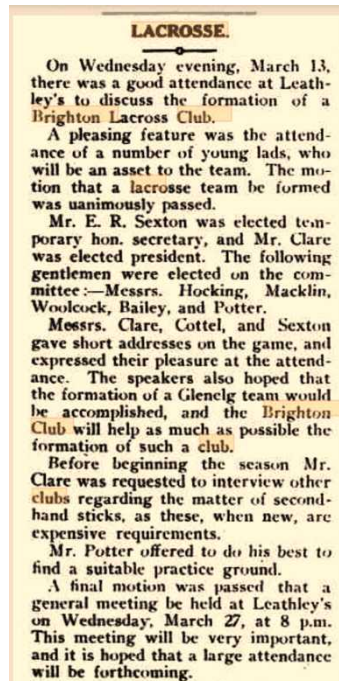


# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BRIGHTON LACROSSE CLUB

In the heart of Brighton, a story began in Leathly's quaint tea shop on Old Beach Road, opposite the original Brighton Railway Station. Here, in 1929, the seeds of Brighton Lacrosse Club (BLC) were planted, marking the start of an extraordinary journey. The following article is from the Glenelg Guardian on 21 March 1929.



The club was formed with 8 persons present, with co-founders President Herschel ("Dickie") Clare and Ray Sexton appointed president and secretary respectively. Amongst those playing from the outset were Ray Francis (Captain), Ken Francis, Vic Cottle, Sid Gubbins, Max Vincent, M. Wollaston and H. "Dickie" Clare.

A team was selected and placed in B grade in 1929 and Ray Sexton was elected captain. Some of the members of the team were Sexton, Hocking, Francis, Edgar, Wollaston, Macklin and Gubbins.

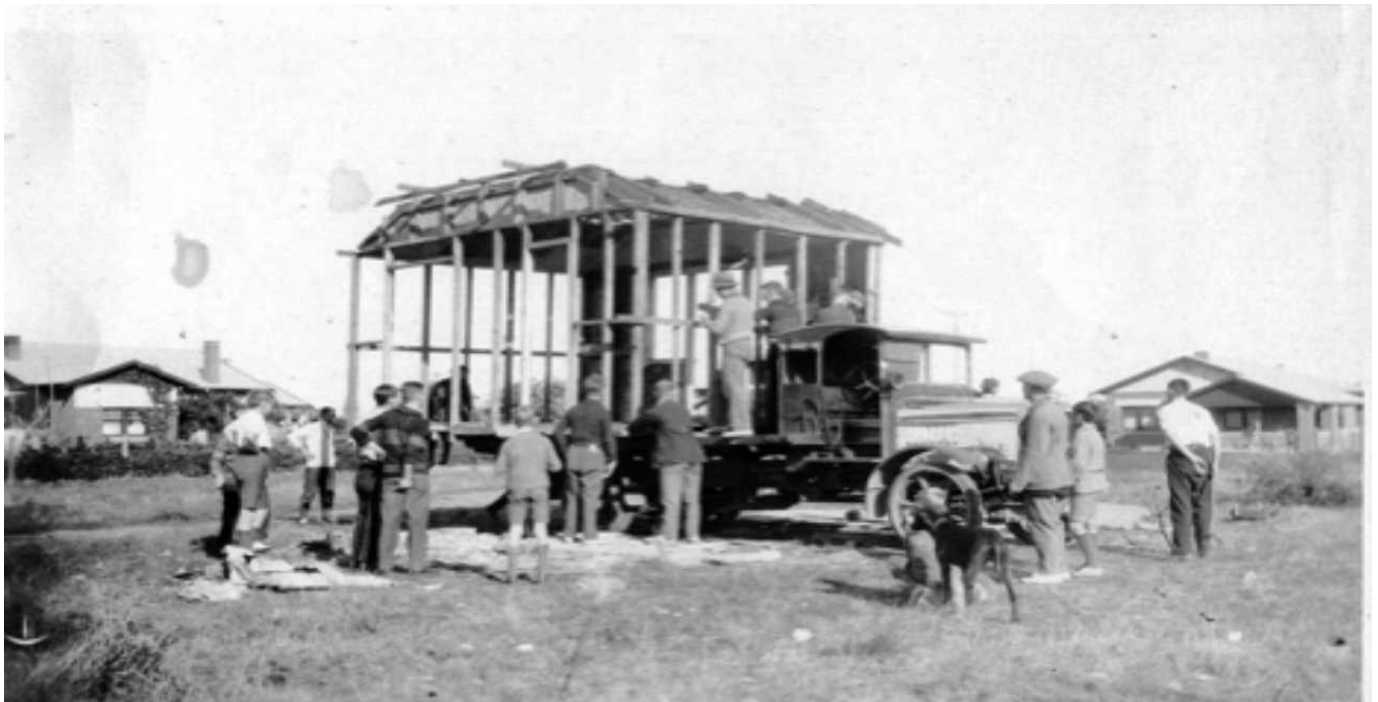
The 1929 B grade team played on an area of land just south of the railway line between Hove and Warradale Railway Stations. Brighton played its first match on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1929, losing to Port Adelaide 12-3. Not one match was won that year, but improvement occurred the next year. In 1930 Brighton won its first match against University, 5 goals to 4, goal scorers being Swalling, Giles, Wollaston, Francis and one knocked in!

While the fortunes of the club varied as far as results of matches were concerned during the first two years of playing, Brighton won only one match, but in 1931, after having been re-graded, they won both the C grade and D grade (Under 16) premierships, and then in 1935 the B grade premiership. By 1936 Brighton was playing in A grade, and it wasn't until 1937 when Brighton won its first A-grade premiership, and to prove it was no 'flash in the pan' the A grade team repeated the feat in 1938, 1939 and 1940.



In 1937 the club had 75 playing members, whose ages ranged from 10 years to 35 years, and at that time the club president, Mr H.R. Horwood, induced the Brighton Council to provide a grassed area at the oval on which the games could be played.

Below is the first Brighton clubhouse. We believe it was somewhere in the vicinity of King George Ave and Wattle Ave, Hove. Today's clubhouse is located on Highett Avenue, Hove, which is about 1km from where our first clubhouse was located.



The onset of WW2 brought a close to most senior lacrosse in Australia and it didn't resume until 1946, but the game lost a lot of players who paid the ultimate price and others who were injured, and of course most people were struggling with rationing, life was hard and lacrosse sticks were hard to come by due to severe foreign exchange and import regulations imposed following the war.

During the war years Mr A.G. "Paddy" Hayden did a lot for the younger boys of the club, which helped to keep the club together during those difficult years. About this time there were five teams playing from a membership of approximately 80. With the large number of teams playing matches in 1947 it was necessary to make arrangements with Townshend House School for the use of an area of land in the north-east corner of the property on which to play lacrosse.



13 players lost from one club from WW2 is an immense numerical loss from a club that would probably have had no more than 50 players before the war, but it also would have had an incredible emotional impact on all surrounding them.

A most interesting feature of the Brighton club was the number of brothers of various Brighton families who played for the club, as indicated by the following names: Francis (4 brothers), Horwood (3), Isaachsen (4), Jenkins (3), Swalling (3), Vincent (4) and Neill (4).





H. Thomas, A. Swalling, K. Roennfeldt, R. Gregory, D. Kimber, G. Arnold, M. Hamilton, H. Vincent (*President*),  
A. Vial, W. Horwood, F. Melbourne (*Captain*), J. Edwards, D. Haydon.

Above is the 1946 premiership team

From the above team Keith Roennfeldt and Allan Vial became the coach and manager of the 1959 South Australian and Australian teams, with the Australian team successful against the visiting Americans at the MCG in 1959.

Dudley Hamilton started playing lacrosse in 1939 at Brighton Lacrosse Club at the age of 10 but with the onset of WW2, lacrosse effectively went into recess in many parts of the world, including Adelaide. Dudley resumed playing lacrosse in 1947, then an 18 year old, and attributed the success of Brighton at the most senior level after WW2 to Ken Francis, who was one of the Club's founders, who went to local schools to recruit juniors, and was one of the key driving forces to recruit and develop juniors, and at that time there was a real village atmosphere, similar to that of Williamstown in Victoria.

As at 1959 Brighton had 65 playing members and 4 teams. The president was Allan Vial, a former state player and manager, the chairman was Mr G. Arnold and the secretary, Brian Neill.

In terms of senior player development and coaching Dudley Hamilton stated that Keith Roennfeldt, who was originally from Sturt, who came to the Club in later years, was a very successful senior coach from the late 60's, followed by Fred Neill and Roger Attenborough.

Michael Raggatt also felt that Keith "Father" Roennfeldt orchestrated/introduced the tactics to defeat the "invincible" North Adelaide team to win the 1960 final, which kick-started the dynasty, to win the next 4, lose 1965 to Sturt, after being undefeated all season, then win 1966, lose to East Torrens in 1967 & then win the next 8.

According to Michael Raggatt "Keith Roennfeldt certainly was the catalyst in terms of coaching, he was instrumental, innovative and a major factor in the Club's super performances. After "Father" passed in 1971, Fred Neill coached for a few years, followed by Roger Attenborough, and then Barry Thompson.

As life member Des Edwards recalls "I believe one of the reasons behind the success of the club on and off the field during this period (50's-70's) came through a lot of effort put in by members, firstly concentrating on juniors. A few members in this group included Ken Francis, Fred Melbourne, Geoff Arnold, Dudley Hamilton and the person with the most input, Brian Neill.

Fred, Geoff and Ken did a lot of work in the high schools in the district, and Brian's efforts at the club with the juniors was epic! This all started before my time, but the Club has always had a strong junior program as long as I have been a member.

Another reason for the club's success was, in the early 1960's the senior competition consisted of three grades - A, B & C. Our junior program gave us an excellent feed of players into these teams, and we had no problem fielding very competitive teams. Brighton decided we had enough players older and younger with a high level of skills, that they would enter a second team into the A grade competition. This gave us four teams all up in the senior competition, the other clubs only had three teams.

In theory this gave players, who would normally be in the C grade team, the opportunity to move up to the B's and B's moving into the A grade, therefore gaining more experience, and we had enough players to do that. In 1965 our two teams were in the final four, the Brighton Black team only losing by a couple of goals in the first semi final against the team that was to play our top team, Brighton Yellow, in the grand final, which we won. Although the two A grade teams only lasted for three to four years, it gave the club a good flow on effect for many years to come.

**LACROSSE FOUR SETTLED**

By I.C.S.

Both East Torrens and Brighton Black secured positions in the top four after their victories on Saturday.

East Torrens won comfortably by 14 goals from Sturt, while a rough tussle between Brighton Black and West Torrens ended in favor of Brighton.

East Torrens 17, Sturt 3.  
Goals:—East Torrens, Bengier 6, Mildren 4; Sturt, Fleason, Plaislead, Nottls. Best:—East Torrens, Vanderpear, Corner, R. Bengier; Sturt, Braidy, Plaislead, Stevens.

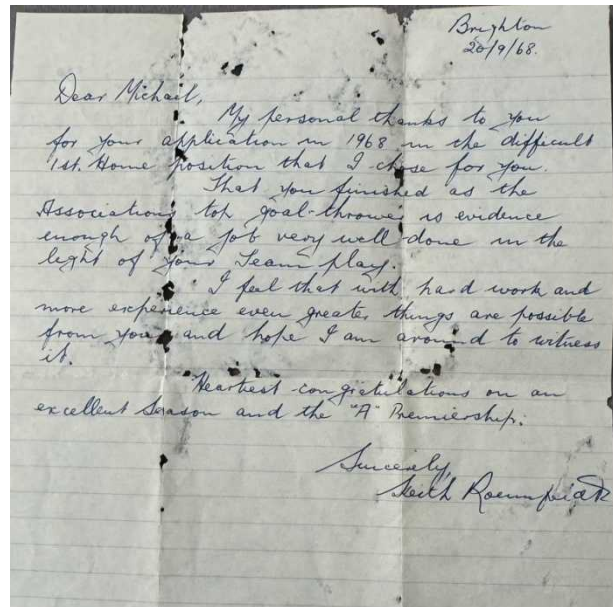
North Adelaide 17, Glenelg 6.  
Goals:—North Adelaide, P. Mac-

Mahon 5, Oakey 5, Cherry 5;  
Glenelg, G. Hobbs 2, Pennington 2, A. Bartlett 2. Best:—North Adelaide, Carter, Thompson, Oakey; Glenelg, G. Hobbs, P. Hobbs, R. Bartlett.

Brighton Yellow 39, Port Adelaide 9. Goals:—Brighton Yellow, Attenborough 11, B. Neill 10, A. Neill 8, Aldenhoven 6; Port Adelaide, K. Forrest 2, Pecock 2, Inge 2. Best:—Brighton Yellow, Attenborough, A. Neill, Aldenhoven; Port Adelaide, Forrest, Mobbs, Turner.

Brighton Black 23, West Torrens 3. Goals:—B. Edwards 9, Trewarta 5; Brighton Black, Best:—Brighton Black, Williams, B. Edwards, Arnold; West Torrens, T. Carter, R. Duffey, Strudwick.

In the 1959/1960 period we also had the luck of having a new senior coach join our club, one Keith Roennfeldt. He was a genius, who understood the game of lacrosse and knew how to get the best out of players. He was quiet and methodical in his approach and had the respect of all his players. The respect he had from all, soon led to him getting the title of 'Father'. Unfortunately due to health reasons Keith had to retire from coaching in 1970, however he enjoyed the success of winning the senior premierships from 1961 – 1964, 1966, 1968 – 1970 - eight in total! Fred Neill then took over as coach, he had success in taking the club to four more premierships, then Roger Attenborough, with two premierships and Barry Thompson, all in the 1970's.



Above is a letter from coach Keith Roennfeldt to Michael Raggatt after the 1968 season ended – he wrote a similar letter of encouragement and wisdom to Roger Attenborough.

We had some so-called superstars in the teams during that period but in general we had a really solid group of team players as well as coaches.

The other thing that contributed to the club's rise was the on-field successes that led to a fantastic social membership. We had non-players with very good management, technical and building skills, who happily volunteered their time to the club. The Brighton Lacrosse Club was and still has a proud reputation for being a family friendly club.

Another was the building of the clubrooms by the players, social members and volunteers, using their various skills during this period. It gave everyone a personal attachment to the club for life."

The men's senior team has participated in 47 grand finals since inception in 1929, winning 29 A grade premierships. This included 14 premierships between 1961 and 1978 and an incredible 7 consecutive premierships from 1968-1974. In the 2000's the men's team appeared in 17 grand finals with a total of 9 wins, including 2024.



# 2024 PREMIERS

## MEN'S STATE LEAGUE



**BRIGHTON**

*defeats Glenelg 9 - 6*

### **BRIGHTON WOMEN'S LACROSSE**

In 1964 the high school competition for girls consisted of Seacombe, Brighton, Marion and Plympton High Schools, as well as an A and B grade competition in the SAWLA. The 1964 results show 2 Brighton High School A grade teams (Gold and Black).

In 1967 Brighton's A grade team lost the grand final to Seacombe (2 -3), however reversed the situation in 1968 by defeating Seacombe (4-3).

At the 1983 AGM, it was agreed that the Brighton Women's Lacrosse Club would amalgamate with the Brighton Lacrosse Club. In 1984 the B grade women's team, coached by Malcolm McNicols successfully won the premiership.

In 1997 the Brighton club formed its first women's A grade team but it wasn't until 1999 that it won its first premiership, which was the start of many grand final appearances and premierships.



Back Row: Melinda Pearce, Lisa Pearce, ?, Malcolm McNicol, Bronwyn Smith, ?, Annie Abel.....

Front Row: Sue Burke, Fran Freeman, Kerry Herbert, Jayne Bartholomew, Trish Wissell, ? (partially obscured), Ros Biebrick, ? (Partially obscured).

In 1994 Seacombe was unable to field an A grade team and many of their A grade players merged with Brighton to form the Stingrays in A Grade, coached by Brett Cope, finishing fourth, and in 1995 finished 2nd. Seacombe folded at the end of 1995 and the Stingrays team became the Brighton A Grade team, which included several Seacombe players, with most of the remaining Seacombe players also moving to Brighton.

The state league women's team has been a formidable force, dominating the field with 33 grand final appearances since the women's competition began in 1962. In this time, they have clinched an astounding 18 premierships. In the 2000's the women's team has played in every senior grand final, winning 15. This era has been marked by not one, but two extraordinary streaks of triumph, including a remarkable run of 7 consecutive premierships from 2018 - 2024.



# 2024 PREMIERS

## WOMEN'S STATE LEAGUE



**BRIGHTON**

*defeats Woodville 6 - 4*

### **The Brighton Lacrosse Clubhouse**

Life member Des Edwards and his classmate Ian “Willy” Williams both attended Mitchell Park Boys Tech High School in 1959, as 14-year-olds, where Ken Francis had introduced the game to them and others, and from there their connection to Brighton.

“My recollections from that time are that we had 2 grounds to play on, one at the Brighton Oval precinct (where the club is located today) and the other at the Hove ground, located on the northeastern corner of Colton and Wattle avenues. I heard that there was another venue in the early days on the south side of the railway line east of the Hove station, well before my time.

I believe that the original club rooms, built in the southwestern corner of the new Brighton precinct on Highet Avenue, was during the 1950’s by the club members. It consisted of a changing room, toilet/shower area and a social area (as pictured below).”



The first clubhouse built by its members in the early 1950's on Highet Avenue, Hove.

The gentleman opening the clubhouse in the photo above left is O.C. "Zac" Isaachsen, who not only played but served on the Australian Lacrosse Council and who the men's national best and fairest award is named after.

Holding the lacrosse stick (bottom right), is Alan 'Chopper' Pearce, former Brighton, S.A. and Australian representative.

The photo below is of the first extension to the club back in 1967/68. The clubhouse was extended by its members in 1967/68 to cater for its growing membership and player base.



Photographed by Des Edwards -1st extension complete October 1968

The second extension was completed circa 1975 when the main social area was further extended to the north to give the club a much larger social area. At some stage, the foyer area was added plus the big viewing windows and the veranda area.



Alan 'Chopper' Pearce speaking at an official function

Around 1983 the third extension was in the pipeline as the women's teams merged with the men's club in 1984. We believe the extension was completed in 1987 and gave the club a further storeroom, kitchen and the women's teams a changing room with showers and toilets. Again, it was due to the efforts of club members and the combined skills of this group at the time.

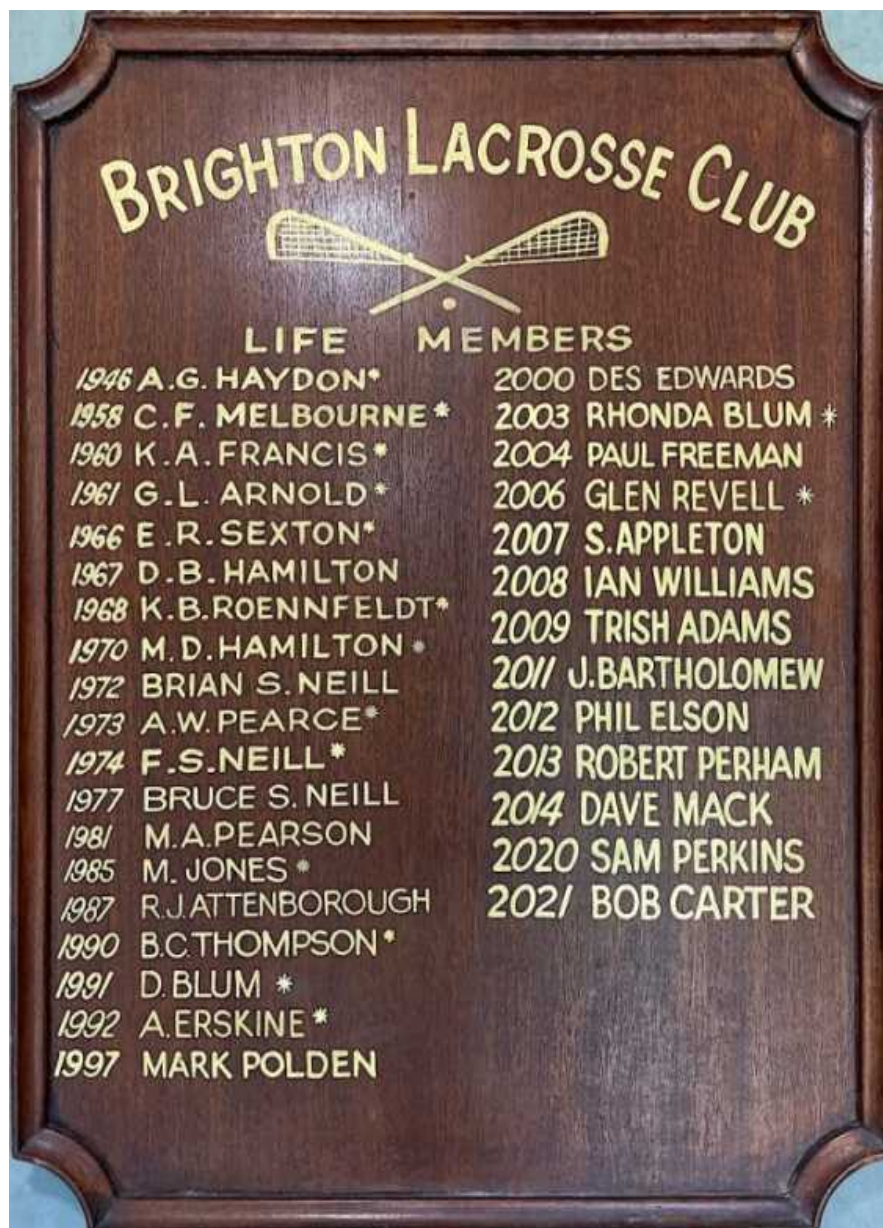




The old clubrooms in the photo above were demolished in 2019 to make way for the new home of the Brighton Lacrosse Club, made possible through grants, the new two-story building below was completed in 2020.



Below is the Brighton Lacrosse Club life member honour board, yet to be included are Ray Polotnianka (2023) and Mark Mangan (2024). There are a lot of people who have worked very hard for the common good and made an invaluable contribution to the remarkable success of Brighton over a 95 year period.



## HOW IS BRIGHTON DOING AT THE END OF 2024?

Brighton has one of highest playing memberships in S.A. with 48 senior and 39 junior males and 42 senior and 25 junior female players, a total of 154 registered players as at the end of 2024.

Interestingly on the men's side the state league and division 1 teams won the grand final, the division 2, Under 18 and Under 15 teams were runners-up in 2024. Even more impressive were the women's teams for 2024, with state league, division 1, Under 15 and Under 13 teams all winning their respective grand finals.

Below are the Brighton Lacrosse Club's U8's and U11's from 2024 (6 teams - two in U8's, 2 boy's teams in U11's and two girl's teams in U11's).





What started in a salvaged tin shed, blossomed through the dedication and teamwork of its members, through tireless fundraising and community spirit, a simple shed was transformed into a home.