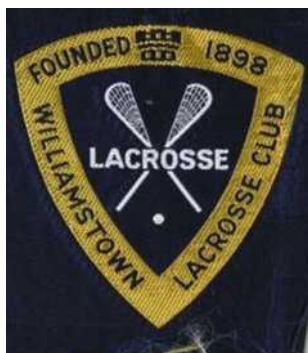


A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WILLIAMSTOWN LACROSSE CLUB

1898-2021



THE FORMATION AND EARLY DAYS

All successful clubs have people who focus on building a successful club and Williamstown had many of them, but none more successful than Captain James Fearon and Mal Taylor, both in different eras, but both deeply committed to the development of the Williamstown Lacrosse Club. While highly effective and hard working, they were not alone and there are many people that the Club owes a debt of gratitude to for the success achieved over its first 123 years.

At the time of the formation of the club in 1898 the population of Williamstown was approximately 15,000 but we note that the population dropped to 14,000 in 1916, due in the main to young men heading off to war in foreign countries. The country was also in severe recession in the 1890s and Williamstown was really a coastal village, yet not far from the capital Melbourne.

Williamstown Lacrosse Club has a long and proud history and of all the sports clubs in Williamstown, the lacrosse club is perhaps the club that represents the spirit of this once quiet seaside village, and now sought after suburb of Melbourne in the truest sense.

Saturday 27 August 1898 "Williamstown Chronicle" - Williamstown Lacrosse Club

It is now a considerable time, at the close of last cricket season, since we advocated the formation of a lacrosse club, and although so much time has elapsed since then the suggestion has gradually gained ground and popularity until it has now culminated in the formation of a club. It has been with pleasure that we have been able to record that practices would be held from week to week, and that one match had been played, with the result that now a fairly good combination exists. But meantime they were disconnected gatherings with no appointed head although Mr H. Radford has been mutually regarded as such to direct affairs. It was therefore decided to call a meeting to arrange all details in connection with the formation of a club, and which was accordingly held Tuesday evening, in the schoolroom of the Baptist Church, convened by Arthur Whitney (Son of the minister). It now being the end of the season, the proceedings were of a purely formal character, the object being to have everything in thorough working order for next season.

Mr Radford was elected to the chair, Tom Henderson, who was a solicitor, was appointed the inaugural president, Radford was elected as the inaugural captain,

Arthur Whitney was appointed vice-captain and Fred Scott appointed secretary, *pro tem*. The principal motion of the evening, "that those present unite under the name of the Williamstown Lacrosse Club" was moved by Mr J. Waycott, and unanimously adopted. The colours decided upon by the club are blue, yellow and white distributed as follows - blue guernsey, yellow band across right shoulder and under the left arm, white knickers and blue stockings. Active proceedings are being taken to arrange a match to be played in the town before the end of the season to give those who have not seen the game played before an opportunity of witnessing this interesting pastime. We sincerely wish the club success and hope to see it in full swing in connection with the Victorian Lacrosse Association next season.

While the club only played practice matches in 1898 it entered a team in "B" section of the Victorian Lacrosse Association in 1899.

On Saturday 17 September 1898 the "Williamstown Chronicle" wrote "Last Saturday those who visited the Williamstown Cricket Ground saw the first lacrosse match played in this district. A team from Essendon, under the captaincy of Mr W. Strickland, volunteered to come down to play a match with the newly formed Williamstown Lacrosse Club. Messrs. Gay and Dunn of the Essendon first twelve volunteered to play for "Town" to make the sides even. Shortly after play commenced Gay threw the first goal for Williamstown, while B. Arthurs a few minutes afterwards threw their second. Owing to the wet state of the ground many mistakes were made in picking up the ball, which caused too much "shinty." In a good match under favourable circumstances the ball is very rarely on the ground, being passed from player to player in the air. At half time "Town" led by four to nothing, but during the second half each side scored two, leaving the final score Williamstown 6 to Essendon 2. It is hardly possible to single out any of the "Town" for special mention, for each one did well. It was undoubtedly their combined play which won them the match. Of the Essendon team, McTaggart was about the best, but Watson, Morrison, Griffiths, W. Scott, and O'Connor (2) did a lot of work, and had their play been more combined the game may have worn a different aspect. Goal throwers were :-Williamstown -Gay (2), B. Arthurs (2), and Dunn (2). Essendon, McTaggart and G. O'Connor. At the end of the game a vote of thanks was passed to the Essendon players for coming down and Mr Strickland responded on their behalf, complimenting the Williamstown on their fine play and expressing a hope to meet them again in association matches next year. Members are requested to be present at practice today at the usual place, Hannan's Farm, near rifle butts. Players to meet at 2.30. Records indicate that the farm ran from Hannan Street through to the rifle range or butts, most likely the area where the Girls High School is currently located.

On Saturday 25 March 1899 the "Williamstown Chronicle" wrote "The first annual meeting of the club was held in the Mechanics' Institute, Monday evening. A large number of members were present, and Mr V. Strickland was elected to the chair. The election of office-bearers was proceeded with, and at their hands the game should boom in the town. The chairman congratulated the members on the excellence of their play during the past season, and wished the club every success. Correspondence was received and discussed from the Gardens Improvement Committee and Williamstown Cricket Club, and there is every probability that the members will close with the terms of the Cricket Club. The club decided to join the Victorian Lacrosse Association "B" section, and will play about nine or ten matches

locally. The club has a good outlook, and with good management the members will no doubt give a satisfactory account of themselves”.



The Williamstown Chronicle noted on 13 May the inaugural match for the club on 6 May, “Which celebrated the opening of the season, and was played on the Williamstown' Cricket Ground, Saturday last, in the presence of a good assemblage of spectators. Both teams were about evenly matched and a well contested game was the result. At quarter time neither team had scored, the ball travelling from one end of the ground to the other' rapidly. Several shots for goal were tried by both sides, but were unsuccessful. In the second quarter the even play continued, but the ball being passed down the field to the opponent's goal, B. Arthurs had a successful shot and scored first goal for “Town”. Soon after resuming play, at half time, B. Arthurs scored the second goal for “Town”, which was responded to by W. Williams' (Essendon) throwing a splendid goal for the visitors, thus scoring their first point. Thence, onward to the conclusion of the match both teams played well for the mastery, but Essendon failing to secure any further points, “Town” were left-the victors by two goals to the visitors 1 goal; neither team scoring in the last quarter. As a whole “Town” played well together, but the members would do well to pass the ball more frequently than trying to run with it. Williamstown is drawn to meet South Yarra at Grace Park, Hawthorn, today when the club will be represented by A. Hick, E. Hick, C. Arthurs, B. Arthurs, F. Arthurs, W. Waycott, C. Scott, F. Scott, A. Whitney, Clark, Addy, Parkes. Members will proceed, by the 1.54 train.

The Club commenced playing at the Williamstown Cricket Ground at which time the football club had only one team. The first premiership was won in 1902 in “B” grade. Historians indicated that the Club quickly became the largest sporting club

in Williamstown, when the population of Williamstown was circa 15,000 and the population of Victoria circa 1 million.

The Club moved to the Gardens Reserve in 1910 when the bike track still circled the ground. The Gardens Reserve was renamed the Fearon Reserve circa 1936, in honour of Captain James Fearon, and retains that name today.

IMPACT OF THE GREAT WAR

With the advent of war in 1914 the world was about to change dramatically, and that change also pervaded sport and indeed lacrosse. The first noticeable impact on lacrosse following the outbreak of the Great War came in 1915 with the significant reduction in senior numbers due to players enlisting in the armed services. The total number of lacrosseurs who had volunteered by mid 1915 was upwards of 260, representing between 50 and 60% of those eligible for service. Interstate matches were cancelled along with in 1914 the cancellation of a proposed tour of New Zealand by an Australian team, which would have been the first to travel overseas. In 1916 the view with regard to being qualified to enlist became explicit and the following motion was proposed and adopted by the VALA "During the season 1916, and for the currency of the present European War, or any extension thereof, no person shall be allowed to take part in any matches arranged by the association if over the age of 21 years, unless such person has volunteered for active service with the Australian Expeditionary Forces, and has been rejected by the Defence Authorities, or unless, in the opinion of the sub-committee of the association to be appointed for the purpose, the circumstances of the person are sufficient for his failure to volunteer for active service, when such sub-committee shall give to such a person a certificate of permission to play for any period to be stated".

The president of the VALA at the time was totally opposed to lacrosse being played while the war lasted and resigned his position, such was the strength of feeling towards support for the empire versus playing lacrosse. Thus formal lacrosse matches, certainly at senior level, were not played in Victoria from 1916-1918. Williamstown was not immune from this directive or national feeling, with significant numbers enlisting in the war.

The club records from 1919 record "Despite a disagreeable afternoon a large gathering of relatives and friends of lacrosse players who had "gone to the front" and "did their bit," took place last Sunday week at the Punt' Club Hall, Strand, in connection with the unveiling of an honour roll by Mr. J. G.Latham, K.C.M.G. This ornate memento to deserving players of the local club had been presented by Mr. A. W. Hick, himself, in years ago, a prominent exponent of the pastime. The Mayor presided. Captain J. Fearon (President of the club) :and Mr. Harold Balmer (General secretary of the V.L.A.) were among those present." Mr. M. D. Nathan (Secretary) had made complete arrangements.

Of the names on the roll, three had made the "supreme sacrifice" - Privates E. Baker, D. McLean and A B. Taylor. The other 38 soldiers from the Club who returned from the conflict were Privates B. Baker, S. Barnes, L Beagley, L Benness, N Bolger; R Bishop, P. Cocks H.B. Causer, P.Davis, J.Davis, J. Drew, L. David, A. C. Forsyth, L.Hewitt, T. Hutchinson, H. Joel, A. Joel, N. Keig, R. Keig, C. Kellett, P. Knowles; C. Lonsdale, S. Mitchell, F. McLaughlin, M. D. Nathan, C. Palmer, A. Roberts, F.

Strickland, H. Stubbs, K. Thompson, C. Vallins, F. Webster, J. Westlake, J. V. Woods, C. Woods, J. Woods, F. Woods and J. Williams. The Salvation Army Band service ably filled up the intervals between speeches. The chairman opened the proceedings by inviting Mr. A. Hick to hand over to Captain Fearon, the president of the W.L.C, his presentation honour roll. The latter, on behalf of the members, expressed, the pleasure all would feel at the donor's gift. The Mayor next introduced Mr. J. G Latham. Mr. Latham replied that it gave him a good deal of pleasure to revisit Williamstown, particularly on so important occasion as the present. The last time he had done so it was to play lacrosse. They were doing honour to 41 members of the Williamstown Lacrosse Club who had proven that they had been of some service to the community and some service to the state. (Applause). During the period of a great emergency they had shown themselves "willing to serve' their country and the Commonwealth at great personal risk." Mr. Howard Balmer, Hon. Secretary to the Lacrosse Association moved a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Latham and the Mayor. It was recognised that during the war lacrosse players had assisted- to "do their bit'. Of 600 playing members of the Association as a whole 500 enlisted, and of these 95 will never return. Captain Fearon seconded, and the motion heartily carried.

Following the war lacrosse, like most sports, was slow to restart given there was high unemployment, customs and fiscal restrictions in place, which limited the import of lacrosse sticks and equipment, rationing was in place and these were very difficult times. But lacrosse was a popular sport and after a few years it did return to its former popularity with Victorians, and Williamstown was no different.

The Club was very successful in its first 40 years of competition, with 23 premierships and runners-up 27 times, but did not win an A grade or state league premiership until 1963, and from there the "Fearons" took off and dominated. Since and including 1963, up until 2019, Williamstown has won 34 A grade or state league premierships, runner-up in 15, and missed the grand final on only 8 occasions, out of a total of 57 years.

The Club established a record for lacrosse when, in 1936, it fielded 8 teams and had 139 registered players, making it the largest amateur sporting club in the southern hemisphere.

Reflections by the late Ken Speakman

"1936 was the first time that the Fearon was graded and planted as it is today. Prior to that it was like a cow paddock.

"My first (playing field) was the Pound Reserve; they used to call it. It was bordered by Champion Road, Kororoit Creek Road and Park Crescent. Right smack bang next to the cemetery."

"I started playing in 1929 aged 11 and again in 1946 after the war."

"Junior lacrosse started in 1929. Captain Fearon started the ball rolling and the numbers of juniors that turned up amazed the club officials. So much so that they had to make two teams."

"I took it [my stick] to bed with me."

“One defeat by a Coburg team, 63 to nothing, is still fresh in my memory!”

IMPACT OF WW2

With the advent of war in 1939 the Club went into recess as many of the players joined the armed forces, many of whom paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Extract from the Annual Report. (1946, March 8). *Williamstown Chronicle*

“The following is the report submitted by the secretary (Mr. Vic. Roberts): After the club being in recess since 1942, a meeting was convened by Messrs A. J. Fowler; H. Jones, Cr. A. J. Deacon, Lindsay Caithness and Vic G. Roberts for the purpose of re-forming the Williamstown Lacrosse Club. Numerically the club was not as strong as in former years owing to the large number of members in the fighting services and other duties pertaining to the war, and was only in the position to field two teams, namely, No. 1 open age and No. 2 open age. However, the high standard of play 'Which is always predominant in this club was seen, in as much as both teams' reached the final games, in both sections. We congratulate J. Ogilvie, who was captain of No. 1 team, and who ably led the side under adverse conditions. The team was as follows: J. Ogilvie (capt.), Arthur Pearson (Vice-capt.), Bill Coggins, D. McNeilage, W. Hiddle, T. Speakman, Laurie Parker, Keith Parker, Ern Roberts, J. Roberts and Keith Burgoyne. The No. 2 team, which also reached the finals under the same adverse conditions, was well led by Mal Taylor. To him we also congratulate for ably skippering this team. The team was as follows: Mal Taylor (Capt.); G. Simpson (vice-capt.), B. Hancock, Vic Roberts, Berrie Newgreen, D. Newgreen, G. Brown, R. Griffiths, R. Jenkins, L. Jenkins and K. Preston.

We were also very pleased to welcome back players such as Lionel Burgoyne (R.A.N.), C. Martin (M.N.), L. Donaldson (A.I.), Jim Shields (R.A.A.F.), who all played several games whilst on leave from their respective duties. Included in No. 2 team was a former Nedlands, Western Australia player in the name of B. Hancock, who was attached to the R.A.A.F., Laverton, and whose services were greatly appreciated. The get-together night was one of the most enjoyable nights of the year. A pleasant night was enjoyed by all. During the course of the evening Mr. A. Paxton and Mr. H. Jones spoke of the high standard of the club in the past years. Mr. A. Paxton offered his services as coach for season 1945. Interstate Trials.-We congratulate D. McNeilage, T. Speakman, J. Roberts, A. Pearson and J. Ogilvie on their selection. Trainer.-To Mr. George Dever (Snr) for the manner in which he performed his duties on the field and in the club-rooms, we extend our thanks.

President.-Mr. E. H. Hick, son of the second president of the club, and also a life-member, was unanimously elected president, but it is with deep regret that we have to announce that after a lengthy illness Mr. Hick passed away on the 16th January. To the members of his family we extend our sincere sympathy; and wish to place on record the interests displayed in the club during, its existence by him.

Delegates.-The interests of the club were attended to by V. Roberts at the VL.A. To the Williamstown City Council we are indeed grateful for the ground and conveniences put at our disposal, and for the preparations of the Fearon Reserve after being evacuated by the Army. To the local press for the help in publishing the activities of the club; to Mr. L. G. Caithness (hon. auditor) and to all our supporters who rallied the teams, once again we say "Thanks." Our thanks are also extended to the following donors: Messrs F. R. Tyler, E. H. Hick and Laurie Parker. To the Women's Lacrosse Association and the donors of lacrosse equipment we also extend our thanks.

War Service.-It is with great pride that the club looks to those members who have helped to bring victory to their country by their enlistments in the various fighting services. The number of enlistments known extends to 96, the names of which your committee has kept a record for all times. The following members were killed on active service: J. Flett (A.I.F.), F. Deacon (R.A.N.), J. Manderson (R.A.A.P.), F. Wadds (R.A.N.), H. Turner (R.A.A.F.), K. Barty (R.A.A.F.), and to their relatives we extend our heartfelt sympathy. Dr., R. Maynard, an old member of the club, was a prisoner-of-war in Japan for a number of years, and we now welcome him back again. Thus 96 members of the club enlisted for active duty, with 6 paying the ultimate sacrifice.

Bereavement.-The club suffered a very severe blow in the passing of the late Captain J. H. Fearon, who was president of the club for the record number of 43 years. Members also extend their sympathy to Mr G. Dever and family in their great loss.

Treasurer's Report. The balance-sheet, submitted by Mr. Keith W. Parker, and audited by Mr. L. G. Caithness, shows assets £382/6/9 and liabilities nil. An amount of £200/3/6 is at credit at the E.S. & A. Bank, £39/8/10 in the reserve fund at savings bank, and £12/12/8 to the credit of the social committee. Commonwealth bonds are set down at £70, and there is £60 with the Victorian Lacrosse Association for stick purchase account.

Election of Officers. The following were elected to carry on the club for the forth coming season: President, Cr. A. J. Deacon; Vice-presidents, Messrs L. G. Caithness, F. Ray, K. Rae, T. J. Brown, R. Tyler, A.J. Fowler, H. Jones, A. J. Granger; Hon. secretary, Mr. B. Newgreen; Hon. treasurer, Mr. K. Parker; Asst. hon. secretary, Mr. G. W. Brown; committee, Messrs L. Burgoyne, G. Hewitt, K. S. Speakman, H. Spencer, J. Ogilvie, V. G. Roberts and L. Parker. Vic. Roberts, the secretary, is a great scout, but on account of pressure of business was unable to carry on the good work, and Mr. B. Newgreen agreed to accept the responsibility."

Since the end of World War 2 a number of people have made significant contributions to the continuation and success of the Club, none more than Mal Taylor, who was a junior player prior to WW2 and was described as "Officer in charge of everything" up until his retirement from lacrosse in the late 1980's. Our current Best Clubman annual award is named in honour of Mal Taylor.

MAL TAYLOR AND THE RENAISSANCE

With the sudden passing of Captain Fearon in 1944 the Club had lost its greatest stalwart, a man who not only sponsored many ventures, but was also President from 1901-1944. With the war ending in 1945, the economy was struggling to get back on its feet, many who had left for war either didn't come back or were deeply affected by that experience, equipment was difficult to obtain due to exchange and import restrictions, and sport generally was struggling, and lacrosse was no stranger to that struggle.

The driving force behind the rebuilding of the Club was Mal Taylor, who along with Berry Newgreen, Lionel Burgoyne, Jack & Ken Speakman and Mr & Mrs Mick Titter, who determined that the Club had to start a rebuild with the juniors, and set about

finding the youngsters who would be the beginning of the renaissance of the club that we see today.

Malcolm “Mal” Taylor started as a 14 year old junior player in 1934 at Williamstown, just prior to WW2, and after the war umpired lacrosse from 1947-1950. In 1950 the Club was in difficulty and struggling to rebuild, and Mal was asked along with several other former players to come back to the Club where they formulated a 10 year plan, with Mal’s main focus being the recruitment and development of juniors.

Peter Hogg, who lived two doors from Mal Taylor in Perry Street, along with Leeton Titter, were given the job of recruiting school kids around 8 years of age, to start playing lacrosse. 1950-51 was the start of the junior program at Willy, which set the Club up to become one of the one of the most successful lacrosse clubs in Australia.



Mal Taylor as a player

As many former Williamstown players who started in the 1950s and 1960s would attest, Mal’s home in Perry Street was the centre of the universe for many kids and Mal was very good at recruiting. As many will recall Mal would often suggest “Why don’t you bring some of your mates down to the Fearon to play lacrosse”. Life was less complicated in those days and to spend most of the day engaged in lacrosse, throwing a ball around, lacquering or oiling the stick, or just talking about the game is something that is no longer that prevalent, with a preference now for I-Phones and Facebook.



The photo above is the 1955 Under 14 team. From L to R, Back row: Peter Hogg, Ian McLean, Bill Forder, Mal Taylor (Coach), Leeton Titter, Graham Hill, Kevin Hope, Jim Stewart. Front row: Alan Clements, John Morrish, Michael Orr, Alan Chiron, Norman Marr, Rex Williams.

Kevin Hope and Alan Chiron were introduced to lacrosse at the Gloucester Reserve in 1951 by Mal Taylor, and joined players such as John Morrish, Peter Hogg, Leeton Titter and Norman Marr as 8 & 9 year olds playing in the VALA Under 14 competition.

As Alan Chiron would attest, "We were not that good, but Mal stood by his boys and coached every one of us two nights a week". To demonstrate how much faith he had in his recruits, the team played for two years without winning a game, but Mal would be running up & down the sidelines, week after week, with his pants tucked into his socks, telling players who to pass the ball to.

We were all 9 or 10 years old in 1951 and playing Under 14 section for the first few years was always hard. We all grew into the game with a solid defensive style as under 9-10 year olds playing against 13-14 year olds was always hard due to more defence than attack in every game. In our first game against Malvern, as goalkeeper, I had 75 throws which as a goalkeeper doesn't sound too bad, but 72 of them were back to the referee after a goal had been scored against us!"

In 1954 we finished runner-up to Malvern, and in 1955 we went through the season to become the undefeated premiers and champions in the Under 14 section. From the team that won the 1955 premiership there were 10 players who represented the state in junior & senior grades and 4 who represented Australia. It was from that day in 1955 that Williamstown started to improve and for the next 10 years they won just about every junior premiership. Players from the 1955 team sometimes played up to 3 games a weekend as we were nowhere as strong as we are today, nor did we have much depth. The years between 1955 and 1960 were the years that Williamstown struggled to have enough players and you played where you could.

THE DECISION THAT DIVIDED THE CLUB!

In 1961 the VALA asked Williamstown, Malvern and Caulfield to enter two teams in A grade in an attempt to even out the competition. Malvern and Caulfield entered one strong and one weak team whilst Williamstown split the teams down the middle and entered two teams of equal strength. This practice continued at Williamstown until the end of 1964.

In hind sight this was one of the most divisive decisions that the Club had ever made and it took more than the end of that season to clear the bad feelings which grew between the members of the Fearons and the Cities.

The Fearons were coached by Alf Evans, an ex Malvern player and coach, and the Cities were coached by Frank Hogarth, a past Williamstown player. The teams met three times during the season and the Fearons won each of those games, but by less each time. The Fearons finished third and the Cities fourth so the two teams met in the first semi-final, which finished 6 all, the Fearons went on to play in the preliminary final as there was no provision for playing extra time in those days in the event of a draw. Considering the tribal nature of our great game these matches were as brutal encounters as could be imagined in the modern era of the game.

The competition between the Fearons and the Cities was resurrected in 1970 and Williamstown again had two teams competing in A grade. A significant amount of animosity developed as a result of these games and many were brutal conflicts, but perhaps any stories or folklore are best left unsaid!

Players from that 1955 team were the building blocks upon which the 1963 A grade premiership team was founded. Players such as Peter Hogg, Graham Hill, Michael Orr and Alan Chiron came out of that team and others who followed including Rod Cordell, Alan Rolley, Eddie Toomey, John O'Keefe, Ron Twomey, Richard Speakman, Phil Pearson, Peter Bellette, plus younger players like Robert Speakman and Alec Inglis, who were emergencies in the grand final, were added, over the late 50's and early 60's, to the old heads of Les Goding and Ian Jewitt to the team that won the first senior A grade premiership in the Club's history".



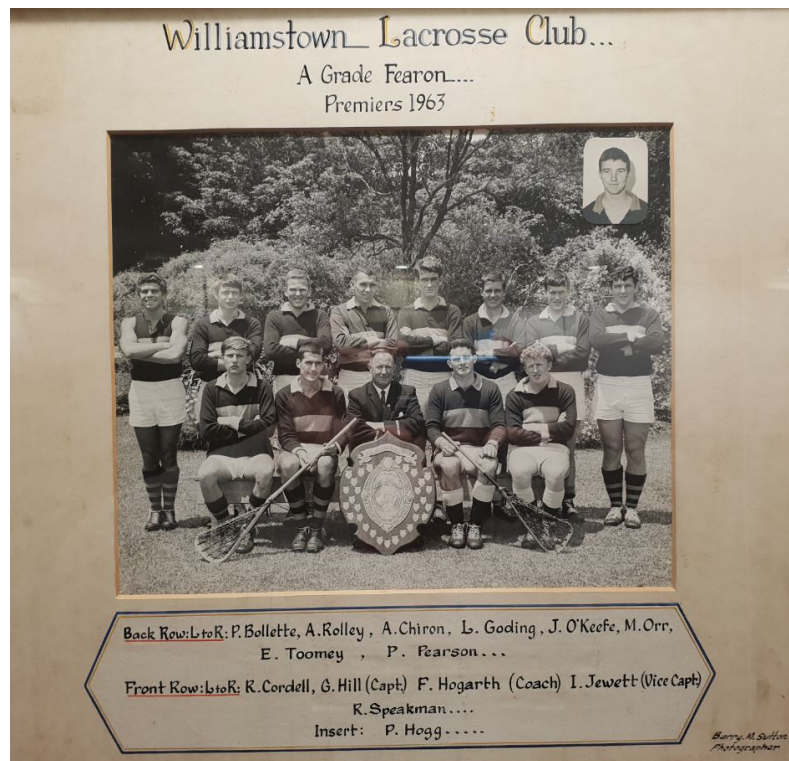
Above are the players from a 1961 Williamstown masters game.

Back row (L to R): Colwyn “Pud” Martin, Kevin Hope, Leeton Titter, Mick Titter, Keith West, Frank Hogarth, John Brotheridge, Lionel Burgoyne, Arthur Pearson (Partly hidden), Berry Newgreen, Keith Preston & Bob Anderson Front row: Bert Ferris, Mal Taylor, Alf Evans & Ken Speakman

1963 – 2019 (THE GOLDEN YEARS)

1963 began the golden years of the Club when the Club won its first “A” grade premiership, 22-14, against arch rival Malvern. . The game was played at Orrong Park, which was a neutral ground in the vicinity of Malvern. The crowd was estimated to be 800-1,000, with the final score being 22-14, with Peter Hogg recalling “I got 4 goals for the game and named best and fairest, Alan Chiron was awarded 2 votes and Eddie Toomey awarded one vote, having thrown 8 goals”.

Then followed premierships in 1965,1967-71, 1973,1975-80, 1982-83,1985-86, 1990-92,1998-2001,2003, 2008-11, 2012 & 2015-17 & 2019. A total of 34 premierships, 15 runners-up and only missed the grand final on 8 occasions from 1963-2019.



During this time two coaches: Frank Hogarth 1967-71 and Alec Inglis 1975-80 hold the impressive records of five and six consecutive premierships respectively. Malvern still holds the record for total premierships won in A grade, but our Club, from these golden years, holds the record for 105 consecutive wins in A grade from 1967-1972. During that period handful of players played in most of those games, including Eddie Toomey (97), Alan Chiron (93), John O'Keefe (92), Michael Orr (89), Rod Cordell (88), Ron Twomey (87), Alan Rolley (84), Gus Garnsworthy (79) & Robert Flaherty (74), and a further 56 players, with 36 playing under 10 games at that time, including John Butkiewicz who at that time had only played 2 games before the record winning streak was stopped, but destined to play many more.

The record for most games played in "A" grade, based on games from 1960-2019 is Peter Morley with 352, just behind is John Butkiewicz with 351, Alan Rolley with 340 and Carl Radford, Cliff Jennings and Rod Cordell with over 300.

The highest goal scorer in A grade over the same period is Alan Rolley with 1608, Brian Smith with 1,398, and Eddie Toomey with 1,181 (Although Eddie didn't play for Williamstown after 1972). Midfielders who could certainly throw goals included Rod Cordell (915) and John Butkiewicz (829).

GROUNDS AND VENUES

Commenced playing on the Williamstown Cricket Ground at a time when the football club had only one team, moved to Gardens Reserve in 1910, which at that time still had a bike track around it. Gardens Reserve was renamed Fearon Reserve in 1932, in honour of Captain Fearon and remains under that name today. According to Arch Fowler the Club played one full senior season on the Williamstown Racecourse.

Other grounds that have been, and some still are, used by the Club include Gloucester Reserve, Hatt Reserve and Market Reserve in Williamstown and Digman

Reserve in Newport where the Williamstown Deacons (The third senior team) played. The club also in the very early days played some games or at least trained at "Hannan's Farm" near where the rifle range was located. Peter Hogg recalled that in 1962 as women's lacrosse was starting, training for the Williamstown women's team was held at what is now the Hatt Reserve, the only problem was that it wasn't a very good ground and had a tree in the middle of it. As Peter recalled, "For some reason the small useless tree seemed to be vandalised one evening and died a few weeks later, and all of a sudden we had another ground!"

The clubrooms in the 1960s were in a grand stand north of the current clubrooms, which had a home changing room and a visitors changing room next door, with the same 2 style of rooms at the other end used by the Imperial Football Club and the Catholic Youth Football Club. The occupancy of the tennis club and courts came about in the early 1970's. The tennis courts became the existing box court, which was also used for training during heavy winters.

Circa 1964 the nearby Rotunda was just a shell of a building, not being used and it was thought that it might come in handy for storage and committee rooms. The Council (There were a couple of ex-players on the Council) agreed that the Club could use the building. A working bee was held and a floor was added to make a room upstairs and windows put in. The Rotunda hasn't been used by the club since the 1970s?

The Club's current clubrooms at the Fearon Reserve were previously the rooms for the Esplanade Tennis Club. The lacrosse club took over these rooms as they outgrew the old rooms adjacent to the football clubs in the early 1970s. The occupancy of these rooms heralded an innovative era for lacrosse in Australia as in 1973 new box lacrosse courts were built enabling the Club to run a regular state-wide summer competition for many years.

The Canadian team that participated in the 1974 inaugural World Championship in Melbourne was billeted by the Williamstown, Footscray and Altona clubs and were asked to play an exhibition box lacrosse game on the courts. This was a great night and the billets of all the visiting players and their families attended.

The first Australian Box Lacrosse Championships were also held at Williamstown in 1978.

Another first for the club was in 1978 which saw the first ever televised highlights of the match of the day by the then ATVO (Channel 10) television channel. Williamstown won that match by 20 goals.

COACHES SINCE THE "GOLDEN ERA"

Since 1962, Williamstown has won 34 premierships, starting in 1963, out of the 57 grand finals played, with many former champion players coaching the team.

Frank Hogarth coached from 1963 – 1974 (8 flags – 4 runners-up), Alec Inglis from 1975-1982 and 1997-1998 (8 flags, 2 runners-up), Darren Gibson 2007-2010 & 2019 (4 flags) and coaching again in 2021. Noel Smith coached for 5 years (1 flag) as did

his brother Bryan Smith (3 flags). Michael Orr (3 flags), Damien Orr (3 flags), and Mark Butler (1 flag) all coached for 4 years. Gus Garnsworthy (2 flags) and Jai Carroll (1 flag) coached for 3 years and Mark and Alan Lewer co-coached for one year, as did Graeme Read. All coaches since 1963 have been "Home grown", with Alf Evans the only "Outsider" to coach, coming from Malvern to coach from 1960-62.

Many former Williamstown players went on to coach Victorian and Australian teams. Notably Ian Jewitt was the first to coach an Australian team (1967), followed by Alec Inglis, who coached Australia in 1978, 82 & 84. Ken Read coached the inaugural box lacrosse team to play at the Commonwealth Games in 1978. Noel Smith successfully coached the Australian women's team to victory at the 1986 World Cup and coached again in 1989. Max Madonia coached the Australian women's team in 1993, 1997, 2005 & 2013

CHAMPION PLAYERS

Where do you start? From the late 1960's to the 1980's Williamstown players dominated selection in Victorian teams and many Australian teams. The first players selected to represent Australia and tour overseas in 1962 were Graham Hill, Peter Hogg, Ian Jewitt, Eddie Toomey and Les Goding, with Graham Hill and Peter Hogg subsequently relocating to Western Australia. This was the start of the golden era and it is interesting to note that no Williamstown players were selected in the 1959 Australian team to play the visiting American team, which was dominated by Malvern and South Australian players. How things changed in those 3 years from 1959 to 1962?

In terms of recognition we cannot go past John "Keka" Butkiewicz, who is probably acknowledged as the greatest face-off/midfielder of the modern era, who is one of only two lacrosse players inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame. But there are so many more who have brilliantly contributed to the success of not only Williamstown, but also Victoria and Australia.

In terms of goal scorers Eddie Toomey led the Victorian goal-throwing with 147 goals in 1967 and in his 206 game career with Williamstown from 1960-1972 he threw 1181 goals. Alan Rolley in his 355 game career with Williamstown from 1961-1982 (Plus one game in 1985) threw 1677 goals. Eddie Toomey threw over 100 goals in 6 seasons and Alan Rolley threw over 100 goals in 5 years.

In terms of awards John Butkiewicz was the first player to win the Don Hobbs Trophy for the most valuable player at a carnival, winning it in 1985 and then again in 1987, followed by Scott Garnsworthy (1996), John Brewer (1999), Ryan Garnsworthy (2003) and Noah Jenney (2016).

The "Isaachsen", for the best and fairest player across Australia in club competition, has been won by only one player from "Willy", Rod Cordell (1972).

The Vince Healy Trophy, for the best and fairest player in Victoria, has been won by Alan Rolley (1965 & 1969), Eddie Toomey (1967), Rod Cordell (1970 & 1972), John Butkiewicz (1975), Darren Gibson (1995), Scott Garnsworthy (2004), and Sean Clarke (2018).

END OF SEASON TRIPS

According to a record from Arch Fowler 4 EOS's were held at Nagambie, the last after fire bell rung. This was an attempt by Captain Fearon to start lacrosse being played in Nagambie and other regional towns and Captain Fearon was their inaugural president.

In 1929 the EOS was to Rushworth, nothing further is noted, Maryborough perhaps a year or so later. The first visit to Launceston, while really was not really an EOS, held during the season in August 1932, was made possible and hosted by the "Skipper", where he took the team by boat, the S.S. Naraina (Which saw service in WW1 and became a passenger ship between Melbourne and Launceston) which was named as a Victorian team. The team included Fred Ray (Captain), Alan Deacon (Manager), Berry Newgreen, Keith O'Brien, "Pud Martin" and "Tich" Hogarth, who was voted best and fairest.

In 1934 the team was again skippered by President James Fearon to Launceston, all expenses paid, where Arch Fowler was captain and manager.

Arch Fowler also recalled that the team went by boat to Adelaide around Xmas 1935.

Captain Fearon again skippered a boat load of players in 1936 to Port Pirie for a game and the team returned the next year.

Most, if not all of these trips, were due to Captain Fearon's generosity.

In 1962, following the Australian Championships in Adelaide, the Williamstown/Brighton EOS games commenced and were played annually throughout the 60's. They were pretty much an Australian Championship game as both Brighton in South Australia, and Williamstown in Victoria, were the premiership teams for most of the years of the EOS trips. While the EOS trips had a break for a couple of years during the 70s, Williamstown made the final EOS trip to Brighton about the mid 70's.

The following photo was taken at Spencer Street Station in 1961 as the Willy team was about to embark on its first end of season trip to Perth, hosted by and billeted by Nedlands-Subiaco. As Peter Hogg stated "It was an outstanding trip, one we were incapable of replicating". No air travel in those days for teams! The trip was organized by Mal Taylor. While the games were supposed to be "Friendlies", and Williamstown was asked to take it easy as Nedlands-Subiaco was playing in a final the following week, however it didn't turn out that friendly as Eddie Toomey was flattened and Keith Hogg had his nose broken and had to be taken to hospital! Peter Hogg was the MVP for the first trip to Perth.



The touring party: back row; Peter Hogg, Gary Calvert, Ray Dickins, Russell Brown (Footscray) & Graham Hill. Second row: (Partially hidden) Judith Hogg, Shirley Hogg, Mrs Hogarth, Robin Lourensz (Footscray), Alan Chiron, David Thompson & John Pepper

Third row; Frank "Tich" Hogarth, John Morrish, Ken Read, David Ferris, Murray Jones, David Wood, Brian Greer & Warren Renton Front row: Keith Hogg, Mal Taylor, Eddie Toomey, and hidden was Mrs Olga Taylor.

A further EOS trip was undertaken to Perth in 1964 with Ken Read winning the MVP trophy. This was the last EOS trip to Perth and Nedlands-Subiaco never travelled to Melbourne for an EOS.

KEY BUILDERS

CAPTAIN JAMES FEARON – LACROSSE BUILDER

Captain James H Fearon, commonly known as “the Skipper”, Sea Scout Commodore of Victoria, sea pilot, member of the Marine Board and sea lawyer supreme, kept the Club running, often at his own expense, in those early years. He was Club President from 1901-43, Victorian Amateur Lacrosse Association President 1934-5, with our state league team and our ground bearing his name in perpetuity. It is not known how Captain Fearon became involved with the Club, he was 37 when the Club formed in 1898 and never played the game, but he was genuinely involved in promoting sport to the youth of the area and was heavily involved in football, sailing and the sea scouts.

The Captain did not play lacrosse, possibly because he only became involved with the club circa 1903, when he was in his late 30s, however he was very keen to ensure that the young men of the district had some type of sport to enjoy. Captain Fearon did referee lacrosse, well into his senior years. There is a record of him refereeing 40 plus games, in a season, at the age of 65.

WILLIAMSTOWN LACROSSE CLUB



Presented To:

CAPTAIN J. H. FEARON

A Token
of Esteem



From The
Members. SEPT. 1924



A.E. Green's Photo, Williamstown.

Captain Fearon was an outgoing person and he must have had some money as he kept the Club running during WW1, and after the war he was a major source of entertainment for the members. He took teams to Nagambie, Adelaide, Perth (The Victorian team in 1935) and Tasmania and was elected president of the Nagambie Club following the first visit. He was a very open person and often arranged for dance parties and or drinks parties at his home. He was, as previously stated very interested in the juniors, so much so that in 1929 he started the ball rolling to set up the junior section of the Club, and there were so many that turned up that they had to make up two teams.

How fortunate was the Club to have such an active and capable leader as Captain James Fearon in such difficult times, which started in 1914 and continued to his death in 1944, just prior to the cessation of WW2.

MAL TAYLOR

Mal Taylor started playing lacrosse in 1934 as a 14 year old in the Wanderers junior team that had been facilitated by Captain Fearon's energy and enthusiasm to develop a junior team at Williamstown. WW2 put an end to Mal's playing days, he returned to referee after WW2 and when the call was made he along with a few others rebuilt this club, primarily through his selfless commitment to the establishment and growth of the junior program, which from humble beginnings bore fruit when in 1963 the Club won its first A grade premiership, primarily with players who were in Mal's junior teams from the early 50's. Not only did Mal Taylor develop the junior program but he also was a primary mover in the establishment of women's lacrosse in Victoria, he was the key supplier of hickory sticks in the western suburbs

of Melbourne, and he went on to establish the Newport, Footscray, Altona, Essendon and Glenroy lacrosse clubs. Mal Taylor was the centre of the lacrosse universe in the western suburbs from the 1950s to the 1980's.

While there have been many people who have helped make Williamstown the lacrosse juggernaut it is today it is difficult to consider they would not have achieved the success they have and be where they are without Captain James Fearon and Mal Taylor. Captain Fearon actively led the club through a recession, 2 world wars and the great depression, through active leadership, personal sponsorship of interstate tours, and where necessary the payment of expenses where players could simply not afford it.

Mal Taylor came back to the Club after WW2 when the economy and society were struggling, and through hard work and dogged persistence, along with a vision of what had to happen in terms of junior development to make the club great, systematically went about recruiting, developing, encouraging, coaching and training junior players, from not winning games in the early years to claiming the Club's inaugural A grade premiership in 1963.

People like Captain Fearon and Mal Taylor sadly come along very infrequently, and Williamstown Lacrosse Club has been fortunate to benefit from the service of both of these great leaders and builders in the 20th century.

There is more written about these two legends of the Club and members are encouraged to learn more about what they did to make this club so great.



The above honour board has not been updated but note that Simon Brown was awarded a life membership in 2019 and Jock Garnsworthy in 2020.

For many years lacrosse has been a major sport of the area providing an avenue for like - minded people to gather together to achieve group and individual goals. Apart from our success within lacrosse the Club has been fortunate in having so many influential community leaders over many years. Alan Deacon, Lionel Burgoyne,

Laurie Parker, Max Robertson all fine players who served long terms as councillors were also appointed Mayors of the City. Lindsay Caithness, a tower of strength in Williamstown Hospital activities and Arch Fowler, local solicitor and historian, were players of distinction and long service.

Lionel Garnsworthy, 1988 Williamstown Citizen of the Year, as a player, participated in one of the Club's many interstate lacrosse trips under the direction of long time Williamstown resident, Howard Balmer and the sponsorship of Captain Fearon.

While it would be hard for someone born in the last 70 years to appreciate, WW1 had a devastating effect on the population, with many young men paying the ultimate sacrifice, and if they did return many were either physically or mentally injured or scarred. So it took many years for lacrosse and society in general to recover, only to be hit in October 1929 with the Great Depression, which saw the highest unemployment the nation had ever endured, and people struggling to survive, let alone afford to play sport. The Great Depression lingered on for many years and it was only the advent of WW2 that saw the nation start to come out of the depression, but then have to offer up its favourite sons to once again defend the "Empire" and itself, which again caused significant social upheaval and hardship and again many paying the ultimate sacrifice, and many coming home physically or mentally damaged forever!

WILLIAMSTOWN'S WIDE IMPACT ON THE GAME IN VICTORIA

The amount of success experienced by the Club on the field and the quality of the coaching personnel and administration within the club, have ensured excellent representation in Victorian state teams over the years. This has been extended to all Australian teams that have played at either the world field lacrosse championships or the world box lacrosse championships or national touring teams as players, coaches or officials.

Many ex Williamstown players have aligned themselves with other Victorian clubs over the years thus continuing to spread the influence of the Williamstown Lacrosse Club.

These include the Altona, Footscray, Glenroy, Newport, Surrey Park, Chadstone, Essendon, Melbourne University, Monash University, Latrobe University, Caulfield, Eltham, Camberwell and Malvern Lacrosse clubs. Many Club members have been appointed to administrative roles within the Victorian Lacrosse Association from the early days until now reflecting the involvement of our Club in the continued development of lacrosse.

In terms of service to the VALA and the national body, Capt. Fearon was President of the VALA from 1934 – 5, Vice President 1930 – 32. Alan Chiron was President of the

VALA from 1987 – 88, Howard Balmer was Secretary of the VALA from 1920's -1930's, and Arch Fowler was Secretary to ALC in 1932.

It is quite special and somewhat amazing when you consider that the Williamstown Lacrosse Club has maintained such a high level of competition and success in our great game for over 120 years.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

Lacrosse was not played in Victoria in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions but the game recommenced in 2021, although was forced into lockdown in May due to a further outbreak of the pandemic.

In 2021 Williamstown has 3 senior teams (State league, division 1 & division 2) and 6 junior teams (Under 17, Under 15, Under 13 and 2 Under 11 teams), with a total playing membership of 54 seniors and 75 juniors and remains one of the strongest clubs in Australia.

Below we have the 2019 Under 11 team, the next generation and hopefully future champions who will continue the success that has gone before them.



Back row (L to R): Back: Coby Whiteman, Henry Turnbull, Blake Radford, Brent Lavelle (Coach) Front row: Gus Mee, Sam O'Dea, Max Marquard, Sebastian Taylor, Flynn Crawford & Ryan Reane.