

The Chadstone Lacrosse Club.

Chadstone – a new suburb



*Charles Daniel Pratt 1892-1968 photographer.
Airsy Collection, State Library of Victoria.*

In the post-war years, the suburb of Chadstone was growing. All the subdivided land was developed with new housing, and families were moving in. The primary school was full and a high school was under construction.

During the 1940s, Bill Gray Snr and his family moved to Chadstone and built a house in Durward Road. David Cohen was a fledgling teacher, newly appointed to Caulfield Tech. and then Oakleigh Tech.

David and Bill Snr had been active members of the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC) Lacrosse Division and saw the possibility of starting a new lacrosse club in the burgeoning suburb of Chadstone. They both recognised that the youth in the developing area needed something to do out of school hours. They possibly also hoped to form a “feeder” group for their home club of MCC.

Bill knew that there was a playing field fronting Chadstone Road big enough for a football field and a lacrosse field. There was an active tennis club adjacent to the field with five courts. More importantly, a community group called the Chadstone Recreation and Civic Club (CR&CC) had been formed and was looking to expand its influence and promote new sports.

CR&CC had taken under its wing a football club and a cricket club. Within a short time, a bowling club had also been created under the auspices of the CR&CC. Work had commenced on new rinks and a clubhouse. A lot of this was done by volunteer labour and finance from members. The Chadstone Football Club was operating as a Section of the CR&CC for several years. They used the change rooms and facilities in the playing field owned by the Malvern City Council. Bill Snr saw the possibilities in this ground, Chadstone Park.



When David Cohen started his teaching career at Malvern East Central School in 1956, he was already playing senior lacrosse at MCC, and then went on to Caulfield Tech in 1958. He instigated lacrosse teams at his various schools and hoped to extend lacrosse into the south-eastern suburbs. He saw the boys hanging around with nothing to do after school. David combined his passion for lacrosse and the boys' need to do something and the seeds of Chadstone Lacrosse Club were sown. David's career took him from Melbourne for many years, but he continued his association with the club and visited often when in Melbourne. He was made a Life Member in 2003.

"I shall always retain my deep and strong affection and emotional attachment—and enormous pride—in the continuing accomplishments of Chadstone Cardinal Lacrosse Club and its players and supporters."



Bill Gray Snr had a successful lacrosse career with MCC long before David approached him with the idea of starting up a new lacrosse club in the outer suburbs.

Bill enthusiastically took up the challenge to create a new club. He was the original secretary. He was elected President in 1967.

Bill's son Bill Jnr, was captain of one of the first two teams – the Redcoats.

Bill Snr was the first Life Member, awarded 1985.

"Words fail me when I try to express the debt of gratitude this new Club owes to Mr Bill Gray. He accepted the dual positions of Secretary and Treasurer, and his wise and able leadership in both capacities has been an inspiration. Nothing else need be said than – without Mr Bill Gray, there would be no Chadstone Cardinals Lacrosse Club."

 Presidents Report, 1st Annual Report, Chadstone Cardinals Lacrosse Club 1960.

Photo courtesy MCC History Library of Bill in 1950 MCC touring team in Queensland.

Forming a new club.

The Chadstone Cardinals Lacrosse Club was formed at its first official meeting on 10th March 1960. David Cohen and Bill Gray presided, others present were Philip Shappere Victorian Lacrosse Association (VLA), Gordon Zanuck (CC&CR), Frank Landsbury (VLA). N. Jeffrey, K. O'Hagan, and Alan Everest.

It was apparently a cold and miserable evening and only one family turned up. David Cohen takes up the story in his Recollections :

“The reaction of the VLA Representatives was: You’re wasting your time David. You may as well forget about it. These words were like a red rag to a bull to me and the challenge was down!”

After that disastrous first meeting, Bill and David decided to hold an exhibition game played by Caulfield and Malvern Men on the Chadstone ground.

This game changing event was on 19th March 1960, in conjunction with a CR&CC fete. By the end of the afternoon there were enough boys to enter two Under 14 teams in the Saturday morning competition run by the Victorian Amateur Lacrosse Association (VALA). Later in June, a third team was entered. Many of the club’s adult stalwarts began their association with lacrosse at this function, including Dick Morgan, Ken Mathews, Lyle Chynoweth, Alf Cugley, Frank Milne, and Roy Freeman. Many of these original players and parents are still closely associated with the club.



The first teams

The Redcoats

Team number one were called **Redcoats**. They had a very successful season, reaching the semi-finals. Bill Gray Jnr. and Ian Minter were captain and vice-captain. Neil Clough was a very steady goalkeeper, Robert Wilson, and brothers Michael and Peter Gould were recognised as key players. The rest of the team comprised Bernard Hutchins, Ken Wilson, Ken Bracken, David Pearce, Doug Markham, Wayne Ledwidge, and Robert Mathews.

The Giants

It was said that “Jimmy’s Giants” were the smallest boys in the competition. This team won several games, and was under the leadership of nine-year-old Jimmy Bridges and his brother Alan on the forward line. Other players were Peter Everest, Dennis Seears, Bruce Bishop, John Potter, Derek Bardsley, Ross Greenfield, Ian Swinton, Chris Milne and Peter Hinde.

The Bears

This was the third team entered in that first year of play. They played their first game on June 25, 1960. Peter Rushan was captain and Robert Wood was in goal. Defenders were Peter Quinn, Warren McGillivray and brothers Robert and Brian Beswick. Others were Alan Wilson, Graham Duncan, Graeme Summers, Wayne Chynoweth, Angus Baird and John Harris.



The first set of sticks (then called racquets) were given to the club by the ALA, on the condition that the club was still around in three years time. Other sticks were either donated or purchased at a total cost of £40.

Goals, nets and frames cost £23. The red and yellow woollen playing tops (guernseys) cost a total of £78.

Two of the early players reminisce:

Matt Gleeson *"Pure wool scratchy jumpers. But they came in pretty handy down at Willy on their old ground on the water during a blowy winter's day..."*

Phil Skiller *"They were a great jumper just a bit prickly"*

Facebook entry on Chadstone Lacrosse Past Players August 2018

Bill Gray Snr had originally proposed MCC colours, anticipating that the boys would move on to MCC when they became seniors. This idea was abandoned when the Club came under CR&CC whose colours were red, yellow and blue.

The name "Cardinals" was taken from the St Louis Cardinals, a baseball team who have the North American Cardinal bird as their emblem, predominantly red, with some yellow.

Money must have been a problem in that first year when they had the glorious problem of three teams to equip, instead of only the one, hoped for team. It is noted in the annual

report that Mr F. Maggs at the local sport store "Palmers" extended credit so that the equipment could be purchased. Small fees were imposed on the players – 5/- (five shillings) annual subscription and 5/- equipment hire.

Bill was savvy enough to know that a new club was unlikely to prosper and grow without the help of a strong kindred organisation prepared to support a new sporting club. He therefore approached the CR&CC with the aim of establishing the fledgling junior lacrosse club under the umbrella of the CR&CC--not as a full section of the composite club, but rather as a part of the Civic Section. This allowed time to establish the club, raise funds, recruit members and convince the VALA that the new club was a worthy member of the VALA Saturday competitions.



Lyle Chynoweth began his connection with the club his son, Wayne, started playing in 1960. He spent many years doing all the jobs a parent supporter does, from bench official to President from 1973 to 1975. He was granted Life Membership in 1986 to honour his 20 plus years of service to the club.

"...my lacrosse years, 1961 – 1984, were excellent and full of pleasure, friendships and seeing juniors 10-11-12 grow up to manhood ... and provide the foundations for the future"

Lyle's memoirs on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary 1999. Photo from the 1985 Senior Men team photo.



Chadstone Recreation and Civic Club, by Dick Morgan

During the early post war years, the suburb of Chadstone was growing rapidly. Young families were moving in. The primary school and kindergarten were there. Scout and guide groups were being established. There was an active Progress Association.

However, there were no sporting or recreational facilities except an open space area of land fronting Chadstone and Quentin Roads – euphemistically called a Park.

At that time a group of residents, including myself and Gordon Zantuck, Don Fairley and Pat Knapp were working hard to form a recreational club based on the structure of the Glen Iris Recreation Club. We had an organisation that would initially comprise Tennis and Bowls and a section that would cater for people interested in community and youth affairs.

So, the Chadstone Recreation and Civic Club was born.

The Malvern City Council was told of our plans and land at the northern side of Chadstone Park was set aside for the development of tennis courts, bowls rinks and clubhouses. Percy Treyvaud, who was then an East Ward Malvern Councillor, was a great supporter of the CR&CC in those early days.

I was elected the Inaugural Treasurer of the Tennis section, but my interests were quickly taken up by the Civic Section when I became Secretary with Michael Hancock as President.

During these early years Bill Gray Senior, David Cohen and others were busily working on getting the lacrosse club up and running.

Bill, being an astute politician, realised that if he wanted to achieve his aim of a fully functioning sporting club, with clubrooms and canteen facilities, he had to associate the Lacrosse Club with a larger and financially stable organisation with good connections with “City Hall”.

The CR&CC fitted these criteria perfectly. John Cooper had started the Chadstone Football Club and the Malvern City Council had granted them the primary use of the old brick pavilion as their Club House and change-rooms.



Clubrooms around the 1960's, from Ian Whitbourn.

They also had exclusive use of the main oval fronting Quentin Road. The Lacrosse Club had to use the lower oval at the Chadstone Road end, that had a concrete cricket pitch and, in those days, was not a very good playing surface.

By this time Bill Gray had a growing membership of junior and senior lacrosse players but no club rooms he could call 'home' and no social facilities.

So, he applied to the CR&CC for the Chadstone Lacrosse Club to be affiliated with the CR&CC. The management of the CR&CC decided that they would admit the Lacrosse Club to the CR&CC provisionally as a member of the Civic Section. I was at that time the Hon. Secretary of the Civic Section and Bill used to attend the Civic Section Committee meeting as delegate to report on the activities of the Lacrosse Club.

We all learned a lot about lacrosse from Bill and it was not long before Bill's application for the Lacrosse Club to become a full Section of the CR&CC in its own right was granted.

The Chadstone Football Club had also become a Section so by then the CR&CC consisted of Bowls, Tennis, Football, Lacrosse and Civic Sections.

Gordon Zantuck's vision of a fully recreation and civic club had come to fruition.

About this time, Ken Matthews had invited me to join the Lacrosse Committee. The CR&CC had built the original clubrooms between the tennis courts and the bowling greens and all sections were able to use this facility on a pre-booked basis. Many a Committee meeting, general meeting, and social function was held there – and innumerable pie-nights for the juniors.

Both the Tennis Section and the Bowls Section were growing apace and they really needed their own clubrooms. Sharing the one premises was becoming unmanageable. A decision was made to construct a new, larger clubhouse on the road into the park area directly opposite the bowling greens.

This new building was to be home of the Bowls section but available for use by all sections. It would have a liquor licence and kitchen, bar area, and be suitable for meetings, social functions, after-game drinks and fund raising events.

The lacrosse club made good use of this venue for some years. Because of the fact that lacrosse is a winter game and bowls a summer game, both Sections of the CR&CC were able to get good use out of the facility without too much infringement of their separate activities.

The big drawback was its unsuitability for junior activities. It was a licensed club, it was close to valuable and sensitive bowling greens and it really was not conducive or suitable to junior usage. By 1986, all concerned could see that the joint sharing of the facility was becoming untenable and something had to be done.

Fortuitously, (for us) the Football Club (Section) was on the point of collapse – finances, administration – everything. (But that's another story!).

Under the leadership of Ian Whitbourn, The Lacrosse Club moved quickly to secure the lease of the football pavilion and the exclusive right to use the top oval from the Malvern City Council.

With these two objectives secure, we then applied for disaffiliation from the CR&CC.

Everyone associated with the management of the CR&CC saw the wisdom of this move for the longer-term benefit of both the bowls and lacrosse players. The separation went ahead without ill will or rancour and the club started a new life in a new home.

The early years

The early sixties were boom times for the Club.

Enthusiastic recruitment in the local primary schools kept the momentum going after that first surprising year.

Parents played the greatest part in this continued boom. Even the Victorian Amateur Lacrosse Association (VALA) recognized their importance in their Annual Report of 1960,

“Parent support has been noticeable (at Chadstone) and should secure a big future for this enthusiastic club”.