

Glebe District Hockey Club

Life Membership Biography

Kenneth Edward Wark Snr

Born 13th January 1926 - Died 4th of February 2009 aged 83 years

Elected a Life member of the Glebe District Hockey Club in 1969.

Patron of the Glebe District Hockey Club 2002 - 2008

Ken was born in a house owned by his parents at 28 Victoria Street Rozelle (now named 28 Quirk Street), just behind Saint Joseph's Catholic Church. His father Foster Henry Wark was in the meat wholesale business. Before she was married his mother, Molly King was a dancer/actress with JC Williamson. Ken's maternal great-grandfather Charles King, a timber worker, had migrated to Australia from Wexford in Ireland in the 1800's. His paternal grandfather Joseph Wark was an abattoir worker and his paternal great grandfather James Wark was a marine engineer who was born in Glasgow, and came to New South Wales from Scotland in 1854.



The Darling Street Demonstration Primary School, Rozelle was where Ken had his primary education. For secondary school he went to Ultimo Technical College. On leaving school Ken got an apprenticeship as a fitter and turner at Australian Consolidated Industry's Glass making plant in South Dowling Street, Surry Hills. After finishing his apprenticeship Ken worked for a year or two at ACI. In 1946 Ken joined his older brother, the late Harry Wark, at the family butcher shop at 107 Mansfield Street Rozelle. Ken and Harry worked together in the butcher shop for over 30 years until 1978. When it became clear that none of next generation wanted to continue the family tradition in the meat business, Ken decided to get a job with easier hours. In

1978 he was employed as a marine fitter at Goat Island with the Maritime Services Board, where he stayed until retirement in 1991 aged 65 years.

In the mid to late 1940's Ken was a keen motorbike enthusiast and rode a 750 cc Harley W2A. He raced bikes and loved nothing better than tinkering around with bike engines. Several of his co-workers at ACI were motorbike enthusiasts, and one long weekend in 1946 his motorbike group went for a trip to the Wallacia Picnic Grounds. Also at the Wallacia Picnic Grounds was Joyce Bishop, an attractive girl from Maroubra, who was making one of her regular visits to Wallacia for a weekend's horse riding. One of Ken's co-riders, Rex Atkins, a fellow ACI worker lived at Maroubra near Joyce. Rex introduced Ken to Joyce, and they struck up a friendship. One thing lead to another, and Ken and Joyce married at Saint Jude's Church Randwick on 19 February 1948.

After they married Ken and Joyce moved into Flat One, 107 Mansfield Street Rozelle, behind the butcher shop where they stayed for over six years. His brother Harry with his wife Molly lived above them at Flat Two, 107 Mansfield Street. In 1954 Ken and Joyce built a house on a block of land at 33 Burnell Street Five Dock. Foster Henry had bought the block in the early 1930's at the time the area was first subdivided. They lived there their entire married life, celebrating 60 years of marriage in February 2008.



Ken died in the Palliative Care Ward at Canterbury Hospital on 4 February 2009, two weeks after he suffered his second stroke and three weeks after his 83 birthday. His first stroke which severely affected his speech occurred on 25 August 2005. Joyce and Ken had three children Robert (1951-), Gary (1956-) and Ken (1961-) and he was grandfather to six.

Five Dock, where Ken lived bordered Iron Cove, an estuary of the Parramatta River System. After moving to Five Dock, he quickly developed an interest in boats and for decades was heavily involved in the Half Moon Bay Yacht Club, a little boat club 400 metres from where he lived. He was Commodore of the Club for over 20 years. His first boat was called the Longboat bought in 1970 and in 1979 he purchased a small half-cabin boat called the Lazy Pat. After retirement from work Ken spent many hours socialising and playing pool at the boat club.

Another pursuit of Ken's was golf and after retiring he spent many hours happily chasing the little white ball around Barnwell Park Golf Course with his friends. He also enjoyed playing at Pennant Hills with Neville Adcock, a neighbour, who went to Rozelle Primary School at the same time as Ken and his brother Harry.

Ken enjoyed motorbike racing, boating and golf, but his real passion was hockey. His first game of hockey was at Ryde Oval in 1938 at the age of 13. Ken had gone along to watch his older brother Harry play for his school hockey team, the Drummoyne Boys High School. Harry's team was short and Ken was recruited to play goalkeeper. He developed an interest in the game and established a social network with players in the team. Ken played for his secondary school, the Ultimo Technical School Team, in a school's competition. After leaving school Ken played for the Balmain Police Boy's team, which was comprised mainly of men who had played hockey while at Drummoyne Boys High School.



The Balmain Police Boy's Club team trained at Allen's Reserve, a grassy area which adjoined Johnson's Creek Canal in Forest Lodge. Teams from the Glebe District Hockey Club also trained at Allen's Reserve. After World War Two, houses were built on the once grassy area, which ran from the banks of the storm water canal to where the Glebe Police Youth Club is now situated.

In 1946 the Balmain Police Boy's team won the second grade competition of the Metropolitan Hockey Association beating Glebe in the grand-final. Being a one team Club, under the rules of the Association, the Police Boy's team was ineligible for promotion to first grade. Glebe Secretary of the day Mr J W Taylor approached Ken and his brother Harry at Allen's Reserve one day after training, and suggested to them that if they wanted to play in the Metropolitan Hockey Competition First Grade Competition, they would be more than welcome to play for the Glebe Club.

It was a difficult decision for them to make, as they had many close friends in the Police Boys Club Team. In the end, after much soul searching Ken and Harry commenced their first season with Glebe in 1947. Ken continued his association with the Glebe Club until he died. He had a 62-year association with Glebe and was Patron of the Club until November 2008. Three months before he died. Ken's endorsed candidate Martin Howe was elected Patron at the 2008 Annual General Meeting

By any measure Ken was one of Glebe's great sons. He was a dynamo on the field and held many off field positions, which he always performed to the best of his ability.

Club Life-Member Paul Rogers recalled that just to run onto the field with Ken inspired them. He had that sort of impact. A fullback who was always pushing up into the attack, Ken was gifted with great reflexes and great recovery. Ken played with commitment and passion. A member of the Glebe first grade team from 1947 to 1968, Ken played in 13 first grade premierships, a phenomenal record, which will be hard to beat. Ken played 342 first grade games for Glebe and was 42 when he played his last first grade game, 21 years after he took the field for the first time in the First Grade side. Only Pat Nilan has played more first grade games than Ken. Pat played 361 first grade games between 1959 and 1978. Between 1947 and 1982, Ken played 492 games for Glebe.

For 15 years from 1969 to 1983, Ken was the unofficial groundsman at Federal Park Annandale. In the early 60's, Federal Park was a piece of wet, spongy, wasteland and its transformation into a magnificent hockey field was due largely to the voluntary labour of Ken Wark. He added topsoil, raising the level about six inches, improved the drainage and mowed the grass every week during the winter competition, making the field suitable for the First Grade competition. Casuarinas and eucalypts were planted on the edge of the field.

Ken served on the Club's Management Committee for decades. He was elected a Life-Member in 1968, served as Treasurer in 1976 and 1977 and was Club Patron from 2002 until 2008. All of Ken's children have played over 400 Club games each, for Glebe, and three of Ken's grandchildren currently play for the Club. Ken's youngest son Ken played 210 games for Australia and competed at three Olympic Games, Seoul, Barcelona and Atlanta, winning a silver and bronze medal.



Ken quickly established himself as a player of considerable talent, being selected for NSW Seniors in his first Glebe Season. Not one to take a backward step, he was very competitive and tough, and became involved in a lot of hard play on the field. Being an Australian Player, Ken was often given the 'treatment' by the young, up-and-coming opposition forwards. This was always a mistake as Ken usually dished it back in spades – he never even thought about taking a prisoner.

Ken Wark was always one of the first choices in the NSW seniors from 1947 to 1956 and became Glebe's third Australian Representative when he toured New Zealand in 1952 and again played for his country in 1954.

Ken played for Australia before hockey was an Olympic sport, playing against New Zealand on tours there in 1952 and 1954. He played for NSW seniors in 1947, 1950-1954 and in 1956. In 1967 and 1968 he was coach of the NSW under 21 team, and in 1972 and 1973 he was coach of the NSW senior team. For decades he helped supervise Hockey Camps for junior players. In 2007 he was elected a Life Member of Hockey NSW.

The world is a better place as a result of Ken's efforts and activities. He contributed to the betterment of his fellow man, where and when he could. Hopefully he is now enjoying his eternal reward in heaven. To his wife Joyce and to Ken's family, the Hockey Club extends its heartfelt condolences.

Ken has handed to current Members of the Glebe District Hockey Club, a vibrant, flourishing, optimistic organisation, and his contribution is greatly appreciate by us all.