

Recreation in Liverpool: Horse racing

Racing and horse breeding had long been a part of the gentry's social and financial business in Liverpool. D'Arcy Wentworth's horse *Hector*, once owned by the Duke of Wellington, was kept at Liverpool and when he died he was famous enough to rate an obituary in the Sydney Gazette. (Keating, 1996, p.116)

James Badgery, of Badgerys Creek was also an enthusiastic horse breeder. His horse *Jockey Boy* won the fifty guinea Magistrates Plate in 1811 in competition with horses of the 73rd regiment. In May 1819 another cup was competed for, at the Hyde Park course. The event brought together the best horses of the time and was run in heats. James Badgery's 'very good horse' *Rob Roy* won the cup, which is still in the possession of the Badgery family. (Donald, 1996, p.4-5)

In 1832 the Sydney Turf Club opened a new course near Liverpool. This was probably the old *Collingwood* Racecourse and races were still being held there in 1900. By at least the 1890s the Liverpool Turf Club had been formed and was holding races at the Woodlands course near O'Brien Parade off Orange Grove Road. By 1892, this venture was known as the *Liverpool Horse and Galloway Racing Club*. (Keating, 1996, p.116)

William Alexander Long, the son of a wealthy ex-convict wine merchant had a passion for racing. In the early 1880s he bought J.H. Stroud's *Warwick Park* grant north of Liverpool and by 1884 he had also developed his property across the river, building stables and tracks. He called the estate *Chipping Norton*. Long was the squire of *Chipping Norton* until 1901 when the banks foreclosed on him. His most successful horse *Grand Flanneur* won the Melbourne Cup in 1880.

He sold the *Warwick Park* estate in 1882 to William Forrester who became one of the most successful trainers of his time and in 1889 he and E.A. Oatley were the principals in the formation of the *Warwick Farm Racing Club*. Forrester owned two Melbourne Cup winners, *Gaulus* in 1897 and *The Grafter* in 1898. Forrester died almost destitute not long after his last winner *The Watch Dog*, won the Ellesmere Stakes at Randwick in 1901. (Keating, 1996, p.116-117)

Many of the local hotels held pony races, wood-chopping contests and footraces to attract customers. In January 1905 the Cross Roads Hotel offered two pounds for first place in an all-comers handicap over 150 yards and others, like the Warwick Farm Racecourse Hotel, promoted Liverpool as a famed cyclists' resort.