

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S RACEWALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS: 1931 - 1942

I have already written about the long time that Australian women had to wait before they could compete officially in amateur athletics competition (see [Australasian Championships Women 1933-1940.pdf](#)).

In summary, the general attitude of the male-dominated society in Australia was not conducive to women's athletics and women were actively discouraged from participating in sport. Nevertheless, there was no stopping the women and by 1928 three women's clubs had affiliated with the NSWAAA as part of men's clubs - Botany, Kensington and St George. In 1929, women's inter-club competition began in Sydney.

South Australian, Queensland and Victorian women also formed their own associations around this time. But it was not always easy. Early in 1929 a delegate from Glenhuntly AAC in Victoria moved that women's events be included in the state championships. The male delegates were shocked and the motion was soundly defeated. The women went their own way, forming the Victorian Women's Amateur Athletic Association (VWAAA) in December 1929. When the women's association subsequently tried to affiliate with the men, they were refused on the grounds that they would flourish better on their own. This resulted in Victorian men and women competing in separate associations until the late 1970's when they were finally amalgamated. Nationally, the women also went their own way, forming the Australian Women's Amateur Athletic Union (AWAAA) in 1932 and taking control of their own destiny.

The 1930/31 season saw the start of inter-club for women in Victoria at 3 venues - Williamstown and Glenhuntly Cricket Grounds and the Royal Showgrounds. It was not until 1936 the the VWAAA was able to get Royal Park from the Melbourne City Council. By 1939 they had a proper cinder track and dressing room accommodation there and they competed at that venue until the merger with the men in the late 1970s.

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 1931

The first official Victorian Women's Athletics Championships were held in early 1931 at the Royal Showgrounds in Flemington and included the following events: 75 Yards Run, 100 Yards Run, 220 Yards Run, 90 Yards Hurdles, 440 Yards Walk, 880 Yards Walk, Long Jump and High Jump. Later in the year, a 300 Yards Relay Championship and a 4x100 Yards Relay Championship were held in Oakleigh.

440 YARDS WALK, ROYAL SHOWGROUNDS, SATURDAY 28 FEBRUARY

- | | | | |
|----|-------------|-------------|--------|
| 1. | Hazel Scott | Eastern Sub | 1.52.4 |
|----|-------------|-------------|--------|

880 YARDS WALK, ROYAL SHOWGROUNDS, SATURDAY 14 MARCH

- | | | | |
|----|-------------|--------------|--------|
| 1. | Hazel Scott | Eastern Sub. | 4.13.8 |
| 2. | Mabel Moad | Malvern | 1 yard |
| 3. | D Sinclair | Malvern | |

Sadly, results for all the events display only the first few places, and normally only record the performance for the winner. This practice continued for many years, meaning that these early results are incomplete. We do know that fields were substantial in most cases, as evidenced by this photo, taken from May 1930.



A women's walking race held at the Ascot Vale Racecourse on 30th May 1930 - 1st L Graut 2nd D Sinclair 3rd Hazel Scott

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 1932

The second Victorian Women's Athletics Championships were held a year later at the Royal Showgrounds, with the program spread over 2 Saturdays. The event mix had been extended to now include Shot Put, Discus Throw and Javelin Throw, and the 400 Yards Walk had been replaced by a $\frac{3}{4}$ Mile Walk.

With five women's events being included in the 1932 Olympics (100m Run, 4x100m Relay, High Jump, Discus Throw and Javelin Throw), the start of women's athletics in Victoria was perfectly timed. What was not perfectly timed was the Great Depression which dragged on throughout the early 1930's.

As an aside, while possible Olympic selection beckoned for the women sprinters, jumpers and throwers, the racewalkers had no such opportunity. The women's walk would not be added to the Olympic program until 1992.

Defending walk title holder Hazel Scott did not contest the walks, leaving the way open for a new champion in [Mabel Moad](#). Mabel, a tennis player who had joined Malvern Harriers more for fitness, had entered her first walking walk as a joke. However, she found she had ability at this event and started to train seriously for it.

Her winning times were granted Victorian Record status. She would dominate the Victorian walking scene until she retired in 1937. She would also win the inaugural Australian 880 Yards Walk Championship in 1933, setting an Australian record of 4:00.3. She was generally regarded as a flawless stylist.

$\frac{3}{4}$ MILE WALK, ROYAL SHOWGROUNDS, SATURDAY 27 FEBRUARY

1.	Mabel Moad	Malvern	6.39.1
2.	Emily Neville	VRI	5 yds
3.	B Hooper	VRI	10 yds
4.	Jill Milner	Eastern Suburbs	
5.	Doris Smith	Glenhuntly	
6.	Anne Slade	Eastern Suburbs	
7.	Pearl Currie	Glenhuntly	

880 YARDS WALK, ROYAL SHOWGROUNDS, SATURDAY 5 MARCH

1.	Mabel Moad	Malvern	4.11.1
2.	Emily Neville	VRI	20 yds
3.	B Hooper	VRI	5 yds
E4.	Anne Slade	Eastern Suburbs	
E4.	Gwen Milner	Eastern Suburbs	



Mabel Moad in action on the grass track at the Royal Showgrounds – a flawless stylist

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 1933

The 1933 Victorian Women's Championships contained the same mix of events as in 1932, but the venue changed, with the first Saturday's events at the Royal Showgrounds in Flemington and the second Saturday's events at the Victory Ground in Maribyrnong.

The championships were held in a state of excitement, with the inaugural Australian Women's championships to be contested the following week at the Amateur Sports Ground in Melbourne on 23rd and 25th March.

Mabel Moad won the two walks again, in new Victorian Records. A week after her 880 Yards Walk win, she would win the inaugural Australian Women's 800 Yards walk in an even faster time of 4:00.3.

¾ MILE WALK, ROYAL SHOWGROUNDS, SATURDAY 11 MARCH

1.	Mabel Moad	Malvern	6.33.6
2.	Elsie Edwards	Footscray	6.41.0
3.	Emily Neville	VRI	6.57.0
4.	Gwen Milner	Eastern Suburbs	
5.	B Hooper	VRI	
6.	Anne Slade	Eastern Suburbs	Disq
7.	I Vinnicombe	Melbourne	Disq

880 YARDS WALK, MARIBYRNONG, SATURDAY 18 MARCH

1.	Mabel Moad	Malvern	4.04.0
2.	Elsie Edwards	Footscray	4.15.0
3.	Emily Neville	VRI	4.21.0
4.	Gwen Milner	Eastern Suburbs	
5.	B Hooper	VRI	

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 1934

The 1934 Victorian Women's Championships were held over successive Saturdays at the Victory Ground, Maribyrnong. The event mix was the same as for the past few years – variety was definitely not the spice of life for the women!

Mabel Moad won the walk double for the third year in a row, while Elsie Edwards had to be content with dual silvers once again. Mabel's ¾ Mile time of 6:17.5 was a big improvement on previous years and her 880 Yards time of 4:04.1 was not too far outside her best.

¾ MILE WALK, MARIBYRNONG, SATURDAY 3 MARCH

1.	Mabel Moad	Malvern	6.17.5
2.	Elsie Edwards	Footscray	40 yds
3.	Hazel Day	Eastern Sub.	20 yds
4.	Dorothy McLennan	Collingwood	

880 YARDS WALK, MARIBYRNONG, SATURDAY 1 MARCH

1.	Mabel Moad	Malvern	4.04.1
2.	Elsie Edwards	Footscray	6 yds
3.	Hazel Day	Eastern Sub.	20 yds
4.	Maisie James	Melbourne	

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 1935

The 1935 Victorian Women's Championships were once again held over successive Saturdays at the Victory Ground, Maribyrnong, with the same event mix as usual.

In what was perhaps a surprise, Mabel Moad had to lower her colours to Elsie Edwards, who finally took the walk golds after silvers on the previous 2 occasions. But perhaps it was not a surprise, as Mabel was heavily involved in athletics administration by this stage. She was one of the women who had formed the VWAAA and started women's athletics in Victoria. She doubled as a finish judge, recorder, field judge and track and field referee, finding time to compete when she could. She was also the Vice-President of the VWAAA from 1932 to 1948 and became President in 1952, a position she would hold until 1978.

$\frac{3}{4}$ MILE WALK, MARIBYRNONG, SATURDAY 23 MARCH

1.	Elsie Edwards	Footscray	6.20.0
2.	Mabel Moad	Malvern	20 yds
3.	Dorothy McLennan	Collingwood	50 yds
4.	Betty Wilson	Eastern Suburbs	
5.	Heather Day	Eastern Suburbs	

880 YARDS WALK, MARIBYRNONG, SATURDAY 30 MARCH

1.	Elsie Edwards	Footscray	4.01.6
2.	Mabel Moad	Malvern	15 yds
3.	Betty Wilson	Eastern Suburbs	

These second Australian Women's Championships were held 4 weeks later at Lang Park in Brisbane, and Mabel and Elsie both made the trip north. On that occasion, both women were beaten by young NSW start [Lorna Carrington](#) who set a new Australian record of 3:49.0. Mabel was second with 3:55.4, a new Victorian record, and Elsie was third.

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 1936

The 1935 Victorian Women's Championships were held over successive Saturdays at the Victory Ground, Maribyrnong, with the same event mix as usual.

Elsie Edwards had now disappeared from the Victorian walk championship results, presumably retired. Mabel was certainly not ready to put her shoes away in the cupboard yet, winning both walks for the fourth time.

The Victorian Championships had been held 2 weeks after the 1936 Australian Championships in Sydney, which saw Lorna Carrington win the 880 Yards Walk with a time of 3:59.2, ahead of Mabel who finished second once again.

$\frac{3}{4}$ MILE WALK, MARIBYRNONG, SATURDAY 8 FEBRUARY

1.	Mabel Moad	Malvern	6.20.8
2.	Jill Bond	Eastern Suburbs	6.29.0
3.	Iris Dowsey	Collingwood	6.46.0
4.	Betty Duncan	VRI	6.54.0
5.	G Bradford	Malvern	7.00.0

880 YARDS WALK, MARIBYRNONG, SATURDAY 15 FEBRUARY

1.	Mabel Moad	Malvern	4.01.6
2.	Jill Bond	Eastern Suburbs	15 yds
3.	Maisie James	Melbourne	30 yds
4.	Iris Dowsey	Collingwood	
5.	Betty Duncan	VRI	
6.	G Bradford	Malvern	

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 1937

The 1937 Victorian Women's Championships changed venue in 1937, going to Royal Park. It was in 1936 that the VWAAA had been able to obtain support from the Melbourne City Council to develop a grass track in that area. The new venue been used for the 1936-1937 interclub season and was now o be used for its first major championship.

By 1939 the council had built a proper cinder track and dressing rooms at Royal Park. VWAAA then consolidated to that venue until the merger with the Victorian men's association in the late 1970s.

The 1937 program saw the addition of the 440 Yards and 880 Yards Runs, and the removal of the $\frac{3}{4}$ Mile Walk. The full fixture now read as follows: 75 Yards Run, 100 Yards Run, 220 Yards Run, 440 Yards Run, 880 Yards Run, 90 Yards Hurdles, 880 Yards Walk, High Jump, Shut Put, Discus Throw and Javelin Throw. Amazingly, the 880 Yards Walk would continue until 1968, when it was replaced by the 800m Walk.

The 880 Yards walk was an exciting event with only inches separating the first two – Maisie James 3:58.4, just ahead of Mabel Moad.

880 YARDS WALK, ROYAL PARK, SATURDAY 27 FEBRUARY

1.	Maisie James	Melbourne	3.58.4
2.	Mabel Moad	Malvern	inches
3.	Rose Roberts	Collingwood	20 yds
4.	Betty Duncan	VR	
5.	Jill Bond	Eastern Suburbs	
6.	Sheila Neville	VR	
7.	Nancy Williams	Eastern Suburbs	
8.	V Simpkins	Collingwood	
9.	E Lee	Glenhuntly	
10.	A Smart	Eastern Suburbs	
11.	Iris Dowsey	Collingwood	

The new facilities at Royal Park were showcased for the 1937-1938 Australian Women's Championships, held in December 1937. Maisie James also won this race (3:55.2), with Mabel Moad second.

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 1938

Maisie James won the next two Victorian 880 Yards walk, stamping her authority over the other Victorian women. Her time of 3:48.6 in 1938 broke Mabel Moad's Victorian record time of 3:55.4.

880 YARDS WALK, ROYAL PARK, SATURDAY 19 FEBRUARY

Maisie James	Melbourne	3.48.6
Jill Bond	Eastern Sub	
Elsie Capel	Melbourne	

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 1939

880 YARDS WALK, ROYAL PARK, SATURDAY 11 FEBRUARY

1.	Maisie James	Melbourne	3.51.1
2.	Elsie Capel	Melbourne	
3.	Mabel Moad	Malvern	
4.	Jill Bond	Eastern Sub	
5.	Betty Duncan	VR	
6.	N Canvert	Williamstown	

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 1940

The 1940 Victorian Championships saw the last appearance of Mabel Moad, who finished fourth behind winner Iris Dowsey.

880 YARDS WALK, ROYAL PARK, SATURDAY 3 FEBRUARY

1.	Iris Dowsey	Collingwood	3.50.1
2.	Elsie Capel	Melbourne	
3.	Betty Jarrad	VR	
4.	Mabel Moad	Malvern	
5.	G Bradford	Malvern	

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 1941

Iris Dowsey was a repeat winner in 1941 and again in 1942.

880 YARDS WALK, ROYAL PARK, SATURDAY 8 MARCH

1.	Iris Dowsey	Collingwood	4.00.0
2.	Betty Jarrad	VR	
3.	Gwen Vautier	Eastern Sub	

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 1942

880 YARDS WALK, ROYAL PARK, SATURDAY 7 MARCH

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|----|--------------|-------------|--------|
| 1. | Iris Dowsey | Collingwood | 4.07.8 |
| 2. | Betty Jarrad | VRI | |

Interestingly, the Victorian Women's Championships continued throughout the war, with their usual schedule of events, except for the 880 Yards Walk which had been removed. It would not reappear until the 1947 edition.