

The Adventures of the Brown Brothers on the playing fields of Greensborough.

Society member Val Wilson, gave an entertaining account to Society members at a recent meeting of the talented Brown Brothers and their problematic relationship with the early local cricket clubs of the district.

It was while looking through the wonderful website Trove that an article caught my eye - I thought thereby hangs a tale. It concerns the Brown Brothers, the Greensborough Cricket Club and the Correspondent to the early paper "The Evelyn Observer"

The Brown boys lived in Plenty Road Bundoora where their father Adam had been running a blacksmith shop for some 40 years. There were four boys in a family of seven: William the oldest, Adam, Tom and younger brother Henry. All it seems were excellent cricket players.

The earliest report of cricket I found tells us that in 1882-1884 William, Adam and Tom Brown were playing cricket for Greensborough; but also for Thomastown, Eltham and Diamond Creek.

Cricket seems to have been loosely organized in the early days. Invitations were extended to clubs and teams to play Greensborough Cricket Club by contacting the Secretary Mr. J. Mitchell, and so we find Adam Brown was top scorer in a win against the Brunswick Brick Dusters and William playing against the East Melbourne Dead Beats played a careful game that puzzled the bowlers!

And so Cricket bowled slowly along during the latter years of the 1800's until the start of the 1892 season when the Greensborough correspondent had this to say in his article in the Evelyn Observer: "I was very angry to see so much unpleasantness among the members of the Greensborough Cricket Club on Saturday last, but it is consoling to know that the majority of them had the good sense to avoid any serious results and thereby keep up the good name and dignity of the club.

It is also gratifying to know that it was through no fault of the "local" men. The facts I understand are that there are four members living at Bundoora and Janefield who, apparently available for selection for the team to play Morang, and because one of this four were left out, the other three refused to play. How they can justify their action in this is hard to see, and I PRESUME the Greensborough Cricket Club will receive an apology from these players, or they will not be allowed to play for some time to come!

And I must say that one of these players alluded to, behaved in such a manner that the patrons of the club may feel proud that through the forbearance of the members generally that nothing more serious occurred."

I could find no explanation for the cause of this dustup, but I suspect in view of later happenings it may have been that one of the four players was told he was not selected because he was not a bona-fide resident, and the other three have said "If he's not, well neither are we" and refused to play. It may have been that a highhanded manner and

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short fuses didn't help either.

During the 1892-3 season there was no sign of the Browns playing for Greensborough, although William was batting and bowling up a storm for Eltham. But then our Greensborough Correspondent tells us: "It will be remembered that some time ago the brothers Adam and Tom Brown were disqualified from playing for Greensborough unless some apology was offered to the club. This they have never done; therefore they have never been selected in any match since, and it was decided by the players not to play against these Browns, so there might be not be cause for any unpleasantness (this I think was a very wise precaution).

When Eltham arranged a match with the secretary of this club - it was done in WRITING that the Brown brothers were not to play with Eltham, but when Greensborough arrived, they found that Tom Brown was to play. The secretary of course took it as insult, not because Brown was to play but because of the breach of faith; however this was allowed to pass. But on this occasion (Last Saturday) it was found that THREE Browns from Bundoora were playing with Eltham. Greensborough decided they would not refuse to go in and play, but go in determined to show them what they were made of.

Greensborough do not wish to boycott the Browns, they are at liberty to play in any club they wish, but it would have looked far better if they had not played against their old club and it looks especially bad on the part of Eltham to take three Greensborough players when they have plenty of local men".

All of a sudden it seems the Browns are Greensborough men when it suits the Correspondent, but he has not finished with them yet. At the end of the 1892-3 season in May the Greensborough Correspondent writing in an article about the General meeting of the Greensborough Cricket Club after congratulating all on a good season had these words of his own to add "No remarks were passed in reference to the conduct of certain persons who were members during the past season and caused a certain amount of unpleasantness, which the more orderly and respectable Members were determined not to allow.

These people I believe have started a new club. I trust they will succeed, as there is plenty of room in Greensborough for them all, but if there is no more unanimity with them than when in their old club, there is bound to be trouble.

By the way, I wish it to be understood that none of these remarks were passed at the meeting on Saturday night, as perfect good feeling existed among the members, and I presume they felt it was Infradig to refer to these matters. However one thing I noticed which no doubt was a very wise one and perhaps was the result of the above. It was resolved that no person should become a member of the club except by ballot. This is as it should be and is the only way of keeping good company. I believe the club is sorry to lose good players as some are. But I give them credit for their determination to keep up the honor and dignity of the club"

And so it came about that Greensborough had two Cricket Clubs in the season 1893-4: Greensborough Cricket Club and Greensborough Social Cricket Club. A fundraiser was held

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in October for the Socials with Mr. W. Brown thanking all for their support and no more was heard from our correspondent until a match was played between Greensborough and Greensborough Social on Christmas Day 1893. This was a much talked about match and people from all over the district must have made the trip to Greensborough as some 150 to 200 people were in attendance, and I am sure it may have divided the town on the day.

Some names for the socials were the three Browns, D. Black, B.Carr, E. Purcell, W. Wilson, R.Chapman, W. Poulter and for the Greensborough Cricket Club were Messrs. Mitchell, Elliott, Partington, Pepper and Butterworth. The Greensborough Social Cricket Club won the match by three runs!

Our Correspondent had few words to say about the match only that a small unpleasantness occurred when the Socials broke their agreement to play only local men and put in W. Brown of Eltham who was a credit to them doing excellent work in bowling and making 25 of their 70 runs - in other words Greensborough would have won but for W. Brown. A member of the Socials wrote to the paper refuting these remarks and adding that the correspondent omitted to mention that Greensborough played Mr. Chamberlain from Richmond on the day and William Brown was a member and had played most matches this year - he also added the disappointment on the face of the correspondent at the result was a joy to behold.

Well the Social club played competition cricket for two years, at that time they were playing for the Chandler Bros. Trophy - but they withdrew from the comp at the end of the 1894-95 season. And so the turmoil of the past two years settled with William playing for Eltham and Adam, Tom and Henry playing for - one guess- yes Greensborough. 1895-96 season: A very handsome gold pin was presented to A. Brown for the most number of catches; 1896-97 season: A splendid pair of buckskin boots was presented to A. Brown for the best bowling average of the season.

On a closing note in February 1898 the delegates of the clubs in the Yan Yean District Cricket Association met to deal with a protest lodged by Diamond Creek against the Greensborough Cricket Club. The protest was entered owing to Greensborough playing Tom Brown who in the opinion of the Diamond Creek Cricket Club was not a bonafide resident as he works in town during the week only returning to Bundoora on Saturday and Sunday.

Everything old is new again.

Adam, Tom and Henry played for Greensborough well into the 1900's. William lived in Eltham and was a young married man when the early days of cricket were being played out, he had married Ellen Chapman Poulter, daughter of William Poulter, and I am pleased to say took time out from all this batting and bowling to become my great grandfather.

Val Wilson (nee Rolfs)
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