

# The history of two-up schools in Melbourne's West

By Jason Foster

**"Head 'em up!" "Tail 'em up!"  
Come in spinner with the  
'kip' in hand.**

This ANZAC Day, should you watch or play two-up, you are probably aware the tradition most famously dates back to the diggers at Gallipoli and the trenches of World War I.

Our diggers were the highest paid soldiers in the war, receiving six shillings a day.

They were often known as 'six bob a day tourists.'

Battles were often followed by long periods of boredom so, with time and money on their hands, they used a paddle to flip two coins, with three outcomes: heads/tails/odds.

Some two-up venues now use three coins.

Pennies were, and still are, used because they are weightier than modern currency and, being more decorative, the outcome is clearer.

Melbourne's West has a long history after World Wars I and II of a range of illegal two-up schools, frequently in places such as Point Gellibrand in Williamstown, Brooklyn and Sunshine.

They were often kept small to avoid police detection and because the police were less likely to use the limited resources they had on small games.

These games, according to a Herald Sun 'special correspondent's' 1947 article, speaking of the Brooklyn two-up school, stated they sometimes used dice and that they are, "pretty well run, with big bets sometimes, but seldom, if ever, an argument. Have a good win, they say, and you leave in

peace, without any standover man interfering, and with an escort provided by the school, if you feel like one."

What you may not know is that Dudley Flats, according to the same Herald Sun correspondent, often hosted two-up games of 600 to 800 men.

In 1947, twenty-one police raided a paddock near Wunderlich's factory (now the Westbrook Hotel) in Sunshine and detained 94 men.

Their names were taken, they were allowed to leave and told to be at Sunshine Court (the Town Hall) for the next time the Police Magistrate was in session there.

The Wunderlich factory was started by Alfred and Otto Wunderlich in 1885.

It became notorious for the CSR/James Hardie asbestos cases where people died

from mesothelioma (an aggressive cancer which comes from breathing asbestos fibres) in the 2010s.

In 1991, the Gaming and Betting Amendment Act declared that playing two-up on any other day than ANZAC Day in Victoria is illegal.

All games of two-up in Victoria also need approval from the Victorian RSL and can last a maximum of six hours.

There are a few places where you can legally play two-up year-round: famous examples include Kalgoorlie's outback two-up shed and every Friday at The Palace Hotel in Broken Hill.

So, if and when you decide to join the 'ring' (also known as the school) to take your spin at your local on ANZAC Day, just remember, you are the newest two-up players in a long legacy. 🍷

