



Vale Isabella and Harry Butler, Belated Obituaries.

Eighty-eight year old Dave Robertson, a Glebe Hockey Club stalwart, contacted me and suggested that I write an obituary for Isabella Butler and publish it in the Red Rag, the Hockey Club's Newsletter.

Dave Robertson played for Glebe from 1940 to 1958 (245 Club Games). He still receives the printed edition of the Red Rag, which is sent to him at Ettalong, and he follows the affairs of the Club closely. Dave, a toolmaker by trade, founded an engineering

company in the 1945. Harry Butler joined Dave's tool making business a few weeks after it was formed and he worked in the business until he retired in 1989, never working anywhere else. As an aside, Dave remembers that in the early 1940s when he was doing his apprenticeship his weekly wage was 15 shillings and thruppence, which is less than \$50 in today's money.

Initially the business operated out of an eighteen foot by twelve foot shed at the back of Dave's mother's house in Nelson St Annandale. The shed was built by Dave Robertson and another member of the Hockey Club, a friend of Dave's and Annandale resident, the late John Collett (1946-1954, 124 Club Games). The business, which was called Roblan, was started with working capital of £50, which is equivalent to \$2,800 in today's money. The money was to buy materials, tools and machinery.

Dave and Harry were business associates and close friends. Dave knew Isabella and the two Butler children Rodney and Christine very well.

When I thought about Dave's suggestion that I write an obituary for Isabella, I came around to the view that it would be more interesting to most Club Members and Supporters if I wrote an article that outlined the contributions of both Isabella and her husband Harry to the life and times of the Glebe District Hockey Club. This article outlines their contributions from 1939 to 1961, a period of 22 years. They were generous contributors to Club affairs and acted as role models for those coming after them.

Isabella Butler (11 June 1924 - 1 April 2013), Harry Butler (July 1924 - 4 January 1990)

Isabella and Harry were Hockey Club stalwarts from the late 1930s until the early 1960s.

Isabella Baxter Butler (nee Grant) died in Berry on 1 April 2013 aged 88 years. She was born on 11 June 1924. Her husband Harry Butler (1939-1961, 356 Club games) died on 4 January 1990.

Isabella was the principal typist for the inaugural Red Rag published on 10 May 1958. She shared the typing duties for this edition with the Editor's wife, the late Pat Rogers. Isabella was an accomplished typist - a much-valued skill in those years, and worked for the managing director of Westinghouse Australia. Interestingly, the Hockey Club's first Life Member the late Jack Logan Quinlan (1931-1948, 262 Club Games) worked at Westinghouse at the same time as Isabella, as a store man.

The First Editor of the Red Rag Paul Rogers writes about Isabella and Harry "It was Harry who encouraged me in starting the Red Rag. I think it was his idea of the name. Many a night was spent at their place in Bankstown while the 4 of us worked on articles for the paper, and we didn't leave their place until near midnight. They were a great help, Isabella with her typing skills and Harry with his ideas."

Isabella was brought up in the Bankstown area of Sydney. In the mid-1940s she became a friend of then Hockey Club Member Reg Matthews (146 Club games from 1942-1957), who now lives in retirement at Thirroul just north of Wollongong on the Illawarra Coast. Isabella was introduced to Harry through her friendship with Reg.

The 1946 Annual Report recorded that in that year Isabella Grant helped the Hockey Club with typing and secretarial tasks. Isabella and Harry married in 1947, set up house at 15 Dutton Street Bankstown where they lived for decades. In the 1960s they moved to a waterfront house at 39 Abbotsford Parade, Abbotsford. Several Members of the Hockey Club frequently visited Harry and Isabella at Abbotsford, where they would throw in a fishing line and sip the odd ale, often not leaving until late at night. Isabella and Harry being the perfect hosts, never had the heart to tell the good-time-Charlies it was time to go, particularly when work was to beckon the next morning.

Isabella was a volunteer at the Children's Hospital for many decades. She was a kind, considerate, caring and thoughtful person who gave of her time freely and willingly for the benefit of others.

She helped at the Hockey Club where and when she could with typing, administrative duties and on the Ladies Auxiliary of the Club in the 1950s. The Ladies Auxiliary organised Club Balls, Cabaret Dances, children's Christmas Parties, and picnics to places such as the Lane Cove National Park, Clifton Gardens and Parsley Bay. Isabella often joined in with the men, as did some of the other ladies of the Club, for the annual Club Golf Day.

Isabella was a great contributor; she had an outgoing, bubbly personality which often brightened up the life of those she came into contact with. During her association with the GDHC she freely gave of her time, efforts and energies for the common good and did so willingly, in good spirits and with good cheer. In return she was loved by many. Isabella and Harry had two children, Rodney and Christine. Rodney became a mechanical engineer and is a shareholder in the Roblan Company. Christine married an anaesthetist

Wayne Houghton. Living at Bankstown when they were growing up, Rod and Christine were many kilometers from the action at Jubilee Oval and neither of them played hockey. Harry was brought up in Marrickville and started playing hockey with Glebe in 1939 when he was 14 years of age. In 1938-39 Harry had played cricket with a Saint James' Sport's Club cricket team, after being encouraged to do so by a couple of his teachers at the Newtown Technical High School on King's Street Newtown (now known as the Newtown School of the Performing Arts), Tom Irvine and Billy Atkinson. At the time Tom and Bill were playing first grade hockey for Glebe in the winter after their cricket commitments had finished.

When the cricket season finished in April 1939 Harry decided to try his hand at hockey where he played with a few friends from his cricket side. Harry started off in the Hockey Club's fourth grade team, which in 1939 played 17 games, and of these it won four, had twelve losses and had one draw. Harry enjoyed his first season even though it was not a particularly successful one on the field.

Harry also knew the Hockey Club's President at the time Charlie Humphreys (1937-1945, 89 Club games). Charlie was a police sergeant based at the Newtown Police Station. He was closely involved in the training of motorcycle police in the Moore Park Area and a onetime he was Chairman of the Police Union. Charlie was an Englishman and an accomplished hockey player; who learnt to play hockey in India. At the time India and Pakistan ruled the Hockey World.

In 1944, '45 and '46 Harry played representative hockey for the Metropolitan Senior men's team. By 1945 he had played 50 first grade games. Dave Robertson remembers Harry as an excellent left half, and difficult to get past. He held his position well. He was an efficient, effective trapper of the ball, read the game well and passed the ball to the most suitable member of his team. He was a team player, no hero runs for Harry. Dave opines that Harry's traditional methods of playing hockey are still relevant for the players of to-day. Later in his playing career, when he could not get to training and his speed became not what it was, Harry passed on his skill and approach to the game to the players coming up through the ranks. He played for many years in the Club's lower grades. The 1954 Annual Report records that he was captain of the 1954 Third Grade team, and that he was the team's Wise Old Owl. Many of the Club's up and coming players of the 1950s were mentored by Harry Butler, often known as Butch to his teammates.

Harry treated first grade players, z grade players, women, men the young and the old, equally, with compassion, encouragement and good cheer. Dave Robertson remembers Harry as being "friendly to every-one". The camaraderie and friendships formed between players and supporters in the era of Isabella and Harry Butler frequently lasted a lifetime, and often long outlived their playing and supporting days.

Harry played hockey for Glebe for twenty-two years and in this time played 356 games for the Club. Towards the end of his career he had trouble with his knees and his varicose veins, which in the end lead to his retirement from the game in 1961.

Paul Rogers remembers spending a Sunday with the Butlers at a Carnival in the late 1950s:

“It was the Annual Canterbury-Bankstown Hockey Carnival at Parry Park, Punchbowl, and unusual for Glebe, we didn’t have enough players. We were two players short. We got Frank (can’t remember his surname); he was freelancing, and a solid player. In an attempt to round up a full team of eleven, a couple of us drove over to the Butler’s house in the nearby suburb of Bankstown and cajoled, coerced, begged and eventually persuaded Harry to join the Glebe team at the Carnival. It was not the way he had expected his Sunday to unfold. Being the senior player we elected Harry captain of the team.

Rather surprisingly we made the final against Canterbury (their 1st grade side). Our full backs were George Griffiths (1957-1969, 56 Club Games, Glebe and NSW Representative Cricketer), and “Freelance” Frank, and both men could hit the ball a million miles an hour. Bennett Dunn (1950-1972, 496 Club Games) scored early in the game, and from then on our plan was to hit the ball into the storm water canal that ran through the park (it was empty, as it was low tide). This plan was specifically devised to waste as much time as possible and shorten the time Canterbury had to score an equalising goal. Our plan worked and against the odds we won 1 nil.

After our victory Harry and Isabella invited us all back to their house to celebrate, with food and drink provided. It was a great post-Carnival celebration. The events of the day were retold for decades. Isabella and Harry were great hosts to anyone who came to their house, their hospitality was legendary.”

Harry had done an apprenticeship as a fitter and turner and was responsible for the development of the pressed metal division of the Roblan business. Harry was Roblan’s first employee and learnt that Dave Robertson was starting up in business in 1945 when he saw a advertising sign painted for the business by another Club Member the late Tom Pearce (1931-1948, 199 Club games). Tom was the first Australian player produced by the Club. The business Dave established in 1945 is still going strong today, 68 years later, and the Head Office is located at Catherine Street Leichhardt in the inner west of Sydney. The company has a satellite manufacturing facility at Ingleburn in South Western Sydney. Harry was renowned for his tooling skills, sound business judgment, and insistence on a fair deal for all echelons of the tool making industry.

As a great supporter of the apprenticeship system, Harry helped in the training of many apprentices. Apprentices training at Roblan have won the NSW Apprentice of the Year Award on seven occasions, which is a record unequalled by any other engineering company in NSW. In days past some of the starting apprentices at Roblan were referred to the company on leaving school by Glebe Club Member and Father of the Glebe Juniors Vernon Turner (1942-1958, 259 Club games).

Vernon on leaving school did a sheet metal working apprenticeship. After completing this apprenticeship Vernon went back to TAFE, did his Leaving Certificate, and went on to become a school teacher, taught at Saint Mary’s High School in Western Sydney and became an excellent talent scout for the Roblan apprenticeship scheme. Current first grade player Pat Wark did a three-month placement at Roblan in 2004 in the fourth year of his mechanical engineering/commerce degree at Sydney University.

Interestingly a young accountant Jack McPharland (1948-1959, 146 Club games) became the Club's Auditor in 1949, a position he held for many years, and he played in the same team as Dave Robertson. Dave recognised Jack McPharland's accounting talents and invited him to join the staff at Roblan. Jack subsequently became Chief Financial Officer of the Company and worked at Roblan until he retired.

Harry was a keen sportsman and as well as hockey and cricket he participated in a number of different sports. He played golf, squash, and snooker and was a founding member of the Southern Alps Ski Club.

Harry contributed to Hockey Club life where and when he could, even when he was quite young. He was assistant secretary in 1943 and 1944, as well as being on the Club's Management Committee in 1944 when at 20 years of age.

He was Treasurer in 1945, '46, '47, and '48 and again in 1955 and 1956. He was assistant treasurer in 1957. He was on the Club's Management Committee for six years from 1943-1948 and again for seven years from 1955-1961.

Harry helped Editor Paul Rogers (Life Member, 1950-1984, 557 Club games) with the Club's first Red Rag Newsletter which was published on 10 May 1958. The Red Rag has been published intermittently over the years and all copies ever published are available for viewing on the Club's Web Site.

They make interesting reading, and are worth a look.

When Harry retired from Roblan in 1989, having turned 65, he moved with Isabella to the NSW South Coast. Several months after the move, Harry suffered a ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysm, and died suddenly. After Harry's death Isabella remained on the south coast where she lived life to the full, regularly swimming, walking and having a single, small nip of Grant's whisky (for medicinal purposes only) at 5 pm most afternoons. Isabella Butler (nee Grant) was of Scottish decent, and a Scottish Piper played at her Memorial Service on 8 April 2013 at Gabbys, 13 Prince Alfred Street, Berry.

Vale Isabella and Harry Butler—Rest in Peace and enjoy your Eternal Reward in Heaven. The Hockey Club Isabella and Harry nurtured and helped in the 1940s, and 1950s is still going strong to-day in 2013, only because of the contributions over the past 83 years of people such as the Butlers—long may it continue.



Photo

Harry Butler is shown in the middle of the back row. He was attending a function at the Glebe District Hockey Club, Clubhouse at Number Four Arch Jubilee Oval Glebe in 1962, to celebrate the attainment of the 500 Club Game Milestone by Jim Kenny. Jim was the first player in the Club to have achieved the 500 Club Game Milestone.

Back Row: Greg Harris, Harry Wark snr, Kelvin Dickey, Harry "Butch" Butler, Ray Thorpe, Frank Murray, and Les Waight.

Middle Row: Joe Krepp, unknown, Jack Cummings

Front Row; Jim Kenny



The Glebe team that won the 1958 Canterbury Carnival at Parry Park Punchbowl
Back row: Jack Buckley, Frank (Easts player), George Griffiths, Jack Thompson (or Gary Sullivan), Harry (Butch) Butler, Len Needham, Bennett Dunne.
Front row: Paul Rogers, Ron Payne, Max Jeffs and current Patron Bill Stubbs.