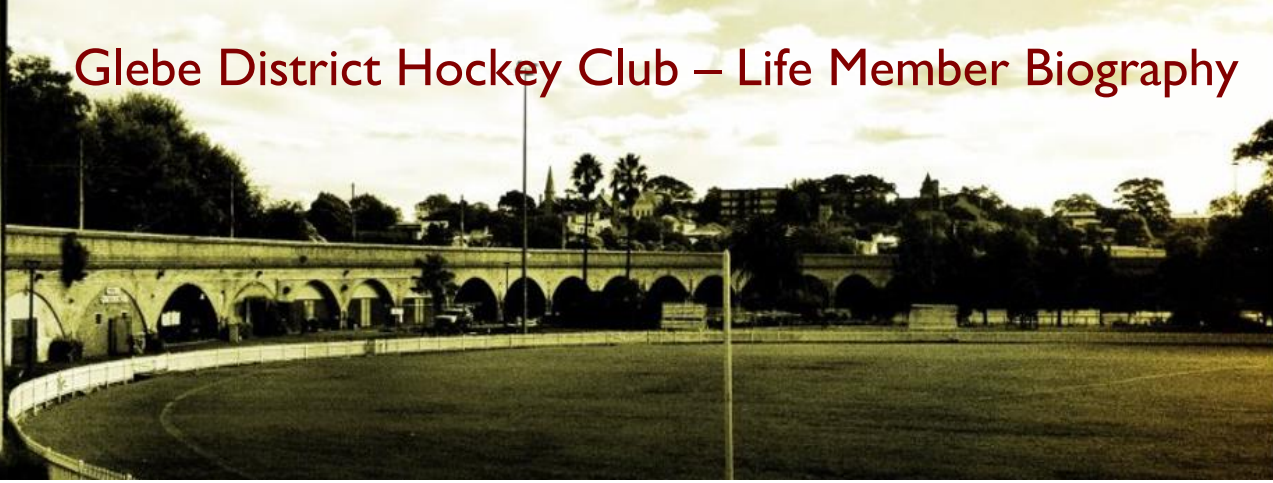


Glebe District Hockey Club – Life Member Biography



Les Wark

Elected Life Member in 1998

Born 17 April 1955

Les' father, brother and uncle played hockey for Glebe and he hit the ball around on the sideline of senior fixtures from a very young age.

He joined the Club's organized junior teams in the early 1960s, but at that time the Club's junior numbers were at a low ebb. In the 1960, 1961, 1962 GDHC Annual Reports there were seven lines written about the Club's junior teams. In the 1960 Annual Report Secretary Ray Thorpe wrote "We nominated, but could not field 2 under 13 teams. Of our 2 under 15 teams, I understand Glebe rarely fielded a full team."



Les running onto the field through a guard of honor, to play for his fifth grade team in August 2009, for his 800th Senior Game for Glebe, which was played against the UNSW, at the Olympic Pitch, Homebush

In the Club's 1963 Annual [Grab your reader's attention with a great quote from the document or use this space to emphasize a key point. To place this text box anywhere on the page, just drag it.]

Report Club President Kelvin Dickey opined about the deteriorating junior's situation "if something is not done soon the name of the Glebe District Hockey Club could become extinct."

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One season in the early 1960s Les remembers that the Glebe teams went to Hefferon Park, Maroubra for their Saturday morning games, to play Randwick teams. The Randwick teams were on average comprised of older boys and the Glebe teams got “flogged” each week. One of the Glebe teams, after a pick-up from the Club House at Jubilee Oval, was transported to Hefferon Park in the back of Harry Wark’s old green Austin panel van. Les remembers that having a team of juniors in the back of a small panel van was an interesting experience!

On one occasion, after playing at Hefferon Park, the van driven by Eddy Johnstone, Les’ maternal uncle, who was transport officer for the day, had a minor smash. Fortunately, no one was injured and the smash provided the team with a topic of conversation for the rest of the season.

It was a Sydney Hockey Association regulation that all District Club’s field at least four junior teams. Glebe had failed to meet its regulatory requirements in 1960, 61, and 62. Because of this dearth of junior players, in early 1963 Glebe’s management entered preliminary discussions with the Western Suburb’s Hockey Club about an amalgamation.

These discussions did not progress, and the Club’s Management Committee of the day made an impassionate plea for Club’s senior players to become involved in the revitalization of the Club’s junior ranks. In 1963 Glebe fielded four junior teams in a severely rain interrupted competition that was run at Jubilee Oval, Glebe. Les, aged 8, played in a team called the Untouchables coached by Victor Westacott.

Les’ time in the Club’s juniors was during a rebuilding phase. This rebuild was the work of Pat Nilan, Robert Brown, Victor Westacott, and Barry Goodrick, none of whom had children playing in the juniors at that time, and Molly Wark, Les’ mother. These people were soon joined by Colin Brown, Dennis Brown, Graeme Gilmour, Martin Howe, Kevin Weeks, John Cowan, Maureen Cowan, Graham Lisk, Garry Manou and Kathy Casey. The revitalization was slow but steady.



In 1964 Les was selected in the Under 10 Sydney Team. He was successful in selection to Sydney teams each subsequent year as he progressed through the Glebe juniors.

In 1966 Les played in the under 12 Glebe team that played in the North West Zone Junior Hockey Competition. Clubs competing in this Competition were Cumberland, Gordon,

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Northern Districts, Ryde and Western Suburbs. Robert “Charlie” Brown coached the team and Molly Wark was its Manager. Players in the Team were John McMahon, Paul Abate, John Chelpko, Adrian Howe, Ray Holden, Paul Puckeridge, Phillip Ioannou, Tony Morgills, Murray Reynolds and Stephen Casey.

Les’ under 14 team coach Colin Brown said this about Les in the 1968 Team report “Very versatile forward, should improve if he becomes keener at training.” Les remembers that training of Wednesday nights at Jubilee consisted on a 15 minute hit up then a game of “hide and seek” that ran for about 1 hour, with the old score board, which was situated near the toilet block being home.

In 1970 Les was coached in the Under 16 team by Pat Nilan, who at the time was a current Australian representative and had played at the Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964 and the Mexican Olympic Games in 1968. These days, current Australian players are not remotely connected to hockey at the junior grass roots, and the game is poorer for this disconnect.

Les started out in the senior grades in 1970, playing in the fifth grade with his father Harry, his uncle Ken and cousin Gary before being promoted to the fourths, which finished as Minor Premiers and Premiers in this competition. This was an excellent start to Les’ senior hockey career. In 1971 he won the V J Turner Cup for being the most improved and best behaved junior under the age of 16 years. Also in that year Les made his first 1st grade appearance when he played full back against North Sydney at Primrose Park.

From 1971 to 1972 he mostly played second grade, and in 1973 was playing games in the Club’s first grade team when regular first graders were occasionally unavailable. Also in 1973, Les won the W J Oldfield Cup for being the most improved and best behaved junior during the season. In 1974 Les played in the first grade team that won the Premiership, beating Saint George 3-2 in the grand-final. He was selected in the NSW Under 21 team in 1974, 1975 and 1976.



Les playing for the Glebe First Grade Team in the mid-1970s.

In 1976 Les played in the undefeated first grade team that beat Saint George 4-2 in the Grand-Final at Saint Paul’s Oval, Sydney University. Fellow players were Graham Bell, Greg Corben, Kevin Sweeney, Ian Cooke, Ian Mutton, Martin Howe, Geoff Paterson, Robert Diviney, Jeff Dearing and Pat Nilan (captain).

In 1977 Les was the Club’s Social Secretary, and played in the Club’s Premiership winning first grade first grade team. Les played for the NSW senior team in 1977 and 1980. By the

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end of the 1978 season Les had played 207 senior games for Glebe. He played in the Club's first grade team until 1991.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s indoor hockey, played during summer, was popular and Glebe had teams in several divisions of the Sydney Indoor Hockey Competition. Les played in the Glebe Super Eight Team which won the competition in 1978 and 1979. Players in the Glebe Super Eight Indoor Team along with Les included: Graham Lisk, Ian Mutton, Robert Brown (coach), Geoff Paterson, Tony Cowan, Vernon Howe, Greg Corben, Graham Bell, Robert Diviney, Kevin Sweeney, John McDonald, Gary Wark, Warren Birmingham, and Royce Jenkins.

In 1981, 1982, 1983 he was the Club Captain and a Member of the Club's Management Committee. In 1981 others on the Management Committee were Graeme Gilmour, Harry Wark snr, Robert Wark, Colin Smith, Kevin Sweeney, Tom Casey, Colin Rochester, Warren Dell, Geoff Paterson and John Diviney. In 1982 he won the W J Taylor Cup, which is awarded annually to the Club member: "who has set the best example by consistent play and general demeanour."



Super 8 & Indoor Champions 1978

Ian Mutton Greg Corben Robert Brown Les Wark Robert Diviney Geoff Paterson
Graham Lisk Grahm "Dinga" Bell

In 1982 he played in the Club's First Grade team that won the Sydney Hockey Association Premiership, had his first season as coach of the Glebe Women's Hockey Club First Grade team.

In 1985 Les was the captain coach of the Club's first grade team, with Bill Stubbs as its manager. Also in 1985 he won the J W Kenny Cup for being the Best and Fairest Senior player in the club for that year.

Les played 303 first grade games for Glebe from 1973 to 1991 a period of 18 years, and was its captain for six years, and its coach for five years. He was succeeded as first grade coach in 1992 by Pat Nilan.

By the end of the 1988 season Les had played 401 senior games for Glebe. In 1989 Les was elected the Club's Assistant Secretary. In 1990, he served on the Club's Management Committee, was the Club's Assistant Treasurer, Club Coach and the first grade's team coach. In 1991 he was the Club's Vice-President, Club Coach, first grade team coach, and a Management Committee Member. In 1992 Les was the Club Trainer and captain-coach of the third grade team.

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In 1993 Les coached the women's First Grade team, the Sydney Under 21 men's team, was a NSW men's selector and a National U/21 selector, Glebe's Publicity, Social and Carnivals Organizer, a Member of the Club's Management Committee, as well as playing in the Club's Second Grade team.

In 1994 Les was the Club Coach, men's First Grade coach, Assistant women's First Grade coach, and played in the Club's third grade team. Players in the 1994 first grade team included: Aaron Nilan, Shane Nilan, Glen Barnes (from Maitland), Stephen Hurst (from Bathurst), Steven Cain (Port Macquarie), Craig Greaves, Warren "Buster" Birmingham (Coraki), Simeon Booth, Pat McCann, Craig Stubbs, Brett Stubbs, Colin Rochester, Ken Wark, Brad Goodridge, Alan Alderson, Peter Busch, Stuart Corkery and George Manou.



The Glebe Women's First Grade Team of 1996. This photo was taken at the Little Bay Turf the home ground of UNSW.

Back Row L-R: Les Wark (coach), Mary Wark, Rowena Mackie, Stacey Turner, Kate Rowe, Kerrie Wark, Bethan Richards, and Rebecca Harrison.

Front Row L-R: Dale Phipps, Jane Whitham, Cathy Savill, Helen Howe, Colleen Howe, Megan Byrnes and Megan Rivers.

In 1995 Les was Club Vice President, on the Club's Management Committee, stepped in half-way through the season, on the resignation of Keith Corkery to become Club Secretary, and was assistant coach of the women's Third Grade team. He played in the 1995 Premiership winning Fourth Grade team, which comprised: Mick Bougoukas, Harry Wark, Garry Wark, Kieran Diviney, Steve Casey (captain), Roger Byrne, Brent Gilmour, Shane Casey, Ken Bennett, Adrian Howe, Jason Taylor, Saul Rivers, Glen Dunn and Les.

Les' first year as a junior coach was in 1983 when he coached the Club's Under 13 team. He recommenced his junior coaching career twelve years later in 1995, when he coached the Glebe Under 11 Vipers, in which his son Simon played.

In 1996 Les served as the Club's Secretary, Public Officer and Management Committee Member, coached the Club's First Grade women's team, and won a Premiership with the Club's Third Grade team that comprised: David Krepp (goal-keeper), Les Wark, Colin Sargent, Jason Greaves, Danny O'Brien (captain), Adam Campano, Geoff Hammett, Richard Pate, Colin Rochester, Jeff Busch, Warren "Waka" Benfield, Anthony Wark and Adrian Searle. On the junior side in 1996, Les coached the Club's Under 13 Redback Team.

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In 1997 Les was Club Secretary, Club Public Officer, Management Committee Member, won a Premiership with the Club's Third Grade team, and coached the women's First Grade team. Players in the 1997 women's first grade team coached by Les were: Mary Wark, Rowena Mackie, Stacey Turner, Kate Rowe, Kerrie Wark, Bethan Richards, Rebecca Harrison (goal-keeper), Dale Phipps, Jane Whittam, Cathy Savill, Helen Howe, Colleen Howe, Megan Byrnes and Megan Rivers.

He was replaced as Secretary in 1998 by Eddie Crook, the parent of a junior player, Alex Crooke, but continued to serve on the Club's Management Committee. In 1998 Natalie White succeeded Les as women's First Grade coach. In recognition of his many years of service to the Club he was elected a Life-Member in 1998.

In 1988 Les became actively involved in the Club's Synthetic Turf Committee and has remained involved in the Club's efforts to site a site a multipurpose synthetic turf in the Glebe Area for over 30 years. He has been Convenor of this Committee, off and on for close to 20 years.

In 1999 Les captained the Club's Fourth Grade team, and at the end of this season had played 601 senior Club games. He coached the Glebe Under 13 Strikers to the Central Area Premiership. Players in this team included: Gary Backhus, Scott Bortfield, Andrew Cheong, Thomas Dodd, Zach Farlow, Andrew Fox, Andrew Glynne, Dean McWhinney (gaol-keeper), Alistair Moran, Ian Paterson, Tom Schlosser, Michael Wark, and Simon Wark, with Geoff Bortfield as the Team's Manger.



In 2000 and 2001 Les played fourth grade and in 2000 he coached the Under 13 Tigers team which was undefeated, and won the Central Area Competition.

Les was elected Club Secretary in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 served on the Management Committee in these years and played in the Club's sixth grade team in 2002, the fifth grade team in 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 the Premiership winning fourth grade team of 2004. In 2003 he coached the Under Seventeen team to the Premiership. Players in this team included Scott Bortfield, Andrew Cheong, Scott Cornish, Jesse Cox, Zach Farlow, Andrew Fox, Luke Freeman, Tim Frommer, Angus Glynne, Scott

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Howard, Dean McWhinney (goalkeeper), Alister Moran, Tom Pacey, Ian Paterson, Michael Wark and Simon Wark.

At the end of the 2004 season Les had played 714 senior Club games for the Club. In 2004, 2005 and 2007 he coached the Glebe Under 17 team to a Sydney Hockey Association Premiership. The 2004 Grand-Final was an epic game with the team winning 6-5 in sudden death extra-time against Sutherland, after being behind for most of the second half.

In 2006, 2007 and 2008 Les played in the Club's Veteran team in the Homebush Veteran's Competition, and won the B Division Premiership in 2006. Players in the 2006 team included Craig Bagley, Donald Ball, Mick Bougoukas, Peter Busch, Steve Casey, John Cullen, Terry Diviney, Leo Kalispiros, Steve Magill, Garry Manou, George Manou, Keith Marsh, Robert McDonald, Danny O'Brien, Amrat Parbhu, Geoff Roberts, Colin Rochester, Craig Stubbs, and Robert Wark. In 2008 Les coached the Men's Second Grade team.

Towards the end of the 2008 season Les played his 800th senior game for Glebe, in the fifth grade game against UNSW at the Olympic Pitch at Homebush. This is a Club record, and Les played every year from 1970 to 2008, 38 years, to accomplish the feat.

Les was succeeded as Secretary in 2009 by Danny O'Brien, after his seven-year stint in this position. He played some games in the Club's Fifth Grade team in 2009, but his knees were showing signs of wear and he found the knee pain and discomfort after the game a real problem. This prompted Les to retire at the end of the 2009 season, having played a record 813 senior games for Glebe.



A photo of Les and his family taken after his 800th game at Homebush Olympic Pitch L – R: Simon Wark, Les Wark, Carole Wark, Amy Wark

In his 20s Les was an active Member of the Australian Army Reserve, going to training camps and learning maritime skills. During his time with the Army Reserve Les coached the Australian Combined Services Hockey Teams at the Australian Country Championships and on overseas tours.

After retiring from playing hockey Les took up bike riding and joined the Lidcombe-Auburn Cycle Club (LACC). He cycled two or three times a week, most weeks, and this keep him fit and it was much kinder to his knees. He developed many friendships at the cycle Club, and has been with the LACC for over ten years. In his 50s Les cycled extensively in Europe

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with his cycling friends, and he and his wife Carole have travelled widely in Europe, and have taken a few long-stay breaks there.

After an eight year break from Club administrative duties, Les was elected President of the Hockey Club for the first time in 2017, and Carole was elected Assistant Secretary. He became involved in devising an Annual Plan Review, revising the Constitution of the Club, and reviewing its administrative practices, with the aim of bring it into line with current corporate management practices.

He continued as President in 2018 and 2019, with his wife Carole as Club Administrator in these years. Carole replaced Mark Paterson as Secretary of the Club in 2018.

In 2018 the Club began to use a synthetic turf area at the Camperdown Tennis Centre, off Mallet Street, Camperdown for junior and senior training. Les helped out at both junior and senior training sessions in 2018. Les' knee problems had resolved somewhat and he found that his activities during the Club's training sessions were not associated with significant knee discomfort. This prompted him to recommence his playing career in the Club's Fifth Grade team in 2019.

During his third comeback game Les suffered a significant quadriceps muscle, knee injury, which thwarted his comeback plans. He is now retired "for good" with his total senior games tally standing at 816.

Les' father Harry Austin Wark was a Life-Member of the GDHC, as was his mother Molly Wark and his paternal uncle Ken Wark. From an early age Les was around hockey fields, hockey sticks and balls, and developed a keen interest in the sport. He commenced playing in the Club's junior teams at age eight.

Les was born at the Mater Hospital Crow's Nest in 1955. He went to the Saint Mark's Catholic Primary School Drummoyne, Balmain Christian Brother's School and to Lewisham Christian Brother's School for the final two years of his schooling.

On leaving school Les went to work at the Water Board where he worked for a couple of years, before moving to Telecom where he stayed for more than 20 years. From Telecom he moved to the Law Firm Clayton Utz for 8-9 years, then to ASIC, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and finally to Sydney University for the final few years of his working life, before retiring in 2015.

During his working life Les did Certificate in Real Estate and an Associate Diploma in Business majoring in valuation and facilities management. He was a facilities manager for most of his working life

Les moved out of his parent's Drummoyne home when he was in his mid-20s to live in a house at Canada Bay near Concord. In the late 1980s Les and his family moved back to a house in Drummoyne and in 2013 he and Carole moved to a unit on the old Children's Hospital site in Camperdown, where they currently reside.

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In the early 1980s Les had coached the Glebe Women's Hockey Club First Grade team, which is where he met his wife Carole, who was a member of the team. They married on 24 March 1984. They have two children Amy and Simon, both of whom have had a long association with the Hockey Club.

Carole played for Glebe from 1980 to 2006, and has had held many administrative positions within the Club. Amy and Simon commenced playing juniors in 1990. Amy Shipp (nee Wark) has three daughters and has played 296 senior games for Glebe, and continues to play in 2019. Simon played 286 senior games for Glebe, playing his last game for the Club in 2017. Both Amy and Simon have coached junior teams for Glebe.

Les' father Harry played 751 senior games for Glebe, and his elder brother Harry, also a Club Life-Member, played 643 senior games for the Club. All six of Les' nephews and nieces have played hockey for Glebe, as has his sister-in-law Anne.

In the summer time Les played water polo and pottered around in boats. He started at the Drummoyne Swimming Club in 1961 aged five or six and continued at the Club into his early teens, when he switched to playing water polo with the Drummoyne Water Polo Club. He continued to play water polo until he retired in 2010, aged 55 years.

Les' father Harry enjoyed his summer time boating activities on Sydney Harbour, and Les soon caught the boating bug. He has enjoyed boating activities from a young age. He initially used his father's boats and then purchased boats of his own, first an ex-police boat called "Scott", and then a boat called the Sun Seeker which he and the family still potters around on.

He has been a Member of the Half-Moon Bay Yacht Club on Iron Cove, Drummoyne, and an estuary of Sydney Harbour since his early 20s. He served this Club as Commodore for many years and is presently on the Management Committee, as did his father before him. Les is still an active Member of the Yacht Club.

Les' contribution to the Hockey Club for close to fifty years has been outstanding. He has played 816 senior Club games, been a Management Committee/Executive Committee Member for twenty years, Secretary for eight years, and President for three years. Other positions he has held within the Club have been Public Officer, Club Trainer, Club Coach, Social Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Assistant Treasurer, first grade men's coach, first grade women's coach and coached junior teams for 14 years, from under 11 to under 17 age divisions.

Thank you Les for the time, effort, energy, enthusiasm, selflessness, and devotion you have shown to the Club and its Members since the 1960s. It has been a remarkable effort in which your family, Carole, Amy and Simon has been an enabling force.

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