victoria Park alone was fully committed to providing non-racing diversions comparable to those available at Randwick). Ironically most twenty-first century racegoers would have found earlier meetings at the third-tier pony racecourses, which also relied on racing but lacked those positive aspects of the ARC product, confusing, tedious and unedifying.
9 Raced and produced profits for an oligarchy of rapacious sports entrepreneurs

Some of the early unregistered entrepreneurs probably believed that pony racing had a limited lifespan and consequently adopted a carpet bagging approach that sought to maximise short-term profit, mainly by paring back expenditure, especially on public amenities and riders’ safety. The more committed promoters, especially those with ties to the district in which their racecourses were located, remained in the sector at least until government had an epiphanous realisation of the taxation possibilities of horse racing. Thereafter racing company shareholders incurred a considerable opportunity cost, as many alternative investments were likely to provide better returns than the modest dividends they received. In most cases joint-stock companies superseded syndicates, many of the stockholders motivated to claim a small share of the romance of the turf. By the 1930s, certainly, McKell’s view of rapacious racing company owners was an anachronism. Nevertheless, proprietary racing remained a textbook capitalist activity and it is singular that it has ever come to be represented as a working-class sport. McKell clearly did not perceive the pony racecourses as the ‘workers’ courses’, as his ALP colleagues in Victoria had, or as manifestations of working-class popular culture, but rather as places where middle-class commercial interests exploited the working class, in particular jockeys and stable hands, who (he believed) received poor pay and conditions in return for their labour.

10 Was insignificant, economically, socially and culturally, when compared to registered racing

Pony racing was once considered more popular on Saturdays than horse (i.e. registered) racing itself, and in 1926 was identified as ‘one of this state’s [New South Wales] biggest industries.’ It provided direct employment and flow-on economic benefits to thousands of Sydneysiders. The social impact of the racecourses on the suburbs in which they were located—in providing rare open space in what increasingly became industrial suburbs, in their use for non-racing sporting facilities such as golf and polo, and in establishing equine, quasi-rural neighbourhoods—was

13 NSW Parliamentary Papers 1923 Vol. 3 part 2 p. 1313
enormous. Of the most importance of course were the race meetings held on them. The size of attendances alone, which at their height eclipsed those everywhere outside Randwick, *ipso facto* demonstrates the sport’s contemporary social significance. Its broader cultural credentials are considered below.

11 Was exclusively a sport of the weekday, and of hard times

This plank of the orthodoxy is not really true of almost three-quarters of the continuum of pony racing. In the period of ARC control one third of all unregistered meetings took place on Saturdays. In this epoch, while it coincided with the growth in the number of races on a program and other developments that expanded gambling turnover, the movement of unregistered racing towards a cultural identity more like that of registered racing began. That unregistered racing during this period included regular Saturday racing was a vital factor in the shift. Although it is difficult to encapsulate, there is a palpable difference in the *Zeitgeist* of midweek and Saturday racing. A depressing aura of truancy and guilt seems to oppress midweek attendances, but there is a sense of legitimacy in going racing on the Saturday half-holiday. This feeling of well-being is added to, for most racegoers, by the knowledge that the next day is a holiday. The greater variety of patrons (expanded from the rump of habitual punters and retirees that dominate midweek racing), the greater presence of women, and the better class of horses (although this last was less true of unregistered racing) contribute to a more festive atmosphere and indulgent gathering. The ARC recognised the advantages of racing on Saturday, although it meant inevitable opposition from registered meetings, and sought to stage their most important programs on the weekend. The loss of most of their Saturday dates in 1932 was viewed with such alarm by ARC officials and shareholders that a crisis of confidence ensued.

Lillie and Hickie, McKell, Pollard and Boulter have been instrumental in constructing the mnemonic association between the Great Depression and the fibre of pony racing. In fact the worst years of the Depression coincided with only one tenth of the years of

14 *Sydney Sportsman* 16/3/1926 p. 6
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pony racing, and they were rather atypical ones, as attendances, prize money and on-course betting turnover were much smaller than hitherto—and the ARC racecourses operated, in that period alone, under AJC supervision. If, however, the decade of the 1890s is added to the sum of hard times, it can be seen readily enough that pony racing’s adolescence and decline coincided with some very lean years. On the other hand the middle years, especially those of World War I (despite the human tragedy) and immediately after, are generally regarded as boom times that coincide with the era in which horse racing had its firmest grip on the white Australian consciousness—the times that Jack Pollard called the ‘racing twenties’. At the beginning of this period unregistered racing achieved its largest totalisator turnovers, which overshadowed those of the registered suburban clubs. The pre-eminence of pony racing in those prosperous days should figure much more prominently in the memory of it, as well as in the meta-narrative of Australian horse racing.

12 Became defunct as a result of opposition from the establishment, corrupt practice and maladministration, although the Great Depression and World War II were the immediate causes.

Neither middle-class Protestant activism nor even the malevolence of the AJC dispatched pony racing, but rather world events, which placed a hangman’s noose in the hands of government, were the cause. O’Hara correctly identified government desire for centralisation and greater bureaucratisation of racing as the greatest blights on proprietary racing. The dark middle years of World War II enabled William McKell to rush through a bill to hasten those outcomes that at the very least would have been strongly lobbied against outside parliament in less momentous times. Despite the sentences that had been proposed for the ARC member-clubs by the 1939 Select Committee, proprietary racing may have lingered on for several more years in New South Wales but for McKell’s bill. However, in the context of the times, for most the survival of proprietary racing was a very minor issue compared to the defence of the nation.

15 Pollard *Australian Horse Racing* p. 203
16 O’Hara *Mug’s Game*. p. 227
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In fact the ARC unwittingly signed their own warrants when they sought registration with the AJC in 1933. In doing so they surrendered their autonomy and profile, and lost their industrial relations *raison d’etre*, as in the new era of ‘open’ racing former pony jockeys’ and trainers’ livelihoods were no longer married to the survival of the ARC, although the jockeys in particular were indeed marginalised. By 1943, the only real apologists of the ARC were the ARC themselves.

Memory

The final consideration of unregistered proprietary horse racing made in this thesis is of how it has been remembered, and what have been the key factors and influences in the construction of its memory.

The collective memory in most senses coincides with the orthodoxy that was described in the preface of this work and has been discussed throughout it. The memory presides primarily in the writings that supply the orthodoxy, particularly those of Lillye and Hickie that were built on the recollections of several octogenarian former participants. From time to time, however, it has reemerged in other forums. In the 1980s, when a Sydney radio station broadcast a talk-back program on racing, callers often sought information on pony racing and the defunct racecourses, typically on where they were located and when they closed. There is a fascination for many people in the lost features of the places where their lives are played out. The retired champion jockey Billy Cook, despite spending a lifetime on racecourses, whenever passing the Eastlakes shopping centre recalled fondly the Rosebery racecourse that once stood there, and attempted to overlay in his mind its onetime features on the modern streetscape.17 In 2004 a weekly radio program retells the most famous racing folklore, such as the ‘Grafter’ Kingsley tunnelling stories, and the ‘Baron’ Bob Skelton anecdotes.18 But the bar-room oration of the Billy Borker type that was once an important element in the oral conservation of memories to do with unregistered racing has all but disappeared with the passing of the people who experienced it, and

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17 Cook, Interview with Bennetts, 1980
18 This feature, hosted by Rod Gallegos, is broadcast as part of the radio station 2KY Raceday program
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with the retreat of horse racing from its place of pre-eminence in the Australian psyche.

Little sanctioned effort has been made to preserve the memory of pony racing, although the Histories of Green Square project signals perhaps a welcome change in this position. Thanks to the recent enthusiasm for the construction of social history through oral history, there are numerous accounts of such popular experiences as cinema-going in the silent era; but there are few of a day spent at the racecourse (even though attendance-figures are comparable), and none focused on unregistered racing, except for the snippets that were used in The Track. Horse racing hardly appears on the syllabus of the limited social or public history (and even more limited sports history) taught at tertiary level.

Some artifacts and documents relating to pony racing, have, largely by accident, survived its dissolution. Such realia are natural conduors of memory. Race books and ornately lettered and mounted photographs of race finishes, of which there are several examples in this thesis, have proven the most enduring. As it was the practice to commemorate almost every race with a photo of the finish there must still be many of the latter extant. The ScreenSound Australia archive holds a few hundred feet of nitrate film of racing at Kensington and Victoria Park. Other odd items—photographs, trophies, whips, saddles, totalisator betting tickets, jockeys’ scrapbooks—are scattered among the Mitchell Library, University of New South Wales archive, AJC library and archive, and the STC. Other material may be lying in council archives, local history association backrooms, and in old suitcases under numerous suburban bed frames. There is no museum of horse racing in New South Wales, although there is in Melbourne, but its collection includes little material on unregistered racing. The AJC archive and library at Randwick racecourse have performed a laudable service as repositories for all sorts of documents and realia relating to horse racing history, including unregistered racing, but they are not at present accessible except by appointment. If a racing museum should ever be established in Sydney there is material enough for a room on unregistered racing.
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The appendix following this conclusion provides information on the remains of Sydney’s pony racecourses. Most of them have unmarked graves but there are memorials near the entrances to the Rosebery and Kensington racecourses, although they commemorate the soldiers of the first and second AIF that trained there rather than the racecourses per se. Two of the buildings and several of the fig trees at Kensington racecourse are incorporated in the middle campus of the University of New South Wales but there are no plaques to identify their significance, or indeed any hint that the site was once an important racecourse. 20 Victoria Park slept anonymously as an automobile plant and defense department depot for almost fifty years but the in the twenty-first century developers of a residential complex have provided a local history of the site that includes timelines in the photographs in the public space. These are spaces well suited to hosting a racing museum.

It is axiomatic that the survivors of conflicts write their histories. The racing memory as it stands is largely uninformed of unregistered racing. Even though the ARC membership came mainly from the literate middle and professional classes, AJC-registered racing was one of the primary totems of the social elite—the pastoralists, parliamentarians, lawyers, and wealthy businessmen—that makes most of the decisions on cultural formation. Indeed, the cultural hegemony enjoyed by this group determined the process of memorialising racing. 21

I have an undisguised regard for ARC racing but this thesis has not been written to question its dissolution or the loss of its racecourses. It is obvious that no city of one or two million people required nine racecourses, especially when five of them were located within a few miles of each other. With hindsight it seems the STC’s racecourse retention policy was ill advised and that perhaps decisions about it were not always made with the quality of the facilities and the racecourses’ locations as the main criteria. However the STC acted no doubt in good faith, and hindsight is an

19 Spearitt op. cit. p. 51
20 After the death of the former jockey Harry Reed the University of New South Wales proposed a commemorative plaque be attached to one of the old racecourse fig trees in middle campus, but the plan did not proceed; personal communication by Joan Pope, daughter of Harry Reed, 11/09/2004
21 I stress that I refer to the racing establishment of that time. The current keepers of the racing memory at the AJC and STC have been extremely supportive of this thesis
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enormous advantage enjoyed by the historian. Nor has it been my intention to criticise journalists for writing what is after all journalism. I do however dispute the way in which the memory of unregistered and proprietary racing has been constructed.

Malinowski suggested that a possible function of mythology is the justification of subsequent events or the maintenance of a status quo.\(^\text{22}\) The shortcomings of proprietary racing have been exaggerated to help legitimise the decision to end it and to establish the STC.\(^\text{23}\) Its dismissal as a thing of little worth has helped make that decision uncontentious. Premier William McKell nurtured universalities about poor standards of facilities and prize money in proprietary racing to help legitimise (unwittingly, perhaps) the STC and strengthen the control of government bureaucracy over racing. The latter was demonstrably his intention. His biographer Christopher Cuneen found that while premier he had given serious consideration to taking the final step in its achievement—to replacing the A JC with a supervisory racing authority, a regime change that was ultimately implemented by an ALP government in 1996.\(^\text{24}\) The imputed benefits that accrued to racegoers as a result of the replacement of proprietary racing by the STC are reiterated and propagated in *Forty Years On*, and by racing establishment figures such as the auctioneer Clive Inglis.\(^\text{25}\) Such sabotage has affected the public memory of pony racing in particular. It is no longer known even to racing enthusiasts that pony racing once seriously challenged registered racing in Sydney.

Does it matter that the memory of unregistered racing will *probably* be committed to relatively specialised, and rarely accessed, written works? There are those who would argue that sports history in general and horse racing history in particular has no claim on the public estate. However I suggest that a phenomenon that prompted tens of thousands of men (and a few hundred women) to gather together, over many decades, is of cultural and sociological significance. For these reasons the remains of an ARC

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\(^{23}\) Similarly, the pronouncements that accompanied McKell’s slum clearance program overplayed in some cases the dilapidation of the properties

\(^{24}\) Cuneen *McKell* p. 237n

\(^{25}\) Refer page 102
racecourse, and the associated artifacts, should be thought as worthy of preservation and display as a pipi midden of indigenous peoples, or the bottles and coins unearthed in the Hyde Park barracks restoration.

As one of the earliest examples of a large-scale splinter professional movement in a major Australian sport, unregistered proprietary horse racing was a precursor of such watershed schisms as the New South Wales Rugby League, the Victorian Football League, World Series Cricket and SuperLeague. Epithets such as ‘useless brutes and loafing men’ that were directed at the participants of proprietary pony racing by AJC authorities in the 1890s bring to mind the pejorative descriptions such as ‘pyjama cricket’ and ‘Packer Circus’ that the supporters of establishment cricket coined for its secessionists some eighty years later.26 Pony racing did not jump from the flagship, as did those later-day breakaways—it would be more accurate to say it was cut adrift—but the chagrin it caused the AJC established the paradigm for these subsequent stormy episodes in sports administration.

Wray Vamplew has said ‘Setting the sports record straight, and thus preventing myths from becoming conventional wisdom, is a prime duty of all [sports] historians.’27 That sense of obligation has been the motivation behind the creation of this thesis. The story of unregistered proprietary horse racing, or pony racing, in Sydney, is entitled ‘to claim [its] fair share in the past’.28

27 Vamplew Pay Up and Play the Game p. 13
28 Connell & Irving op. cit. p. 12
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Appendices
Appendix A

Further description and location guide of pony racecourses of Sydney

The Sydney racecourses on which pony racing took place that still exist, relatively intact—Canterbury, Rosehill and Warwick Farm—have been excluded from the descriptions given in this appendix. The maps reproduced were taken from UBD City Link, 2000 edition. The map references given in the captions to the maps relate to that publication.

Ascot

In 2004 General Holmes Drive runs parallel to the back straight of Ascot racecourse (354a), and the point at which it bends right to Botany Road marks where the one mile start joined the course proper. As the photographs on page 128a illustrate, the east-west domestic runway of Sydney Airport cuts across the track at about the old two furlongs mark and the twin runway roundabouts to the north are near the main paddock facilities. The grass track that formed part of the turn out of the back straight is still visible in the lower photograph, taken in the 1950s. The Botany goods line, built between 1921 and 1925, marks the northern boundaries of the racecourse grounds.¹

It is believed that Ascot racecourse was the basis of the name Mascot selected in 1911 by residents for the suburb and shopping centre based around Botany Road, a few hundred yards to the northeast of the racecourse gates.²

Botany

The Botany track’s dimensions (page 354a) of two furlongs circumference and width of about 40 feet were almost identical to Lillie Bridge. The final section of

¹ Jervis and Flack op. cit. p. 303
² Gerald Healy and Frances Pollon, The Book of Sydney Suburbs; North Ryde NSW, Angus & Robertson, 1988, p. 167
(Illustration A.1) Location map of Ascot (map 405 C7) and Botany (405 J16) racecourses
Facilities, information and services

(Illustration A.2) The tram junction at the intersection of Botany Road and Lords Avenue Mascot. The roof of Ascot Lodge, the caretaker’s residence, can be seen in the middle distance. The stands of Ascot racecourse are visible at right, the chute for one-mile race starts is at left. (source: Government Printing Office Collection, State Library of New South Wales)

(Illustration A.3) Ascot Lodge in 2004, buried between busy General Holmes Drive and Botany Road
the course boasted a full picket fence on either side, while the surface was cinders, oddly divided into five running lanes by collars of thick grass, a remnant its pedestrian usage.

The photograph reproduced on page 355a of this thesis, from Fred Larcombe’s *History of Botany*, shows the old pedestrian track, which was constructed in the 1880s at about the same time as the Italianate extensions to the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel. The track ran across the slope of an incline directly above the main pavilion of the picnic grounds next to the beach, shaded on both sides by gum and pine trees. This track, after slight modification, became the pony racecourse. The stairs that lead down from the old hotel in the left middle distance and top left of the photograph of the running track, and which can be seen in the contemporary photograph at the bottom of the page, demonstrate that the racecourse was on the same site as the current oval.

The finishing line of the racecourse was situated at the northwestern corner (lower left of photograph) of the oval.

**Brighton**

The Brighton racecourse (page 358b) was situated on the block formed by present-day Bay St, Francis Ave, Gordon St and Moate Ave, directly to the west of the Brighton Novotel Hotel. The back straight ran parallel to Moate Avenue. It lay less than a 100 yards from the water’s edge. When construction was almost complete the New Brighton Racing Club made the claim that its racecourse, with views of Botany Bay and its fixtures, would be the prettiest track in Sydney, and indeed it was a pleasant seaside venue. One commentator described it as a ‘magnificent course…also famous for pigeon shooting matches. It possesses, besides, several football pitches, and as a football field has absolutely no rivals in the suburbs.’

However the appreciation of the beauties of the spot were

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3 *A Place of Pleasure; Some Notes on Lady Robinson’s Beach*, Sydney, W.R. McLardy and Co., 1900?, p. 21. This pamphlet is stored in a box marked ‘Sydney and Suburbs vol. 1’ in the State Reference Library call number S991.1A 14/30. The card catalogue entry is made under Gibbs, Shallard and co, ‘Illustrated Guide to Sydney and its Suburbs’
(Illustration A.4) A photograph probably taken after the Botany course had closed to pony racing. The gentlemen at left and right are holding a finishing rope. The hotel is located above the sloping ground at the left of the photograph (source: Larcombe, History of Botany)

(Illustration A.5) The same location (now Sir Joseph Banks Park) in 2003
diminished when the nor-easter blew over the extensive Sydney sewage farm located nearby on the south head of Cook’s River.

The circumference of the grass course-proper was about four furlongs. The small but fashionably ornate grandstand resembled the SCG’s Ladies Stand, with flags and pennants flying from its spires. The stand had sections reserved for members and officials, as well as the better-financed elements of the public. Horse-stalls were located to the south and rear of the grandstand. Later improvements included the addition of a tan training track on the outside of the main course, as at Kensington.

Kensington

Kensington (page 361a) is one of the most accessible of the defunct Sydney racecourse sites. The home straight ran parallel to High St; the winning post approximates to A Block, Phillip Baxter College and the eastern boundary was on the line of Willis St. The back straight ran parallel to Barker St and the side of the course swung past Anzac Parade. Two of the racecourse buildings remain as part of the grounds of the University of New South Wales. The two-story building now known as the White House which houses the Communication Law Centre, was once the official stand. A consultant architect has estimated this structure was built about 1897. The southern side of the building formed part of the outside fence of the course proper and the upper deck served as the judges’ box. The western side of the building opened into the saddling enclosure and the lower floor served as the jockeys’ room. Years later these rooms served as the headquarters for the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA). About 50 metres to the north of the White House stands the paddock totalisator building of 1917, which as the Old Tote Theatre continued to sell tickets to drama punters for many years.

4 University of NSW Archive paper, October 1990
5 Waugh op. cit. pp. 13, 24
Description, location, remains

(Illustration A.6) Woodlands and Warwick Farm racecourses location maps (map 365 A16)
Description, location, remains

Liverpool (Woodlands)

Three courses were used for regular pony racing in Liverpool. The Liverpool Turf Club’s 1832 racecourse was situated on the Glenfield estate several miles west of the main settlement. Woodlands racecourse (page 356a), which was of about one mile circumference, lay a few miles to the north-west of Liverpool station and a few hundred yards from Warwick Farm (page 356a), the third course. Woodlands Rd and O’Brien Parade Liverpool mark its location. It was on this racecourse in 1894 that the American dentist Dr G.M. Slate introduced the pneumatic harness racing buggy to Australia.

Lillie Bridge-Forest Lodge-Epping

The sports promoter George Edgar founded Lillie Bridge at a location previously known as Allen’s Glen or the Glebe Hollow, a tiny scrap of disused land in an urbanised, working-class location—a mere four-and-a-half acres of former quarry that had once been a favourite hunting ground for rat catchers. The Referee was quite effusive in its account of the wasteland’s transformation into a racecourse:

> Whatever money could do has been done, and it has done a lot, for it has changed an unsightly quarry and swamp into the most picturesque sporting rendezvous in the world. It has scratched a pest spot and pestilential incubus from the people’s view and left in its stead an ornament and pure lung, for which the people in the neighbourhood should feel thankful and for which the city should feel proud.

Such fulsome praise for the course was rare in later days. The track, a mere 2 furlongs and 20 yards long and 36 feet wide, circled a football pitch belonging to the Metropolitan Rugby Union.

Lillie Bridge re-emerged as Forest Lodge on Christmas Day 1899. The course was very different from the present-day Harold Park, although, unlike during the Lillie Bridge period, races were run counter-clockwise. The course was in the form of a figure six which included a long, slightly curved chute that joined the course proper near the Harold Park Hotel and provided a two furlong run to the first

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6 Referee 15/5/1890 p. 1
7 Agnew Silks and Sulkies p. 147
8 Brown op. cit. pp. 50-51
9 Referee 1/1/1890 p. 1
Description, location, remains

corner in 5.5 furlong races. The surface was a heavy mixture of cinders and loam (today it is shell-grit) and its constitution was the probable cause of the large number of meetings cancelled after rain.\(^\text{10}\) The sharpness of the turn out of the straight—the cause of many accidents in the trotting era—was already a talking point. The Forest Lodge corners were so acute that jockeys attached padding to their left legs, which often contacted the running rail as the riders attempted to cut the angle.\(^\text{11}\)

The club took advantage of the natural amphitheatre provided by earlier quarry excavations by locating the paddock on top of a hill from whence a good general view of the course could be had.

When Joynton Smith took over the failed Forest Lodge course and renamed it Epping, he extended the paddock enclosure along the full extent of the home straight and built a new grandstand at a cost of £3,000. He moved the cheaper enclosure from next to the paddock to the centre of the course and renamed it the flat.\(^\text{12}\)

Menangle

The Menangle racecourse (page 358a) was designed to outmode the existing provincial courses, as Victoria Park had the metropolitan tracks. It was set on 80 acres, with a 135 ft wide course proper, a circumference in excess of nine furlongs, a three-furlong straight—the longest in the state—and a straight five-furlong course that began from a chute at the top of the straight. The ornate members stand of the Menangle Club, which raced for the last time on 18 November 1941, was retained until the 1970s at the NSWTC’s Menangle paceway, which replaced the racecourse. The stand was located near the home corner of the trotting track and was not of use as a viewing area for trotting races.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{10}\) *Referee* 18/1/1899 p. 5, 20/12/1899 p. 5
\(^{11}\) Frank Martin, Australian Racing Board, personal communication, August 2001
\(^{12}\) *Referee* 16/12/1903 p. 3; 29/6/1904 p. 5
\(^{13}\) Refer *Town & Country Journal* 10/6/1914 p. 34 for photographs and description of the Menangle racecourse. The Local Studies Section, Campbelltown Municipal Library, has a sketch of the galloping track.
(Illustration A.7) Menangle Park racecourse (map 538 J4)

(Illustration A.8) Richmond (NSW) racecourse. The pony track is the larger course, which was retained for trotting on turf (148 B3)
I. **Description, location, remains**

**Illustration A.9** Location map of Moorefield (map 433 D5) and Brighton racecourses (K2).

**Illustration A.10** The Moorefield champion Cave Dweller returns to the saddling paddock after his last win on the course in the early 1930s (author’s collection).
Moorefield

The area of Moorefield racecourse, Kogarah (page 358b), is bounded by Lachal Avenue, the Prince’s Highway, President Avenue, which runs parallel to the home straight, and Marshall Street. It was located on part of a grant made to Patrick Moore by Governor Macquarie in 1812.\(^\text{14}\) In 1887 his son Peter Moore set aside about 70 acres of the estate on which to situate a seven furlongs and three chains course with an average width of 66 feet. Immediately after the first meeting work commenced on extending the course by widening the back straight turn into the Patmore Swamp at the southeastern corner of the course. That part of the course was low-lying and ran through ti-tree scrub.

When the course opened on 13 October 1888 noteworthy features included a paddock grandstand for 500 people, members stand and weighing room; eighty race-day horse stalls near President Avenue and others for the buggies of patrons.\(^\text{15}\) There were panoramic views of Botany Bay from the stands that were judged the most pleasing of any Sydney racecourse.\(^\text{16}\)

Moorefield was an undulating ‘horses for courses’ track and some specialists like Cave Dweller in the late 1920s were all but unbeatable there, although average performers elsewhere. Cave Dweller was able to defeat the Melbourne Cup winner Nightmarch at Moorefield. Most riders would seek to soo the horses up the rise at the turn out of the back straight with the objective of establishing a good lead before the home turn. The land fell away quite steeply in the direction of the swamp and Botany Bay, so that the latter part of the short home straight was markedly downhill, and many tired leaders were able to literally stumble across the line to win.

The New South Wales Government built three educational institutions on the site of Moorefield racecourse; Moorefield Girls High School at the back of the course; James Cook High on the side of the course and turn into the home straight, and St George College of TAFE on the site of the leger and paddock enclosures. Housing

\(^{14}\) For detail of Moore’s grant refer Geeves & Jervis *op. cit.* p. 98
\(^{15}\) *Town & Country Journal* 28/7/1888 p 193
Description, location, remains

replaced the low, swampy land at the eastern end of the course. The Fairfield Trotting Club acquired the wooden grandstand and several pavilions, which it reassembled at its new track. The grandstand remained in race-day use until July 2004.\textsuperscript{17}

Parramatta

The Parramatta racecourse was located on the town domain north of the Parramatta River, near modern-day Rydalmere. An English observer described the course as:

nearly circular, and marked by one line of rails only—on the inside; a gully forms the outer boundary. I was there on the day before the last meeting to be held on the old track [i.e., in 1882], a little over a half mile around. The Grand Stand was of the most primitive character—a wooden affair, very strong, and particularly rough of design; but the course was of old soft turf, and the going first-rate.\textsuperscript{18}

Richmond

Pony racing at Richmond took place on a seven-furlong right-hand turf track (page 358a), featuring a steep uphill home straight, on which trotting races were also run. The registered non-proprietary Richmond Race Club reintroduced thoroughbred racing for a short time after World War II, but discontinued it in 1952 when, after difficulties with the course, the club decided to restrict its activities to harness racing. A change to racecourse licensing laws in the 1980s compelled the Club to run trotting races left-handed onto an absurdly short home straight, and to abandon standing starts for the mobile barrier, for which the undulating turf course was not well suited. When informed in 1997 that it was to lose its status as a track on which metropolitan TAB meetings could be conducted, the Club decided to discontinue harness racing to focus on greyhound racing.

Rosebery Park

The first Rosebery Park racecourse (page 360a) was built on the northwestern side of the Botany and Gardner Roads intersection on a portion of the Cooper estate,

\textsuperscript{16} STC files, \textit{Valuer General’s report on Moorefield racecourse}, 1943, Mitchell Library
\textsuperscript{17} Brown \textit{op. cit.} p. 236
\textsuperscript{18} Martin Cobbett, \textit{The Man on the March}, London, Bliss, Sands and Co., 1896, pp. 327-8
Description, location, remains

(Illustration A.11) Location map of the original Rosebery Park racecourse (map 375 E16)

(Illustration A.12) The second Rosebery Park (map 406 A2)

Page 360a
Description, location, remains

opposite the still extant public school and the Halfway House hotel, which was
diagonally opposite. The racecourse grounds occupied just 20 acres, or one-tenth
the area of Randwick racecourse. Two sand hills to the east offered natural
elevated viewing positions.\textsuperscript{19} Despite an obvious size disparity, an imaginative
journalist once compared the layout at old Rosebery to Flemington.\textsuperscript{20} It had a
circumference of four furlongs and a relatively long one-furlong home straight. It
was 40 to 50 feet wide and featured a tan training track on the outside of the main
grass.

After its closure to racing old Rosebery Park became a football ground operated
by the YMCA. In the 1930s the Australasian Coursing Club reopened the
racetrack as a greyhound course that was known as Mascot or Shepherds’ Bush.
The site of the course now forms part of the industrial suburb of Beaconsfield,
near Ralph Street.

High-rise flats and the Eastlakes shopping complex at Racecourse Place, which
sits astride what used to be the finishing line and the turn out of the straight,
occupy the enclosures of the second Rosebery racecourse (page 360a). Gardeners
Road, which ran parallel to the home straight, and Florence, Universal and
Maloney Streets mark the boundaries of the course.

A memorial stone at the corner of Evans and Florence Avenues Eastlakes honours
men of the 1st and 2nd AIF who both camped on Rosebery racecourse during the
world wars, is close by the location of the entrance to the paddock enclosure.
Jerome Dowling Reserve, named after Rosebery’s last chairman, marks the
position of the turn into the back straight.

SDPC

The course on which the SDPC raced (page 361a) was not that on which
twentieth-century Royal Easter Show patrons witnessed trotting events. The
Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales Annual of 1907 explained: ‘The
SDPC track in 1885 ran round behind the present grand stand, through what is

\textsuperscript{19} Town and Country Journal 27/10/1894 p. 37
(Illustration A.13) Location map of the Victoria Park (map 375 K10), Kensington (376 H14) and SDPC (376 I4) racecourses
now the machinery section, and on behind the present Federal stand.\(^{21}\) The original 2.5-furlong track was expanded to 4 furlongs in 1886, but covered the same ground.\(^{22}\) This is the area bounded by present-day Suttor Avenue and Park Road.

**Victoria Park**

The large Victoria Park racecourse (page 361a) lay within the rectangle defined by O'Dea Ave, South Dowling St (back straight), Epsom Road and Joynton Ave (home straight). The naval stores that had occupied the site since the 1960s were demolished in 2000. Spared from the wreckers’ ball was the impressive three-storey totalisator designed by Roberston and Marks, which the developer of the ‘Victoria Park’ apartments have used as a site office. In 1956 sections of the running rail and the horse stalls were recycled to become part of the emerging Fairfield trotting complex.\(^{23}\)

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20 Sydney Mail 23/3/1895
22 Brown *op. cit.* p. 36
23 Brown *op. cit.* p. 236; a photograph of the totalisator is at page 214a