Biography

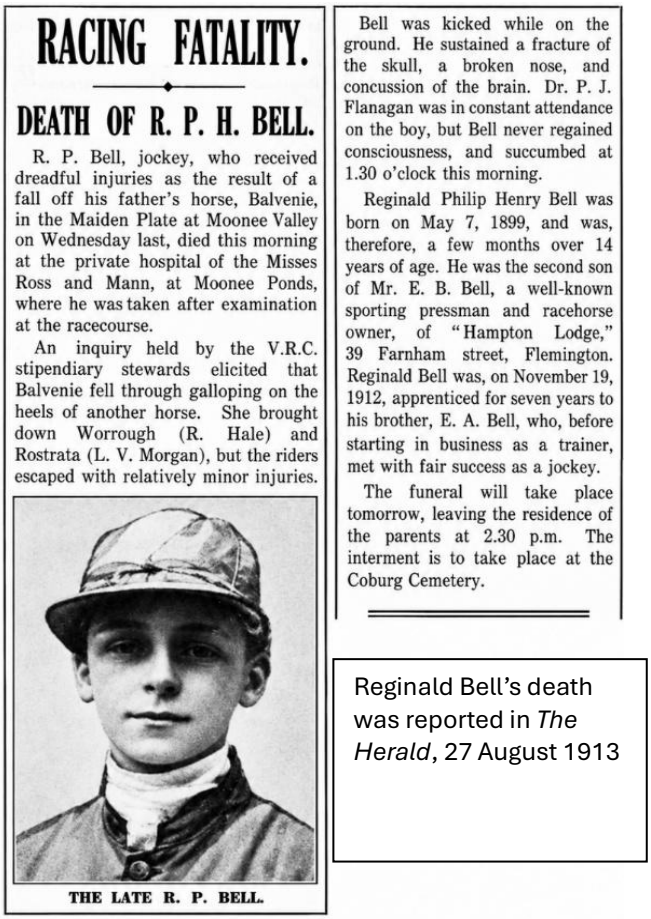
Reginald Philip Bell (1899 – 1913)

Reginald Bell, better known as “Little Bell,” was a talented young Victorian jockey whose life was tragically cut short at 14. Born into a well-known Melbourne racing family, he had already gained considerable riding experience before a fatal accident at Moonee Valley in August 1913.

Reginald was born in May 1899 and was the youngest child of Edward and Rachel Bell. Horse racing played a major role in the Bell family. They were involved in various aspects of the industry, including journalism, horse training, bookmaking, and jockeying.

Reginald showed a natural ability with horses, beginning to ride confidently when he was only two years old. By the time of his death, he had competed in more than 100 races, an impressive record for someone so young.

Reginald’s racing achievements included wins at the Geelong St Patrick’s Day meeting in 1911. His final victory came in June 1913 at Moonee Valley, riding Gold Braid, a horse owned by his father.



RACING FATALITY.

DEATH OF R. P. H. BELL.

R. P. Bell, jockey, who received dreadful injuries as the result of a fall off his father’s horse, Balvenie, in the Maiden Plate at Moonee Valley on Wednesday last, died this morning at the private hospital of the Misses Ross and Mann, at Moonee Ponds, where he was taken after examination at the racecourse.

An inquiry held by the V.R.C. stipendiary stewards elicited that Balvenie fell through galloping on the heels of another horse. She brought down Worrough (R. Hale) and Rostrata (L. V. Morgan), but the riders escaped with relatively minor injuries.

THE LATE R. P. BELL.

Bell was kicked while on the ground. He sustained a fracture of the skull, a broken nose, and concussion of the brain. Dr. P. J. Flanagan was in constant attendance on the boy, but Bell never regained consciousness, and succumbed at 1.30 o’clock this morning.

Reginald Philip Henry Bell was born on May 7, 1899, and was, therefore, a few months over 14 years of age. He was the second son of Mr. E. B. Bell, a well-known sporting pressman and racehorse owner, of “Hampton Lodge,” 39 Farnham street, Flemington. Reginald Bell was, on November 19, 1912, apprenticed for seven years to his brother, E. A. Bell, who, before starting in business as a trainer, met with fair success as a jockey.

The funeral will take place tomorrow, leaving the residence of the parents at 2.30 p.m. The interment is to take place at the Coburg Cemetery.

Reginald Bell’s death was reported in *The Herald*, 27 August 1913

Reginald received his training under the guidance of his older brother, Edward Alan Bell, who went on to establish himself as a respected jockey and trainer. Edward’s contribution to racing was later recognised when he was inducted into the Victorian Racing Club Hall of Fame in 2017.

On 20 August 1913, Reginald was competing in the Maiden Plate at Moonee Valley aboard a filly named Balvenie. During the home straight, the filly stumbled after stepping on another horse’s hoof, causing Reginald to be thrown from the saddle. The young jockey sustained catastrophic injuries, including a fractured skull, a broken nose

and concussion. A stewards' inquiry investigated the accident, with congestion among the horses and Balvenie's inexperience considered possible contributing factors.

At just 14, 'Little Bell' had already competed in more races than many jockeys would in a lifetime. His promising career ended at Moonee Valley, but his story lives on at Coburg Cemetery, where he is buried in Roman Catholic A, Grave 487.