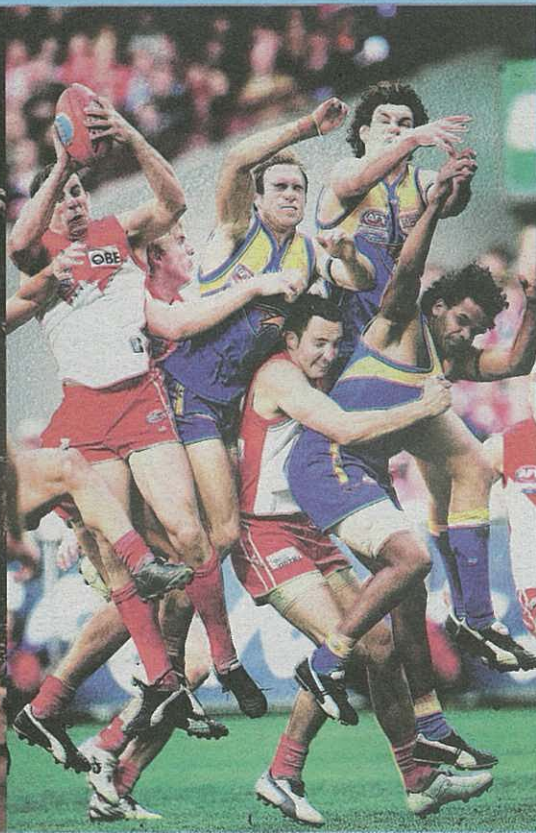




MUD WAR: David Callow's superb shoot at Mt Evelyn, 2006.



MARKING HISTORY: Leo Barry's Grand Final saver.

Living images of a glorious past

A magnificent pictorial history of the game reveals much about what has been lost.

A SMALL photograph of a Victorian team that appears on Page 23 of *Our Great Game* says much about the pictorial history of Australian football.

The caption says: "A Victorian State side (year unknown) - missing a couple of heads. An all too common fate for photos of years gone by."

I can tell the publishers of this superb book that it is in fact the Victorian team that journeyed to Tasmania in mid-1960.

What is interesting is the fact that if you look at it through the magnifying glass you will find that the jacketed figure in the middle of the seated row is the team's manager, Tom Sherrin. He occupies the seat where the coach would normally sit, next to captain Bruce Comben. Amazingly the team had no coach!

Sixteen years ago when I interviewed Comben he chuckled at the ramshackle nature of the day when this Victorian B side went into the annals as the second Victorian team to lose to Tasmania: "They only told me on the plane on the way there that I was going to be coach."

The side struggled when Billy Goggin and Hugh Mitchell were injured and when Comben crashed into a goalpost he had to stay on because otherwise he would leave the team short.

To top off the do-it-yourself nature of the trip, Comben had to book himself a taxi to go to hospital for treatment.

So even the smallest picture can have a great back-story.

In this book are many pictures that have been long forgotten, alongside more familiar images that achieve greater resonance by the way they have been cleaned up digitally and reproduced on quality stock.

Accordingly the famous mark of Dick Lee soaring over Carlton opponents

and Magpie teammates is presented across a double page spread, as is the famous 1990 Grand Final depiction of Collingwood coach Leigh Matthews barking at Terry Daniher that a glassy-eyed Gavin Brown would be back in action, Daniher having KO'd him half an hour earlier.

In his introduction, publisher Geoff Slattery laments the way in which scant regard was given to archiving and maintaining football pictures.

Many prints were "souvenired", but thankfully some have been rediscovered in private collections.

Perhaps more will come to light as a result of the publicity surrounding this book's launch.

Getting back to the story about that mutilated picture of the Victorian B side, one of the sad things is that many team shots don't have names captioned on them, but *Our Great Game* has published them anyway.

Even though we will never know the names of the Port Broughton ladies football team of 1922 or the Australian Training Unit team of 1916, their group shots have a majesty and interest that shines through.

One remarkable find in this book is the North Ballarat side lining up before the 1973 grand final. Standing on the left is a seven-year-old mascot, Tony Lockett.

Royalty even bobs up with Queen Elizabeth meeting players of St Mary's Football Club in Darwin in 1977 and Prince Charles being introduced by Mal Brown to fellow All Stars players Geoff Blethyn and Peter Crimmins.

Every image evokes its own memory or re-creation of a time long gone.

Remember mud in footy



- turn to Page 83 for a 1960 picture of a St Kilda-Collingwood melee during which Murray Weideman sits on the ground spectating while other blackened warriors grapple.

One of my favourites is a David Callow shot of a muddied battle at Mt Evelyn in 2006.

This is a marvelous book and personally I love it. Back in 1996 I was involved in researching the Herald Sun archive for a publication which was initially intended to be along these lines but ended up being a tabloid potboiler on standard newsprint.

At the time I thought it would be wonderful if someone could do a book like this, and now they have.

It was a huge undertaking in a comparatively short time, so the odd blue could get through. Thus the vintage pic of Albert Collier on page 165 is identified as Gordon Coventry. It's inevitable in any big project (we've even had the odd mistake in the Encyclopedia of League Footballers).

Never mind, hopefully someone will track down a nice shot of old "Nuts" for volume two.

I'm already clearing a space on the bookshelf.

■ *Our Great Game - The Photographic History of Australian Football*. RRP \$99.95. Available from July 1.



CLASSIC: North's John Dugdale soars above Saints Verdun Howell and Ray McHugh, Junction Oval 1961.