

RACING IN THE WARWICK DISTRICT

THE EARLY YEARS 1850 - 1873

In the early days of racing in Queensland, Warwick occupied a particularly high place in the racing world, meetings held in the district attracting horses from all over southern Queensland and the central districts. The *Moreton Bay Courier* of 4 May 1850 published a full report of the races held on over three days, the 23rd, 24th and 25th April 1850. Despite the lack of transport facilities as we know them today, horses would travel many hundreds of miles to race at Warwick, where the carnivals were the testing grounds of the State's best horses.

Prior to the convening of the public meeting called for 20 January 1873, at which the present Warwick Turf Club was formed, race meetings were held in Warwick at different intervals on the old course, when the straight was at the opposite side to where it is now. *The Courier (Brisbane)* has advertisements and reports from races in the Warwick district, especially Warwick Christmas races, from 1851 to 1862. Further, *Warwick Argus* notes the appointment on September 1862 of trustees of a Warwick Jockey Club and in 1866 report the formation of the Warwick Jockey Club in March 1866. From 1865 to 1872 Warwick and Brisbane newspapers published results of races held in the Warwick District.

FORMATION OF WARWICK TURF CLUB. January 1873

The Warwick Turf Club evidently was formed on January 20, 1873, for the files of "*The Queenslander*" on January 25 record that a well-attended public meeting was held in the Cosmopolitan Hotel on that date for the purpose of forming a club to manage the racecourse and the future race meetings at Warwick. Most of the influential residents of the town and district were present, and considerable interest was manifested in the proceedings. Mr. Wildash was elected to the chair. Resolutions were proposed and carried that a club be formed and called the Warwick Turf Club, and that member's subscription be two guineas. His Excellency the Marquis of Normanby was requested to be patron and Mr. Wildash was the first President. With some few alterations the rules of the Queensland Turf Club were adopted.

The early history of the club is full of incident. In 1889, following a report of an overdraft, the Club was wound up and a meeting resolved to form and register a new club "The Southern Downs Turf Club" under QTC rules. Nevertheless, as the *Brisbane Courier* of October 1894 reports upon the Inaugural Meeting of the Warwick Turf Club, it seems the Club was in some way reconstituted.

FIRST ANNUAL RACE MEETING OF WARWICK TURF CLUB. July 1873

The new-formed club held its first annual race meeting in July, 1873. Honour-of winning the first race. It extended over two days, and the prizemoney amounted to £300, an equivalent of approximately \$45,000 in 2017, for nine races; four of which were run on the first day, and five on the second day. The principal events were the Warwick Handicap of £75, one and a half miles, on the first day, and the Governor's Cup, £55, w.f.a., one and a half miles, and the Turf Club Handicap, £65, two miles, on the second day. The grey gelding, Zanco, was the hero of the meeting. Racing in the ownership of the president (Mr. Wildash), and ridden by Fitzgerald, he won the treble.

The honour of winning the first race conducted by the Warwick Turf Club, The Maiden Plate of 35 sovereigns¹ went to Mr. T. G. Robinson's Louise, a 6yrs bay mare carrying 9st 1lb and ridden by a Mr. Sinclair.

¹ A gold coin of the United Kingdom, with a nominal value of one pound sterling and here 35 sovereigns is currently worth approximately A\$375

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OTHER RACE CLUBS

Press archives reports many other race clubs holding race meeting in the Warwick district. Some of these clubs were the Warwick Hibernian Club; Licensed Vitualler's Race Club; Warwick Picnic Race Club; Diggers' Race Club Warwick ; Kildare Race Club²; Allora Jockey Club, and the Warwick Cabmen's Race Club. In addition, local properties conducted race meetings; the Border Calvary and South Canning Downs Sports Club conducted races at the property of Mr. C. H. E. Chauvel from 1888 to 1892, and the South Toolburra is reported conducted races meeting in the vicinity of Darkey Flat from 1890 to 1900;

THE ALLMAN PARK RACE COURSE

To commemorate the significant association to turf racing and civic service in Warwick by members of the Allman family, notably Mr. Jeremiah Allman (1842 - 1910) and Mr John 'Jack' Allman (1900 - 1946), the Mill Hill Racecourse renaming to Allman Park was approved and gazetted by the Department of Public Lands in January 1940.

MILESTONES TO CELEBRATE NEXT FIVE YEARS

- ANNUALLY - Annual Christmas Racing a tradition since 1855 – The *Moreton Bay Courier* of in December 1852 advertised and later report the results of the Warwick Christmas Races held on the 26th and 27th December 1852
- 2023 - Warwick Turf Club 150 years

² A club was run by Mr. J. Allman at his paddock along Stanthorpe road about six miles from Warwick