

Glebe District Hockey Club

Life Membership Biography

James Wilfred Kenny

Glebe District Hockey Club Life Member

Elected Life Member in 1952

Born on 23rd July 1914

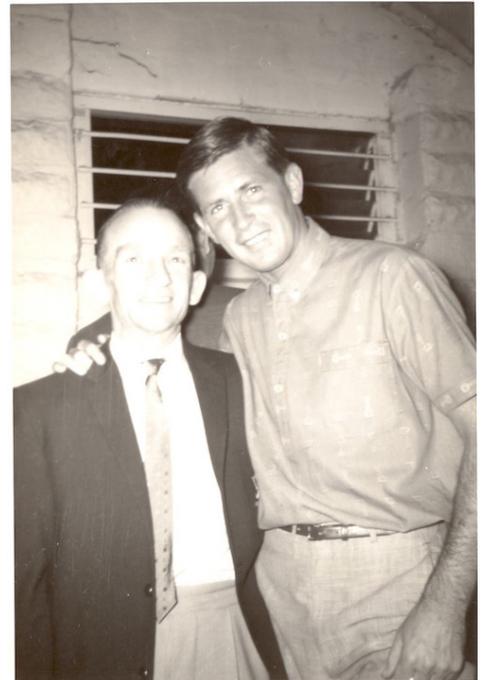
Died on 17th March 1996 (Age 82)

528 games from 1933 to 1964

James Wilfred Kenny was born on 23 July 1914 and grew up at 37 Leichhardt Street, Glebe. In 1941, at the age of 27, he married Dorothea May Byrne (known as Dot). After they were married Jim and Dot moved to 132A Blue's Point Rd North Sydney, then to 57 Belgrave St Neutral Bay and finally after their two children Lynette and Peter had left home, to 13/42 Gordon St Manly Vale, near Warringah Mall, just off Pittwater Road.

Living on the north side of the Sydney Harbour Bridge Jim and Dot reasoned that bring their children to training and games at Jubilee Oval Glebe would be a time consuming undertaking. Lynette and Peter Kenny developed sporting interests closer to home and did not play hockey for the GDHC.

Jim was a semi-skilled worker, who spent most of his working life as a factory hand at the Hallstrom Refrigerator Company which was situated in the Sydney suburb of Willoughby. The most famous refrigerator produced by the company was the 'Silent Night'.



Jimmy Kenny (Left) and Len Needham (Right) at the GDHC Clubhouse 4 Railway Arch

The owner of the company Sir Edmund Hallstrom was a major sponsor of the Taronga Park Zoo, which overlooks Sydney Harbour in Mosman, a harbour-side Sydney suburb.

Jim, who started playing hockey for Glebe in 1933 aged 18 years, was the first Club member to reach the 300, 400 and 500 senior Club games milestones. He reached the 500 Club game milestone in 1962.

Jimmy continued to play hockey for Glebe up until 1964 and by the time he retired from the game aged 50 years he had taken the field 528 times for the Club, a record which stood for 11 years until Harry Wark Snr broke it in 1975. Harry went on to play 754 senior games for Glebe. Harry's son Les, now retired, holds the record for the most games played for the Club, having played 813 senior games for Glebe. Les reached the 800 Club games milestone in 2008 when he was aged 53 years.

In the mid-1930s and for the next 10 years Jim played five or six seasons in first grade, but most of his Club games were played in the lower grades. Jim won several first grade and many lower grade premierships with the Club. He had a full trophy cabinet and had won first, second, third and fourth grade premierships. He was a short stocky chap, with a powerful hit and strong tackle.

The fact that he was not playing first grade did not concern Jim. He was a GDHC Clubman through and through and delighted in the camaraderie that playing for Glebe provided for him, in whatever grade that may have been.

The 1939 Annual Report, the Second Grade report had the following to say about Jim "Our left fullback J Kenny revealed his usual consistent form and he is undoubtedly the star of the defence." In first grade were two good full-backs Tom Taylor and Charlie Humphreys. These two players kept Jim out of first grade, although he was of first grade standard. By the end of that season, Jim had played 104 games for the club.



Back Row: J. W. Taylor (Hon Treas), T. Taylor, C. Bush, K. Dickie, W. Ryan, C. Humphries (President).

Centre Row: V. Burton, J. Cummins, J. Quinlan (Capt), J. Taylor J. Kenny, P. Rogers.

Front Row: W. Atkinson, S. Cairnduff, V. Turner

Insert: T. Irvine

The 1944 Annual Report stated that Jim, who was captain of the second grade team. "J Kenny who skippered the team was an inspiration to the side and the old general has lost none of his form."

1945 First grade report "J Kenny (left back) deserved his elevation to the team due to splendid form in trial games, which he maintained throughout the season." In 1945 Jim got a pennant for playing 100 first grade games.

By the end of the 1946 season Jim had played 210 Club games for Glebe, the second person to have achieved this milestone. Fellow Club Life-Member Jack Quinlan achieved the 200 Club game milestone during the 1944 season.

During the 1949 season Jim became the player who had played the highest number of games for the Club surpassing the 257 Club games played by Jack Quinlan who had retired from playing hockey after the 1947 season. At the end of the 1949 season Jim had played 262 Club games.

At the end of the 1952 season Jim had played 302 Club games the first Club Members to have played 300 Club games.

Jim was elected a Life Member at the 1952 AGM held at the Glebe Town Hall on 11 March 1952. His Life Membership was moved by Mr Frank Murray and seconded by Mr Harry Wark. Mr Jack Worley and Mr William (Bill) Ryan spoke in favour of the motion. A ballot was conducted and Mr Kenny was successfully elected as the Club's third Life Member.

The 1953 Annual Report had this to say about Jim who played in the Premiership winning third grade team: "The team was very ably led by veteran Jim Kenny (Jim was 39 at the time) Jim has been playing hockey with the Glebe Club since its inception and during that time has amassed the grand total of over 315 games, a record for the Club and very close to, if not a record for the Sydney Association. The younger players of the Club would do well to take a leaf out of Jim's



1944 GDHC 2nd Grade Team at Jubilee Oval, with the white Federation picket fence in the background and the political graffiti painted on the railway viaduct, "OFFICIAL LABOR VOTE MORAN".

Back Row L - R: Vince Halls Snr, Allan Cross, Vic Burton, Paul Rogers, Vern Turner, Kevin Spears.

Front Row L - R: Jacky Brown, Jack Quillan, Glen Elliott, Jim Kenny, Billy Taylor.

book in as far as practice is concerned. I don't think he missed a Sunday morning at Harold Park. On the field he is a tower of strength to the younger players, helping them whenever possible. Jim is a good man to have behind you; one that never gives up."

To clarify the point made by the author of the 1953 Third Grade Report, Jim started playing for the Club in 1933, which was the first season of the Glebe District Hockey Club. Jim did not play in the 1931 and 1932 Saint James' Sports' Club Hockey Teams. The Saint James' Sports' Club Hockey Teams became the Glebe District Hockey Club in December 1932.

The fourth grade report of 1955 says of Jim, "Jim Kenny A lifer with the spirit of youth."

The fourth grade report of 1956 says of Jim "A good man to have behind you, one that never gives up."

During the 1957 season the selectors were finding it hard to fill the second grade goal keeping position, so Jim put his hand-up for the task and did a great job for the team. 1957 was Jim's first year playing as a goalkeeper; he was 43 years old at the time. Jim spent the next eight years playing in goals.

Jim was the first goalkeeper to be made a Life Member of the Club with goalkeepers Colin Brown and George Manou being made Life Members of the GDHC in 1989 and 2012. In those days goalkeepers wore a box and cricket pads with no other protective equipment, no gloves, no helmet, and no chest pad. Goalkeepers of that era relied heavily on agility, a good eye and anticipation to keep the ball out of the net.

By the end of the 1958 season Jim had played 412 games for the Club.

Jim played in the 1960 second grade team that won the Sydney Hockey Association second grade Competition and the Second Grade Report in the season's Annual Report had this to say about jim "My hat goes off to Jimmy for the Club Spirit and "guts "he shows of a Saturday and there are many of our members who could take a leaf out of his book."

At the end of the 1962 season Jim had played 501 Club games. To mark the achievement the Club organised a presentation night for Jim, where he was awarded Pennant, a silver tray and a Club Blazer to commemorating the exceptional achievement. The night was an outstanding success, well attended by many ex-players, friends of Jim from the early days of the Club and



Jimmy Kenny celebrating 500 games for the GDHC at Number 4 Railway Arch in 1962

current players, friends and supporters. Players from other Sydney hockey clubs also attended the evening at the GDHC Club House, number four Railway Arch Jubilee Oval, Glebe.

Players who played with Jim in the 1963 second grade team were Barry Goodrick, David Lisk, Peter Howe, Graeme Kirkland, Harry Wark snr, Brain Howe, Dennis Brown, Fred team became Life-Member of the Club.

Harry Wark remembers playing in the Glebe second grade team at the Gladesville Mental Hospital grounds on the banks of the Parramatta River against Ryde in the early 1960s with Jim as its goalkeeper. A Ryde forward sent a cracking shot at the Glebe goal which struck Jim flush on the forehead. He barely saw it coming. The ball rebounded outside the circle and no goal was scored. Jim was knocked out cold for a fraction of a second, before his consciousness was quickly restored. The first words uttered by Jim as he came around were "did I save it". He was that sort of bloke, always putting the team first and his own interests second. Fortunately Jim made a complete recovery from his concussion and finished the game, which Glebe won. He was a tough old bugger, and never gave up a goal easily.

Up until the 1970s hockey balls used by the Club were in the main cricket balls that were painted white. A thin nail would be lightly tapped into the ball and a piece of string attached to the nail. The string would be tied to a piece of timber dowel supported above the floor at both ends. A drip catching arrangement of old newspapers would be placed underneath to catch any drips from the balls after they were painted. The balls would be dunked in a tin of white enamel paint and left to dry before being ready for use as a hockey ball.



GDHC Social Golfing weekend. J. Kenny second from the right

Working for the Hallstrom refrigerator company Jim was in close contact with the company's paint room. Jim was able to source the paint for the Club's hockey balls from the Hallstrom factory. Jim supplied the paint for more than 30 years. The same paint was used for the Glebe Club's hockey balls as was used to paint the Hallstrom refrigerators of the day, nothing but top quality paint for the Glebe Club's hockey balls.

Jim was not a wealthy man but the Club's Annual reports record that Jim was still able to donate a modest amount of money over and above his yearly playing fees. For many years Jim would donate a guinea (one pound one shilling), or 10 shillings to the Club's consolidated revenue.

Jim was a dour, hardworking, reliable, consistent, dependable, plain vanilla type of chap. He was not flashy, or spectacular either on or off the hockey field. Jim was never much involved in the administrative, or coaching side of the Club, his contribution was as a player and as a long-term supporter.

He was a foot soldier rather than a general. He was a doer rather than a talker. His involvement with the Club stretched from 1933 to 1993, a 60 year span, which is a long time in anyone's books.

Jim played with a heavy stick, and hit the ball crisply and powerfully. He got a lot of mileage out of his sticks, which were held together with glue and tape of various sorts. His stick would never have passed through the two inch ring, a legal requirement which has been in the rules of the game almost from when hockey as an organised sport was first played.

When in doubt about what to do when he had the ball on his stick in a defensive position Jim would crack the ball towards the oppositions backline, where the backline met the sideline, on the same side of the field where he had possession of the ball. Jim was never one for the short passing game when his team was hard pressed in desperate defence.

Jim was not a volatile chap and his calm, uncomplicated analysis of the game and his simple, easily understood comments at the half-time team talk and at the post match team gathering were greatly appreciated by his fellow team mates.



Jimmy Kenny playing for the GDHC as Goalkeeper.

Jim never aspired to play representative hockey and was content and fulfilled playing for the Glebe District Hockey Club. Playing with his mates on a Saturday was what Jim played hockey for. The camaraderie of the Club and the camaraderie of the team in which he was playing was what kept Jim coming back to play year after year.

The smell of the liniment, which Jim used frequently, the idle banter between players and the highs and lows of the game Jim found fulfilling, interesting and stimulating.

Jim was Vice-President of the Club for four years from 1946-1949. He was elected Club Patron in 1962 succeeding Mr Kelvin Dickey and remained Club Patron for 31 years.

Jim played his last game for Glebe in 1964 but continued his association with the Club as Patron for another 30-years until 1993.

Jim was always well behaved on the field, a good sport who accepted bad luck with equanimity and good luck with humility. He always accepted the decision of the umpire as final and had a positive influence on the psychology of the teams in which he played. He was the penalty corner hitter for many of the teams in which he played and scored countless goals during his hockey career.

In 1976 Jim had donated a perpetual trophy to the Club which is still awarded annually to the Best and Fairest Senior Player for the season.



GDHC 1937 - 1938 2nd Grade team

After he stopped driving in the 1980s, when Jim attended games at Federal he got the bus from Manly Vale to the City, then the 431 or 433 bus from the City to Glebe Point and walked the 300 metres from the Glebe Point Bus Terminus across Jubilee Park and the Allen Truss Bridge over Johnston's Creek Canal to the Federal Park field. Approaching 80 years of age Jim felt the return trip by public transport from Manly Vale to Federal Park unmanageable. Not being able to attend Club games Jim asked to be replaced as Club Patron.

The Homebush State Sport's Centre's synthetic turf complex became the venue for the first grade games in 1986, meaning the grass field at Jubilee Oval Glebe was no longer the Glebe first grade team's home ground. Second grade games were also held at Homebush in the late 1980s. Jim found the trip from Manly Vale to Homebush by public transport difficult and from the mid-1980s he seldom attended higher grade games.

Up until 1993 he attended the lower grade games at Jubilee Oval Glebe/Federal Park Annandale when he could and enjoyed mixing with the players, ex-players, and the many Glebe supporters who attended Glebe home games. Jim found attending the Glebe home games a great day out. Paradoxically the lower grade teams had twice or three times as many spectators watching their games as did the higher grade teams at Homebush.

At Annual General Meetings in the late 70s and 80s Jim had repeatedly asked to be replaced as Patron arguing that the position would be better served by a Club Member who was more active

in the Club. GDHC Members at these AGMs ignored Jim's request, no one stood against him, and he remained Patron for a further 20 years.

Jim was a link to the first GDHC team of 1933 and to the Club's Founder Reverend Brother Macartan Keegan. Club Members wanted to retain this connection and continuity to their roots for as long as possible. Jim had many stories about Brother Keegan and Club Members loved hearing about them. Brother Keegan left Glebe for Lahore, then part of India in 1937. Lahore is now the capital city of Pakistan.

Even though he did not attend many games Jim always followed the affairs of the GDHC closely, looking up the team's results in the Sport's Section of Monday's newspapers. He knew all the results.

Jim became unwell in 1993, which prevented him making the trip from Manly Vale to Federal Park Annandale. It was at this time that he relinquished his position as Club Patron and he was succeeded by Mr Harry Wark snr.

Jim's wife Dot had a domestic house cleaning business. She worked for the same people, same households for several decades. For some of her clients she was more of a bush psychologist, therapist than a house cleaner, she acted as a sounding board and trusted advisor to them. She was an upbeat cheerful woman, discrete, approachable and insightful who would always help if she could. She was a prominent woman in Club affairs for over 35 years. She was on the Club's Ladies Committee, Social Committee and Catering Group almost from the time she became associated with the Club until when Jim stopped his strong involvement in Club affairs.

Jim and Dot were regulars at all Club social functions. They were great supporters of the social life of the Club. Throughout his life Jim was a keen fisherman.

Following his death on 17 March 1996, he was cremated at the Northern Suburb's Crematorium. Dot May Kenny died on Saint Patrick's Day, 17 March 2003 at the age of 82 and like Jim was cremated at the Northern Suburb's Crematorium.

Research for this Biography was conducted by Mr Max Solling, local Glebe Historian, and Mr Chris Morton, of the Genealogical Society. Their efforts are acknowledged and much appreciated by the Hockey Club.



Jim Kenny cutting a celebratory cake at the GDHC 25th Anniversary function in 1956. People L - R: Jack Worley GDHC President, Jim Kenny, President of the Sydney Hockey Association Mr R O Banks