# JOE (AND HIS OLD BIKE) STILL GOING

**Ever seen Mr. Joe Egan, of Thomas St., Dandenong, cycling around this city's streets? Well, the bike he rides is the same one on which he won the famous Warrnambool to Melbourne cycling classic 35 years ago and was built at Bayles by the late Harry Harker who played forward for three years in Melbourne league.**

Joe prizes that bike, and it is almost as well preserved as he is (and he is justly proud, too, of the medallion he received to commemorate his win).

**That was back in 1930 when the famous Kooweerup Cycling Club was in its heyday — it was the day of Percy Asborn, a famous cyclist from the Swamp, and one of Joe's clubmates, who won a place in the Australian team to ride in the Tour de France.**

Joe Egan, a modest, quiet chap, doesn't usually talk about his cycling success, but he was asked to give a talk on his early reminiscences at the September meeting of the Dandenong Historical Society, and it all came out then.

*Joe, still very active, is a keen member of the historical society, and in his talk, recalled the halycon days of the Kooweerup Cycling Club around the 1930s.*

"Claude Einsiedel was a wonderful secretary and built the club up," Mr Egan said.

"Naturally the Warrnambool road race was a big draw at Kooweerup, and 10 riders from the club started in the 1930 Warrnambool.

"A famous clubmate was Percy Osborn — a remarkable fellow and a fine personality as well as a brilliant cyclist, who was later one of four riders chosen from the whole of Australia and NZ to represent Australia in the famous 3000-mile world classic, the Tour de France. Hubert Opperman was another member of the team."

## Only six

Percy was a next-door neighbor of Joe's — one of a family of nine who lived with their parents on the next property.

***But to get back to the 1930 Warrnambool won by the "unknown" — the boy from Kooweerup:***

Joe mounted his bike on the Tuesday evening before the race and rode to Prahran the first night, staying the night at a hotel there. On the Wednesday morning Percy Osborn called at his home at Kooweerup, only to find that Joe had left — so he set off after him.

They rode from Prahran to Warrnambool on the Wednesday — and found 228 riders there ready to start in the 165-mile race — and it turned out to be a warm, windy day.

Alex Bellproud, of Geelong, was one of the fancies, but "Groggy" Colvin, noted Kooweerup judge, said that no Geelong rider would win — they were too concerned with being well up and leading into Geelong. And this proved true in Bellproud's case.

Alan Bailey, the South Australian champion, the favorite, made the pace and it took Joe all his time to keep up to him over the last 50 miles. They caught the leading bunch on the Deer Park diversion.

**When Joe passed his two brothers as they stood on the side of the road there were only six of the 228 riders left with a chance 10 miles from home, and Joe was the last of the six!**

The finish was a battle of tactics, and Alan Bailey made the final break for the finishing line with the boy from Kooweerup hot on his wheel.

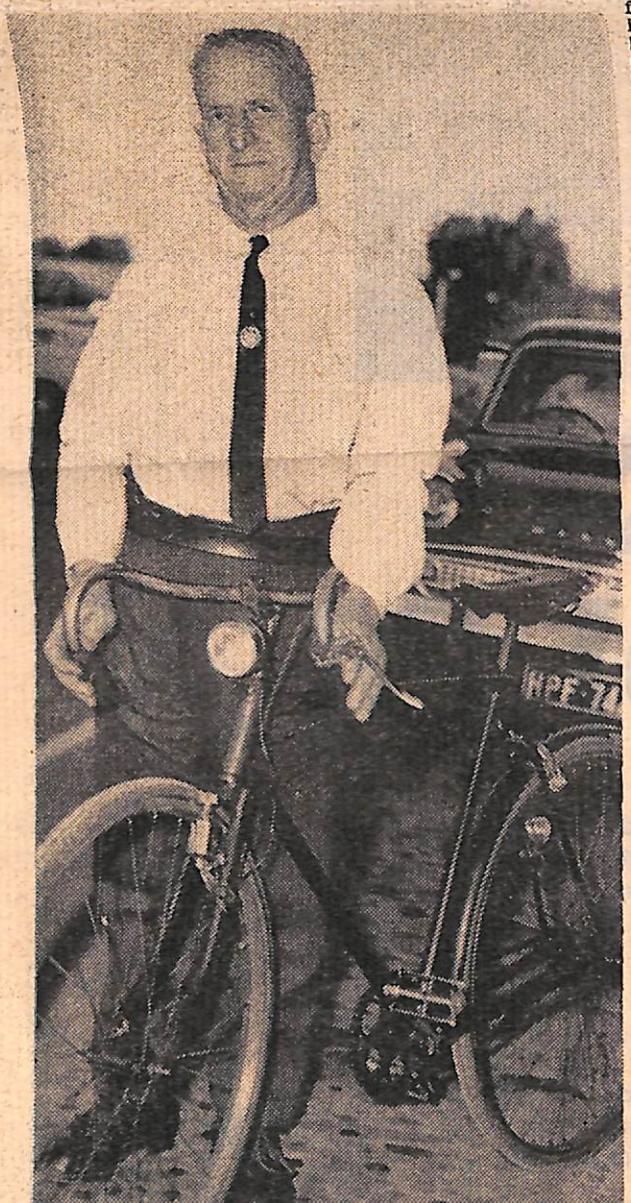
And Joe Egan had enough stamina left after his gruelling ride to beat Alan Bailey, the hot favorite, on the line by 1½ lengths.

As he crossed the line he still had a spanner clutched in one hand — everything else had been discarded to lighten his load, but Joe clung to the spanner in case he struck trouble and needed it.

**"But for Bailey, I would perhaps never have won a Warrnambool — he was a great rider and keeping up with him gave me my chance," Joe Egan admitted.**

It was his third ride in the big race and his win was a great triumph, not only for Joe, but also for the Kooweerup Club, which produced so many champions in those days.

And sitting in the audience when the story was recalled was Des O'Sullivan, a past president of the Dandenong Cycling Club, who himself rode in six "Warrnambools"; and also a grand-daughter of Percy Osborn's father, Mr Osborn snr.



PAKENHAM

# Egan family celebrates 100 years in Gippsland



*A gathering of Egan relatives at the Euroa cemetery on 13 June by the grave of James Egan.*

**Nineteen ninety three is the 100th anniversary year of the Egan family coming to the Kooweerup Swamp.**

Denis and Catherine Egan came to Bayles with two small children in 1893, and later seven more children were born at Bayles.

To mark the occasion, a reunion of cousins was organised by Michael Egan (late of Cora Lynn and now of Albury).

Relations of the Egan clan travelled from many parts of Victoria, including Gippsland, to meet with cousins at Euroa on Sunday 13 June.

After a very pleasant lunch, "blessing of the stones" was held at the Euroa Cemetery where Father Kevin Flanagan, Parish Priest of North Albury, blessed the recently restored graves of James Egan and his wife Catherine.

James Egan (son of Patrick Egan and Joanna Purcell) was born in Casteltown (County Tipperary, Ireland) in 1811 and came to Australia in 1832.

Later James came to Victoria and met and married Catherine Crowe who hailed from County Clare, Ireland. They were married at Brighton in Melbourne in 1853.

From this marriage eight children were born, one of whom was Denis, who came to Bayles in 1893.

After the blessing of the stones, Father Flanagan, knowing that most descendents were men of the land, read the famous John O'Brien poem "We'll all be rooned, said Hanrahan".

This happy reunion of the Egan Clan ended with prayers for the deceased at the grave sites in the Euroa Cemetery.



*Michael Egan, Mary Dillon and Gerard Egan, great grandchildren of James Egan.*