

“Briars” a Family Club

The Briars Sporting Club is generally accepted as a family club and even a cursory look at our history verifies this. Many members have followed family in to the ranks of the club and below we outline the stories of five Briars families.

Today many members will be very aware of the **Price brothers**. **John Price**, joining the club in the mid 1970's, has been the guiding force in Hockey over the last 30 odd years and without his guidance, hard work and tenacity, it would not be the sporting force and success it is. **Gerard Price** has for the last 30 years been our Mr Cricket, his enthusiasm, administration skills and playing ability with both the bat and ball, has produced a golden era of Cricket in our club. Not to forget youngest brother **Paul Price**, who has not only played consistently high standard of Cricket and Hockey for Briars but is the current President of The Briars Foundation. Certainly a highlight of his contribution is the completion of The Ted Stockdale Pavilion at Rothwell Park.

But the Price brothers represent the latest in a long list of families whose contribution has been considerable.

The **Whiddon family** made a critical contribution to the clubs' foundation over the first 50 years. **Geoff Whiddon** was a founding member and later became a gifted sportsman and coach for Briars, he was also a long serving board member from the club's incorporation, President from 1943-1948 and again 1968-69 and club Patron and life member. His father The **Hon H W Whiddon MLC**, was one of the parents who mentored those young boys from the club's inception until his death in 1955. He served as club president 1919-20, 1921-24, 1926-1928 & 1932-33. He served as Patron once the office was initiated, trustee when the original club premises were leased in 1930 and made a life member in 1948. The third grade, 1st division competition was named in his honour. His hard work and dedication cannot be underestimated and the result this wonderful club we now enjoy today.

The **Vanderfield family's** contribution has also been enormous through generations of its members. **Mr R. T. Vanderfield** moved to Culdees Rd Enfield in 1923. His interest in the club was immediate and the Briars, benefitted from his generosity and commercial advice. His sons Don and Geoff joined the club in 1938, followed by Doug in 1939 and Roger in 1946. **Doug Vanderfield**, a gifted all rounder sportsman represented the club in rugby and later squash. His membership, like so many others of the era was interrupted by WW11. Doug was a very popular figure in the Briars and reminded fellow players to “face the metal” and that regardless what you put into the club the rewards were far greater. Doug was the force behind the Ski club. He tragically died, on the squash court, during his term of club presidency. **Dr Roger Vanderfield OA MBE** was also a gifted sportsman and administrator. Roger was a tireless worker in the Briars club during his early membership years. As Bar Steward, Magazine Editor, & Snr Steward, he was meticulous and forthright. Playing first grade for both the Briars and Sydney University, later led him to become an international

referee. He was later President of the NSW Rugby Union and Australian Rugby Union and IRB Chairman. His personal legacy is the Rugby World Cup. **Richard Vanderfield** was Doug's son and played rugby for the Briars club. On his father's death he took over the management of the Briars Ski Lodge. Richard sadly passed away in 2016.

Mal Blair joined the Briars in 1920 as the 14th member, not quite a founder, but close to it. He was totally engrossed with the club and became one of its first International representatives. Mal played 60 games for Western Suburbs Rugby in the front row and was selected in the Team of the Century for Western Suburbs in the year 2000. Mal also played in the premiership team of 1929 the last time Western Suburbs won the 1st Grade Premiership. He toured with the famous 1927-1928 Waratahs to the British Isles, France and Canada aged 22. The touring team was away for nine months. Mal Blair was a Vice President of The Briars Sporting Club from 1938-1963. Son, **Ian Blair**, joined the Briars in 1962, (he was interviewed by Bob Clark and Bruce Trevenar), and has been actively working for Briars both on and off the Field. Ian has played rugby and cricket for The Briars Sporting Club – rugby until 1976 Kentwell Cup to Judd Cup and cricket to 1999 in all grades. He was captain of A Shires in 1981 when Briars won the premiership, the first time in 25 years. In 1973 Ian became a director of The Briars Sporting Club and was President from 1983-1985. From 2010-2016 Ian was President of Briars at Greenlees and also a director from 2005-2016. Ian is still a director but under the banner of Briars Sports. Ian was the inaugural President of the Briars Foundation from 1995-2000. Other positions held during his membership of The Briars Sporting Club: Honorary Assistant Treasurer 1965-1969. Honorary Executive Officer 1975-1978 and again 2001-2005. Together Mal and Ian Blair have the distinction of 98 years continuous membership.

The **D.P. Walker** family first appeared at Briars in the 1930's. Don Walker, a 6'4" second rower and his brother John, a 6'3" second rower both joined and played Kentwell Cup Rugby and Shires cricket for Briars. In 1939 Don and Gwen gave birth to Chris, followed by Peter and David, all of whom became Briars whilst the best athlete of all, Bronwyn, preferred Gordon Rugby players and was rarely seen at 30A George Street or Rothwell Rugby Park. Don Walker won the Gordon Bevan Shield in 1946 and was Rugby Chairman in 1947. He served as a Briars Director for several years and was elected as a Vice President of the club in 1948.

In 1957, the year **Chris Walker** joined the Briars, the rugby chairman's report noted a unique situation in Briars rugby. It occurred when father Don Walker and son Chris Walker "appeared in club foot ball for Briars on the same day. Anything approaching this has never occurred since in our football history."

Since joining in 1957, Chris played Kentwell Cup for 13 years from 1957 – 1969 as a scrum half and later inside centre. He was chosen for combined sub-district in both positions. He captained the 1964 Invincibles and the 1965 Kentwell Premiers and captain/coached the 1966 Kentwell minor Premiers. He was Rugby Chairman from 1961 – 1964 inclusive and a Suburban Rugby Director for several years in the 60's. In 1961 Chris was awarded the Gordon Bevan Shield for rugby and the JH Stone Trophy for administration.

In 1994, Chris started the Briars Foundation and the Walker family are one of the foundation's major donors. Chris Walker is a joint Patron of Briars sports with Keith Free.

Peter Walker joined in 1958 and played mainly Burke Cup at no.10 for several years. University studies and a corporate move to Melbourne finally concluded his Briars rugby.

David walker joined in 1963 under Lex Yule as coach and he at no.9 and Kerry Trollope at no.10 were selected from Briars Burke Cup to play combined Sub-district 2nd XV. David eventually left to play at Sydney University, where he was an architecture student, making the first grade side.

Bronwyn, though not making Kentwell Cup, did eventually marry Ross Prowse, son of Briars Director and Patron, Doug Prowse. Ross played 100 First Grade games with Gordon. Bronwyn died of cancer at age 39 survived by son Simon and daughter Kristyn.