

TRUE TO OUR TRADITIONS
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF REVESBY WORKERS' CLUB

GARY LESTER



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IN THE BROAD POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MAELSTROM OF the Labor frontline have stood more than a few good men, many of them in the Revesby/Bankstown precinct where, as the population expanded in the 1950s and '60s, the working class provided the undergrowth for left wing, socialist values.

Integral in the development was a decision by a hardy, persistent group of local men to form a club, which was generous of spirit and with strong family commitment ... not a Labor club, but, more succinctly, a workers' club, one that would embrace women as much as it would the men folk.

That club, the Revesby Workers' Club, stands today as a monument, not just to those who have carried it over its 50-year journey, but even more, perhaps, to those pioneers who dug the well for us all.

The original club premises were opened on 12 September 1962 – a day early, that, in itself, rare within the club industry, with 235 members. The Big Club, as it was christened, across the road was officially opened on 18 August 1973 by the then-prime minister Gough Whitlam, who would enjoy a long and rewarding relationship with the club.

The story of Revesby Workers' Club is like no other in Australian licensed club history – that fact will be clearly evident as you take the journey through the pages of this work. It's a club that has worn its heart on its rolled-up sleeves – no beg pardons, no denial of a sometimes turbulent history, yet with an integrity and soul that continues to invoke the Revesby message.

The club's status can be gleaned in the number of awards won both within and without the industry ... three times Clubs NSW Club of the Year ... best in entertainment and the number one health centre in the country, just for a start.

The real success, however, is captured in those who have taken the ball from the pioneers and have run with it ever since, maintaining the theme, *True to Our Traditions*.

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THIS PAGE: The impressive western entrance to Revesby Workers' Club glistens in the evening light.

FOLLOWING PAGES: The Workers' Club sports bar as it was in April 2012 – the perfect meeting place. Photos, Steve Back Photography.



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Foreword

YOU CANNOT DENY YOUR HISTORY. YOU CANNOT DENY YOUR BEGINNINGS. THIS FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY BOOK IS THE RESULT OF GARY LESTER'S RESEARCH AND IT DEMONSTRATES THAT THE REVESBY WORKERS' CLUB HAS BEEN TRUE TO ITS TRADITIONS AND TRUE TO THE VALUES OF THOSE EARLY PIONEERS OF THE CLUB.

The club's logo, first designed as the club opened its doors in September 1962, remains the same as the one we see today.

Our foundation members comprise the 240 names submitted in an affidavit dated 1 May 1962 by the original secretary, Brien Higgs, to the Metropolitan Licensing Court. This was in support of a conditional application for a certificate of registration for the club. There were fourteen women foundation members and all had equal rights. Only one woman, Joan Higgs, and twenty men are still with us and continue to be financial members of the club.

It is against this background that the Board believed it was important to commission a history of the club in our fiftieth year. To leave it any longer would have made it impossible to capture those early years.

In compiling this history, several documents were retrieved. These included the Licensing Court file for 1962 which contained a number of Affidavits, transcripts and the judgment granting the conditional licence together with all available board minutes and minutes of general meetings.

Additionally, two of the club's earliest plaques were rediscovered. The first commemorates the original subscribers and foundation directors of the club. The second commemorates the official opening at the club. There had been no formal event when the club first opened its doors in 1962. It would take until 28 May 1966 to have an opening of any

kind. Mrs Doris Dickens, the wife of the first president of the club, the late Jack Dickens, officially opened extensions to the club.

From the outset there was a close connection to the local Labor branches. Fifty-five of the 240 foundation members were financial members of the Labor Party. A further ten had a previous association. And six of the seven foundation directors were members of the Labor Party. That close association has been maintained over the years. Interestingly, despite this association, the name of the club was preferred as a workers' club and not a Labor club. This reflected the fact that many foundation members had a strong commitment to the union movement with the early membership including factory workers, waterside workers and seamen.

The Workers' Club has always been a contest of ideas. Many strong personalities were pitted against one another at general meetings. The Board elections of 1977 were a first for the club movement. Seven sitting directors were removed from office and were replaced with a completely new team. And the early 1980s saw divisions in the Board which resulted in a number of special meetings being called to resolve differences.

Gough Whitlam has a special place in the club's history. He opened the new premises on 18 August 1973. He was also involved in three other openings and has been a regular visitor to the club. Bob Hawke, Julia Gillard, Neville Wran and Bob Carr have all been associated

with the club, together with many Federal and State politicians.

Foundation president Jack Dickens, who died in office, was loved by all. His successor Jim Donovan and secretary-manager Brien Higgs were instrumental in the club's success and development in those early years. That is not to diminish the role played by others.

In recent years, our long serving presidents Bill Bullard and Norma Smith deserve special mention. Sadly, they, too, are no longer with us.

The club's ongoing success has been a team effort over the years, involving directors, managers, staff and members and it would be an impossible task to name them all. This book does not claim to acknowledge everyone who made a contribution, rather, it is a snapshot of the first fifty years.

I thank everyone who has contributed to this history by telling their stories and providing memorabilia and photographs. I want to especially thank the author, Gary Lester, who has done a magnificent job in compiling this history. His professionalism and dedication has ensured a truly remarkable read.

Revesby Workers' Club is a special place. Our pioneers were special people. They had a values system and they knew what they wanted the club to be. I believe they would approve of the direction we are currently taking.

DARYL MELHAM
President
Revesby Workers' Club
September 2012

Construction of the railway line c1929-31. Revesby Railway Station was completed in 1931.





A defining moment in the history of Revesby Workers' Club. The then-prime minister Mr Gough Whitlam opens the Big Club in August 1973. It was the beginning of a warm and close relationship between Mr Whitlam and the club; Mr Whitlam was to open three more facilities during his long association. Club president Jim Donovan proudly helps in the unveiling.

INTRODUCTION



Poultry farms and paspalum

IN WHAT WOULD LATER BE KNOWN AS THE SOUTH WARD, THE COOKE FAMILY TENDED THEIR LAND – A POULTRY FARM WITH A SMALL VEGETABLE GARDEN IN A PRECINCT KNOWN SINCE 1797 AS BANKSTOWN. THIS WAS EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY AND BANKSTOWN WAS STILL SPARSELY POPULATED. WHILE MOST OF THE LAND HAD BEEN DISTRIBUTED INTO SUITABLE FARMING GRANTS, THE RESIDENTIAL BOOM WAS A LONG WAY OFF.

The significance of the poultry farm is that it became the resting place of Revesby Workers' Club, one of the most successful and impressive clubs in the licensed club industry. The Cooke family tree leads directly to the club. Walter Leonard Cooke was an orchardist who lived with his wife, Elizabeth Matilda, in Polo Street, Bankstown, before the section in which they lived, which is south of where the railway line is now, was renamed Tarro Avenue. From that union would come Eva Myrtle (later to marry Arthur E Westcott), the woman with whom Workers' Club management would negotiate the sale of the property in the late 1960s.

The farm's destiny was sealed from the moment in 1966 when the pioneering directors understood the need for a larger club and went in search of sufficient land to accommodate it. They had only to look across the road from their original club. The purchase of the land and construction of the new club will form a significant later chapter.

This was Revesby long before the post-World War II building boom; before local hotels and clubs; long before, when to obtain a beer, train commuters in the evening

rush would stop off at Beverly Hills station and dash into the Bennelong Hotel for a quick swill before six o'clock and then back on the next train for the onward journey home. And it was a time well before the Revesby Workers' Club (originally known as East Hills Workers' Club) opened its welcoming doors.

The land that would encompass the suburb of Revesby was part of a 500-acre grant offered to 14-year-old George Johnston Junior in 1804. Land grants were spread among the marines, free settlers, former convicts and military widows, among others. George Johnston Senior was an officer of the marines who arrived on the First Fleet and was offered large parcels of land which ultimately covered much of the Canterbury and Bankstown municipalities.

On the Revesby land, Johnston employed farmhands to run cattle and he grew maize and wheat – long before poultry became the staple produce for farms in the area.

Revesby was named in 1912 in honour of Sir Joseph Banks' home and estate – Revesby Abbey – in Lincolnshire, England. Banks, who had inherited the estate from his father, and was known as the Squire of Revesby, was a botanist who sailed with Lieutenant James Cook on the "Voyage of Discovery" from 1768 to 1771. Banks' Town (Bankstown) was named in honour of Banks and his enthusiasm for the botanical and scientific specimens he took back to England. Banks's exuberance for the area in and around Botany Bay strongly influenced British authorities to send the First Fleet to Australia.

Revesby in the 1930s – paspalum, wide-open spaces and poultry farms – long before the post-World War II residential boom.





Revesby Railway Station, c1931.

Bankstown's original inhabitants were various Aboriginal groups, among them, according to Bankstown City records, some thousands of years before European settlement, the Gweagal, Bidjigal (or Bediagal) people and a portion of the Dharug people. The land provided kangaroo, possum, emu, wild honey, plants and roots, and, in Botany Bay, the Cooks River and Georges River, ample fish and shellfish. Rock paintings, middens and axe-grinding grooves are still evident along the Georges River.

Notable, too, in 1795, just seven years after the first European settlement at Sydney Cove, was that Matthew Flinders, then a Royal Naval midshipman, and surgeon George Bass, along with Bass's servant William Martin, explored the Georges River in a two-and-a-half metre rowing boat, the famous *Tom Thumb* in which they bravely circumnavigated Australia. The journey up the Georges River, during which they sketched the river and its land formation, lasted nine days; they travelled as far as the junction of the Georges River and Prospect Creek. (It was not long after that a new branch of the colony was formed and named Banks' Town.)

Four months after Bass and Flinders's exploration, a settlement was established for marines at the junction of the Georges River and Prospect Creek and, later, was named Garrison Point. Because of its significance in Bankstown's history, the Bankstown City Council now hosts Australia Day celebrations at that very spot.

After a sub-division in 1893, the whole area south of Bankstown became known as East Hills, so named by a tenant on the property, Robert Gardiner, after the region of that name near Liverpool, in England, possibly influenced by the fact that Liverpool (Sydney) was virtually next door.

A group of public-spirited citizens had the chance to change the name at a meeting on a moonlit night at a spot, called Hog Sty, which today carries the more dignified name, Amour Park. According to Merle Peters in her 1985 history of Revesby Workers', titled *The Big Club*, this might well have been the first community meeting of the South Ward.

By the light of hurricane lamps, the group tossed around a number of possibilities, such as Westonville, after Edward Weston, who took possession of a large parcel of the land following his marriage to Blanche, the youngest daughter of George and Esther Johnston. However, they decided to retain the original name. The original site of East Hills has moved and much of that site today is Revesby, bounded on the north by Canterbury Road and the suburbs of Bankstown and Condell Park; in the south by Revesby Heights and Picnic Point; on the Georges River; on the west side by Panania and on the east by Padstow. The first school opened as Bankstown South in 1896 and is now known as Revesby Public School.

The inevitable train link with Sydney developed slowly. The first steam-driven locomotive to Bankstown was in 1909 and, after initially by-passing Revesby, the first electric train arrived at Revesby Station on 19 December 1931, as part of the Tempe to East Hills line.

The opening of the line sadly coincided with the Great Depression and dashed the hopes of land developers, who had promoted and offered new estates, including the Revesby Park Estate (ten per cent deposit, minimum £15 and balance on 60 equal monthly installments at six per cent interest), of making a quick killing.

However, Revesby's turn would come. Bankstown had become a focus during the war effort. After attempts, dating back to 1929, to build an airport had failed, the Department of Civil Aviation acquired 630 acres for the development of a Royal Australian Air Force base in 1940. From 1941 numerous fighter squadrons were located at Bankstown and the airport became a vital training and military facility.

The airfield was also taken over by the United States Army Air Force. Thousands of United States military "invaded" Sydney, many of them stationed at Bankstown, forcing the government to requisition buildings such as the Capitol Theatre for accommodation. Toward the end of the war the airport became the responsibility of the British Fleet Air Arm before being handed back to the RAAF.

The aerodrome was enclosed at its perimeter by coiled barbed wire and a multitude of tents accommodated an army defence force. Searchlights and anti-aircraft guns were set up on vacant building lots and radar stations erected in Bankstown to provide surveillance for Sydney, particularly as the conflict with Japan intensified.

The uncertainty of war also forced Revesby residents, with help from authorities, to prepare as if it might come to their very backyards. As related in *Revesby Public School Centenary Book 1896-1996: Celebrating 100 Years of Quality Education* and repeated in Andrew Molloy's book, *The History of Revesby*, local residents provided a kaleidoscope of memories. Among them was Merril Watkins: "The trenches for air-raids zigzagged across the back playground near Victoria Street and parallel to Beaconsfield Street in the front," she recalled.

"We had air-raid drill often, although not always in the trenches which always seemed to have water in them."

Local Revesby resident Arthur Kemp was an air warden. His daughter Dorothy Bridge recalled that the family (all families) had to put blankets on the windows so light wouldn't shine through. "In our backyard, we buried an old car to be used as an air raid shelter. A huge hole was dug out by hand."

In 1942, the National Emergency Services set up a first-aid post at Revesby Public School, occupying two classrooms. However, the closest the war came to Revesby was in the shape of errant Allied aircraft, most of which survived forced landings. One such plane, a Mosquito, was built at Bankstown. A versatile British fighter-bomber built by Hawker de Havilland, the Mosquito was highly regarded, though made of plywood and screwed together: thus its nickname, "The Wooden Wonder". Sometimes the screws came loose!

If Bankstown presented a depressing picture before the war, it was on the precipice of a dramatic residential and industrial boom after it. Returned soldiers, urban-city dwellers and migrants from Europe, looking for cheaper land and housing, found it in Sydney's south-west. It led to large-scale development of not just Revesby, but in areas such as Padstow, Panania, Greenacre and Villawood.

It is essential to understand the impact the war effort had on the growth of the Bankstown district. The Department of Aircraft

Poultry farms dominated the Revesby-Bankstown landscape where families – young and old – enjoyed a rural, though forgiving lifestyle.





TOP: War-service homes being built in 1960 en masse, it would seem, keeping pace with the population explosion in Revesby. Occupants of some of these homes enjoyed water glimpses.

ABOVE: A completed war-service home in Revesby (1960), some of which remain the same today.

Production set up Hawker De Havilland to manufacture Mosquito bombers and the company remained (at the time of writing in 2012) as a peacetime builder of aircraft and aircraft parts. The Commonwealth Defence Industries was established at Villawood and munitions factories that had been built during the war became heavy and medium industry when the war was over.

With the increased industrialisation, the New South Wales Housing Commission built whole suburbs to house workers and their

families, aided by the Department of War Service who offered war-service homes. A survey conducted by the Housing Commission in 1946 showed that 56 per cent of the 30,000 applicants for housing requested two- and three-bedroom homes. The baby boom was up and running!

Foundation members of the Revesby Workers' Club were among those with strong working-class ethics who left the Eastern Suburbs and inner city areas for more affordable living in the Revesby area. They built and they stayed. The population in the broader Bankstown municipality increased from 42,646 in 1947 to 102,384 in 1954.

Revesby became a major part of the new urban sprawl, enjoying the spoils of improved infrastructure along with the rest of the municipality. Local residents recalled the wide open spaces as the area geared for the building boom; of the lack of kerbed and, in some instances, paved roads, the small rural holdings, paddocks of paspalum, the many poultry farms and the sight of farmers driving their horse and carts full of produce on their way to market.

The influx of settlers and the rapid growth of the building programs would lead inevitably to the introduction of leisure and social facilities, cinemas, hotels ... and, eventually, licensed clubs.

1

A club begins to take shape



1958-61

THE ORIGINS OF THE WORKERS' CLUB ARE DEEPLY ROOTED WITHIN THE WORKING-CLASS AND LABOR PARTY-SOCIALIST VALUES. FROM THE VERY NOTION OF A LICENSED CLUB IN THE LATE 1950S, THE PIONEERING SUBSCRIBERS DETERMINED TO UPHOLD PRINCIPLES CLOSEST TO THEM.

The development of Bankstown's South Ward had brought with it a heavy influx of young blue-collar workers who were prepared to grow their families and make this place home. As the population spread in the mid- to late 1950s, so did their social and leisure needs.

Socialising with other families was difficult, particularly for those heavily committed financially to building their own homes. In many cases they had just sufficient money each week for essentials. Most families didn't have cars and the only cinema was at Bankstown, as were the dances and housie, the perennial gambling game.

For the men, it wasn't until the Pacific Hotel opened in February 1956 that they had a local social focal point. In a sense, it changed the face of Revesby. Networks were formed and friendships developed, which was fine if you were male – and thirsty. Men found it a refuge, and they could not be blamed. The “local” had long been at the core of developing the matey Australian culture. There were 2022 hotels and inns in New South Wales in 1956, a good number of them unruly and rambunctious dens where the fight for the last drink had been to beat the six o'clock closing deadline – the dreaded six o'clock swill – which only fostered more brawling and rowdy behaviour. None of them was close to Revesby until the advent of the Pacific.

The new local was not without its wild and wayward disturbances. Workers would file off the train at close-by Revesby Station and make a dash for the hotel to cram in as many drinks as they could before closing. Until then, for those that worked in the City, the St James Hotel (near St James Station) was the main watering hole. Jim Donovan, the club's initial vice-president, recalled many trips home in the last carriage of the 6.25 from St James where there were "more bathroom baritones than you would meet in a day's walk".

On weekends, the Pacific was, as many called it, a "bloodbath". Brawls and unruly behaviour were commonplace. It was so popular on Saturdays and in the hour before closing each weekday, drinkers inevitably spilled out (illegally) onto the footpath and car park. The hotel was no place for women, some of whom would accompany their husbands to the hotel on weekends and wait in the car, for those fortunate enough to own one, while the husband brought them – and the children – drinks, a beer for mum and lemonade for the kids. Most often he would return to the main bar and drink with his mates. At least it was an outing!

The Pacific, and its unsuitability to mixed and family socialising, was critical in regard to decisions made regarding the social fabric of future-Revesby and surrounds. In the hotel's very bowels, as the drinks flowed, a band of regular drinkers were plotting to move their business elsewhere – eventually to licensed club premises just 150 metres away.

These men had grown tired of the cramped, uncomfortable conditions where the heaving, sweating bodies would sometimes stand five and six deep to get a beer. These were strong Labor men, too, who shared political ideologies, some steeply to the Left, others conservative and more to the Right (of Left), but blue-collar Labor supporters all the same – with the occasional Communist Party member thrown in, which will be dealt with in the coming chapters. It was because of their common bond – allied to their wish to find a place for their women to join them – that they began to agitate for a club.

One of the many photos taken by professional photographers of a bulging Revesby Pacific Hotel in 1962. The photos were used in the club's licensing court appearance to highlight the poor social drinking conditions of the area. The spill of drinkers onto the footpath was illegal and highlighted that it was no place for women and families. The mood of the woman about to cross the street, arms folded in apparent defiant fashion, perhaps tells the story best of all.





Jack Dickens, inaugural president of the East Hills (Revesby) Workers' Club.

Out of the small band of regular drinkers, Ray McCormack, Jack Dickens and Jim Donovan were the principals. McCormack was a staunch and loyal Labor Party member and a future mayor of Bankstown. He told former Sydney journalist Alan Knight, who had been engaged in the 1980s to research the early history of the club, of the growing unhappiness with the unruly drinking conditions.

"You used to buy half-a-dozen schooners just before six, stand them up on the shelf outside and then talk to your mates," McCormack explained. "The men would go down to the pub and leave their wives at home. There was no entertainment for women. Shocking times," he added, the last statement clearly underlining just how much his social conscience was at odds with the unacceptable set-up.

Marjie Elder, wife of foundation member Merv, was disdainful of the conditions at the hotel, recounting that the only night her husband drank at the hotel was Friday – she, too, with her children, would sit in the car while Merv brought them drinks. While it was uncomfortable for her, she related that "the kids still think it was the best night!"

Chook raffles a police matter

During these times Dickens ran chook raffles, firstly, to raise money for any number of good causes and, secondly, for the Labor Party. Police refused to turn a blind eye to the activity and Dickens, an invalid pensioner and former boilermaker, was promptly arrested. The sight of Dickens being dragged across the railway line to the police station outraged his Labor Party mates. According to Knight, the group had already been helping local war widows who couldn't afford to paint their Housing Commission homes. They had also run a charity night for a fellow drinker, who was deep in debt, after his wife died of cancer.

It was now 1959 and while the idea of forming a club was already heavily on their minds, the need to raise money – legally – for their fellow man only deepened their resolve and added a further reason for wanting a club.

They were gathering support, too. Revesby, by this stage, was growing fast. Merv Elder recalled being involved in conversations at the Revesby South Branch of the Labor Party where he was a member; Dickens was the president. The branch would hold their meetings in a church on the corner of The River Road and Uranus Road.

The group was aware of other workingmen's clubs – it was not as if they had discovered something wondrous and new. According to Jim Donovan, "They had been in existence elsewhere for many years, primarily in districts of heavy industry, such as Newcastle, Wollongong and large retail centres like Goulburn."

Doug Kelsey, a foundation member, offered some insights, perhaps better than most, though still understandably sketchy. He was a drinker at the Pacific Hotel at the time Dickens and his group were planning a club. A plumber by trade, Kelsey recalled advising, in particular Dickens and Herb McDougall, of a workers' club in Darwin which he had frequented while working briefly in the Northern Territory. The Darwin club had opened in 1946. Kelsey would do a "mail run", collecting bottled beer on Sundays for his fellow workers and taking them back to an old brewery where they all lived.

According to Kelsey, "I didn't drink with Dickens and his group at the Pacific – we were in a corner, right under the telly – but when they came around and said they wanted to form a workers' club, I told them about the workers' club in Darwin. They said it will cost you a quid to join and we're signing people up. So myself and Ronnie Gage signed up."

When the idea of a club was first mooted, it was suggested that it should be a Labor club and, indeed, the first name given to it was the "East Hills District Labor and Welfare Club". On the basis of their sympathetic welfare acts while fundraising at the Pacific Hotel, it is easy to understand the decision to include "welfare" in the club's name. However, the group agreed to drop the name later at the suggestion of their appointed solicitor, J P O'Neill.

UNION OF REGISTERED WORKERS' CLUBS

The first workers' club to receive its certificate of licence following the release of additional licences was West Wallsend Workers' Club in August 1947. The mining communities of the Hunter Valley and at Lake Macquarie resented the discrimination of hotel publicans in the area during World War II. The publicans were selective to whom they would serve alcohol. Beer supplies were short and trading hours were restricted to six o'clock closing.

After the war, the miners, mindful of the treatment toward them during the war years, vowed to form their own club and with the NSW licensing act about to change to allow a substantial number of extra club licences, the miners got their way. Until 1946 the only continuing licensed workers' clubs were Helensburgh Workmen's Club and Lithgow Workmen's Club, both established in 1887, and Silver City Workingmen's Club, formed in Broken Hill in 1901. Lithgow Workers' was founded by railway workers and lays claim to being the state's oldest registered club, though certainly not the first club to be formed – that place is reserved for The Australian Club, a gentlemen's elite establishment in Sydney, formed in 1838.

The Lithgow, Helensburgh and Silver City clubs were among a number of workingmen's clubs permitted licences in 1906 when clubs were first registered under the state government's new Liquor

Act, which restricted the number of licences to a miserly 85. (Only the three mentioned workers' clubs survived to 1946, the others were disbanded and replaced by a club in each of the respective electorates, the only way a club could obtain a licence after the 1906 restriction).

In 1946 (40 years later!) the Labor Government under the guidance of then-premier William McKell understood the desperate need for amendments to the Liquor Act to include clubs. In so doing, the government opened the way for 414 club licences, the numbers for each district restricted depending on the number of existing hotel licences in that district. The important issue, however, was that McKell had shown a need for a club industry and, thus, a demand for more club licences. And *that* would have significant ramifications for Revesby Workers' Club.

By 1954, Justice Allan Maxwell's Royal Commission into liquor licensing in New South Wales lifted the lid on club licences for all time. The impact was profound – no longer were there restrictions on licence numbers. Justice Maxwell was particularly severe on the conduct of hotels. He admonished publicans for their selfless profiteering. The neglect of and rejection of women in licensed drinking areas were significant in Maxwell's recommendations.

The irony for Revesby Workers' is that part of the reason its working-class men

sought to start their own club in the late 1950s was set in the same values that inspired the government to permit the first club licences in 40 years and Maxwell to admonish publicans – unrest in the community over unruly and unbecoming behaviour in and around local hotels and the need to provide a sanctuary for women who wished to drink and socialise in an acceptable environment with their men. The inspiration for the Revesby men, of course, went beyond that; but the need to form a safe haven for themselves and their women was at the crux of their reasoning.

The significance of the growth of the workmen's clubs was the subsequent formation of the Federation of Community, Sporting and Workers' Clubs Incorporated, known as the Union of Registered Workers' Clubs when it was formed on 25 February 1949. The Union catered for the growing number of workers' clubs and played an active role within the Registered Clubs Association (later, ClubsNSW), campaigning strongly for the admittance of 18-year-olds as members of licensed clubs, agitating for an industrial sector within the RCA and helping to establish holiday venues over a number of decades for their own clubs as well as others within the RCA.

This is the family into which the men of Revesby would, in the ensuing years, take their community.



Eric Costa, Labor MP in 1962 in the new seat of Banks and supporter of moves to form a licensed club.

The men who would form the basis of the first committee and first club Board were uncomfortable with the reference to Labor, suggesting it did not truly reflect their intentions and reasons for forming the club. True, they were Labor men, but they were workers first. They wanted their women folk as part of the landscape and ethos of the new club and felt a “workers” club had a broader, more rounded appeal. There may also have been an influential push from members and potential members of the Communist Party at the time. While the first Board consisted almost entirely of Labor Party men, among their friends and supporters on the fringe were Communist Party members – and workers! Nor did the pioneering group want a Returned Services League (RSL) club since RSLs contained a clause requiring a member to declare he was not a member of the Communist Party.

According to Donovan, “A lot of diggers weren’t communists, but they were socialists and they took exception to it [the RSL rule]. It was like asking a man his religion. We never did that. We had strong tykes working alongside members of the Communist Party. As far as members of the Board were concerned, we were club members first.”

Originally, the Dickens, Donovan and McCormack group had been part of a much larger team who had been agitating for a licensed club known as an unincorporated body: The Revesby Social Set. For whatever reason, the “workers” group split from the main party, a fact mentioned by Merv MacFarlane and later supported by Donovan in an article in *The Torch* newspaper on the purchase of their first block of land. MacFarlane was a strong Communist Party member who became editor of the club’s first newsletter in 1964. He was there as plans for a club began to take shape and wrote in a later club bulletin: “The first organisation collapsed and a small band of seven workers disassociated themselves from the initial movement and started afresh to establish a club. The take-it-or-leave-it attitude of the breweries [hoteliers] to amenities and

sane drinking stiffened their determination. Their wish was to form a club where people of differing political and religious backgrounds could meet socially and pursue common interests.

“The originators of the club are trade unionists,” he continued, “and their concepts of trade unionism were and still are the motive force of the club. Led by the late Jack Dickens, they struggled to make their dream a reality. It proved no bed of roses.”

According to Donovan, “This was the first time a group of really resourceful, determined and often obstinate men, equipped with the necessary courage and zeal, had banded together to bring this thing to fruition.” The move, he said, was promoted by the Labor League of whom the “original subscribers [to the workers’ club], with one exception, were office bearers in same”.

“These were men with years of experience in the ALP and trade unions and battling for the rights of their fellow men was nothing new to these chaps,” he offered. “Many were the tragic cases in the district that had their sorrow eased somewhat by practical assistance in the form of benefit nights. Such occasions brought out the men’s organising abilities and stood them in good stead when the club was proposed. Welfare was one factor that motivated the idea of such a club in the district and was actually adopted as part of our title in the first instance, i.e. ‘The East Hills Welfare and Workers Club [sic].’”

Who made the first call for a club is not known – the principals in the group were genuinely unsure, believing it had been a collective decision. And as has been noted already, there was little doubt they had a number of reasons for wanting a licensed club in their midst: the need to assist the less fortunate workers and families in the community, a suitable environment for their women and families, a suitable base for local sporting clubs and as an entertainment venue, just for a start. These were, in the main, fair-minded men, not without conflicting political

and social views within their own group. It was nothing for them to have a “barney” if they believed strongly enough in their argument. And, of course, they were egalitarian in their political views – as long as you voted Labor!

There was much to do if a licensed club was to be the fruits of their labour. Eric Costa, a foundation member and Labor MP for the new seat of Banks, was a regular in the “Labor corner” of the Revesby Pacific on Friday evenings. Through his hotel meetings and his association with men at the local Labor League, Costa suggested Dickens and his group contact the Narwee Welfare Community Workers’ Club, which had formed with similar aims and objectives. Narwee Workers’ was in its death throes due to the prolonged illness of Harry Turner, the club’s driving force. A deputation led by the club’s subsequent foundation president, Jack Dickens, and which included Costa, Donovan and Harry Ryall, met Turner at his home where he gave them a copy of their constitution. He also offered the money that had accrued through the Narwee club (believed to be £3000), requesting that, at the very least, it goes to a similar organisation, though it did not eventuate. With a few appropriate modifications, the Narwee club’s constitution was adopted.

A large public meeting was held at Revesby Public School on Friday, 29 June 1959 where a shadow committee was elected, consisting of president, Jack Dickens; vice-presidents, Jim Donovan and Ray McCormack; honorary secretary, Bill Delauney; assistant honorary secretary, Len Foss; honorary treasurer, George Johnstone. An annual membership fee of £1 was adopted with some reluctance, particularly since the basic wage was £13/16/-. Not everyone at the meeting was willing to part with their hard-earned income – not perhaps until they could see something more tangible than a mere step in faith.

According to Donovan, after further meetings at both the Revesby Public School and Padstow Progress Hall, a full committee of what was still known as the East Hills Workers’ and Welfare Club was elected, as follows:

President: Jack Dickens

Vice-presidents: Jim Donovan and Ray McCormack.

Honorary secretary: Bill Delauney.

Assistant honorary secretary: Brien Higgs (owing to the resignation of Len Foss)

Honorary treasurer: George Johnstone.

Committeemen: Herb McDougall, Herb Barron, Ted Smith, T Gould, G Downs, L McCarthy, Bill Potts.

21 AND OUT!

Tom Delauney, the son of foundation member Tom Senior, added a new slant on the pre-formation days of the club. His reminiscences are among the few eyewitness accounts of the days when local men would meet at the Delauney house.

According to Tom, “They would meet either Saturday or Sunday for a game of cards, a few beers and a snack and a general discussion. Some of the meetings

were held at our home, in our garage at 8 Constance Street, Revesby, and we as kids would take out the various snacks.

“The group called themselves ‘21 and out’. Each member would have a badge number up to 21. My father, Tom Delauney, was number 13 and my brother Harold was the last member at 21.

“After a while, the group started having gambling nights at various homes.

They would have cards, dice games, roulette and a lucky wheel. The proceeds from these nights went to the group and they soon became quite financial.

“When my father passed away, I was a member of Revesby Workers’ and I applied for badge number 13.”

Tom has that badge today, and cherishes it, and will pass it on to his son and/or grandson when the time arrives.

Pokies in the backyard

The vexed question for the group was money. They needed a kitty and the best way to grow the funds, since their options were limited, was to hold fundraising evenings in the backyards of some of their homes. These doubled as social evenings and gave the wives, mostly young marrieds, a chance to socialise and to play their part. According to Brien Higgs, socialising and entertainment consisted mainly of going to the movies, playing cards and, for those so motivated, attending political meetings. The cost of entertainment was beyond most – even a night in Bankstown at the movies or other such treats was rare. The wives and their men enjoyed the chance to mingle with other like-minded families, though Sunday night proved unpopular and was changed later to Friday nights, where the evenings were better patronised and the committee had first chop of the week's pay. According to Herb McDougall, "When they moved to Friday nights we took £1000 on one night."

Merle Peters, in *The Big Club: The History of Revesby Workers' Club*, reported that up to 150 friends would attend the functions each week. The group decorated the backyard clothes hoist with party lights, erected makeshift

shelters, occasionally a small marquee, and ran games such as under and overs and crown and anchor. Kegs were tapped in the laundry and George Anthony wheeled in a few "used" poker machines. Grog and food was free. Anthony, who lived at Lakemba, would later play a major role in the Workers' Club's gaming needs. For the time being, he was happy to usher in a few trade-in machines, about four or five for each fundraiser. Car trials and cricket matches were also organised to raise funds.

To this point, the accepted version of how the club changed its name and refined its committee numbers to seven led to the Picnic Point Bowling Club, which was perhaps the first club to offer significant support. Donovan explained that it was on the advice of friends – members of Picnic Point and other clubs – that he and his committee sought well-known Bankstown solicitor John P O'Neill, to help them prepare their constitution and seek a liquor licence. O'Neill was conversant with the club industry, particularly through his association with Bankstown Sports Club and that club's successful acquisition of a licence.

However, Higgs's recollection, offered some years after the club's formation, attributes Bankstown Sports Club representatives with shortening the name, as well as the need to reduce the committee from its unwieldy 13 members and the suggestion to contact J P O'Neill. Higgs also wrote that the club initially elected him a director, then as assistant secretary to Bill Delauney. There is no evidence that Higgs was ever a director, though the appointment might well have been made – and then withdrawn – at the one meeting, and therefore never released

to the public. Whichever version is correct is not an issue, though it is important to offer both scenarios as possibilities.

There appears enough evidence that O'Neill advised the committee to scrap the "Narwee" constitution and draw up a more appropriate one which would be far more acceptable to the licensing court – and that O'Neill suggested the committee drop the word "Welfare" from the title. He advised the club to "amalgamate, co-ordinate and enlarge" the group's various sporting clubs and activities, among them golf, fishing, darts, bowls and peg quoits. It should be remembered that it was O'Neill who directed and guided Bankstown Sports in their formative moments and one can give him the credit for trimming the Workers' Club's committee to seven directors and an honorary secretary. On 21 December 1960 he registered the club's articles. The new club would be known as East Hills Workers' Club Limited.

The directors, appointed by Memorandum and Articles, Article 14, under the *Companies Act 1936*, were: Jack Dickens, Jim Donovan, Ray McCormack, Herb Barron, Ted Smith, George Johnstone and Herb McDougall.

Of course, the group lacked club facilities – and finance – and if they wanted to hold meetings in the Padstow Progress Hall or the Revesby Public School they had to have a "whip around" to pay for it. Thus, they began to hold regular meetings in the front room of Dickens's house at 20 Murphy Street, Revesby. A very understanding Doris Dickens would retire to another room to watch television while the men forged a path toward a liquor licence and a club structure, though many of the meetings spilled over into political argument. Others had to be completed in a member's car and continued by torchlight.

In a review in 1966 of the club's history, Donovan recognised Doris Dickens's role. Said Donovan: "Not one word of objection

or complaint was ever raised from the quiet, smiling, tolerant, housewife, Mrs Doris Dickens. As she used to philosophically put it, with a shrug of her shoulders, 'Well, this is his interest, and he is so wrapped up in it, far be it for me to change this, or him, at his age.'"

In his interview with Alan Knight, Donovan admitted divisions in local Labor politics interrupted committee meetings. "Politics were played straight down the line," he explained. "They fought every inch of the way. Jack [Dickens] was often crook and he used to shout out from his bed in the next room. He was told, 'Shut up! You're crook!' Of course he didn't shut up. He just kept bellowing.

"Things would come up like what sort of attire should be required in the club. Some blokes wouldn't know what the hell attire was. It might take ten minutes of shouting them down just to get across that all we were talking about was dress. Small issues like that took up hours."

The first directors' meeting of the East Hills Workers' Club Limited was held at the office of O'Neill, in the Commercial Bank Chambers, 114a North Terrace, Bankstown on 24 January 1961. Dickens was appointed president; Brien Higgs, the secretary in place of Delauney and George Johnstone treasurer. The Board meetings thereafter continued in Dickens's front room – by then the club's registered office. Dickens was ailing, having suffered a serious heart attack and, though an enthusiastic prime mover in the quest for a workers' club, was often not at the front table – as Donovan remarked, sometimes attending directors' meetings from his bed in the next room.

As the registered title implied, the only definite conclusion one could take after the Articles of Association were completed was that the club building would be in the East Hills electorate. They boasted a registered office, but not the four walls to house it!

Selems Parade, Revesby in the 1950s – just as the area was beginning its great population spurt.



With a little help from 'Mr Big'



1961-62

IT WAS TIME TO RAISE SOME SERIOUS MONEY. A BLOCK OF LAND AND A CLUB BUILDING WOULD REQUIRE FUNDING BY WAY OF BANK LOAN, BREWERY FINANCE OR A GUARANTOR EVEN, AND, AS A STARTER, BY WAY OF DEBENTURES. THE DECISION TO OFFER DEBENTURES CAME AFTER REPRESENTATION ON THE CLUB'S BEHALF BY STATE LABOR MEMBER JOE KELLY HAD FAILED TO SECURE THE 'NARWEE' MONEY. THE DEBENTURES WERE ISSUED IN £10 UNITS AT AN INTEREST RATE OF EIGHT PER CENT FOR A FIXED PERIOD OF THREE YEARS. THEY COULD NOT BE REDEEMED BEFORE THIS TIME UNLESS CONSENTED TO BY THE BOARD DEPENDING ON THE EXTREME NEEDS OF THE HOLDER.

At a time when £10 was a considerable sum for the businessman and workingman alike, an old builder's labourer, Bill Rigby, walked into a committee meeting in the Dickens's lounge room one evening and laid £100 on the table. Brien Higgs admitted sitting there 'google-eyed'. Two days later, Rigby took out another £100 worth of debentures, and as McCormack commented this time, "That really kicked the club on. We had enough to pay our architect." Sadly, Rigby never lived to see the club built. He died following an accident on a building site.

One of the methods the committee used to seek debentures was by letter advising the person of his acceptance as a new member, along with a request to pay his £1 subscription at the registered office (Dickens's lounge room). The letter outlined the need for finance and an invitation to take out debentures which "can be paid off over a period of 6 months if so desired". The letter concluded by assuring the member that

taking out debentures was not a condition of membership, a factor pursued in the licensing court in April the following year in an effort to discredit the Workers' Club's right to be granted a conditional liquor licence.

Though raising money was understandably slow, despite the gathering support within the local community for licensed premises, the committee had sufficient funds for a deposit on a block of land. Real estate was surveyed throughout Padstow, Panania and Revesby and all that was required was for the suitable land to be in the South Ward. The club's first treasurer – and a director – George Johnstone, a former Bankstown Council alderman, held an interest in real estate and was given the role of acquiring the most suitable land site available. Which he did, selecting a strategically placed block, Lot Z, Macarthur Avenue, Revesby, ideally placed close to the Revesby Railway Station and bus routes. Next to it was a baby health centre and across the lane, the Revesby Post Office. Directly north was a shopping centre.

The block, 116 feet by 150 feet, was purchased for £6000. Through O'Neill, the club's solicitor, an option on the land was obtained from the vendor, Monaro Investments

Pty Limited, for £1000 with the balance to be paid within three months. A contract for the land was signed on 10 April 1961 by Dickens and Johnstone and the block was valued at a developed price of £16,364. In a significant stroke of good fortune, the principals of Monaro Investments, father and son Paul and Oscar Ramsay, agreed to invest the remaining amount owing on the land – £5000 – in two equal debentures of £2500.

If ever there was a show of confidence in the project, this was it. These were professional men, well heeled and alert to investment potential. They were also known to have what Brien Higgs called "big interests in the [Revesby] area". Paul Ramsay was a real estate agent and Oscar a surveyor and they understandably saw the value in investing their money at eight per cent interest and at the same time securing a sale for their land – in some ways the best of both worlds. The two men lived on the North Shore and conducted their business at 17 Bond Street, Sydney.

Higgs described the transaction matter-of-factly, though one could imagine the high fives all round as "we had put a deposit on it [the land] and they offered to take out the debentures

The Revesby Baby Health Centre served the community for many decades. The original club was built alongside it.





George Johnstone, a foundation director and the club's first treasurer.

so that we could finalise the deal". The Ramsays would join the club as foundation members. Though they had not contributed to any of the social and sporting activities at the time, Higgs expected them to do so once the clubhouse was built. Cross-examined in the licensing court the following year as the club sought a liquor licence, Higgs assured the court that the Ramsays' debentures carried exactly the same conditions as all others. Higgs had known them for 18 months at the time of buying the land.

The Ramsays' investment took the debenture issue to £5926/5/-. The balance of the money (£926/5/-) was spread among 83 other debenture holders who invested amounts from £150 down to £10. A condition of taking out a debenture was that you had to be a member of the club.

At the April 1961 Board meeting, Higgs was instructed to make application to the licensing court for a provisional licence, with a proviso: "As soon as the requested numbers of members have been elected." However, gathering sufficient membership numbers proved to be slower and more arduous than they had envisaged and the same request was made of J P O'Neill eight months later, in December, following the finalisation of a guarantor for the bank loan to build the club.

By August 1961, membership had reached 198, still 52 short of the number the Board believed were required to satisfy licensing court ordinances. However, the club needed only 200 members to satisfy the courts as decreed under the recent *Liquor (Amendment) Act 1954* following the Maxwell Royal Commission, which introduced the most significant reforms in licensed club history.

One had only to survey the occupations of the membership list at this point to understand that these were truly heart and soul working-class people. Among the occupations were iron workers, motor mechanics, wood machinists, telephone technicians, gardeners, master plumbers, panel beaters, crane drivers, carpenters, wharf labourers, the occasional sales representative, and an engineer. The addition of women to the membership list

maintained the high quota of working-class occupations. "Domestic Duties", as each woman was labelled, was as working-class as one could get! Jim Donovan when asked about equality for women in a workers' club replied: "We think housewives qualify for the title of worker just as much as the labourer or the doctor."

Buoyed by the purchase of the land and the prospect of soon being able to apply for a liquor licence, the pioneering committee appointed Alan K Eedy as architect to draw up acceptable plans. The council gave approval in principle, a step that would have no further meaning if finance could not be found.

Beer choice is serious

At this time, Millers Brewery became interested after an approach from the Workers' Club. Millers was a relative newcomer to the liquor playing fields. One of the few medium-scale Sydney brewers to successfully take on Tooheys and Tooth & Co, they were located on Taverners Hill on Parramatta Road at Petersham. Millers, an aggressive procurer of hotels in the 1960s, moved into the licensed club scene until 1967 when it was purchased by Tooheys.

Millers were prepared to guarantee funding of the club. Johnstone reported in November that a deputation had met with Millers representative Mr D Walker and he had informed them that the advantages the club gained in agreeing to the Millers proposal included reduction in the cost of poker machine items, training of the secretary-manager, and assistance in management help and in arranging finance. He further advised that if Millers Brewery did assist the club to acquire finance, the club would be tied to Millers for a period of five to ten years. Walker recommended that the club contact A B Cowin, the manager of the Bank of New South Wales Bankstown branch.

The club kept Millers at arm's reach – as a last resort, it would seem, if all else failed. To be restricted to Millers ale – and no other – for an extended period would have undermined all the good the committee had done up to that

time. Beer selection, particularly for a new club, was a serious matter and not everyone loved Millers beer.

Funding initiatives looked bleak after a number of banks and financial companies rejected the club's funding proposal. While Millers were keen, Tooheys, for instance, turned down the offer, as did virtually every bank in the area, one by one, despite some promising preliminary discussions with bank branch managers. Forty-eight members attended the Friday-night annual general meeting, held at the Revesby South Public School assembly hall on 29 September 1961, where they were updated on club business and where all directors were re-elected unopposed.

And so the chase for finance went on – through the Commonwealth Bank, the Rural Bank of NSW, the Bank of NSW and General

Credits Limited, a financial institution of the Commercial Bank and another last resort since General Credits advised the club they would be happy to accept an application but if the loan was granted the interest rate would be approximately 12 per cent reducible.

Ken Booth, a hairdresser and returned serviceman, was a foundation member (badge number 59) and brother-in-law of Jack Legge (badge number 60). He recalled cutting the hair of the then manager of Bankstown RSL one morning when Brien Higgs and Jim Donovan walked in. The RSL manager asked them where they were going. "Going to the bank to borrow £4 million [sic]," they remarked. When they left, the manager told Booth: "They'll never be able to pay it off." (It is unlikely that the figure was as high as £4 million, though the sentiment of the story cannot be challenged.)

Ray Fitzpatrick, tagged the "Mr Big" of Bankstown, came to the rescue of the foundation directors, guaranteeing the new club's future. Fitzpatrick was the highest-profile businessman in the area. He also owned *The Bankstown Observer* and is seen here (left) with an editor during the 1950s.



With a little help from 'Mr Big'

In the midst of the rejections, the club's solicitor, John O'Neill, suggested that a delegation of Board members call on Ray Fitzpatrick, who held an affinity with the working-class of Bankstown and was a strong supporter of the Australian Labor Party. According to Ray McCormack in an interview with Alan Knight, he, Dickens and Barron were chosen. McCormack told Knight that Fitzpatrick stood "outside his beautiful house", unshaven and in a pair of overalls. "He asked me, how much did we want? I said, '£50,000.'

"He said, 'No trouble at all.'

"He said to see him up at the bank at ten in the morning and he'd guarantee the money for us. We couldn't get there fast enough the next day.

"Sure enough, in walked Ray in his old overalls. He told the bank manager, 'Fix these people up,'" McCormack added.

McCormack's recollection, made 21 years after the visit, might have been sketchy. Club records show that the amount guaranteed by Fitzpatrick was £20,000 and the version of events as outlined in the Workers' Club directors' meeting minutes of 12 November [1961] are less colourful and certainly less romantic than McCormack's version, though it is not the intention – nor our right – to doubt the sincerity of McCormack's account.

According to club records, Fitzpatrick was less carefree with negotiations than depicted by McCormack, agreeing to be guarantor *providing* he could find no objections after interviews between himself and O'Neill and Cowin, the bank manager, who was already aware of the club's requirements based on earlier approaches. Fitzpatrick had sold his quarry and contracting business to Rio Tinto Co Limited two years earlier to form his new company, Fitzpatrick Industries Pty Limited. It was also reported by Herb Barron that it was he and Dickens who had interviewed Fitzpatrick, which was supported by Higgs during licensing court questioning after the Pacific Hotel licensee, Arthur Pratt, objected to the club's application for a liquor licence.

However, Higgs, in his own handwriting, adds McCormack to the list in an overview of the club's commencement, written some years later.

The grab for a licensed club and the lengthy, sometimes frustratingly slow procedures in development through the late 1950s and early 1960s was conducted at a time when the area – the Bankstown precinct, and Revesby with it – was growing at a fast rate. Statistics published by the State Planning Authority showed that the number of factory workers employed in the Canterbury-Bankstown area increased from 6000 in 1945 to 28,150 in 1961, underlining the heavy increase in industry. Factory workers actually living in the area more than doubled in the same period. It also had its fill of corruption and political intrigue. The Bankstown *Torch*, with Phil Engisch its editor, reported on the rough and ready politics of the local council, described by Jim Donovan as "the greatest snake gully council you could imagine. If you were a member of the ALP branch, you had to fight to become a delegate to the council. She was a wild show."

Fun and games in "Gangstown"!

According to Donovan, Bankstown became known as "Gangstown", a mild reference compared to outlandish characterisations in *The Truth* newspaper, who trumpeted that "its special investigator" visited "little Chicago by the Georges River". Such was the depth of interest in the national consciousness, the Melbourne-based *Herald and Weekly Times* even sent a journalist to the area to cover the aftermath of the firebombing of the local *Torch* newspaper and its court proceedings. The Melbourne journalist wrote in typically colourful journalese, "It paid to mind your own business in Bankstown because someday someone is bound to get on to the cement shoes idea."

The Bankstown *Torch* consistently attacked Fitzpatrick's newspaper *The Bankstown Observer* (co-owned with his brother Jack) and it led to two of the more infamous issues of the time: the jailing of Fitzpatrick and his newspaper

editor, Frank Browne, and the firebombing of *The Torch* newspaper offices on Easter Monday, 11 April 1955. When fire destroyed *The Torch* offices, editor Phil Engisch asserted at a coronial enquiry that the fire had been deliberately lit and that Fitzpatrick had a motive, though Engisch could garner no evidence. The enquiry ultimately returned an open finding.

Fitzpatrick was a colourful, larger-than-life figure, referred to in the mainstream press as the "Mr Big" of Bankstown. A self-made millionaire, he was a sand and gravel merchant (and newspaper proprietor) whose bulldozers were responsible for razing most of the trees in south-western Sydney in preparation for the suburban population explosion through suburbs such as Revesby. Powerful and rich at a time when the basic wage was under £15, he was a fervent supporter of the Australian Labor Party, classed in one *Daily Telegraph* article as influencing "most Labor Party affairs in the area".

Fitzpatrick's political friends in the ALP couldn't save him from a jail term, nor Browne, who had been hired to hound Charlie Morgan, the federal member for Reid, through the pages of the newspaper in retribution for a decade of intense scrutiny and threats from Morgan-inspired investigations into Fitzpatrick's alleged corrupt dealings. Morgan accused Fitzpatrick of being a wartime racketeer and even accused him of firebombing *The Torch* newspaper offices.

Morgan complained that an article headed "MHR and Immigration Racket", appearing in *The Bankstown Observer* some two weeks after *The Torch* fire, impugned his personal honour and challenged his right to be a member of parliament. Morgan moved a motion that the article be referred to the House of Representatives Standing Committee of Privileges for investigation, which was carried by the House. In June 1955, the House determined that Fitzpatrick and Browne appear before the Bar of the Chamber – without legal representation – to answer the breach of privilege charges against them and, on a motion from the then-prime minister,

Robert Menzies, voted that the two men be committed to 90 days in jail – a unique event in the Australian justice system. Appeals to the High Court of Australia and the Privy Council failed and Fitzpatrick and Browne served their sentences in the Canberra police lockup, while the appeals had been pending, and, for a short time, in Goulburn Jail.

Despite his reputation – and though despised on some sides of politics and society – Fitzpatrick was essentially well thought of among the working fraternity. Ray McCormack once confided to friends that you could get into a fight around Bankstown by running Fitzpatrick down because he had done so many favours for people. According to Andrew Moore in his excellent account of Fitzpatrick's business and political influences, Fitzpatrick proclaimed that, "I never robbed a worker in my life."

Bankstown's Mr Big was not afraid to throw his support behind worthy causes – and for no reciprocal benefits. It was important to catalogue Fitzpatrick's background and political influences within the ALP in the Bankstown area in the mid-1950s and, later, for the role he was to play in the establishment of the Workers' Club. The connection was the Labor Party and, to a lesser extent, Fitzpatrick's propensity for helping workers.

Whatever the case, the meeting with Fitzpatrick was a defining moment for the club. Approval took little time and in December 1961, directors were informed that the Bank of New South Wales had agreed to an advance of £20,000. Reductions were to be made at a rate of £4000 annually, the first of which was to be made not later than 30 June 1963 at an interest rate of seven per cent per annum. In fact, the club did not require the full amount of £20,000 guaranteed and would only be required to draw to the extent of £16,000. Interestingly, Cowin advised that the bank would have accepted either Fitzpatrick or Millers Brewery as guarantor of the loan. The Revesby branch of the Bank of New South Wales took over the conduct of the loan, and branch manager

Jim Donovan, who became president after Jack Dickens's death.



V H N Hill and the club transferred all future banking transactions to the bank.

At a specially convened directors' meeting on New Year's Eve – at 9am on a Saturday, just two weeks after confirmation of the loan – Hill was invited to address the directors, at which point he advised them that two directors and the secretary should sign all cheques on behalf of the club. At the same meeting Johnstone moved that the position of treasurer be abolished and that three directors be elected as a finance sub-committee: Johnstone, along with Donovan and Smith, were elected. And not the least important, O'Neill was instructed – again – to apply for a licence.

In late July 1961, the club announced it was lifting its membership limit from 200 to 250 – without comment on whether they believed the increase was a necessary requirement to satisfy liquor licensing conditions or whether the club had simply taken it upon itself to lift membership numbers. During the later licensing court sessions, Brien Higgs, under questioning, advised “there are 250, and 8 directors”. Yet the full list of members tendered to the licensing magistrate when court proceedings commenced totalled 240, including the seven directors and 14 women. The police report to the licensing court prior to court proceedings contained reference to “a membership of 240 persons, made up of ordinary members who are associated together for social and recreational purposes”.

From October 1961, directors imposed an entrance fee of £3 on new members, plus the £1 annual subscription. Not surprising, securing memberships was not easy. Members were

urged to convince their friends and neighbours to join and, in perusing the list of foundation members which appear to be in order of joining, the street addresses indicate that three and four neighbours joined at the same time. It was similar with workmates. In one instance, three waterside workers joined one after the other, and in another instance, three boilermakers, including Vic de Sailly, a future director of the club.

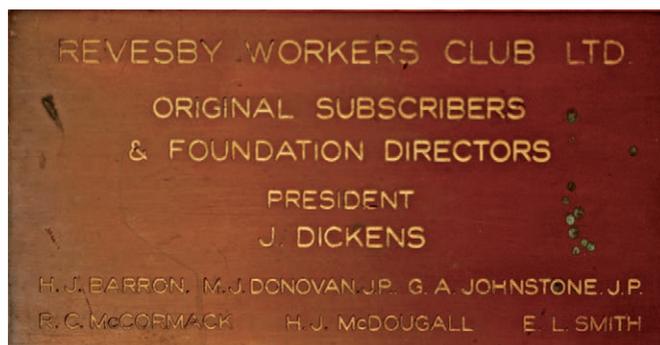
Claims that a number of wives joined to help make up the numbers rings true as well – not one of the 14 women joined at the same time as their husbands. Even though the club, from the first day of formation, accorded women equal membership rights, the Board felt it was better to encourage male members since they were more likely to bring new members to the club and it was less financial stress on a household to pay two joining fees.

Not everyone who filled out membership applications joined the club. During court proceedings in April 1962, Higgs advised the court that as many as 50 people filled out membership cards with a view to joining – 49 did not, for their own various reasons, and one was rejected by the club.

With the financial security of the project in place, the club selected Parramatta business W McNamara Pty Limited, one of the six companies that tendered, as the builder. They had also been the cheapest of the six bids, at £14,500 – and had also guaranteed to finish the job in 15 weeks, as against E R Jones (£18,505 and 28 weeks to complete).

The club now had one major final piece to fit the jigsaw – the granting of the liquor licence.

A plaque showing the “original subscribers & foundation directors”. While the directors are the originals who started the “East Hills” club in 1961–62, the plaque carries the club's post-1965 title of “Revesby”.



Oh for a licence

3



1962

THE PERIOD IN WHICH THE EAST HILLS WORKERS' CLUB SOUGHT A LIQUOR LICENCE WAS FORMIDABLE, TO SAY THE LEAST. THE CLUB INDUSTRY AT THE TIME WAS ON THE ONE HAND A GROWING, DEVELOPING ORGAN – GIVEN NEW LIFE BY THEN-PREMIER WILLIAM MCKELL IN THE MID- TO LATE 1940S – YET AT ODDS WITH AN ACRIMONIOUS HOTEL INDUSTRY WHICH FOUGHT ANY ATTEMPTS TO ENCROACH ON THEIR "TERRITORY".

The Workers' Club was a sitting duck. Not only did it have the licensing police to satisfy but also a hotel, the Revesby Pacific, a mere block away from the intended club rooms. The initial police report to the licensing court was positive and indicated no irregularities. The club was blessed in that it had the guidance of J P O'Neill, not only familiar with the legal requirements but one who understood the workings and needs of the court and of licensed clubs.

For the East Hills Workers' Club (as it was still called), this would be no smooth ride. Secretary Brien Higgs applied for a conditional application for a certificate of registration through the licensing court on 1 March, at which time the court was advised of an objector – Arthur George Pratt, known to club directors and many of the club's members as the publican at the Pacific Hotel and, as such, the licensee and employee of Pacific Holdings Pty Ltd, the owners of the hotel.

Disrupted by a number of adjournments, the hearing got underway on Monday, 26 March 1962 at the Metropolitan Licensing Court in Martin Place, Sydney, before licensing magistrate James Leslie Fitzmaurice. The application would be heard over



Brien Higgs, the club's secretary-manager, who impressed with his handling of the heavy questioning during the licensing court proceedings.

four sitting days. Research indicates the court heard the objections on 26 March, 2, 9 and 30 April, with the decision handed down on 2 May.

At the brunt of heavy questioning from the objector's counsel and, later, the licensing sergeant was Higgs, a laid-back, quietly spoken electrical mechanic who, at the time, had worked for the Public Works Department for 19 years and whose intent when he agreed to the position of club secretary was to learn as much as he could about the licensed club trade. This was his baptism of fire and so well did he handle the intense scrutiny of the court, the directors were convinced at once they had chosen the right man. Though tired and tense from each day's proceedings, Higgs recounted the day's courtroom events over a few evening ales with directors and members, though one assumes not at the Pacific Hotel!

Pratt's lawyer, Mr Broun, acted under instructions from Messrs Murphy and Maloney, and Mr Denton, representing J P O'Neill, acted for Higgs. Sergeant Fryer acted for the Metropolitan Licensing Inspector and the Superintendent of Licenses.

Pratt petitioned the court to refuse the grant on the following grounds:

THAT the Club is not conducted in good faith as a Club.

THAT the proposed premises in respect of which the application is made are not suitable to be registered under the provisions of the *Liquor Act 1912-1954*.

THAT having regard to the existing facilities for social amenities, recreation and refreshment or for cultural or political activities and to the objects of the Club, the Club is not required to meet a genuine and substantial need.

THAT the Court has no jurisdiction to hear the above application.

The petition was dated 20 March 1962.

The Workers' Club would suffer a further objection – from the Metropolitan Licensing Inspector, a Mr McAuliffe, who concluded the club did not meet a genuine and substantial need.

Pratt objected as both the licensee (an employee) of the hotel and as a resident of the area. He had been living at the hotel since the previous December. When asked by Denton, Higgs's counsel, whether he had any personal interest in the objection, he answered that he had – simply, that he did not want to see a Workers' Club there. He quite naively answered, "workers' clubs might be all right in coal mining towns or industrial areas, but I do not think one is needed in this area ... it is a personal feeling I have against it." He suggested a football club might be more suitable. It was an unconvincing response – at best.

Broun, the objector's counsel, searched for any semblance of dishonesty and any titbit that would discredit Higgs and the club, targeting without notice a series of issues, such as: Higgs's knowledge of every one of the 240 registered members – and some potential members who didn't register; the legitimacy of posting the names of newly elected members on a notice board in the lounge room of a residential address – Jack Dickens's house, at 20 Murphy Street, Revesby, the registered address of the club at the time; queried whether prospective guarantors Ray Fitzpatrick and Millers Brewery had any financial interest in the club; and whether the books were maintained under correct corporate law.

Higgs's integrity was continually under question. Pratt's counsel was at lengths to prove that not enough of the club's members partook of the social events offered. Broun endeavoured to show that the new club was no more than a club for sports-minded members and thus there was no genuine need for a club. The issue would be paramount in the magistrate's summing up and would form part of his judgement. In this excerpt from court transcripts, Higgs is both composed and honest.

Q (Mr Broun). The social evenings you have told us about – where do you hold those?

A (Higgs). As far as general membership is concerned, mainly at Picnic Point Bowling Club.

Q. How far is Picnic Point Bowling Club from the centre?

A. A mile-and-a-half to two miles.

Q. How many of your members would be members of the Picnic Point Bowling Club?

A. A small percentage.

Q. Do you mean there are more people who belong to other clubs?

A. No. If you looked to other clubs you would possibly find ten, but I do not think so – I think there would be far less.

Q. You said you have up to half your members taking part in social functions held mainly at Picnic Point Bowling Club?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose the persons interesting themselves in forming the club would be restricted to that half?

A. I did break it into two.

Q. It would be the same people in each lot.

A. Not necessarily so. Quite a large proportion of the people who attended the social evenings had not taken part in the sports.

Q. A large number of those engaged in indoor sporting activity have taken part in the social side?

A. Not having figures, I could not say.

Q. The larger part?

A. I would say of those who have played the sports, a fair percentage have come to the social evening.

Q. Tell us what sort of a percentage – would it be 75 per cent?

A. These affairs have taken place over a period of time.

Q. You are not sure?

A view of the Revesby Pacific Hotel from across The River Road. This was another photo shown to the magistrate during the successful licensing court proceedings to underline the poor drinking conditions of the area.



A. I am sure the activities have taken place.
 Q. You do not know what people have gone along?
 A. We have had very good crowds.
 Q. What do you call very good crowds?
 A. On the occasions when we held nights at Picnic Point Bowling Club, the majority would be members of the Revesby Club.
 Q. Would that be a couple of hundred?
 A. No, 70 or 80.
 Q. That would be members and their wives?
 A. Yes.
 Q (From the Bench). What are the social nights, dances?
 A. Yes, dances.
 Q (Mr Broun). Were Picnic Point members there?
 A. Yes, they were in attendance.
 Q. Excluding women and non-members, there would be about 40 members present?
 A. About a dozen of our members are women, and they were there, too.
 Q. Are there husbands members?
 A. Yes.
 Q. So there might have been 50 members there?
 A. Yes.
 Q. Is this not really the position, that the majority of your members have joined in the expectation of better things to come?
 A. Yes, I would agree with that – better social and better sporting facilities.

On the question of whether directors of the Revesby club drank at the Pacific Hotel, Mr Broun asked:
 Q. Where do you say your members drink at the present time?
 A. At various places, I presume. There may be some at home. The majority, I would say, would drink at various hotels around the place.
 Q. They would drink at the nearby Revesby Pacific Hotel?
 A. I would not say they would not.
 Q. You, yourself, drink there occasionally?
 A. Yes, occasionally.

Q. And so do most of the Directors?
 A. Most of them, yes.
 Q. Are the facilities at that hotel comfortable to drink?
 A. That could be argued.
 Q. Will you tell us your opinion?
 A. I cannot agree.

Broun kept his powder dry for his scrutiny of the legitimacy of a number of memberships, focusing on Higgs's inability to remember "every" name and details on each of them, aiming again to discredit Higgs as much as the manner in which the club sought and sanctioned new members. Most notably Broun centred on one member, Ivor Hedges, in which "H Buchanan" signed his membership card as the proposer but the signature did not match the "H Buchanan" on three other membership cards. Broun asked that the cards be part of the exhibits.

The irregularity in Hedges's nomination was not lost on the Workers' Club Board. The very next night – at their 27 March directors' meeting – Hedges, Hugh Buchanan and Cliff Wyatt, another who had been mentioned in court proceedings, were summoned to the boardroom and informed that "as certain articles were in the hands of the licensing courts this matter would not be dealt with until such articles have been returned to the club's secretary". They were to be notified when the directors had the full information.

Broun also attempted to prove the club had negotiated an agreement with Millers Brewery to finance the new club which included using Millers beer for a period of five to ten years. In essence, Broun wanted to establish that Millers would therefore deprive the directors of the control of liquor supplied in the club which would be a breach of the Liquor Act.

The interrogation into the club's relationship with Millers was challenged at one point by Higgs's counsel, Mr Denton: "I object – the fact that Millers Brewery has been mentioned in the minutes has no relevance in this case." Magistrate Fitzmaurice allowed the

cross-examination. Again Higgs was under the microscope.

Broun asked him: "When did any member of the Board of Directors of the Club, to your knowledge, meet any representative of Millers Brewery to discuss any agreement with him?" Higgs answered: "There was no agreement." Frustrated, Broun eventually asked: "Is this the position: that no agreement was entered into with Millers, because alternative means of finance became available?" To which Higgs answered: "The Board did not want to be tied to Millers as a tied house, and they looked further afield for finance."

Higgs was questioned on whether he or any directors went door-to-door asking local residents if they would like to become members: did Higgs or any director visit homes with a view to selling debentures. Higgs answered in the negative both times – and Broun moved on.

Broun also turned his attack to that of Fitzpatrick, his role as guarantor, his suitability as the so-named "Mr Big of Bankstown", his relationship with the directors and the manner and timing of the club's approach to him to act as guarantor. Higgs defended stoutly, again remaining composed as Broun continued his cross-examination. Broun asked:

Q. Is not R S Fitzpatrick a member of this club?
 A. He is not.
 Q. Has he not been made an honorary member of the club?
 A. He has not.
 Q. Has he ever attended any function of the club?
 A. No, he has not.
 Q. Is he a close personal friend of any director of the club, to your knowledge?
 A. He is an acquaintance of the directors of the club – quite a few of them.
 Q. Mr Fitzpatrick is a very well-known man in this particular area indeed?
 A. Definitely.
 Q. In fact, he is referred to in the area as "Mr Big of Bankstown".

Before Higgs could answer, his counsel, Denton objected to Broun's reference. Magistrate Fitzmaurice agreed: "The reference was disallowed in that form."

Higgs continued to be quizzed over Fitzpatrick's relationship with club directors. Broun attempted to nail down a connection between Fitzpatrick and any company linked to the construction and outfitting of the Workers' Club, looking for any weakness in the Workers' Club brief that might establish that Fitzpatrick did indeed have a hidden interest in guaranteeing the Bank of New South Wales loan.

As with the other matters of contention pursued by Broun throughout these court proceedings, he ran into dead-ends, though not without providing some unsettling and uncomfortable moments in cross-examination. However, Higgs and the club clearly had nothing to hide. The application was sound and without deception. The club was also buoyed by solicitor O'Neill's expert preparation of their application and his knowledge of the system.

On the second day of cross-examination, Broun finally got round to the directors' political affiliations, questioning whether the rejection of a prospective member referred "in any way to his political associations" and later asking Higgs if he was a member of any political club. Broun also questioned the political affiliations of directors and members to one particular political party which he attempted to prove was at cross-purposes and may be grounds for declaring the application unworthy. It was enough for the bench, Mr Fitzmaurice, to interject: "Mr Broun, the very name of the club might show what political party the members belong to." Again, Broun moved on.

Sergeant Fryer, the licensing inspector, also made it clear he was not allowing Higgs to escape the close scrutiny, querying the method in which debentures were called for and stepping over old ground already covered by Broun in questioning if Fitzpatrick held equity as the guarantor or in any company associated



R J "Joe" Kelly, state member for East Hills who supported Brien Higgs during the court case.

with the construction and development of the club. We did learn that the land cost £6000 and, at the time of paying for it, the club held approximately £300 in the bank, plus a typewriter, for which the club paid £16, and some £30 in cash.

During the hearing, the Workers' Club was able to produce a series of photos showing the illegal and unacceptable drinking conditions at the Pacific Hotel. In the photos, large groups are gathered on the footpath and, in some, on the road, a few women drinkers among them. The photos were taken by award-winning Fairfax photographer George Lipman, who ironically left the world of newspapers and bought a pub in Balmain. Lipman was a club member and great supporter of the Workers' Club and was responsible for many of the photos of people and club events that appeared in the early editions of the club journal. State member for East Hills R J "Joe" Kelly spoke in support of the club and also accompanied Higgs on another occasion, such as his genuine interest.

In his summing up, Fitzmaurice, the licensing magistrate, found in favour of the East Hills Workers' Club, putting to rest, in the first instance, the first ground of objection, "that the club was not conducted in good faith as a club". In view of the purchase of land from Monaro Investments, he noted, to the debentures from the two Ramsays, the heavy financial commitment of the club and the generosity of Fitzpatrick in guaranteeing the loan from the bank. Fitzmaurice argued that "it would not be proper to draw any conclusion adverse to the club from these facts". Nor did they, he explained, establish a lack of bona fides.

He also saw no serious intent to deceive when Higgs was questioned over the exact details of a number of randomly selected new members "by reason of an apparent discrepancy in the nomination of one Hedges and by reason of the faulty recollection of the secretary as to persons nominated or seconded by himself". And in reference to Sergeant Fryer's somewhat tired reasoning, he added:

"With regard to the further point raised by Sergeant Fryer that Articles 4(d) and (e) are contradictory I hold that they supplement each other and nominations in the form required by 4(e) are properly lodged.

"I hold that the first ground of rejection has not been sustained."

The second ground of objection related to the unsuitability of the premises which the magistrate quickly dismissed since he had been shown the plans for the new club and took the advice that they met with the conditions of the Liquor Act.

The third ground challenged the genuine and substantial need for the club. Both Broun and Sergeant Fryer submitted that since members were conducting their sporting and social activities in the vicinity of Revesby – up to six miles away in the case of the golf club members – there was no genuine need for the club. They also contended that the membership consisted only of various sporting groups interested in golf, fishing, darts and the like. However, the magistrate rightly concluded that although the club was without a clubhouse, it had conducted a number of varied social functions to that time and, for that reason, held that the third ground could not be sustained.

Fourth – and finally – the magistrate ruled against the claim that the court had no jurisdiction to hear the application. Pratt's counsel submitted, too, that the notice of intention to build a licensed club which was posted in the middle of the block contravened the act. Fitzmaurice ruled this out of order as well. In conclusion he added:

"I am satisfied that the club satisfies the requirements of Sections 134 and 135 of the Act, that the objections taken have not been sustained and I GRANT THE APPLICATION."

The Workers' Club's application for costs against Pratt was denied by magistrate Fitzmaurice. Broun, the counsel for Pratt, added that, "In any event, my client was a nearby interested resident" and, thus, "has some private interest". The estimated cost of

legal fees to the East Hills club was £2000.

Pratt went on to appeal the court's decision and through his legal representatives, Murphy and Moloney, informed Fitzmaurice, and the licensing court, on 21 May that he would take the case to the Supreme Court of New South Wales. In the simplest terms, Pratt contended that Fitzmaurice's adjudication was erroneous in point of law on three counts. However, eight days later, on 29 May, Pratt's legal representatives advised the Metropolitan Licensing Court they had been instructed not to proceed with the appeal.

It would not be difficult to understand the sense of joy and relief at Revesby among the directors and members, not the least Higgs who was lauded for his strength and composure in dealing with the cross-examination. His wife, Joan, in an interview for this book, recalled her husband would often be required to attend the court only to find the day's proceedings postponed. "They put Brien through the mill a bit," she explained. "I know the judge [sic] kept coming up with names of members from the members' register and Brien was more or less supposed to have a working knowledge of all these people."

She also recalled that Joe Kelly was a "really good old standby" to her husband at the court. Kelly, she said, was very helpful to him at the time and accompanied her husband to court on a couple of days – as did Dickens. It reflected Kelly's support for the club and for his Labor Party mates and acquaintances among

the directors. Kelly won the safe Labor seat in 1956 and was popular and well established in the area by this time. His workingman's background positioned him warmly in this blue-collar environment. At various times before he won a seat in state politics, he worked as a cane cutter, a steelworker, a metallurgist and brickworks engine driver. He would remain a friend of the Workers' Club and in 1970 became club patron until his death on 7 December 2005, aged 90.

The district of Revesby and surrounds had an approximate population of 16,000 and the nearest club to the proposed Workers' Club site was the Revesby Bowling Club some 400 metres away. Padstow RSL in Howard Street, Padstow, with a membership of 482, and Padstow Bowling Club in Iberia Street, Padstow, with a membership of 218, were the only clubs in adjoining districts and they were some two kilometres away.

With the conditional liquor licence now in their keeping, the club proceeded with the funding arrangements to build their first clubhouse. This had been a monumental result for the citizens – directors, members and all – of the South Ward. Revesby, Panania and Padstow were growth suburbs of the region and its communities were ready to embrace the new club. Notably, these suburbs accounted for 200 of the 240 foundation members.

The full transcript of magistrate J L Fitzmaurice's decision is found in the appendices.

4



1962

No reds under these beds

NOT EVERYONE IN THE REVESBY COMMUNITY WAS IN FAVOUR OF A WORKERS' CLUB. THE CONNOTATION OF THE HAMMER AND WRENCH AS THE NEW CLUB'S OFFICIAL CREST WAS, OF COURSE, THE COMMUNIST INSIGNIA, THE HAMMER AND SICKLE, AND IT LED TO OPEN SARCASM AND DERISION AMONG MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY.

As befitting an area dominated by blue-collar workers, the majority supported the directors who were well known for their strong Labor and socialist leanings. They also enjoyed an association with Communist Party members, though only thinly in friendships in some instances, but they were comrades just the same. Jim Donovan is said to have been merely tolerant. Some of them would become directors of the club in its formative years. Not surprisingly, the club was referred to, variously, as the Commo club, Red Square, the "red club with brown brick walls" and the Kremlin.

People's anxiety at the growth of the Soviet Union and suspicion of any organisation even remotely connected was symptomatic of the times. McCarthyism was entrenched in the western world's psyche by this time and, to add to the anxieties of Communist espionage and spreading influences on western culture, Australia was not without its fear-mongering. Australians had been wooed to the federal election table in 1954 by a "reds under the bed" fear campaign orchestrated by the incumbent Liberal Party prime minister, Robert Menzies.

The Petrov Affair in 1954, a dramatic Cold War spy episode which was so serious that Australia cut its diplomatic ties with the USSR, both enraged and frightened



The Petrov Affair was a dramatic Cold War spy incident in Australia in 1954 concerning Vladimir Petrov, the third secretary of the Soviet embassy in Canberra, and his wife, Evdokia. Vladimir did not advise his wife he was defecting. Images of an anguished Evdokia being escorted by two Soviet diplomatic couriers to a plane at Sydney airport are embedded in Australian history. The event led to a "reds under the beds" fear campaign by prime minister Robert Menzies and influenced scepticism among locals who, because of the strong Labor and Communist influence among the early subscribers, labelled the new Workers' Club as the Kremlin, the Commo Club or Red Square.

voters. It implanted Cold War scenarios in the Australian consciousness and left a residue of apprehension and suspicion of anything staunchly left wing and socialist. It was the making of Menzies, whose five-year reign as prime minister at the time was in question. With deteriorating economic conditions threatening, Menzies used the scare tactics to hold off Dr H V Evatt's Labor Party. It was perfect timing for Menzies and so successful that Australian voters felt comfortable enough to vote Menzies into power for the next 12 years.

The Bankstown municipality was a dyed-in-the-wool Labor stronghold, both at state and federal levels, only strengthened by the large influx of the working-class. Shifting the political ground under this lot, at this time, would have been as difficult as digging a hole to China. Admirably, too, the pioneering directors decided against their emotions to form a Labor club, instead sanctioning a broader and more practical enterprise – a *workers'* club. As the club moved ahead on solid foundations, many of those in the local community who challenged its ethos found no "reds under their beds" and went on to become members.

Little is recorded of the origins and genesis of the club's controversial insignia – almost as

if no one wanted to claim it. The background to it is simple. The hammer and the wrench are workingmen's tools and understandable selections, though one has to suspect the design and implication of strong socialist views could not have been lost on Board members. Joan Higgs, wife of Brien, the club's first secretary-manager, recalled discussing the selection of tools and their significance as tools of trade to identify the club as a workers' club. That it has survived through the years is a credit to empathetic boards that have resisted numerous calls for change, simply out of respect for the foundation authors of this great club who defined a crest that spoke to them and to the members who joined them.

It also remains unclear as to how the club pioneers chose maroon and white as their dedicated colours, though two possibilities emerge. One theory is that Donovan and Smith, both influential directors, suggested maroon since they were originally from Queensland. However such a scenario, while possible, may be viewed as less likely since the colours of individual states rarely reached the public consciousness in the very early 1960s. The most likely reason lies in the colours of the Panania Wanderers Soccer Club which predated the Workers' Club.

The Panania club sought the assistance of the Workers' Club and would thereafter play under the Workers' Club banner as one of its sporting clubs. Significant here is that the soccer club's colours were maroon and white, as they were for all teams and sports from the Wanderers clubs. Is it too much of a coincidence that both the soccer club and the Workers' Club just happened to have the same colours? The soccer club was up and running from the moment Workers' opened its doors and it takes little imagination to understand that the Workers' Club pioneers might have seen an opportunity and took on board the soccer club's colours.

By 1962, most of the large-styled leagues clubs of the Sydney basin, many of them formed to propagate and support rugby league, were operating. The potentially large East Hills Workers' Club was about to join them. The beginnings were, as one would expect, modest, though not tentative.

Board meetings were stepped up to weekly – more nights in front of the television for a tolerant Mrs Dickens – and within two weeks of being granted the conditional liquor licence, club director George Johnstone, on behalf of the club, presented plans of the clubhouse to the Bankstown Council. The council questioned a number of aspects of the plans including parking facilities, drainage, beautification, as well as requesting a structural engineer's report on the concrete slab floors.

All manner of matters continued to beckon the attention of the directors ... £6 for trophies for a sports day held for the Bankstown Handicap Children's Centre ... £3/3/- for the hire of the Revesby South Public School for a members' report night and a decision to use petty cash to pay for the filming – at a cost of £2/6/6 per reel – of the progress of the building of the new club premises.

A noteworthy and somewhat titillating sidelight to the Workers' Club's application for their liquor licence was the series of photos of the Pacific Hotel ordered by the directors showing the hotel bulging at the seams, men

– and some women – spread out over the footpath and onto the street. All of this was illegal and the photos strengthened the club's case for the need of a more convivial – and legal – venue where men and women could socialise in relative comfort. Just as noteworthy was the account from Hugh Johnson Studio for the sum of £9/6/11 “for photos taken of Revesby Pacific Hotel”, although George Lipman, a professional photographer and later a club member, recalled that he had taken the photos used in the club's application for the liquor licence. Whatever the case, it was money well spent!

These were humble and modest beginnings by any standard and a club noticeboard was hung from a picture rail in the lounge room of the Dickens household. Not only was the house used for directors' meetings each second Friday, and as the opening of the club drew near, *every* Friday, new members would go there to be interviewed by at least one, but usually two directors to secure their election as members, and to pay their subscriptions. In essence, the Dickens house was open to club business at all times.

Circularising members, advising them of social activities or future sporting events, was primitive, though effective in that club directors and Higgs, as secretary, were hands-on in so many ways. Higgs explained that each time the club sent out a circular to members, he would purchase sufficient envelopes, the delivery of same divided among directors and himself, each sorting and taking a selection determined mostly by how close they lived to the member and the ease with which they could drop off the circular on their way home. The rest were posted. Jim Donovan often paid for the club's postage. He would seek recompense, sometimes, many months later depending on when he remembered to invoice the club.

The lack of sophistication was understandable and expected, and further underlined the commitment and heart and soul within these working-class men. As Higgs remarked at the time: “We are not a rich

club ... we are trying to conserve finance.” Understandable, then, that during a June 1962 Board meeting it was discovered that the petty cash tin was empty. Directors moved that £100 be made available – and so it was!

A helping hand

Workers' Club directors were fortunate in the number of established licensed clubs prepared to help and to offer advice, among them Picnic Point Bowling Club, Penshurst RSL, Bankstown Sports, Blacktown Workers' Club, member clubs from the Union of Registered Workers' Clubs, which included Cronulla Workers' and Goulburn Workers', each of whom had shared advice and social evenings, and Canterbury-Bankstown League Club, of whom Ken Charlton, a tough rugby league front row forward of the 1940s and 1950s, was one of the most knowledgeable of club operators. Charlton offered his expertise on more than one occasion, as well as professional advice as sales representative for Cumberland Refrigeration Pty Limited. Charlton's company won a tender for the installation of a refrigeration coolroom, based, it seemed, on being the cheapest of three quotes.

In particular, Workers' Club members enjoyed the support of Picnic Point Bowling Club for social evenings as well as sporting matches, including darts, indoor bowls and lawn bowls. Picnic Point was originally formed as a darts and social club, but could only get a liquor licence if they became a bowling club. They bought four military tin huts and built a bent-grass green, but made darts their prime sporting pursuit – until, it appears, the early 1960s when bowling events were recorded.

There appeared to be a genuine camaraderie between the two clubs. In May 1962, the month in which the Workers' Club was granted its provisional liquor licence, 64 members visited the Picnic Point club for a games night. In the same week the club donated £50 to the Workers' Club cause. The Picnic Point secretary, Frank Rowlands, whose occupation was listed as journalist, at one point,

elected to become a member of the Workers' Club. Despite being accepted, he declined to go through with it. However, he and his committee continued to offer their services and club facilities.

References to sports and sporting activities were common from the very moment the Workers' Club idea was conceived. Directors and prospective members were keenly interested in a number of sports, among them golf, fishing, darts, lawn bowls, indoor bowls, tenpin bowling and quoits. Golf and fishing appeared to garner most interest. Johnstone and Donovan were noted in Board minutes as being in charge of golf and reported consistently on competitions against other clubs, travelling to Narellan, Oran Park and Campbelltown. It was serious enough for Donovan to be given leave from a Board meeting to attend, along with foundation member, Merv Elder, a meeting to arrange a golf tournament between six clubs in the East Hills area.

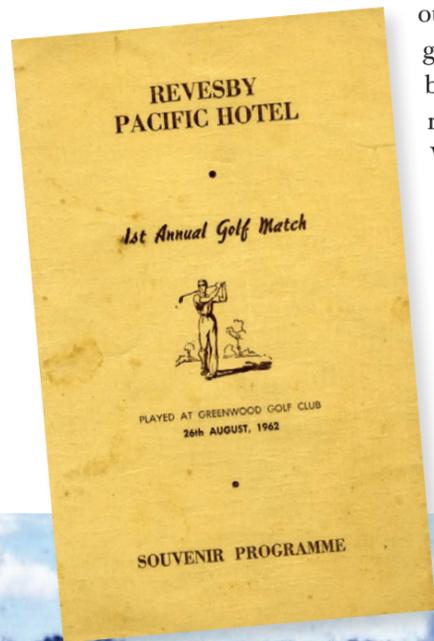
To ensure the Workers' Club team was up to scratch, Donovan proposed a day's golf, at which 13 members played, from which handicaps were ascertained. Donovan reported that five members who had not attended “had given reasonable explanations” but that those who did attend enjoyed “a most excellent social and sporting day”, though without winning many trophies. One hundred members from six clubs played the event at Greenwood Golf Course.

Golf was a regular topic at these directors' meetings and by the time the club rooms were built in September 1962, it was the first sports-affiliated club to be formed at Workers'. The



An aerial view of the Revesby township in the 1950s. “X” marks the spot where the club now stands.

Golf was perhaps the most popular of the sports embraced by club members when the Workers' Club opened in 1962. This photo of golfers was taken at Oran Park in December 1962. The souvenir program is of the first annual Revesby Pacific Hotel golf day at Greenwood Golf Club involving six teams, including the East Hills Workers' Club who played a team called Revesby Southern Cross.



inaugural meeting was held on 21 September 1962 in the newly built clubhouse where Donovan was elected president/captain; Elder, secretary/treasurer; Reg Wright, handicapper; and Jack Pitty and P Dunkin, assistant handicappers.

The support of the *Daily Mirror* Social Golf Club with whom they enjoyed a number of golf days was welcome. Elder's father-in-law, Bill Church, a member of the *Daily Mirror* club, was the vital link between the two clubs. (Church later joined the Workers' Club and became their first club champion, beating Jack Pitty in the final.) Elder explained: "We got the golf club going very early, before we were in our premises. We would go along to their [*Daily Mirror's*] days because we had nothing to pin our name to. That's how we got going and we gradually built up. Then I started to make bookings in our name. When we opened the club, we hit the ground running. We were well established as the golf club ... with about 60 members out of the 240-odd [licensed club members]."

Nearly all the directors played golf and golf club

members recalled mixed night celebrations, with their wives and girlfriends, like no other in these early days. Few were more passionate about their golf than Donovan, though anyone standing remotely near him when he teed off risked life and limb. With just one eye and a list of war wounds incapacitating him, Donovan was a handicap unto himself. However, on one occasion Donovan won the "Longest Drive" – a remarkable feat, though put in perspective by foundation member Merv Elder who remarked that Donovan could hit the ball long when he connected, but rarely in the right direction. "You weren't even safe if you stood behind him," Elder recalled, with some fondness. In 1971, Donovan was rewarded for his passion and "wayward golf" by being appointed the golf club's first life member.

Another character of the golf club was Billy Fazl, a Punjab Indian by birth but to his golf mates "a fair-dinkum Aussie". Fazl loved golf but was, at best, lousy at it. He never missed a golf day with the club and while he might not have been the best of players, he was never backward in offering advice on how to play the game. "He was our own serial pest," according to Elder. "If you hit a wayward shot into the 'jungle', Billy would be there at your elbow – even if he was playing in a group three fairways away – telling you EXACTLY what you did

wrong." After finishing golf, Fazl would then help his mate Herb McDougall run the weekly euchre tournament.

As would be the case through the club's 50 years, directors were charged with looking after the various sports. There were exceptions in these early days – particularly if a member was already handling the running of a club, such as with fishing where a director, Ted Smith, and member Peter Murdoch were in charge. Fishing was the other high-profile activity. Like golf, it had the advantage over many other sports in that it was not dependent on club premises for its prosperity. An ocean or an estuary was a sufficient fishing playground.

These clubs were treated with a depth of earnestness in Board meetings that clearly defined them as among the reasons Dickens and co wanted a licensed club. What might seem trivial in the extreme today was of such substance at a May 1962 Board meeting that the Board was advised there was an "account for £3 for bait used in the fishing trip". Donovan was recompensed for the amount! Secretary Brien Higgs noted that in these pre-clubhouse days, fishing numbers on any one day could range from 12 to 20 and so successful had the club become by mid-1962 "that we looked like having two boats go out about 20 miles off the coast".

The East Hills Workers' Soccer Club began as the Panania Wanderers' who approached the club in 1962 and suggested they play under the Workers' Club banner, playing still in their chosen colours of maroon shirt with two white diagonal stripes and white shorts and socks. Among other sports being played at this time, Herb Barron was in charge of cricket, darts and quoits (interest waned in quoits over the years) and Herb McDougall in tenpin bowling and indoor bowls.

Strong sporting influences developed as the Workers' Club grew and became more financial and was reflected in the fact that 40 leisure and sporting sub-clubs were contained within the Workers' Club umbrella by 2011, among the most of any licensed club in New South Wales.

HERE'S ONE IN THE EYE

The golf club's first bus trip was to Katoomba Golf Club, one of many journeys to the Blue Mountains courses. The bus was very basic – no air-conditioned coaches in those days. The trip home was eventful to say the least. The club made sure they had plenty of beer on board and at two shillings a can it was very popular.

As the bus was passing through Penrith, it was pulled over by a motorcycle policeman who claimed that "someone threw water out the window and it hit me in the face, fogged up my glasses and got all over my uniform". According to Merv Elder, "He was most upset about it and told us so in no uncertain terms ... gave us a real dressing down and finally left. As he rode away we wondered what that 'water' tasted like when he licked his lips!"

Fill up the bookshelves

A library was a legal requirement for all licensed clubs under the *Liquor Act 1912* and the East Hills Workers' Club followed the law strictly thanks to a donation from the defunct Narwee Workers' Club and a contribution of books by Les Haylen, a single-minded, progressive Labor politician who held the federal seat of Parkes in south-western Sydney for 20 years (from 1943 to 1963). Haylen was well known as a playwright, novelist and journalist. One of his works was an anti-war play called *Two Minutes of Silence* which was also turned into a film. He was an advisor to Dr H V Evatt and a great supporter of Arthur Calwell, though many in the Labor Party acknowledged Haylen as the "Artful Dodger" because of his volatility.

Haylen was yet another socialist face at the window of the Workers' Club and one wonders if any other club in the history of the club movement has been so well supported by like-minded and passionate allies. Following Haylen's generosity, the club joined the Australasian Book Society and within 12 months had 87 books on their bookshelves. The library remained until the 1980s, some time after the law changed releasing clubs of any obligation to carry a library.





TOP: Foundation director Herb McDougall.



ABOVE: Arthur Calwell, leader of the Australian Labor Party in the mid-1960s.

OPPOSITE: A sample of Ainsworth's early poker machines, similar to those first used by East Hills Workers' Club.

Through these formative times for the club, one gets to understand the depth and solidarity of the working-class and the Labor Party, bonded by an overwhelming working-class sense of a “fair go” for all. Haylen, for instance, was further testimony that the roots were tied unequivocally and the generosity of Labor nobility to embrace the then-East Hills Workers' Club had few bounds. In the years that followed, 1964 to 1966, the club welcomed Jack Renshaw, then – and briefly – the Labor premier of New South Wales and, in 1966, played host to Arthur Calwell, the leader of the Australian Labor Party. Few Labor leaders have refused the welcoming doors of Revesby in their time in office.

The basic essentials of establishing the Workers' Club was not in its leisure and sporting pursuits – so many factors go toward the building and outfitting of a new club. Among the more essential for an overworked Workers' Club Board included:

- The appointment of Ainsworth Consolidated Industries for the first poker machines and George Anthony as the agent from whom the club would purchase the machines;
- Hours of trading – Monday to Thursday, 11am to 11pm (to be reviewed by directors at a later date); Friday, 11am to 11pm (with the discretion of the duty director to extend the time an extra hour); Saturday, 10am to midnight (with the possibility of a one-hour extension);
- Wages – secretary-manager salary to be £20 plus car allowance of £5 per week from 30 July 1962 and £25 plus £5 car allowance from the opening of the club premises onwards;
- 175 chairs, estimated to be sufficient seating in the new club – 100 “better types” and 75 “cheaper types of stackers”; the club ordered 30 heavy-based centre stem tables;
- 8oz and 15oz glasses of beer to be served at one shilling and 1/9 respectively and “jugs at a size and price to be determined”;
- Robert Poulter replaced J Alcock as club auditor;

- “Near” relatives could not become paid permanent members of staff;
- The final decision on staff applicants to rest with the Board but that the secretary-manager had the power of firing staff;
- That no cigarette vending machine be brought onto club premises; and
- The chosen beer to be Tooheys and Millers.

Though they had not been the club's preferred choice as guarantor, Millers were still in the mix. The brewer offered manager tuition, dartboard supply, stock control services, spirit and wine and entertainment services, though it is unsure if directors accepted all their offerings, certainly, it would seem, not entertainment. However, they took on board enough to ensure that Millers beer would be offered to club patrons.

The question of selection of poker machines and the number required was always going to be a vexed one though the appointment of

Anthony would be invaluable. Anthony was involved with the Labor Party at Lakemba and, in his own words “hooked up ... with the earlier boys”. He was a prisoner of war for three-and-a-half years in Singapore during the war and, afterwards, was a salesman for an electrical goods company until 1952 before entering the poker machine industry. Anthony was alerted to the potential in poker machines by an engineer who had worked with him at the electrical firm. The engineer had joined a poker machine company which was looking for salesmen. Until then, all Anthony knew about poker machines was that “you put money in the thing, pulled a handle and some wheels spun” – humble beginnings for a man who was to become one of the most respected names in the business and was still in the industry in 2012.

Anthony, owner of a small company, Anthony and Staff, advised the Workers' Club Board he would supply them at a cost of

£350, no-interest terms over 18 months with the first payments to be made three months after delivery. Anthony required a ten per cent deposit. Service would be free for six months and then would cost ten shillings per machine per week to cover repairs, replacement of parts and a fortnightly overhaul.

Gold award pokies

Anthony's thoroughness was reassuring. He had supplied some “rogue” machines to the club's backyard fundraising nights and was both well known and well liked by directors and members – a perfect fit for the club. Bankstown Bowling Club had offered the Board nine poker machine trolleys but the club reluctantly rejected the offer because they were unsuitable. Instead they bought eight poker machines and stands, through Anthony, from Ainsworth Industries, as well as lock up trays on each machine. The machines chosen were:



George Anthony, poker machine broker and technical advisor. He supplied the club's first poker machines.



Copyright Historical Society

- One two-shilling Gold Award;
- Two one-shilling Gold Awards;
- One sixpence Gold Award;
- One one-shilling Four Wheeler;
- One sixpence Four Wheeler;
- One one-shilling Three Wheeler; and
- One sixpence Three Wheeler.

The Board whittled the 25 applicants for steward positions down to seven and, finally, after interviews, to J Smith as the head steward on a guaranteed minimum of £52 a fortnight. K Delaney was bar steward “on award wages and conditions” and Eric Teasdale a bar useful “on award wages and conditions”. The staff had been notified to stand by for commencement of duties between 10 and 17 September.

Sadly, Jack Dickens had fallen into ill health and was forced to miss many of the Board meetings at this important time – his brother, Alexander, had passed away only a month earlier. Dickens suffered his first heart attack four years previously and had endured several others – as well as frequent bouts of bronchial trouble – though always able to recover to continue his presidency.

He was well enough to leave his sick bed and make it to his front room for the final directors’ meeting on 4 September, the week before the club was to open. All seven Board members were in attendance, plus secretary-manager Brien Higgs, Alan Eedy, the architect, and Poulter, the club’s accountant. Poulter advised the club that the bank balance as at 30 June 1961 stood at £604/15/4. At the same meeting, the club adopted its first set of by-laws, which included the ruling (under the Liquor Act) that the minimum age for entry was 21. The club became prime advocates for lowering the minimum age to 18 and continually pressured the government over ensuing years until the change was made.

While professional builders were hired to build the club, a number of foundation members lent a heavy hand and some expertise as voluntary workers in helping to clear the land and building the brick fences. With the club built and outfitted, the club’s solicitor, O’Neill, applied for a final certificate of registration, the listing set down for 10 September, just three days before the club was to open officially. In the inspection certificate it describes in some detail elements of the club’s bar provisions and design. According to the licensing inspector’s report:

“The bar room has been properly constructed and contains adequate fittings and utensils to meet the liquor requirements of members and their guests. Provision has been made for the bar to be locked off when necessary by means of two double swing doors and a metal roller grille shutter and provision has also been made to provide members and their guests with liquor to other portions of the premises during such times when liquor may not be lawfully supplied at the bar counter.

“The kitchen and dining room has been adequately furnished and there is ample cutlery and crockery provided for the supply of meals.”

The club premises consisted of a single-storey brick building with galvanised iron roof and contained a bar room, games room and mixed lounge, a coolroom, keg store, storeroom, kitchen, dining room, reading room, an office containing a strong room, a vestibule, toilet blocks and concrete porch. The kitchen doubled as a boardroom. According to Donovan, the cost of the building, furnishings and equipment was “in the region of £30,000”.

No one felt the money was misspent. The dream was close to fruition.

Open at last! One day early



1962-63

IF THERE WAS ANY DOUBT BY THIS STAGE, THE OCCUPATIONS OF THE INAUGURAL DIRECTORS DEFINED CLEARLY THE WORKINGMAN'S CULTURE OF THE NEW CLUB AND ITS MEMBERS. WHILE THE CLUB LEADERS WERE DEDICATED LABOR-VOTING MEN AND UNASHAMED OF THEIR POLITICAL PREFERENCES, THEY WERE AT PAINS TO ENSURE THAT AS MEMBERS OF THIS CLUB THEY WERE "WORKERS" FIRST. SUCH AN ETHOS WAS NOT ONLY APPRECIATED BY THE FAITHFUL WHO YEARNED FOR A CLUB BUT WOULD HELP TO SECURE ITS DESTINY.

As the final touches were added to a spanking new club, no bigger than a large country hall but just big enough to cater for a 250 membership, it is worth acknowledging the two-year commitment of their pioneering directors, Jack Dickens, Jim Donovan, Ray McCormack, George Johnstone, Herb McDougall, Herb Barron and Ted Smith, glued together by secretary-manager Brien Higgs.

While much of the kudos for setting up the club has been heaped on Dickens, Donovan and McCormack, the rest of the Board deserve acknowledgment. McDougall was popular, based on the vote counts at election time. He was a bricklayer with the Department of Public Works and often described as a "fair dinkum bloke", "down-to-earth" and "one of the boys". A scaffolding collapse forced him to give away bricklaying. However, he stayed with the Department of Public Works as a janitor.

Smith worked at the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board, though his occupation on official club documents nominated him as a "material handler".

First day on the job. Secretary-manager Brien Higgs pitches in to help serve beer on the day the club opened in 1962. By the look of Higgs's first attempts, he was not destined for bar duties for much longer!



He was a prominent member of the fishing club and, like a number of his contemporaries, was often at loggerheads with Donovan. A member of the Australian Labor Party, Smith remained a director until 2 March 1971 when he was forced to leave over some unacceptable financial indiscretions.

George Johnstone was a shipwright, though his occupation was shown as “salesman” on the Memorandum of Articles of the club. He was an alderman on the South Ward of the Bankstown municipality from 1957 to 1959 and in 1963; he also dabbled in real estate.

Herb Barron, a much liked member of the Board, was a cordial carter and had little chance to influence the Board, resigning from the club six months after it opened.

Dickens was a strong unionist. A boilermaker by trade, he had been a union delegate at Sydney Steel and later a senior official with the Boilermakers' Union – a renowned militant left-wing association. He went on to become president of the Sydney

branch. Dickens founded the Revesby South branch of the Labor League and retained the presidency until ill health forced him to resign in early 1963. He felt so strongly about the formation of the Workers' Club that he and his wife, Doris, basically gave of their Housing Commission home for two years as the registered office of the club.

Dickens was not a well man, but bright enough to be there on the day the East Hills Workers' Club opened – on Wednesday, 12 September 1962, one day earlier than they had advertised, the decision made the previous day (on Tuesday, 11 September) at a Board meeting. In what might well be unique in the club industry, the new addition to the licensed club world was 24 hours early and without fanfare – no official opening. Directors and staff had done all they could – furniture and furnishings were in place; all required licences had been granted; staff were ready, the pianola, bought from Len Foss some months earlier, was ready for use and drinking and eating utensils had been acquired. Even though the eight poker machines would not arrive until the next day, Thursday, there seemed little reason to delay the opening. Implicit in that decision was a sense of excitement and pride – perhaps impatience – in their achievement.

Merv Elder remembered ambling down to the club at four in the afternoon after work. Business was not brisk and people were arriving in dribs and drabs. “I knew it was going to open and ducked straight down after I finished work,” he recalled.

Charlie Bryant, a life member of the golf club, believed barman, officially “bar useful”, Eric “Ned” Teasdale, pulled the first beer. He recalled, too, that Merv Elder was present but Bryant was too busy drinking to notice who else was there. A photo displaying Brien Higgs pulling a beer on that first day simply acknowledges that he was “one” of the first.

The following day – the day set down originally for the opening – business started slowly but patronage gradually built up through the afternoon and into the evening as workers

finished for the day and high-tailed it, some with their wives, down to the club. The staff coped initially but were forced to call on management and anyone with an official position as the night wore on to help with bar duties, such was the excitement among members who came to look over – and enjoy – *their* club.

Bob Gradwell's (foundation member number 135) recollection of these early days tells of how the links within the Labor movement gradually built up the membership. Gradwell was secretary of a Labor Party body, the Bankstown Municipal Assembly, in the early 1960s. It had over 20 affiliated party branches and part of its role was to co-ordinate election campaigns. Ray McCormack, still working as a plumber at the time, was the assembly's campaign-central organiser on a part-time basis.

Gradwell, a high achiever in the trade union movement who became assistant secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) from 1981 to 1985, attended a drive for new club members when Jack Dickens signed him on the spot. According to Gradwell: “Jack had a motorbike with a sidecar and he ran me home to Saltash Street, Bass Hill. When he did, he would spend a long time talking to me about the vision for the club. That vision went far beyond giving workingmen a place to drink away from the six o'clock swill. It would have been only one of many influences that drove the formation. Jack Dickens's vision was [that] the club would provide an environment in which workingmen and their wives would share in a fraternity and thus enrich their lives.”

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Australian Labor Party records underline just how closely the directors and the foundation membership were aligned with the Labor Party.

Although it is already established that the community was essentially blue collar and Labor-voting, of the 240 foundation members of the Workers' Club, 55 were financial members of the ALP.

Breaking down the numbers: Revesby South had 19 members; Revesby, 23; Panania, four; Padstow, four and East Hills, two. Three others were active with Bankstown branches. Another 10 members had had an association.

Of the foundation directors: Jack Dickens, Ray McCormack and Jim Donovan were from the Revesby South branch; Herb Barron and Ted Smith were from Revesby and George Johnstone, from the Panania branch. Herb McDougall was the only inaugural director who did not have ALP membership.

McDougall's situation provides a few interesting points and goes some way to allowing us to understand that declining the formation of a “Labor” club, which

had been mooted, in favour of a broader “workers” club was not such a dramatic decision. Clearly, the group were more tied to the idea that the club should satisfy the “working” families.

It is also now clear that membership of the ALP was *not* a condition of election to the Board.

Prominent state and federal MPs were also among the foundation members, including: Vince Martin (Panania branch) who was a federal member; Eric Costa, a federal member; Joe Kelly, state member, Murt O'Brien, mayor of Bankstown in 1960; and Bob Gradwell, the assistant secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) from 1981 to 1985.

Only three other foundation members became directors of the club – Vic de Saily, Howard Bush and Bill Bullard.



Vince Martin.

The card (back and front) was used as membership identification for the club's first year – 1962. Thereafter, until 1987, the club struck the familiar badges of the 1970s and '80s. The collection as seen opposite represents every year the badges were in existence – from 1963 to 1987 – after which plastic cards became the mode for entry.

George “the barber” Wilson, a hairdresser who worked at the club as a steward from the mid-1960s until 1973, retained some vivid recollections of club life in these formative years. He described Dickens as “a real good man” and related a story that underlined his generosity. “We would finish work and Jack would come along, and say: ‘Make sure you clean those two machines down there.’ You’d go down and there would be two bob [two shillings] there. A schooner cost one and nine pence; he would buy us a drink. If there were eight of us, there would be eight two bobs.”

Waiting for membership

While women received the same membership rights as men, the Board, except for the 14 women foundation members who were necessary in order to make up the numbers to satisfy the licensing court proceedings, discouraged them initially, to the point some women for a number of years believed they had been rejected.

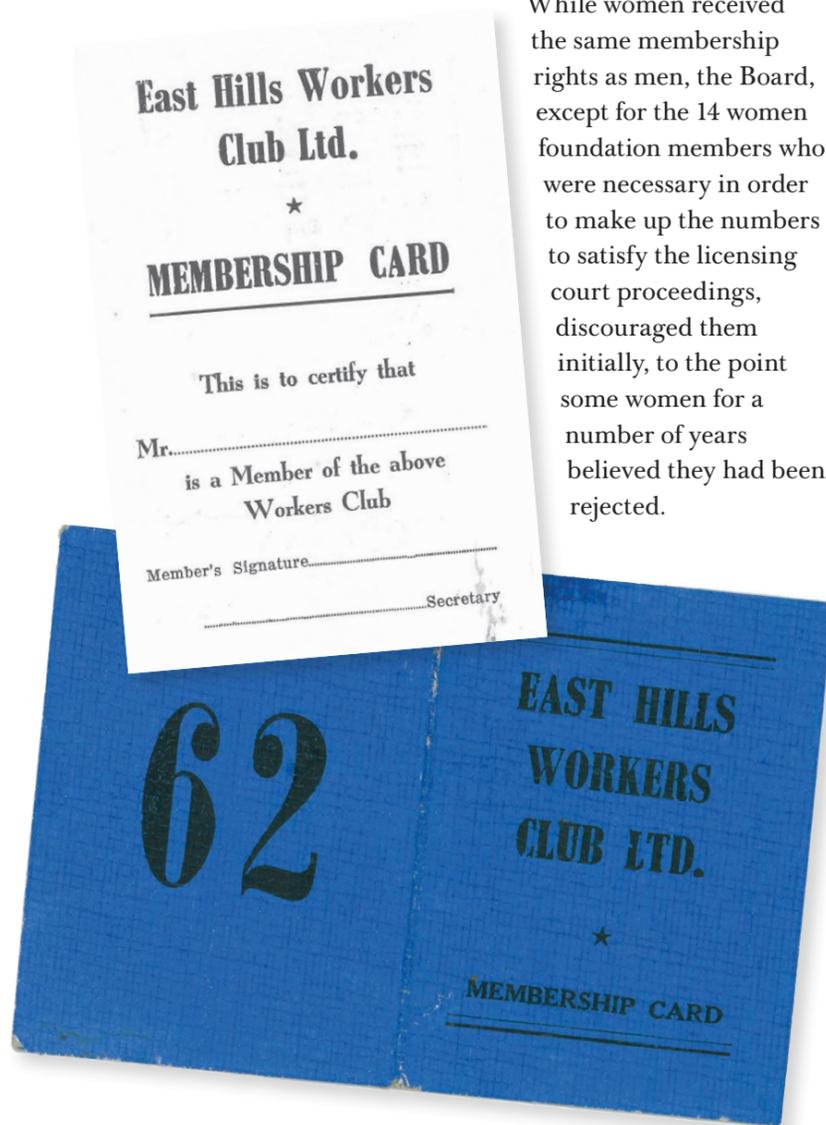
The reasoning by the Board was understandable. With the limited membership available, the directors rightly believed that the men would bring potential members to the club as visitors and would grow the club more quickly than if they made their wives members. The male members could bring their wives to the club, anyway. There was also the factor of affordability. The cost of one membership per family was considered sufficient in these difficult economic times when so many couples were endeavouring to grow a family and build their houses at the same time.

It may also be of consolation for the women who felt they were being overlooked that Fred Cole, a fitter with the railways and well known to Dickens and his team, was one of many men who had to wait until the club was larger before being granted membership. “When the club opened there was only a certain amount of members allowed in the club,” he recalled. “We could have a drink but had to be signed in by a friend. We couldn’t be members until they built the big place on the other side.”

Women became more prominent as members when the club’s membership limit was raised in 1966 and 1967 to almost 1000 after the opening of the new extensions in May 1966. This was by far the largest influx of members – men and women. Marjie Elder, who had been under the impression that she, along with other women, had been rejected, joined – finally – in 1966, with badge number 744!

Brien Higgs embodied all the attributes a club required in a secretary-manager. Though conservative, he was honest, humble, patient, conscientious and exemplary in his conduct. He and his wife, Joan, had moved to Panania in 1954 out of necessity. They found land cheaper and more affordable than nearby Kingsgrove and chose a block in the close vicinity of a shopping centre. At the time, Higgs worked as an electrician for the Department of Public Works.

When he was made secretary in place of Bill Delauney in December 1960, Higgs had a clear picture of the future of the fledgling



club and his own role in it. When he knew he would be moving into club management, he went, at his own expense – twice a week – to the East Sydney Technical College for six months and completed a bar and cellar management course. He resigned from the Department of Public Works and with the guidance of Millers Brewery, who provided training for club industry workers, he gained valuable experience in various facets of management, including stocktaking. Higgs also worked briefly under noted club boss Ron Jones at the NSW 18-ft Sailing League Club. It meant that Higgs was already *au fait* with the machinations of licensed premises when he faced the licensing court in March and April 1962.

Higgs enjoyed occasional drinks with Dickens and Donovan and their group at the Pacific Hotel and the fraternity of like-minded souls at Labor Party meetings in Bankstown. He was highly political though his conservative nature hid the passion within. A member of the Electrical Trade Union, Higgs was left-wing and a strong unionist. His wife, Joan, told of the time she went back to work after years out of the workforce and Brien insisted she join the Federated Clerks Union.

Higgs joined the Panania branch of the ALP in August 1956 and was a member until he was unfairly expelled in December 1961. He had been put on a Communist Party “Unity” ticket at Electrical Trade Union elections without his knowledge. Deeply hurt by what he saw as unfair treatment, he refused to rejoin the ALP for more than 20 years until Daryl Melham, a Labor Party high achiever who, in the following decades, would play a significant role in the club’s fortunes, convinced him in 1983 after some years of persistent urging. Melham, as a 23-year-old, would be a backroom strategist in the overthrow of the entire Revesby Workers’ Club Board in 1977.

The club celebrated its second annual general meeting in September 1962, 13 days after opening – the first to be held in its new premises. The seven incumbent directors were re-elected unopposed. Self-gratification spilled over from those who spoke. O’Neill, the club’s solicitor, urged the 143 members in attendance to support the club and to be particularly observant of the liquor licensing act, as well as the rules and by-laws laid down by the club.

Higgs provided an excellent summary of the journey to that stage, noting that he had spent four days at the licensing court – 30 March, 2, 9 and 30 April; the decision was handed down on 2 May. Allowing for deaths, resignations, and two expulsions, the club membership at the time of the annual general meeting stood at 235 – less than the membership when they went to court earlier in the year. Yet again the Picnic Point Bowling and Social Club was singled out for its “generous assistance” and the “enjoyable time” members had at a smoko at the club. Such references at an annual general meeting served to underline the close relationship between the two clubs and the depth of the assistance given by the Picnic Point club.

However, pleasantries at the meeting were shelved briefly when a

move to make directors of the Workers’ Club life members was rejected by the members. One member, Tom Gould, was the first to speak in opposition, though there are no records of his reasons. It was recorded, however, that “Mr Gould was overruled for making certain remarks” and “then dissented from the chairman’s ruling”. After much debate, the end result was that the motion to grant the directors life membership was lost. The meeting lasted two-and-a-half hours.

By the end of 1962, the Bankstown municipality had grown remarkably, only second in size to Sydney’s population and ahead of Newcastle and Wollongong. At the time, Sydney’s population was 181,000; Bankstown – 146,140; Newcastle – 144,300 and Wollongong – 125,090. Land values increased by 46 per cent and almost a third of the Bankstown population lived in the South Ward, adding further justification for a licensed club at Revesby.

Changes in the boardroom

Within the first nine months of opening, the club would be wracked by internal transgressions, a rapid movement of directors and by the death of their president, Jack Dickens – in sharp contrast to the smooth, well-ordered opening and the collective joy of the occasion less than a year previously.

The first blow was struck in April 1963 when Ray McCormack, one of the three prime movers in the planning of the club, was sacked by the Board he helped to form. While Board minutes are scant, since the club was keen to keep the incident low-key, club member Charlie Bryant witnessed the incident, claiming McCormack threw a heavy glass ashtray at Mick Rigby, a barman, narrowly missing him. “Rigby worked at the garbo depot at Redfern,” said Bryant. “He had an argument with McCormack and Ray got angry.”

In the argument Rigby is supposed to have called McCormack an “Irish Catholic bastard”, to which McCormack responded that Rigby was an “illiterate bastard”. According to Bryant, “McCormack picked up a big glass ashtray and heaved it at Mick.”

While long-time colleague and good friend of McCormack, Pat Rogan understood that McCormack did, indeed, have a fiery temper, McCormack had always told him, that while the lead-up to, and what was said at the confrontation between the two is incontestable, McCormack maintained that he had “decked” Rigby with a blow to the head. Rogan found it hard to comprehend McCormack attacking someone from behind, as had been implied initially, and “that McCormack was always a most direct person, straight down the line with no hesitation in letting all and sundry know where he stood”.

A combative left-wing Labor Party mover and shaker, McCormack was summoned to appear before the Board and expected to be suspended from the club for three months. However, there would be no favours for even the most highly esteemed members and, since it was deemed by the Board an act of the most serious kind, McCormack’s membership was terminated. The decision would seem harsh and without compassion, though this would be the trend in the years ahead under Donovan’s leadership. A three-month suspension might have been far more appropriate.

McCormack maintained his strong Labor connections and friendships on the Workers’ Club Board. Many believed McCormack had been “set up”; banking on his volatile temperament to react accordingly to what appeared to be name-calling and inflammatory remarks. Six months after his sacking, he approached the club as campaign director for the Banks Federal Election Council seeking funds to run the election. The Board donated £25 to the fund. McCormack retained a high profile within the community. He was elected to the Bankstown City Council in 1966 where he remained for 22 years, retiring in 1987; he was mayor from 1980 to 1984. His influence was not lost on the Workers’ Club. He assisted Pat Rogan, a Workers’ Club chairman (director from 1995 to 2008) as well as chairman of ClubsNSW (from 1999 to 2004) and formerly the sitting Labor member.

Joan and Brien Higgs at a function in the early years of the club. Joan helped with office work when family duties allowed and was a willing support for her husband, particularly in the formative years.



TOP: Ray McCormack.

ABOVE: Bill Hills.

Bill Hills was appointed McCormack's replacement, the first to fill a vacancy on the Board. Hills formed the cricket club and incorporated the then-existing senior social cricket club with junior cricket; he was president of the club when he joined the Board. He had often been regarded as an "unofficial committee member", such was his enthusiasm in fundraising ventures and advice as a qualified draftsman. He was the perfect fit as the new director.

Not long after McCormack's indiscretion, Herb Barron resigned from the Board and was replaced by foundation member Vic de Sailly. Barron had been heavily involved in the development of the club, also lending his time to helping arrange cricket matches and darts events at a time when both these sports sought affiliation with the club. Tragically, in July 1964, a little more than 12 months after his resignation, Barron died. The father of ten children, Barron was highly regarded among his fellow directors and members.

Two months after McCormack was dismissed, the Workers' Club management and members were given the news they long expected but never wanted to hear – that their president, Jack Dickens, had finally succumbed to his long and debilitating illness. The death of Dickens on 11 June 1963 was felt deeply by the club and community. Donovan, who had been at his right hand all the way, delivered an emotional eulogy, able to draw solace from the fact that "he [Dickens] did at least survive to see a dream come true". According to Donovan: "Jack Dickens always took an interest in his fellow man – a stickler for the underdog, charitable of heart, and always willing to lend a helping hand to his less fortunate friend and neighbour. His activities, fundraising for the needy in the district, would be too numerous to mention, and his activity for the worker was borne out in his tireless effort over the years in his union, of which, for many years, he was president, and the countless years spent in the executive office in Labor Leagues.

"... With his declining health, he confined his activities and what proved his last strength and resources to the Workers' Club – he was as solid as they came, knew procedure backwards, master tactician, and if he believed in a thing he gave it all he ever had, and so it was with this club, until the end."

A ready-made president

Donovan was the obvious choice as the new president. He used to take the chair in Dickens's absence and his dominant personality already had its influence since the ailing Dickens was often unable to attend Board meetings. Donovan was a stickler for decorum and correct management within the laws of the Liquor Act and made it clear no favours would be shown anyone guilty of misdemeanours. Some saw him as strong, but fair; others as "bombastic", erratic and unpredictable. Yet, for any faults he may have possessed, he was at the helm for 14-and-a-half years and oversaw a period of sustained and considerable growth.

Born in Rockhampton in January 1919, Donovan spent his youth in and around the central Queensland coast. He left school when he was 13 and worked as an apprentice baker, earning 7/6 a week. He would work ten hours a night, mainly hand-mixing dough, "hard yakka", as he called it, and the lessons ensured a working-class, Labor-oriented political predilection later in life.

He enlisted in the 9th Division of the Second AIF on his twenty-first birthday and, after advanced training in Darwin, saw action in Tobruk, "surrounded by the Germans and the Italians," as he recalled. "We'd prefer the German Stukas to come over and bomb us. The Germans dive-bombed and the bombs would go exactly where they wanted them. When the Italians were over Tobruk, they'd pull the lever and bombs would go everywhere. You only had to mention the word 'Itie', and every bugger would go for his life."

Donovan sustained serious head injuries from German mortars at Tobruk, later admitting, "I nearly had my head blown

off by a German trench mortar bomb." He was repatriated, firstly to Egypt, and then to Australia where he spent three years in Canberra as adjutant to the minister for the army, Frank Forde, who would become the interim Australian prime minister for eight days on 6 July 1945 after John Curtin died. Forde's first electorate was in Rockhampton where, clearly, he developed a bond with the Donovan family.

Among Donovan's injuries was the loss of an eye, and apart from shrapnel that had riddled his brain, causing him to leave Canberra to seek medical attention, he also had a plate inserted in his head, suffered leg injuries and was missing fingers from one hand. After the war he went back to his pre-war trade

and bought a bakery in Rockhampton, lasting only long enough to realise that working in a bakery in the tropics with head injuries was detrimental to his health. He spent more time in hospital and in 1948 moved to Sydney where he applied for a Housing Commission home at Revesby and raised a son and three daughters with his wife, Doris.

He was closely associated with numerous public and charitable bodies and by the time he reached Revesby he had developed a strong – and lasting – association with the Australian Labor Party, becoming the foundation vice-president of the Revesby South Labor League.

For 12 years – from approximately 1960 to 1972 – he took over a mixed business which included the postmaster's job at Revesby

Four directors from the early years. From left: Vic de Sailly, Herb McDougall, Bob Sentance, Ted Smith.



Heights – on Hero’s Hill. It also needs to be pointed out that Donovan was already the chairman of directors of the Revesby Heights Memorial Ex-servicemen’s Club when the Workers’ Club opened its doors in September 1962. Helping to run two clubs at the one time would have been no mean feat, though his tenure at Revesby Heights was brief. Donovan Street at Revesby Heights was named after him by Bankstown Council in recognition of his services to the community.

Donovan also bought a butcher’s shop across the road from the current club and hired a Workers’ Club foundation member, Jack Ryan, to run it for him. However, he found that Ryan’s empathy for struggling members of the club was bad for business and sold the shop.

Donovan’s sense of humour was as dark as his propensity for control within the club; he was forever playing jokes with his one glass eye, most of them designed to shock. Merv Elder once asked him to keep an eye on his beer; Donovan took his “eye” out and placed it alongside. He gave a present to Elder’s daughter at a Christmas party and startled her when he handed her his glass eye. No one was safe! One unnamed member squared accounts one night when Donovan placed the eye on the bar and went to the men’s room. On his return, the “eye” was gone. He had the majority of patrons in the club searching high and low, but no eye. It appeared that a “friend” placed the eye in his pocket and walked out the door. The eye suddenly appeared the next day!

Donovan would hijack the club microphone late at night and start singing. At meetings, according to Elder, “he would talk for hours ... terribly, terribly boring. But he was a good bloke; we used to play golf together. He was dead keen on golf but he was pretty hopeless. Quite often we would have to carry him at the end of the day when it was stinking hot; he had a lot of injuries; he was really battling. But he was a tough man.”

Dickens was replaced on the Board by Bob Sentance, a travelling salesman for G M Murphy & Sons, selling hospital equipment.

His job took him into country New South Wales more often than it allowed him to maintain a steady presence at Board meetings and after six months he, reluctantly, resigned. He had been a next door neighbour of foundation director George Johnstone and shared a similar commitment to starting a licensed club. He became a member in the second intake, missing a place as a foundation member only because he was away in the country on business much of the time the first memberships were being sought.

When work commitments allowed, he drank occasionally with Dickens and his group at the Pacific Hotel at the time they were preparing to form a club, recalling how he would get off the city train at Revesby, rush to have his quota of beer at the Pacific before catching the next train to Panania where he lived with his wife and two young daughters. His place on the Board was taken by Harry Nelson.

By mid-1963, just nine months after opening and despite some heavy expenses (the court case and poker machine taxes, etc.), the Board paid out all hire-purchase agreements, with the exception of the poker machines in which the club took advantage of the eighteen months interest-free offer. Not to be lost in Jim Donovan’s lengthy chairman’s report to the 1963 annual general meeting (the club’s third), was the importance the club placed on helping less fortunate members and local citizens. “We have not turned a deaf ear to any worthwhile case,” Donovan explained, “... evidenced on the response by the members towards the Asthma Doorknock Appeal, entertainment of the senior citizens, sporting bodies and the welfare of necessitous members generally.” This would be a common theme throughout the club’s impressive history.

There is a sense of passion and pride in Donovan’s five-page chairman’s report, and while it might seem long-winded and over-the-top, it carried some hefty messages, among them:

“The cause is greater than the man.”

“There is much more than the glory to the administration of a club. This is big business ...”

“Use your club and enjoy it but by the same token, cherish and jealously guard its very soul, i.e., the liquor licence. Let us not hoodwink ourselves; the club’s survival depends entirely on its preservation.”

“Try and appreciate the other fellow’s point of view. All men cannot think alike, but by sheer honesty, let us try to strike a happy medium.”

“With respect, this is not a pub; it is a club, symbolic of an honest, friendly, pleasant way of life ...”

And regarding the directors: “Be tolerant of the Board ... their sacrifice of home life, loyalty and devotion to duty so as to make this thing tick is indeed commendable.”

Donovan’s wordy club dissertations and endless discourses became so prevalent that meeting numbers dropped and some members timed their entrance to coincide with the end of his address. Others, like Dick Moroney, used the excuse they were on nightshift and couldn’t make the meetings.

In delivering his report to members at the September 1963 meeting, Donovan left little out and provided some welcome information. He advised that the club had struck an appropriate club badge and issued keys and key ring badges, as well designing a club blazer and tie.

Sporting clubs fulfil a role

The formation of a House Committee eased the burden on directors. The committee took over the supervision of the indoor games and was required to keep a watchful eye on the door in the absence of the duty officer and the doorman.

Even though a number of sports were played within the jurisdiction of the club, not all of them had formed into a sub-club. For instance, darts had been played among a combination of directors and potential members from the time the committee was first formed but did not commence officially as a club until 1968 and, along with indoor bowls,



A casual Jim Donovan takes over the microphone at a club function. He was a strong and forceful president and was known for his long discourses.

formed the indoor sports club. The soccer club pre-dated the Workers’ Club and was originally known as the Panania Wanderers until they played under the East Hills Workers’ Club banner in 1962.

Golf has already been dealt with and fishing, like golf, was the earliest affiliated club. It too has its origin back to the days prior to the formation of the club. The Pacific Hotel was the club’s headquarters and, according to Merle Peters in her book, *The Big Club*, fishing outings to Palm Beach, for example, where members would board a trawler, would depart Flood Street, Revesby, in the very early hours of the morning.

Within the first year, minor extensions were required to help the club run efficiently. At a cost of more than £4000, improvements such as an enlarged coolroom, a wine and spirits storeroom, a further storeroom and a much-needed staff change room were added to the club. Staff amenities had been overlooked in the first building, an oversight that forced the seven staff to change in a storeroom that was no more than a wired-off section near the bar. One's modesty was always at risk!

Clearly, the club required more extensive improvements. The original clubhouse was basic and the measures taken in 1963 were a temporary solution. The club had been built to accommodate 250 members but its immediate success and a membership that climbed to near 300 by mid-1963 indicated that more space for patrons was a necessity.

Entertainment of some form was part of the Workers' Club culture from the very beginning, starting with a pianola, bought from Len Foss, and a three-piece band which played on Saturday nights, principally dance music. According to Joan Higgs, Wal Huston's three-piece, which consisted of piano, guitar and drums, provided the earliest music. "Those nights were enjoyable," she recalled. "Right from the very start Brien used to employ an artist; I remember one of the first artists was Jimmy Parkinson. He was like our vintage at the time. I can also remember we had this little band that used to play ... all nice dance music ... barn dance; everyone thought that was very nice."

Merv Elder remembered it as a three-piece which played from a corner of the club. He also believed the emergence of The Beatles was a major factor in propping up the music scene at the time. Their music was so popular that a

live band was imperative in the make-up of any emerging club and the Workers' Club members certainly expected to be entertained. It is worth noting that The Beatles celebrated their first hit record, *Love Me Do*, in 1962, the year the Workers' Club opened.

Merle Peters, in her book, recorded Ray McCormack as the club's first entertainment director, given just £10 to hire the weekly artists and band or orchestra – hardly sufficient even in those times. According to Peters, the three-piece band took the allocated money, leaving no room for outside artists. A search for hidden talent among members brought forth some willing entertainers-in-waiting, a number of them making up a group of women dressed as ballerinas in a questionable skit on Christmas Eve 1962, just three months after the club opened.

Peters named the "ballerinas" as Chris Byng, Ida Ladd, Peggy Teasdale, Iris Moore, Dot Conlon, Joan Bennett and Moira McConachie. As brave and forthcoming as they were in the true sense of "the show must go on", they had no pretensions to careers in the entertainment world. Revesby Workers' in the 1960s was as good as it got.

It was not that the Workers' Club membership lacked talent. Bill Scott, who worked a nightshift as a barman in 1962, was a talented singer/guitarist who not only took over the role of entertainment director but also compered and sang on most Saturday nights.

The detail given to musical enjoyment at this time was a precursor to the big stage of entertainment that was to characterise the Workers' Club, particularly in the 1980s.

These were small steps. They would, in time, become giant strides.

Let's call the club Revesby

6



1964-65

INSIDE THE NEW WORKERS' CLUB ON THE BUSIEST NIGHTS, THE MEMBERS WERE PACKED TO THE RAFTERS, ALREADY UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE LIMITED SPACE. OUTSIDE, POTENTIAL MEMBERS WERE LITERALLY CLAMOURING AT THE DOOR, WOMEN AMONG THEM, UNABLE TO JOIN BECAUSE OF THE LIQUOR ACT RESTRICTION ON MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS BASED ON THE SIZE OF PREMISES.

The club was just 12 months old and to have a need for a major extension – and to be able to fund it – was a remarkable beginning and pointed to a bright and prosperous future. The renovations completed in 1963 were small-scale compared to the proposed new major construction.

Planning for what amounted to a new club began in late 1963 when the Board called on well-known club architect Van Breda, from S C Van Breda and Vaughan, architects of the original large club buildings for Bankstown Sports and Mounties, to discuss the new plans. The minutes of the Board through 1964 until the club construction was completed in 1966 are littered with information on the design and building plans. They presaged the club's first big step into the licensed club world – perhaps a small step compared to the “Taj Mahal” of clubs, the St George Leagues Club at Kogarah, but a telling one just the same.

The Board continued to have other more pressing and immediate obligations, not the least mischievous members. The club minutes were crammed with the deeds of miscreants and indiscretions, some serious enough to warrant jail terms, others a matter for club-only discipline. These were also the early days of poker machines

(the renowned one-arm bandits) which invited fraud and cheating, not just at Revesby but throughout the club industry, and it was about enforcing standards and protocol, essential in protecting one's licence under the laws and regulations of the Liquor Act.

Donovan in his lengthy homilies rarely lost an opportunity to warn members of the need to obey the laws of the act, to ensure that the club's licence was not under threat. Many ignored the warnings – and paid the price. Two members were barred for life and staff unrest eventually led to the resignation of bar manager Eric Teasdale, who had been at the club since opening night. He was also the union's shop steward. He apologised after being charged with acting in a manner contrary to

Article 41 of the club's Articles of Association and the Board would allow him to re-apply, but only after "successful medical treatment"!

One offence that could not be kept from the public eye was a theft, in late 1964, of £708/10/–, a sizeable amount at the time. The money was part of the weekend's takings. While the theft had occurred at midnight, the money was not reported missing until 9.20am the next morning. Coincidentally, staff member Maxwell Page did not report for his afternoon shift on the day of discovery and efforts to contact him proved fruitless. Vic de Saily, the duty director on the night the money was taken, reported leaving the club at 11.45pm and that Page was still on the premises.

Page was immediately under suspicion and a police hunt led them to Melbourne and, ultimately, his capture. He was found guilty of larceny after a two-day court hearing in April 1965 and jailed for 12 months with hard labour.

The theft forced the Board to re-think their security at night. They had built the club on a credo of fair-mindedness and a "fair go" for workers and the community. Implicit in that was their own belief in the honesty of the staff and members and, thus, allowed someone other than the duty director to dispense with the day's proceeds at the end of trading. The Board decreed that it would be the responsibility of the duty director to lock away the daily takings and the bar staff be informed that the bar should be closed within an hour of service ceasing and that members be cleared from the bar area 25 minutes after service finished.

Boardroom stoushes were never far away, particularly among strong-willed men determined to defend their authority – and their territory. Donovan, at no time a shrinking violet, was brusque and abrupt in his manner and it never sat easily with fellow Board member Vic de Saily, a director since Herb Barron resigned in 1963. Vic de Saily was not afraid to challenge and to taunt Donovan and it came to a head in February 1965 when Donovan called a special meeting of directors, charging de Saily with:

- Contemptuous attitude to the chairman over a period; and
 - Endeavouring to coerce members of the Board to vote him to the executive staff.
- Again the full complement of reasons and argument from Donovan and de Saily's defence are given scant coverage in the Board minutes except to note toward the end of a four-hour meeting that "both parties for the good of the club settle their differences immediately and that no decision is made within 48 hours" and that "the club's solicitor be called to adjudicate".

Donovan's allegation that de Saily wanted Board members to vote him to the executive staff was supported by long-term member Fred Cole, who not only acknowledged the constant clashes between de Saily and Donovan but confirmed that de Saily wanted the secretary-manager's job. "They wouldn't let him," Cole recalled, "so he got the s----."

Donovan brought sanity to the upheaval two days later after meetings with the club's bank manager and legal advisor. According to Donovan, "As a result of these discussions it became obvious to me that to pursue the case to its conclusion would mean that the club's extensions would be seriously jeopardised" and "would destroy the image of the executive in the eyes of the Rural Bank board to the extent that the £60,000 loan approval could, and most likely would, be withdrawn. With my experience in public life, right is not always might at the ballot box, so that I feel any adventure to this regard holds too serious implications and risks as far as the club is concerned."

In a final ironic twist, without any obvious motivation, de Saily was the director who moved the motion supporting the report! The Board expressed a vote of confidence in its president – and then got on with business. However, the head-butting and dissension between Donovan and de Saily would not go away – not until 1966 when Donovan gathered a membership force to vote him off the Board after a turbulent clash that proved irritating and destructive to club business.

GO HOME – YOUR WIFE NEEDS YOU

The secretary (Brien Higgs) reported to the Board an accusation by a member's wife that her husband had been neglecting her. In keeping with their responsible attitude to club members, it was moved that the husband be called into the boardroom at the next Board meeting.

What at first might appear to be a frivolous piece of news belies the good intentions of a Board who understood from the report that the member was spending too much time in the club, and likely spending too much of his weekly wages. It underlined the club's care and attention to members' welfare above and beyond the balance sheet – whether the member liked it or not. There was no further report of unrest in this matter!

In the meantime, just four months after Donovan had put out the fire in de Saily's belly, de Saily garnered the support of fellow director Ted Smith, another who bumped heads with Donovan, to change the rules governing the election of the president and vice-president. Instead of the two positions being determined by the seven Board members, they wanted the president and the vice-president elected from the floor by members. Not surprisingly, the motion was lost. Donovan held the weight of power on the Board and while he carried sufficient weight within the membership, there was always the off chance a membership could turn on a president or director without obvious indication.

Labor, Labor, Labor

A brief review of the early Board minutes would have been sufficient to understand the political leanings of the club, though it would be folly to assume the club accepted *all* political decisions. When it came to defending their own industry, they were not afraid to push hard, protesting by letter to Dominic "Eric" Costa, the federal member for Banks, which covered the Revesby area, and to Gough Whitlam, in federal opposition at the time, and the federal Labor opposition leader, Arthur Calwell, over the heavy taxes loaded on clubs. The club also

Joe Stanford, Pat Crowley and Bill Browne providing an impromptu singalong at a golfers' smoko in 1965.





dealing with respective governments. Over the years, the union had numerous reasons to challenge government decisions, among them: membership numbers, taxes, the economics of the licensed clubs (understood over the years by too few politicians), gaming, clubs' commitment to community and, most disconcertingly in 2011, problem gambling and its relationship with the club industry.

In the 1960s, one less confronting issue was the building of a holiday camp at Fingal Bay, north of Newcastle, and, later, another at Sussex

Inlet, on the New South Wales south coast. East Hills Workers' Club (as it was still known, though not for much longer) was one of the first clubs to support the Fingal Bay camp and built a holiday cabin on the first site. A local builder from Nelson Bay, Jeff Barnes, completed the cabin at a cost of £1310/14/-.

While there was no official list of the first entertainers to grace the small stage at the original club, Jimmy Parkinson, Warren Williams and Noel McKay were notable performers who entertained members at the

time (in 1964). Parkinson's greatest claim to fame was his cover in the United Kingdom of The Platters' hit, *The Great Pretender* – six months "ahead" of the Platters version. The song entered the Top 20 on 3 March 1956 and remained there for ten weeks, peaking at number nine. An Australian vocalist, Parkinson was a regular on the club circuit in the 1960s.

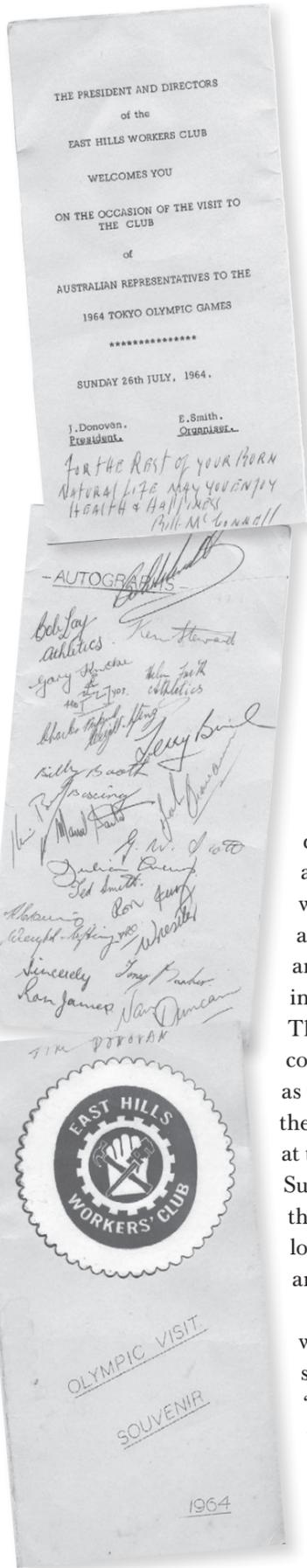
Williams was one of the pioneers of Australian rock'n'roll and featured on early Australian television shows *Bandstand* and the Johnny O'Keefe-hosted *Six O'clock Rock*.



The way it was in the 1960s. East Hills Workers' Club member Kevin Hart and his wife, Beverley, with son, Glenn (3), and daughter, Sharon (1), enjoying a summer holiday at the club's Fingal Bay holiday cabin in the mid-1960s.

joined in a protest with the Registered Clubs Association over a Labor policy to abolish two-shilling poker machines. The club's letter of protest was sent to Jack Renshaw, the premier of New South Wales, and to local member R J "Joe" Kelly.

In July 1964, the club was granted membership of the Union of Registered Workers' Clubs, which provided support through discussion and advice from club managements on the operations of a workers' club. On ratification, Jim Donovan was elected vice-president of the union. A basic premise of the Union of Registered Workers' Clubs, was as a strength-in-numbers platform in



Known as a prolific songwriter, he performed regularly on the club circuit and was one of the most recognised of Australian artists, particularly in the 1960s. McKay recorded for Viking Records which was responsible for recording many New Zealand artists.

Before 1964 was behind them, the Workers' Club would have its first members' newsletter. The Board agreed to the newsletter at the urging of Merv MacFarlane, who was also appointed editor, a decision that did not meet with the full support of members who felt that MacFarlane, as a member of the Communist Party, was unsuitable for such a public communiqué. Even some of his staunchest supporters cringed at the depth of his fervour at times and there were occasions when MacFarlane's left-wing political assertions did offend some members. However, though tempted, the Board decided against bringing him to account and agreed to allow him free rein – within reason. The first newsletter, a roneoed A4 sheet, printed front and back and titled *Club News* – was invaluable as a news source for members. The introduction of the newsletter also coincided with MacFarlane's appointment as the club's publicity officer. No surprise then that the first issues were produced at the Waterside Workers' Federation in Sussex Street, Sydney, until it was clear that the raw roneoed versions were no longer acceptable and better print quality and format was needed.

Areas covered in the first edition were: club extensions; holiday camp; second annual picnic; sports meeting; "Club Chatter"; an appeal for news and welfare assistance. Nothing offensive or political in that one! However, in the third *Club News*, MacFarlane, under the heading "PUBLIC RALLY", included

news of proposed testing of nuclear weapons by France in 1965 in the Pacific which, he wrote, "is of vital concern to the Australian people". Such broad, meaningful issues are usually the reserve of the national media and might have seemed out of place in a roneoed licensed club newsletter surrounded by such items as sporting news and club entertainment. MacFarlane was right that it was of "concern to Australian people" and would have seen no harm (nor would there have been any) in giving the rally some exposure.

MacFarlane's reasons for so vigorously upholding and extolling his left-wing views were not without consideration. In a letter he wrote in 1995, he explained that the club "was formed by local left wing ALP branches and members of militant trade unions and *Club News* has always endeavoured to reflect that background". He had no intention, he explained, of cutting any links to the club's origins. "It is vital that it [the club] remembers its grassroots members, the ones that that have been loyal to the leadership of the club and consistently vote at every yearly election."

The Board itself was not afraid to stamp its political principles on subjects directors saw as being not only in the national interest but worth fighting for. In August 1965, the Board agreed to send a telegram to prime minister Menzies protesting the use of Australian troops in Vietnam. The trigger for the telegram was a press release from the Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament, which provided information on the events influencing the war.

Though technology was beginning to catch up, MacFarlane continued to edit *Club News*. Printing and production standards improved and the club recognised the need for a more substantial – and colourful – product. The one constant was MacFarlane's editorial each month, rarely without a strong socialist view of the political and trade union world.

It is also worth noting Revesby's very early connection with the sporting world when they invited members of the Australian Olympic

team to Tokyo in 1964 to a special club function on Sunday, 26 July. Olympic members who visited the club included Gary Knoke, Bob Lay, Helen Frith and Kevin Berry, who won the 200 metres butterfly gold medal in Tokyo. The club's souvenir invitation carried a large bright red logo, the same crest the club continued to support in 2012.

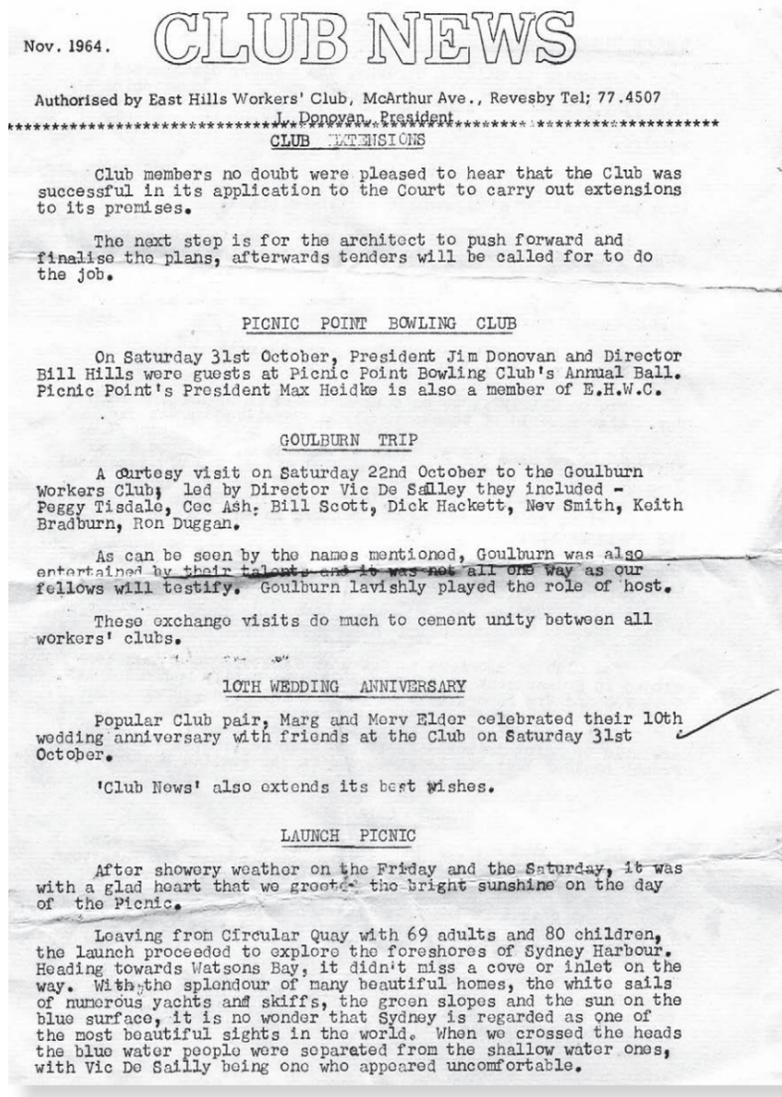
Someone's taking the money
Poker machine fraud was rampant throughout the club industry, particularly in the early days of the mechanical, handle-operated machines. Ridding the industry of the cheats often became a matter of trial and error and, in many cases, of having to be reactive rather than proactive. One man with the expertise to prevent fraud was George Anthony, a poker machine agent (and mechanic) who had supplied the club with their first poker machines. Anthony addressed the Board in January 1965, outlining some of the methods that had been used to cheat and providing a demonstration of the ways to restrict the fraud.

Following the meeting, the club placed a notice near the bar area stating that all reels of a poker machine must be in motion prior to any paying sequence and before the payment of a jackpot could be made – and that no unnecessary abuse of the machine shall be tolerated.

Anthony, whose knowledge of the club industry was widespread, explained that one method of cheating was to drill a hole in the side of machines. "They would put a cigarette packet on the corner of the machine and in that corner they would drill a hole so small that a needle could hardly go through. They placed a wire through to the 50-pay switch which was at the side of the machine. If you hit the switch, it would empty out the money as if it were a pay ... 50 coins at a time. One night I was at a club for a Board meeting and this woman had a hearing aid. She complained there was so much noise in the hearing aid she couldn't hear. We checked and found a guy drilling a hole with a little battery-operated drill. We chased him, but he got away."

The Workers' Club understood they were not immune to poker machine fraud when, later in the year, Higgs reported that a plastic jigger had been found in one of the machines but no clue as to who was using it.

Merle Peters in her book *The Big Club* recounted the story in the 1960s when, again, it was realised that specific machines were being tampered with. Knowing which machines were being targeted, directors sat in waiting, watching proceedings "when all except certain night staff had gone". Then – like clockwork – a person of interest entered the gaming area and proceeded to fleece the machine(s) as he had done regularly. He was suitably surprised



OPPOSITE: A visit by members of Australia's 1964 Olympic team was celebrated by the club before they left for Tokyo.

BELOW: *Club News* in its first year of operation in 1964 – a roneoed four pages that kept members informed. The *News* would gradually, over many years, develop into the glossy colour production offered in 2012 to the club's 50,000-plus members.

when challenged. His fate, and subsequent punishment, is not recorded.

The club also looked at other methods of detection, even prevailing upon select members to act as observers, as Joe Woods related. Woods drove buses and would often arrive at the club in his bus uniform after a day's shift. He was approached one day and asked if he would mind casually surveying the poker machine area to help detect cheats. Since Woods had no official position in the club, and being in his bus uniform, he would unlikely arouse suspicion in anyone fraudulently tampering with the gaming machines. While Woods was unable to identify any misuse of the machines, the task did have a small side benefit – a free schooner each time!

In these formative years, club business was erratic, unpredictable and far from an exact science, as this overview suggests. This is a snapshot of issues that needed attention, some more important than others:

- The club sought a three-piece band through theatrical agent Wal Norman for teenage dances.
- The club looked at the possibility of buying a golf course on the advice of their solicitor, J P O'Neill. However, no further mention is made of the suggestion in Board minutes and one assumes finances would have been stretched to the limit because of the new extension plans. This would have been no time to consider golf course purchases.
- An increase in 10/- per week under new legislation for permanent and casual staff and a move to contact all clubs in the East Hills area with a view to forming a better relationship between clubs.
- As 1964 turned to 1965, the club was still questioning when the sewer would be connected to the club's property. They were still waiting in mid-July!
- The club would be open for trading from 12 noon to 6pm on Good Friday for the first time – visitors limited to a maximum of three to each member.

- The question of noise and the impact on neighbours was a vexed one, even in these early years. Secretary-manager Brien Higgs agreed it was disturbing. One neighbour asked that the volume of the organ played on Sunday nights be kept to a minimum and, another that bands could be asked to play softer during the later hours on Saturday night. The club invited representatives of the neighbourhood to the boardroom and after discussion agreed to investigate all ways of having the noise element kept to a minimum.
- Decimal currency entered the Workers' Club lexicon in May 1965 well in advance of its official introduction on 14 February 1966. Representatives of the National Cash Register company (NCR) visited the boardroom where they explained the many and varied complexities in relation to its introduction and the influence this would have on procedures behind the bar. The Board agreed to an order of five machines with NCR.

Finally – a new name

In February 1965, the Board called for amended tenders for their major extensions which led to H&A Constructions Pty Limited being accepted as the builder. The amended quote was £85,290 and the time given for the completion of the construction – 40 weeks. Work on the extensions, which would cost approximately £90,000 overall, began in the final week of March, part-funded by a loan of £60,000 from the Rural Bank of New South Wales. By December 1965, the club announced that it had outlaid the first £30,000, even before using any of the funding from the bank.

There was an essence of "New Beginning" in these immediate years. Not only would members have a much larger club with its planned completion just a year away, in 1966 they would be blessed with a new name for their club, one that would indelibly link the club to a suburb without any further confusion for the broader community and, especially for

HAVING A PICNIC

Annual picnics were a special event in these years. They were the result of the workingman's culture and derived from the traditions of the trade unions and the Labor Party. The first, in 1963, was held in driving rain at Kurnell and lost some of its impact. The picnics enjoyed considerable attention in both the Board minutes and the new *Club News* and the second picnic, like the first, at Kurnell, attracted almost 1200 members and families – 620 children and 540 adults. The cost was a not-insignificant £493/11/7, yet within the £500 budget allocated. The third was held again at Kurnell, this time in perfect weather where 1000 members,

family and friends enjoyed a day of high spirits.

The day was packed with so many events that organisers ran out of time before all could be run. The highlight was a Jack Dickens Memorial Sprint (men's 100 yards) and the Bill Rigby Memorial (Single Ladies' Championship – 100 yards). Wrestling and boxing were major attractions and no picnic was replete without the ubiquitous tug o' war. Apart from races for boys and girls of varying ages, the day also included events such as a sack race, hit the stump, egg and spoon and the "Married Ladies' Championship"!

Over the years, the picnics moved to various venues, including Fairfield Showground, Warragamba Dam and Warwick Farm. They became so popular they had to be limited to the immediate family of members. In 1982, the day cost \$28,021.65. They lasted until the following year, consumed finally by more sophisticated activities and the growing diversification in entertainment. The organisation of thousands of members and their families was mammoth and the largest single club members' event of any era. It might well have been a relief for the organisers who no longer had the burden of such a large-scale event.



OPPOSITE: The obligatory sack race – with all its inherent fumbles and spills – to the equally mandatory tug o' war were highlights of the annual club picnic. Secretary-manager Brien Higgs (centre of photo) gets a helping hand from member Bill Maher.

a young singer at the time, Kamahl, who, on his first journey to the area for a performance, searched high and low in the nearby East Hills area for the “East Hills Workers’ Club”. Some say it was the last straw for a Board and a community who believed the club should reflect its true location.

The first notification of the change of name evolved from a directors’ meeting on 28 May 1965 among a number of recommended changes to the club’s Articles of Association to be presented to an extraordinary general meeting. The official recommendation for change of name from the Board minutes read:

That item 1 of the Memorandum of Association be deleted and the following be inserted instead, the name of the company (here and after called “The Club”) is Revesby Workers’ Club Limited.

The change was ratified by members at an extraordinary general meeting on 30 June at which Donovan expressed a “tinge of sentiment” and regret, “but commonsense had to prevail as a matter of convenience and practicability – the name ‘East Hills’ was always a source of confusion to guests, travellers, delivery men, artists and such, so that we became somewhat tired of explaining that the East Hills Workers’ Club was at Revesby, or that the Workers’ Club at Revesby was the East Hills Club.”

Few more important decisions have been made in the club’s history. The name change defined forever the future of the club, thus ending the search for an identity. It seemed right and proper that a club that sat at the doorstep of the Revesby Railway Station should bear the title Revesby.

At this point, the Workers’ Club membership dropped back to 290 and the Board was anxious that it be restored to 300. In all clubs, memberships oscillate for varying reasons. A number of members drop out for reasons such as leaving the area, lack of interest, death and occasional expulsions. The balance is to make sure there is a consistent stream of new members to take

up the slack and in that regard Revesby had more than enough to cover any shortfall. The Workers’ Club’s problem was, as it had been since it opened, it didn’t have premises large enough, under the Liquor Act, to exceed a 300-membership limit. That would change with the completion of the major extensions in May 1966.

The sporting clubs within the Workers’ Club umbrella were generously supported. The club was not only keen to satisfy their manifesto which included helping the youth of the district, but keen to respond to the efforts among the clubs which included basketball and rugby league by 1964, sports that sat alongside golf, fishing, cricket, soccer, darts and bowls. No club annual report was complete each year without noting the achievements of these clubs.

Euchre, too, had its start in this period – in the mid-1960s. It was another leisure activity organised by Herb McDougall who, with Harry Nelson, arranged for Sunday morning matches. They were forced to move games to Tuesday night because a number of the players were staying on and not going home for the traditional Sunday roast dinner! Euchre was still being played in the sports bar at Revesby on Tuesday nights in 2012. McDougall ran the games until his death in 2007.

However, not all went according to plan at the newly formed junior rugby league club. Mismanagement of funds prompted the Board to suspend the club – and its officials – from competition until its debts were paid. Members of the executive and coach of the club were called before the Board to answer the charges. After further interviews and questioning, the Board suspended three members. The club rejoined the local junior league in 1966 and played on until 1969, which remains today the last rugby league season under the auspices of the Revesby Workers’ Club.

Due prudence and an active membership ensured strong balance sheets for the Workers’ Club in this period and beyond. The future appeared just as bright as the recent past had been successful.

We want the poultry farm

THE IDEALS OF THE REVESBY MEN WERE CARVED IN STONE LONG BEFORE THE IMPENDING OPENING OF THEIR NEW PREMISES. IMPRESSIVE AND COMMANDING, AS THE FINISHING TOUCHES WERE BEING ADDED TO THE RECONSTRUCTED BUILDING, THREE TIMES THE FLOOR SPACE OF THE ORIGINAL CLUB, WAS A STRIKING THREE-DIMENSIONAL MURAL DEPICTING A LIFE-SIZE FIGURE OF THE WORKINGMAN'S POET, HENRY LAWSON.

The figure of Lawson was set against a wall-high photograph, illustrating a bush scene from the Blue Mountains. At his feet, running water fell over several mini-levels, to ferns and foliage. A plaque set the scene, with these words from Lawson:

*We have learned the rights of labour,
Let the southern writers start,
Agitating too for letters,
And for music and for art.*

Working-class values and a deep and insightful respect for Lawson and his principles were an inescapable focus for this Labor-orientated brigade; Lawson spoke the language and was revered for it. He was, in essence, their “patron saint”. The club set aside 17 June 1967 to celebrate the centenary of Lawson’s birth and made much of the event, hiring quality artists to entertain the large throng that attended.

Not before time, in the shadows of the opening of the new club, directors were busy bulking up the membership, ensuring the largest influx so far: more than double the current numbers. Hamstrung because of lack of space, the Board was given

7



1966-68

approval to increase the membership to 1200, with provision for review. At the opening of the new extensions, club membership stood at 496 and the Board determined that nominations from number 497 would be considered for election, the names posted on the noticeboard as required by the rules of the club.

A standard membership policy at this time was for each nominee to face individual Board members, which was never a problem in the very early years (1962 to 1965) since the restriction on numbers meant the nominations could be dealt with in small lots. However, under the Liquor Act, after the extensions increased the floor space, large groups of new members, some of them two years on the waiting list, flowed in. The first intake after the completion of the new building numbered approximately 500, but had to be broken up into two lots of 250 and their inductions held a week apart.

Despite the increase in numbers, Jim Donovan and his Board still demanded that the prospective members present themselves to the directors – and did so in rather comical fashion in the club’s auditorium, where the nominees walked in single file to the front of the of the stage where Donovan and the other six directors sat. According to Terry Semlitzky, among the throng who joined at this time, each new member was asked questions by Donovan, such as: “Have you ever been in trouble with police?” Semlitzky also recalled some applicants claimed Donovan asked if they were members of the Communist Party, a questionable claim in view of Donovan’s close connections with Communist Party members in the formation and development of the club.

The increase in size of the club and membership also brought with it the need to extend the number of poker machines. Again

the club had been stuck in a mini time warp, unable to grow or upgrade their gaming machines. The first order was specific and well defined – three two-shilling machines, each to be of the three roller-type and that two be “tic-tac-toe” machines and the other a Gold Award machine. Three months later, the club added another twelve machines – 10-cent machines and two five-cent machines.

As preparations for the club opening neared, Harry Nelson resigned after less than two years on the Board because of personal and health reasons. His replacement sparked another dissenting moment involving Vic de Sailly and to a lesser extent Ted Smith, who had become something of a cohort to de Sailly. When the Board approached Bob Sentance to be Nelson’s replacement, he declined – for the same reasons he gave when forced to exit the Board in March 1964: he could not give the role the time it deserved. The Board elected Jack Pitty as the replacement, but with de Sailly and Smith registering their dissent.

On further discussion, the motion to elect Pitty was withdrawn and Bill Hills, on behalf of the Board, approached Sentance again, asking him to step in on a temporary basis until the election of a permanent director. This time Sentance agreed. (Pitty’s turn would come in 1971 when he was elected to the Board to replace Smith, who had been forced to resign over a serious incident within the club.) Sentance stayed for just two months when Ken Books replaced him at an extraordinary general meeting on 1 June.

At the time when this manuscript was completed in early 2012, Sentance was the oldest living director and, at the age of 84, was living on the New South Wales central coast. Even though his tenure as a Board member was brief, he saw the promise and potential in the club and argued that “blind Freddie could see that the block of land across the road [from the old club] ... we called it Daisy’s cow paddock ... was perfect for the new club.”

However, Sentance felt the disharmony in the Board when elected the second time in

A NEW CLUB IN THE FORM OF AN “H”

The rebuilt new club opened eyes and, while some of the features have lost their appeal over time, a Club Managers’ Association journal story does justice to this flourishing new club that would become one of the strongholds of the industry. Explaining that the reconstruction took the form of the letter “H”, the journal noted that, “One long side features an auditorium with seating accommodation for about 250 ... Hanging flower baskets take colour from the blue motif from carpet to the high ceiling.

“There are facilities for indoor bowls and dancing in the auditorium.

“A typical week of social activities provided for mixed membership of about 1000 in the auditorium includes euchre, old-time dancing, darts, bowls, and cabaret nights with artists ranging from pop stars to Isadore Goodman, the concert pianist.

“Once a month a ring is set up in the auditorium and top professional wrestlers entertain the members.

“The other side of the ‘H’ consists of a large mixed lounge, poker machine room, two-tabled billiard room, darts recesses, library, office space and new boardroom distinguished by large, comfortable, red leather chairs.

“The cross part of the ‘H’ is a well-stocked bar with a choice of beers and ample standing room ... Off the foyer is a dining room, seating about 40 people and serviced by a modern all-electric kitchen.

“Once again, tropical fish tanks set in panelled walls bring colour and movement to the decor.”

The finished product was a club fit for an official opening, one that the club didn’t have when it first opened its doors in September 1962.



The club’s auditorium after the first major rebuilding in 1966.

A monument to the Revesby Workers’ Club’s “patron saint”, Henry Lawson, the workingman’s poet.



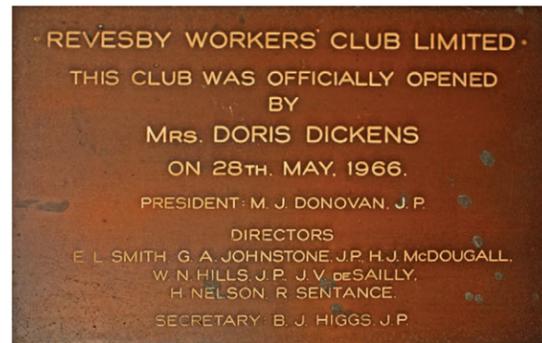
Revesby club directors and senior management in 1966. From left: Brien Higgs (secretary-manager), Ted Smith, Bill Hills, Ken Books, Herb McDougall, Jim Donovan (president), George Johnstone, Vic de Saily and assistant manager, Terry Banks



1966. He recalled the Board having problems and he admitted he “tangled occasionally” with Donovan, but always supported the Board. He spent 48 years in Panania and remained faithful to a club he admitted had been good to him and his family.

With the date for the opening of the larger, renovated club settled, the club’s search for the appropriate person to officially open the club took a strange, though acceptable twist. The Board initially settled on an order of preference as W (Bill) Buckley, president of the Registered Clubs Association, Roy McDonald, president of the Union of Registered Workers’ Clubs and Les Haylen, who had not been forgotten as the Labor politician who generously supplied most of the books for the club’s first library.

The official plaque commemorating the opening of the major renovations by Doris Dickens, wife of the first president – Jack Dickens – in May 1966. This was the first official opening celebrated by the club. Eight directors are featured on the plaque. Harry Nelson had been replaced on the Board by Bob Sentance but was included on the plaque because he had been a director during the building phase.



Instead, the Board chose Mrs Doris Dickens, the decision made just 18 days before the official opening. While Mrs Dickens agreed to their request, the Board had decreed that the alternative to her, had she not accepted the invitation, was Jack Renshaw, state Labor opposition leader.

Mrs Dickens was a worthy choice in view of the deprivations to her home and family life during the two years leading up to the opening of the first club when Board meetings and club business was conducted at number 20 Murphy Street where she continued to live until she died on 5 May 1977. It was also indicative of the down-to-earth nature of the working-class men guiding the club that they should choose the wife of the first president over such business and political achievers.

The finishing touches to the extensions were still being made on the morning of the opening, 28 May 1966. In view of the disruptions and the inconveniences endured by the members, a net profit of \$38,684 for the financial year about to end was impressive. Included in the expenditure was the cost of the official opening of \$2707, as befitting their “gala day”. The Delltones, by then Australia’s leading male pop quartet, were a feature of the

night’s special entertainment. The compere was Slim de Grey, comedian, raconteur and later an actor who became one of Australia’s most endearing entertainers. Celebrations went well into the night.

A casualty of the new club was Millers Brewery. Reluctantly, though out of necessity, the Board replaced Millers beer, which had been on offer from the day the club opened, with Reschs. The rate of consumption of the respective brands was telling: Tooheys 93 per cent and Millers 7 per cent. Clearly, the membership had spoken – they no longer had a taste for Millers beer – not that it was the most popular beer in the first place. Shortly after introducing Reschs, the percentages improved markedly to Tooheys 75 per cent and Reschs 25 per cent. Donovan was quick to recognise Millers Brewery’s support through the club’s formative years, claiming it was with regret that they had to discontinue their product. “Dictates of the palate must, as always, govern choice of wares,” he explained. Within 12 months, the Millers business would be bought by Tooheys!

Entertainment was elevated to another level with the opening of the larger club. Members recalled the Bee Gees performing in January 1967, just a week before they packed their bags and headed for England and fame on the world stage. Ironically, the group had their first Australian hit record, *Spicks and Specks*, while they were on board ship.

Yet the club struggled to fit into a routine with its staple entertainment offerings. Various agents laboured to satisfy the Board’s desire to engage the four-piece groups that had played in the club prior to the extensions. Kevin Hennessy and his band had been reclaimed as well as the Merv Lillie Quartet. However, the Board wanted to return to a previous system of rotating

groups for entertainment nights. A sense of disappointment with the current set-up led the club to one of its own – Bill Scott, who had acted as master of ceremonies for the evening’s entertainment on the day the club opened.

Scott was appointed entertainment manager in June 1967 and continued his role as MC, as well as filling in when needed, singing and playing guitar. Although he played down his talents, club members from this era recall a man who was well-liked and of considerable ability. Scott’s role included hiring a suitable five-piece band for a permanent booking for the Saturday night cabarets and arranging the Sunday evening films.

The films were run by foundation member Bill Potts who had a deep love for the silver screen. His daughter Margaret Gray recalled the many hours her father had spent arranging the films. Joan Higgs, wife of Brien, sewed two large white sheets together to act as a screen when the first renovations were done in 1966. “We didn’t have a lot of money. Bill Potts was the projectionist – and did it for nothing,” Joan recalled. “Interval was taken when Bill had to rewind the tape to put the second half on. But we had some good movies ... showed the films in our new auditorium – people could see them

The fisho’s club at one of their many happy functions. Far left, Alf Rugless, and behind him, Ken Books and Jack Fahey. Also recognised in the photo are Cec Ash (glasses) at front and behind him, Col Tibbetts.



BELOW: Ladies' indoor bowls – a popular and well-attended sport in the early years. BOTTOM: The club after its major reconstruction in 1966.



for nothing. Brien wanted to get people into the club and hoped they would buy a beer.”

A snapshot of club offerings in the mid- to late 1960s included wrestling, which was highly popular and held every fourth Friday of each month – and televised by Channel Ten on one night in October 1966 – old-time dancing on Wednesday nights and, along with fishermen’s smokos, a new billiards room with two billiards tables, the annual cricket grudge match (president’s eleven versus the social cricket club), the club’s first annual ball, a members’ party to see the film *Mary Poppins*, which had just opened in Sydney, the introduction of outdoors bowling (as they called it) and a ladies’ golf club.

The Board remained true to its political philosophies in the manner it continued to support Labor Party ventures and interests. Requests for donations by Labor-orientated and socialist/Communist causes, where they dovetailed with good Labor policy, were as regular as poker

machine payouts. Revesby gave freely – to the likes of the federal opposition, the East Hills State Council for the Australian Labor Party, the East Hills Peace Council and Labor members on the local municipal council. The club at this time also outlined their dissatisfaction with taxation laws to Arthur Calwell, the leader of the federal opposition, to which they received a written response, though there was little Calwell could do in opposition.

Also on the agenda were news clips from the Vietnam action committee, advertising in the Communist Party newspaper, *The Tribune*, as well as providing news of ALP public meetings. Club members were predominantly Labor-voting supporters though membership of political parties such as the ALP was not, and never considered to be, a condition for joining the club and it was the Board’s option as to which releases reached members.

Club invitations to the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) for two representatives to attend the club’s annual picnic had to be declined because of prior commitments. The embassy apologised for not being able to accept the invitation but made it



THE KEY TO MY CLUB

From 1966, members were each given keys to the club’s entrance to replace the doorman who had been responsible, until that time, for members and visitors entering the club. Members would press a buzzer at the front door to be allowed entry, but as the membership grew, it became increasingly annoying and more difficult for the doorman to answer every buzzer. The answer for the Board was

to issue keys to each member, certainly more expedient yet requiring trust in the membership.

The club also had a system at this time of allowing members to borrow “two quid”



(£2) but it had to be paid back on a Sunday morning; members had a month to pay it back. Some members, forever caught in debt, would pay back the money on the Sunday morning but borrow it again on Sunday night; they forever owed the club £2. Eager members would stay to watch the Sunday night movie, some of them classics, but were just as eager to pick up their £2 – and only then head home.

clear that first secretary Vladimir Beljaev and third secretary Vladimir Khanzhenkov would be only too happy to visit the club at a later date, and to show 16mm film of the Soviet Union.

With the members safely bedded down in their new club, the Board turned their attention to buying property that would one day become the bedrock of the club. While there was little urgency in the search, Donovan and his team were already aware that with continued growth, the Workers’ Club would outgrow its new amenities and there was never a bad time to be looking at the future, as will be noted further into this chapter.

The sight of 311 new nominees for membership displayed on the club noticeboard would have gladdened the hearts of the Board. Such a significant influx equated to increased income – and increased profits. The total membership on 30 June 1967 was – officially – 957; the new intake would lift membership to over 1200. By the end of June the following year, membership had surged to 1545, almost triple the number at the club at the end of 1966, only two years earlier. For most staff members, however, there was no membership. One important stipulation by the Board was that no permanent member of the staff be allowed to join the club unless for special reasons approved by the Board.

By the end of 1966, Revesby would have its first electronic gaming machines. George Anthony, the club’s poker machine broker and mechanic, offered to buy back, for \$200 each, the club’s older-style machines as trade-ins. The club installed new Nevada machines from Ainsworth Consolidated at a cost of \$960 each and among the replacement machines would also be two electronic pay-out units (EPU), each at \$1700. The electronic machines were an immediate attraction and returned a high profit.

Sadly, the club’s first guarantor, the controversial Bankstown businessman Ray Fitzpatrick, died in St Vincent’s Hospital, Darlinghurst on 5 December 1967. Fitzpatrick lived on 11,000 hectares in the Wolgan Valley, bought with the proceeds of the sale of his business interests in 1966. Fitzpatrick used the property, north of Lithgow on the western side of the Blue Mountains, for breeding cattle and to enjoy life on the land. He suffered from diabetes in the last ten years of his life and died of cerebrovascular disease (a stroke). His estate was sworn for probate at \$732,785. His generosity and kinship with the workingman was a bright light in a sometimes dark and ominous life.

While most of the sporting sub-clubs continued to prosper, the club’s junior rugby league club struggled yet again, this time in mid-1966 over the cost of equipment after a

season's (1965) lay-off. The Board donated \$150 to help bail them out, yet there were question marks on the club again. Directors found some discrepancies in the club's financial report and called in the accountants, Poulter, Stapleton & Co. The rugby league club pushed on. In 1968 they complained that though the game was booming, the club was not getting support from the Workers' Club members and only 14 players registered. The following year (1969) the club was able to raise the interest of 20 players who formed a C-grade team. While they performed creditably (winning eight and losing eight) it was the last season a rugby league team represented Revesby Workers' Club.

In this period, a number of the sporting and leisure clubs either joined under the umbrella of the Workers' Club or took on formal commencement. Such clubs included billiards and snooker (1966); ladies' indoor bowls (early 1968); men's lawn bowls (1967); mixed indoor bowls – commenced originally as “indoor sports” (darts and indoor bowls), in 1968; ladies' golf (1966); netball (from Panania Wanderers to Revesby Workers' in 1966); social tennis (1967); and a women's amateur athletic club (1968).

The club supported a number of junior teams, Donovan making the point that the club was doing a sterling job combating juvenile delinquency in the area, adding that Revesby Workers' once sponsored more children (500) than the club had members! Other sub-clubs would follow in the years ahead and not insignificant within the new club extensions was a gymnasium and sauna room for the fitness-conscious.

A death in the family

Tragedy struck the Revesby Workers' Club on a sunny Easter Sunday on 26 March 1967 when assistant manager Bruce Flockhart was hit with an iron bar and killed within 50 metres of the club entrance. Flockhart, a father of two, and a generous, hardworking member of Workers', was taking the previous day's takings to the night safe at the Rural Bank 100 metres way.

Flockhart, who was carrying \$1700 with him, was found on the footpath just before 1pm by an elderly man. According to newspaper reports, a resident of Macarthur Street, Mr C Lynch, saw him across the road. “He was trying to get to his knees but he couldn't,” said the witness. According to the newspaper report, Flockhart was able to stumble back to the club and Brien Higgs drove him to the hospital.

Flockhart lost consciousness soon after arriving at hospital and never regained it. He died in Bankstown Hospital nine days later, on 5 April. The takings, carried in a locked leather wallet, were missing. Members in the snooker room recalled seeing him pass the window on his way to the bank – he was seconds away from the bashing.

Bankstown detectives persisted with their enquiries and it wasn't until November 1968 – 18 months after the incident – that charges were laid. The police had long suspected “inside” help. Their instincts were confirmed when they charged the club's head steward, Ernest “John” Withers, with being an accomplice.

Withers turned informant which led to the arrests of Robert Stanley Vandine, a 25-year-old painter, and Keith Francis Spencer, 38, a

driver, who had been in jail for 18 months prior to the assault.

Withers informed police that he had known both men for two-and-a-half years – they had called at his home, with a man called McCoy, to ask him about the banking facilities at the club. Withers said he told Vandine he did not want to be involved.

According to Withers, Vandine and his wife called on him on 28 March, two days after the bashing, and handed him a parcel, telling him, “There's \$200 there to keep your mouth shut that you never knew me or any of the boys.”

According to police, Withers claimed he asked Vandine if he was the one who “did the job at Revesby”. Vandine replied, “Yes.” When asked by Withers why an iron bar was used, Vandine replied: “McCoy used it. He panicked.” After Vandine left, Withers found \$200 in \$2 notes made up in bundles of twenties.

Withers pleaded guilty to charges of concealing knowledge of a crime and receiving \$200, knowing it to have been stolen from the club. He was committed for sentence on 2 December on \$500 bail.

Both Vandine and Spencer pleaded not guilty when the matter finally reached Central Criminal Court in July 1969. Spencer's later plea of manslaughter was accepted by the Crown prosecutor. However, Vandine was on trial, charged with murder. While Spencer was sentenced to ten years in jail on the manslaughter charge – with a non-parole period of five years – Vandine was found guilty of murder and jailed for life. The third man, known as “McCoy”, was never found.

Flockhart's death devastated the close-knit community. He had been at the Workers' Club just seven months. His very punctuality might also have been his undoing. Flockhart and Higgs took it in turns to deliver the previous day's earnings to the night safe. Flockhart was more methodical, leaving at the same time each day. Higgs was far less likely to follow a regular pattern, sometimes waiting until the following evening before dropping off the money.

RATS!

Concern over large anomalies in recent beer sales raised many theories. Blame firstly was aimed at human intervention, as unlikely as it might have seemed. In March 1967, Higgs believed he had found the culprit(s). He reported that leaks in the lines were suspected of having been brought about by a rat gnawing on the lines.

A benefit night for Flockhart's wife, Mona, and two children, Gail and Ian, at which club staff and artists of the calibre of Warren Williams, Jay Justin, Jack O'Leary and Digger Revell offered their services for free, realised \$1271.85 to which the club Board added another \$500.

At the direction of detectives, security was tightened following the assault. All windows in the boardroom and in the offices were barred and made opaque, and a bolt placed on the front door. Mayne Nickless was engaged to carry monies from and to the club and the duty officer, when necessary, was ordered to use taxis from the club on his duty night.

From chook farm to pokie palace
Within a month of the opening of the newly extended club, directors went in search of a more suitable, larger property to cater for a bigger club in the future. With clear-

Workers' Club golfers enjoy a smoko in 1969. Obviously a fun night – the ultimate nineteenth hole! Front left, Merv Elder and behind him, George Johnstone, Ray Kemp, Ron Hill and Nev Pakes. Pouring drinks is Col Tibbetts. From the right, Clive Baker, and those behind him, Bill Fazl, Nev Fisher, Stan Smith, Cliff Wyatt, Lou Dan.

The Cooke farmhouse on the land on which the club now stands and the family cow. There are many references to the front portion of the land as “Daisy's cow paddock”. Easy to understand why!



headed foresight and profit figures to match, management looked no further than across the road at a poultry farm, a 6.5-acre property that ran from Brett Street to Tarro Avenue. Owned by the Westcott family, more specifically Eva Myrtle Westcott, the site was up for sale and ticked all the right boxes – land size, position and with sufficient room for car parking. The land was primarily used for poultry, though it carried a small market garden and, according to Revesby locals, some cattle.

Initial references to the land owners in Revesby Club minutes was to the “Cook” (sic) family, though research indicates they had given up the land to a daughter, Eva Myrtle Westcott. Eva, born in the district of Annandale in 1904, was the daughter of Walter Leonard and Elizabeth Myrtle Cooke (nee Simmons). Eva married Arthur E Westcott in the district of Ashfield in 1932. Mrs Westcott lived on the property with her son, Leonard Ernest, at the time the club purchased the land.

The process of purchasing the land was long and drawn out and loaded with unexpected complexities. There would be no love lost between the club and the Bankstown Municipal Council, a frustrated Jim Donovan calling it “nothing short of sheer skulduggery and petty politics” on the council’s part. On 3 June 1967, after negotiations between real estate agent George Gibbons, representing the vendor, and Revesby Workers’, the club agreed to purchase the property for £61,600 (\$123,200), the clients to take the mortgage back for \$90,000 over six years with an interest rate of seven per cent on quarterly rests – subject to the club paying a ten per cent deposit and entering into a contract within 20 days of the agreement letter, dated 29 May.

The Board was anxious to use the area fronting Brett Street, referred to as “Daisy’s cow paddock”, as a car park until such time as they were ready to build. In the contract was provision for a lease to the present owners for two years with a further twelve-month option – and a further twelve-month option after that. Irritating and frustrating the club Board were

the constant interventions of the Bankstown Council and to a lesser extent the Sydney County Council, who required an area of the land for its electricity sub-station. But it was the Bankstown Council that irked and angered Donovan and his team the most. Donovan, never afraid to vent his spleen in the cause of

justice for his club, threw the full weight of his venom at the council. “The failure of subsequent numerous conferences and interviews with both aldermen and council officers, ludicrous and all as it may appear, we were thwarted in our endeavours to secure the property. Here was a ridiculous situation where a body such as ours

were prepared, at heavy expense, to live up to our obligations and remove some 200 cars off the adjacent streets only to have the local council frustrate our every turn ...”

Donovan later took a “if you can’t beat ’em, join ’em” attitude when he stood, albeit unsuccessfully, for a position as an alderman at



A remarkable photo that captures club member and infamous trade union boss, Ted Roach, front left, and a feast to fill the whole room. Next to Roach is Max Hazelgrove. On the right is Val Salmon, and behind him, Jack Pitty and Jack Roser.

the council's December 1968 elections, polling well but losing out on preferences. Donovan also sought pre-selection for the federal seat of Banks in the same year but was well beaten against an impressive list of candidates.

Revesby displayed an element of daring in their intentions. The club had only recently outlaid a considerable amount of money to help pay for their newly renovated club and were in debt to the Rural Bank. From that perspective it might not have seemed the most opportune time to be investing. However, the opportunity appeared too good to pass up. The club went back to their tried and true method of raising finance – to a debenture issue. The club offered members debentures in units of \$10 at eight per cent interest, as they had done to purchase the first block of land, except that the single debenture unit in 1962 was offered at £10 (\$20). The club added a further debenture issue at seven per cent interest and both of these raised more than \$100,000.

Unlike 1962, this time directors had a growing and financially successful club as security. Faith in their current fiscal capabilities and in the future earnings allowed the Board the chance to invest more boldly. Such confidence was also born out of the trading profits since the club first opened in 1962 and leading up to the 1966 figure: £18,610/9/3 (in 1963); £23,742/15/8 (1964); and £18,654/5/- (1965).

Any notions that a sale was imminent diminished by the day. Negotiations were put on hold and contracts left unsigned while Donovan and his Board dealt with an ever-increasing range of issues – even a plan “B” devised by the Bankstown Council whereby the Sydney County Council would purchase one acre, Bankstown Council 3.5 acres and the Workers’ Club 2.5 acres. There is a minute in club records of Donovan and the Board agreeing to plan “B” and even drawing up contracts. It seemed so illogical and out of character with the Board’s defiance and Donovan’s contempt for the council that they would countenance the alternative.

Plan “B” died a slow death, however, and by February 1968, ten months after Revesby

first agreed to buy the 6.5-acre property, negotiations resumed. There had, in fact, been a number of changes during negotiations over the long period, including a new contract price of \$125,200. The vendor, Mrs Westcott, now required special clauses in a new contract to which the Board readily agreed, meeting on 19 July to settle on the final price of \$130,000 – \$65,000 paid as a deposit and twelve equal repayments at \$5416.70. The club then on-sold a plot of land – Lot 1 within Lot 3 – to the Sydney Council for erection of its electricity sub-station for \$29,300 after forcing the Sydney Council to relocate from the quarter acre it occupied on the north-east corner to an acre at the north-western side, leaving the club with a full frontage onto Brett Street.

While the club had signed contracts with the vendor and was now the owner of the land, there was still the serious matter of zoning, and without the proper re-zoning hopes for a club on the site were dead in the water. The Board engaged a leading team of town-planning consultants to prepare a case for objection to the current zoning which prohibited clubs from building on the land, which according to the consultants, was the only instance of such a prohibition included in zone Residential 2B throughout the entire Commonwealth. It left Donovan to let off further steam: “Could it be because the Bankstown aldermen, who undoubtedly influence the conditions laid down for their council ordinances, dislike the colours of our eyes? Without desiring to lay any claims to being a fearless forecaster, I will wager that this club will still be a prosperous, flourishing centre of communal activity long ’ere we as directors and they as civic fathers have passed into the limbo of the lost.” The club was subsequently forced to the law courts to fight the rezoning, eventually winning their case after a protracted battle.

Obstacles and roadblocks seemed to be a part of the process for growing licensed clubs. The issues were various and it took bulldog commitment to thrash through each problem as it arose. Once again the club was on its way.

Scholarships and good-time music



1968-69

IN FEBRUARY 1969, THE CLUB MADE ITS FIRST PAYMENT OF \$6635.42 ON THE BRETT STREET PROPERTY. IT TOOK SOME THIRTY BOARD MEETINGS AND ALMOST THREE YEARS TO CLEAR THE BUREAUCRATIC OBSTACLES. IT WAS WORKERS' CLUB PERSISTENCE AT ITS BEST.

All along, the vendor, Mrs Westcott, had expressed a desire to sell to the club and no one else. Many believed the council was erecting roadblocks to the deal in the hope the club would grow tired of the interventions and allow the property to be developed – by the appropriate developer!

By 1970, the club had paid off the residue of money still owing to Mrs Westcott after she decided not to exercise her option of a further twelve months rental, which was permissible under the terms of the contract. Not to be missed in being able to pay off the debt early was the fact that the club was riding high on record surpluses and could afford to make the payment.

The income surplus over expenditure for the year ending 30 June 1970 reached \$139,686.08, more than double the profit of just two years earlier. The surplus was even more impressive when one considers the huge increases in taxes since the club opened. In 1962-63 (the club's first year) the supplementary tax on poker machines was \$6878; in June 1970, the year referred to above, the tax was \$86,539.86!

Noise complaints by near-neighbours was an issue for all clubs built in the vicinity of residences and was something the club would consider closely in the plans for the new club. The noise problem was more pronounced in these times since building

Trophy night at the Revesby Golf Club's annual dinner, a mixed night much enjoyed by the wives of the golf club members. Jim Donovan (centre) was still golf club president at this stage.



ordinances were less demanding and, in the building of such structures, clubs were unprepared for the extent of the noise and how to deal with it. The objections from the surrounding neighbours at Revesby in 1967 were wide-ranging – from “banging doors (and the language) in the ladies toilets” to “extremely noisy shouting and yelling in the snooker room at all hours”.

There was no concern that poker machines were overpaying one member who announced to the Board that he “wished to bar himself from the poker machines and drinking any intoxicating liquor”. The Board moved that “the member’s request be granted and should he violate his agreement his membership be cancelled as agreed to in his correspondence”. It was one of a number of similar issues management were only too happy to deal with and a good example of early responsible gambling practices by the club.

A Brett Street neighbour complained that announcements in the club could be heard clearly over the “loud hailer”; cleaning staff were warned to close windows or stop listening to their music and singing loudly (at all hours) and another neighbour objected strongly to club members (or visitors) who parked their cars close to his side fence using it as a urinal. A neighbours’ group gathered a petition and submitted it to the Bankstown Municipal Council. To the club’s credit, the issues were treated seriously. They agreed to a range of compliances, including ventilating the billiard and snooker room to facilitate soundproofing; covering all the windows on Macarthur Avenue with rice paper; and that “suitable signs be installed requesting that ladies be as quiet as possible”.

In this instance, the club and the neighbours were on the same page and the complaints were dealt with in a civilised

manner. In the meeting at which the club outlined the measures they were taking to satisfy the noise complaints were six members of the public and five Bankstown aldermen, among them Ray McCormack, a pioneering director who was forced to leave the club six months after it opened. McCormack spoke well of the club, advising the meeting that in his opinion “the club would make every effort to alleviate these problems”.

Poker machine fraud, too, remained a concern. This time eleven machines were tampered with, the perpetrators inserting a wire instrument into the “slide stops”, forcing the machines to overpay. Relief came some time later but it meant clubs had to be continually vigilant. Manufacturers eventually perfected an anti-jiggle device that made the freewheeling of machines by pulling the handle impossible. These were fitted to Revesby machines by a servicing firm at \$10 per unit.

In May 1968, 29 members of the golf, bowls and fishing clubs embarked on the sporting clubs’ first Fly Away weekend to Forster. Since it was the first journey by air, Fly Away pins, depicting the club’s emblem mounted on wings, were presented to the “flying” members. So many sports continued to play a vital role in club life through the enthusiasm and competitiveness of Revesby members – and their children. Noteworthy, too, that such world-renowned sports stars as snooker and billiards champion Walter Lindrum performed at the club, donating his \$90 appearance fee to Legacy.

Charities and community were also a priority with the 1968 list including: Dr Barnardo’s in Australia; Inala Handicapped Children’s Centre; Paraplegic Association of NSW; the Smith Family; the Talking Book Auxiliary; Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children; the Spastic Centre; the Civilian Maimed and Limbless Association; the Salvation Army; the Adult Deaf and Dumb Society; Fingal Bay Surf Life Saving Club; and the Lifeline centre. Mindful of their own struggles to form a club, the Revesby Club

FOUR WISE MEN GET LIFE

Life membership, denied the pioneering directors in 1963, the year after the club opened, was granted to the four remaining original Board members – M J Donovan, H J McDougall, G A Johnstone and E L Smith – in June 1968.

The four men had been part of the heart and soul of the new club and helped develop a solid and workable platform for the future. As the backbone of the Board, they carried considerable responsibilities. They would be the first to be so honoured but far from the last.

Board agreed to forward a generous loan of \$500 to Bulli Workers’ Club who had fallen on difficult financial times.

A boardroom brawl to the end

In the boardroom lay a smoking gun. The bad blood between Jim Donovan and fellow Board member Vic de Saily was about to become both public and serious. A major factor behind the discord was de Saily’s frustration at not being allowed to join the executive staff, initially as the assistant secretary-manager (with an eye on the top executive role), and Donovan’s determination to deny him the chance. Not lost in this latest conflict was Donovan’s dogged unwillingness to have his authority usurped and placed in jeopardy. De Saily both taunted and challenged him.

The final dogfight in the rivalry began out of a meeting on 17 April 1967 when de Saily accused Donovan of calling special meetings at times when he knew recently elected director Ken Books could not attend, simply to justify Donovan’s opinion when he opposed Books’s candidature that Books would be not be available for sufficient meetings to justify his place on the Board. The accusation struck a nerve with Donovan who found de Saily’s comments offensive and accused him of “holding the chair in contempt.” de Saily struck back by telling Donovan he was not holding the chair in contempt, “only the person in it”!



A commemorative pin that celebrated the bowling, fishermen's and golf club's first Fly Away weekend, to Forster on 2 May 1968.

Books told the Board Donovan had questioned him on his availability at the previous meeting – and that Donovan had notified him of meetings in advance on other occasions. De Saily refused to be convinced. Given three chances to retract his accusation, de Saily declined. The Board then suspended him. When he refused to accept the suspension, Donovan adjourned the meeting to obtain legal advice. In many ways, this was the boardroom stoush Revesby Workers' needed to have!

At 11.15pm the meeting resumed. In seeking legal advice, Donovan was informed by the solicitor (one assumes it was John O'Neill) that since he did not have the club's Articles of Association at home Donovan should refer the matter to the licensing police. Sergeant J Ault was in the vicinity and was called to the club to view the articles and the by-laws and his advice on perusing them was that only the duty officer, Billy Hills, had the right to suspend de Saily. Asked by Donovan what further avenues were open to him if de Saily still refused to leave the club, Sergeant Ault told him his only recourse was to have him removed by the civil police. Donovan advised the sergeant he was not intending to go down that road and Ault duly left the premises.

De Saily was clearly taken aback by Donovan's tenacity. According to de Saily, when he knew the police had arrived at the club he told the meeting: "I had not thought I would have seen the day when a fellow director would seek advice from the police in an effort to have him removed from the club". Although he advised that he had not changed his views, he was, by now, prepared to withdraw his statement. Hills, however, refused to accept the withdrawal, and de Saily's fate was left to a subsequent meeting.

De Saily was not without his supporters. To many, he was a respected member of the Board and generally well liked. Fred Cole knew him as a strong union man and a hard worker. Joe Woods, a member of the Communist Party and a Revesby Workers' Club member since

1966, saw de Saily as "a good bloke ... a good neighbour, good family man ... organised BBQs and worked hard for the club and was always popular, well supported at annual elections". De Saily was also compassionate and generous to Woods when his wife was expecting one of their five children. Woods was working shiftwork on the buses one Sunday night. With his wife in hospital for observation, de Saily, who lived five doors from Woods, heard of his plight and arranged to take the Woods children to the club and feed them. "They took them to the dining room," Woods recalled. "Meals were 2/6 and they finished off with drinks and all the ice cream they could eat. The club wouldn't let them go home on the train. They called a taxi and sent them home – and paid for it, too. All thanks to Vic."

According to Woods, when de Saily was under threat of being suspended, members of the Communist Party visited the Workers' Club and wanted to know if there was a vendetta against the Party. The club made it clear that de Saily's circumstances had nothing to do with the Communist Party.

Donovan had garnered sufficient forces to ensure de Saily was not going to escape this time. According to Donovan, this had not been an isolated incident of contempt and, while de Saily withdrew his statement unreservedly, it was not about to save him from the "gallows". He was suspended by the Board and replaced by Ken Prentice, a wharfie who was also a member of the Communist Party. Prentice's first meeting was on 8 June.

The Board called an extraordinary general meeting for 29 May to allow members to exercise their right to either support the Board or have de Saily reinstated – as a member and as a director. After de Saily addressed the meeting, despite attempts by Donovan to deny him, a motion endorsing the Board's actions but recommending that he retain his membership was followed by an amendment that he should retain both his membership and directorship. While de Saily was not without strong support, the amendment was lost 151 to

BELOW: Jim Donovan and [BOTTOM] Vic de Saily. Their boardroom stoushes were legendary within the club.



FORGET THE GOLF – THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH SCHOONER GLASSES

Bill Thompson was one of the stalwarts of the Revesby Golf Club and the third member to receive life membership.

He joined the club in the mid-1960s and became the golf club's first captain in 1966. He had the distinction of winning club championships in four decades: the 1960s, '70s, '80s and '90s.

It was the camaraderie, particularly at the nineteenth hole, that many loved the most. In the '60s and '70s, in particular, some 80 to 100 Revesby golf club members would descend on various golf courses for their Sunday competition, though none were more delighted than Campbelltown Golf Club – with one exception.

So large – and thirsty – were the Revesby golfers that the Campbelltown club had to order in more schooner glasses. No surprise perhaps that in the next decade Revesby Workers' Club were listed as having the highest liquor sales in the metropolitan area.

175 – and the motion carried. It was one small victory for de Saily – at least he got to keep his membership.

De Saily had one more shot left. He attempted to return to the Board via the annual general elections in September, but, without Board support, he did not have the clout. Although he had polled well the previous year (410 votes), this time he received just 230 votes, well behind the seventh and last placed director, Ken Books who received 401 votes. In essence, Donovan's hands were clean – the blood was left on the hands of members. In a less-than-veiled reference to the saga, Donovan, in his best flowery prose, put the issue to rest in his annual report address to members:

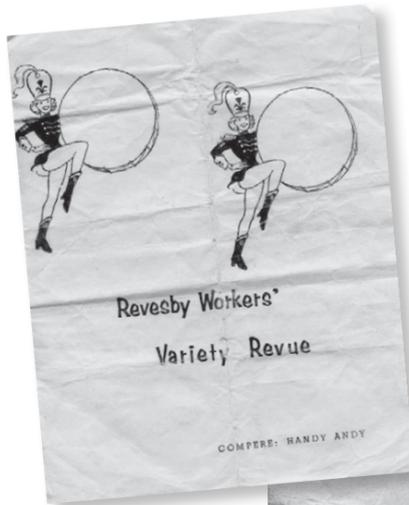
The true story of this has never been told at the appropriate meeting owing, in some degree, to the emotionalism stirred up by experts and assisted by 'ye old John Barleycorn', but regardless of the apt quotation 'none so blind as he who refuses to see', without doubt a fundamental reason for our ex-director's contempt and disruptive tactics was the Board's refusal to permit him to abuse and insult a position of trust and privilege as a director by having himself appointed to a paid executive position, i.e., as assistant secretary-manager of the club. However, this issue was finally resolved democratically and legally at the extraordinary general meeting called for that express purpose according to the Articles of Association by the members endorsing the Board's actions and there must the matter rest.

Prentice was a popular replacement. He was already well known within the club, having been on the club's House Committee and having assisted with many of the club's yearly social events. He had been the annual picnic organiser for five years, sufficient alone to ensure his popularity among members. Donovan described him as a man with "long experience on the waterfront at handling delicate situations".

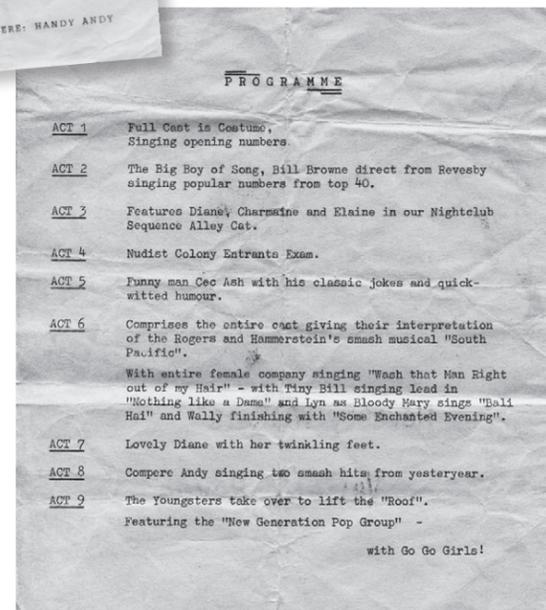
And now there were ten

However, the de Saily saga wasn't over. Four days after the annual general meeting, on 8 September, de Saily was one of ten members called before the Board after a social BBQ and games fundraising night for the struggling rugby league club. Donovan read the charges to him which he alleged "were prejudicial to the interest of this club and in violation of Article 41 of the Articles of Association". As a result, on 6 October, the Board voted to remove de Saily's name "from the club's register of members". In what was the largest mass termination of membership in the club's history, nine other members were called before the Board – seven given the same treatment as de Saily while the remaining two were handed suspended sentences.

Those suspended indefinitely were de Saily, Henry Ryall, Len Emery (club secretary), Mrs Norma Buckley, Colin Wood, Jack Collins,



The Workers' Club unveiled a number of talented singers and musicians within its membership, so much so that a variety club was formed which performed at other clubs. The variety club program was impressive, as was Marjie Elder (below), described in variety club notes as "that sexy songstress".



Danny Kehane and Harry Delauney. Ida McDougall was suspended for three months and Reg McGrath for six months. Ryall, Mrs McDougall, Delauney, McGrath and de Saily were all foundation members. Mrs McDougall joined the club as Ida Ladd (she had married a second time) but was back living with John McDougall (no relation to

director, Herb), her first husband. Ida, whose maiden name was Ryan, joined the club with her father and mother, Leo and Ida "Mum" Ryan. Leo was one of Donovan's best mates, like-minded spirits who enjoyed a good time. Donovan told a story of accompanying "Blue", as Leo was called, home one evening after work, after they had been drinking at their city watering hole, to have a drink to celebrate "Mum's" birthday. So well did Mum wine and dine him, after Donovan left for home at "some uncertain hour", he awoke at dawn among bushes in a market garden in Weston Street, between Panania and Revesby – minus his spectacles, which he never did find.

Donovan's friendship with Leo did not influence the punishment handed out to his daughter. The transgressors' sin was to disobey a directive from Donovan that they were not to hold the function since it did not have permission from the local police. The fundraiser coincided with a Board meeting which Donovan adjourned after a strong complaint from a "certain person" regarding the function being held at 161 The River Road, Revesby. This happened to be the property of Ida and John McDougall, though the latter was not implicated in the charges.

Donovan immediately despatched directors Ted Smith and Bill Hills to investigate. They returned 25 minutes later and reported their findings, resulting in the names of the sub-club's executive officers being placed in the charge book, along with any other member taking part – and that they be suspended from the club immediately. While the exact nature of their transgression is not mentioned in club records, a further claim was that the fundraiser was raided by the police – or at the very least, the "certain person" who made the strong complaint was a member of the police force and was providing a warning of impending prosecution.

Whatever the case, the punishment was swift and sharp, and there is a sense of rage and fury in the boardroom after Smith and Hills returned. It would appear that Donovan

and the Board were not without good reasons for imposing some kind of penalty, but it was recognised that termination of membership was harsh.

At a Board meeting two weeks later, Mrs McDougall, feeling slighted, requested the Board review her sentence which they refused. She died four months later, a month after her three-month suspension expired. McGrath was more concerned his children would be denied eligibility to the forthcoming Christmas party, a major event at the club in those times, and asked for the severity of the sentence to be reviewed. The Board allowed the children to attend the Christmas party, but refused to reduce the sentence.

Donovan, in particular, was close to paranoia over any indiscretion that might give licensing authorities an opportunity to close the club. He was heavy-handed enough as it was when it came to dishing out penalties to miscreant members and the severe penalties in this instance were obviously driven by him. Board minutes in this period were dominated by interviews and charges against members – most of them given no second chance.

The incident and the remaining sacked members would find their way back into the boardroom down the track ... in 1977 after Donovan's Board had been swept out of power in one fell swoop. Four weeks after the new Board was installed, the discredited club members, including de Saily, Ryall, Delauney, Collins, Wood, Kehane and Mrs Buckley, asked for re-instatement, which was duly granted – without hesitation! The decision to review all members who had been struck off the membership list by the previous Board was a part of the platform on which Brien Higgs and his Board came to power.

The same standards applied to Ray McCormack, by now an alderman on the Bankstown council, who sought re-instatement as a visitor during Donovan's reign. McCormack and Donovan (with Dickens) were acknowledged as the prime movers in the club's formation. Donovan sought to rescind a motion

BE A GOOD HUSBAND – OR ELSE!

A club member complained to the Board that her husband was overspending on poker machines and asked that the committee assist her. She was called before the Board and received a highly sympathetic hearing – the husband, quite obviously, was spending the week's wages.

To the Board's great credit, they called in the husband to discuss his wife's anxiety and their own concern that he was overspending. The husband agreed that at times he exceeded his means but had agreed he would curtail his spending on the gaming machines.

The Board accepted his explanation and in turn invited the wife to meet the Board where they informed her of the assurances given by her husband and that any breach of faith by her husband would be viewed seriously – and action taken if necessary.

It gave president Jim Donovan the chance to advise members they could approach the Board at all times and that the Board was concerned that members could place themselves in a position "to derive the family of the necessities of life".

allowing McCormack to return as a visitor, and spoke strongly against it. However, this time Donovan was defeated.

This period of the 1960s had been tumultuous and not helped by a brewery strike in the November of 1967 though its inconveniences might have seemed small fish

The womenfolk enjoyed their "mixed" nights as much as their golfing husbands. The golf club in 1969 continued to thrive as this annual presentation night testified.



PROFESSOR BRIAN A REVESBY PRODUCT

One of the high-profile success stories of the scholarship scheme was Professor Brian Owler, one of Australia's most respected neurosurgeons. Dr Owler earned a Revesby Workers' Club scholarship in the mid-1980s which helped in his undergraduate medical degree at University of Sydney where he earned a Bachelor of Medicine and a Bachelor of Surgery.

Dr Owler was the face of frustration, and hidden anguish, in the Road Transport Authority's television advertising campaign warning of the abject horror of road carnage that he was forced to deal with as a neurosurgeon

at Westmead Hospital and Westmead Children's Hospital.

While Dr Owler expressed gratitude for the role the scholarship scheme played in his university education



("It really helped for a few years with the cost of textbooks"), he also worked part-time from 1989 to 1991 as a barman, poker machine attendant and bar hand.

"It was a fun place to work, with a good social life after work," he recalled. He returned to the club in 2007 as a special guest at the cheque presentation for new scholarship recipients, adding that "it is important to recognise that the club supports academic achievements and further education as well as sporting success".

Dr Owler offered a comprehensive neurosurgical service with special interest in tumours of the brain and spine and complex spinal disorders.

Prominent neurosurgeon Dr Brian Owler was a special guest at the Revesby Workers' Club's Scholarship cheque presentation held in 2007. The scholarship scheme began in the late 1960s. Dr Owler was a benefactor of the scheme in the early to mid-1980s. Back, left to right: Amy Parker, Jenny Suttle, Ed Camilleri (club CEO), Nicole Carter. Front, Norma Smith OAM (club president), Dr Owler, Daryl Melham, club vice-president and federal member for Banks.

in view of the dramas enveloping a weary boardroom. During the strike, members were restricted to one visitor each and were required to drink bottled and canned beer by the weekend's trade – bottled beer at 40 cents and cans at 25 cents for a small can and 43 cents for a large.

It was around this time that the club formed a musical troupe, known as the Variety Club. Members had been inspired by visits of concert parties from other clubs, among them Shellharbour Workers' and Blacktown Workers'. Interested club members had planned a talent quest with \$300 to the winner and a possible recording contract, but it fell through for lack of support. While there may not have been the talent to win a recording contract, conscientious musical types within the club were passionate enough and good enough to take a Variety Club show to like-minded other clubs, as far afield as Muswellbrook,

Cessnock and Goulburn. One of their first projects, organised by Bill Browne, was a performance at the Bulli Workers' Club as a fundraising objective for the embattled club.

The Variety Club charged 50 cents entrance to their shows – 40 cents to be allocated to the Pensions Building Fund and 10 cents to a fund to promote the club itself, which, according to its own new bulletin, had "developed into an excellent top-line show", whittled down to 12 performers by the decade's end. The club's growing popularity led them to an invitation to perform in front of the all-male inmates at the Goulburn Corrective Training Centre, more widely known as Goulburn jail.

The Workers' Club performers, a mixture of male and female, were taken into a normally forbidden precinct – the deepest women had been allowed inside the jail's high walls – behind two large iron gates that closed behind them with a sense of finality and menace. But

anxiety gave way to a smooth, appreciated performance. A remarkable effort from a group brought together with no more than their common interests – the Workers' Club, and a love of music and performing.

Marjie Elder recalled how interested members entered a talent quest to show off their prowess. She was one of the first picked and following her performances with the group was variously referred to as "that sexy songstress" and the Vera Lynn of the Workers' Club. "There was some real talent in the club," she related. "On one occasion at Blacktown Workers', we were given a standing ovation." The group also confounded the doubting members of their own club, among the reviews, "450 people never left their seats until it was over ... we laughed for at least three-quarters of the evening" and "one of the most compact, versatile and entertaining shows we have had at the club".

Unfortunately, the club ran into trouble in 1971 over proven misappropriation of funds and was disbanded by the Board on 29 January.

With their own orchestra leader and light and sound man, it had been a jolly ride for the enthusiastic – and talented – group.

Scholarships aplenty

In 1968, the club implemented a scholarship scheme for the education of dependants of members and deceased members to be known as the Revesby Workers' Club Limited Scholarships. The object of the scholarships was to assist dependants of members complete their secondary education in Forms V and VI and continue their education at a tertiary level. The genesis of the scheme began in 1967 when the club formed an Education Committee whose task was to examine scholarship schemes in other organisations and report the findings to the Board. The recommendations of the committee were accepted: two scholarship levels, firstly, for the final two years of secondary school education and, secondly, to complete, on a full-time basis, a degree course at university. The tenure of the scholarship was for four years.

Celebrating New Years Eve in the late '60s. Secretary-manager Brien Higgs is second from left and his wife, Joan, next to him, third from the left, kicking their heels up.



World snooker champion, Eddie Charlton, second from left, was a special guest at the Revesby doubles snooker (handicap) championship for 1968-69. From left: Ken Prentice, Charlton, Kevin Hart, Ron Hart, Dennis Bartlett, a club steward and Jack Roser. The Hart brothers won the event.

The first eight scholarships were awarded in 1968 – six secondary school and two tertiary – based on the results of the 1967 school exams. The amount awarded each year was \$75 for each secondary school scholarship and \$200 for a university scholarship.

The scheme had many changes over the years and reforms in secondary education in New South Wales resulted in alterations to the Workers' Club's scholarship awards. Secondary school scholarships were discontinued and all funds channelled into tertiary educations which was broadened to recognise achievement in approved courses at the Technical College of Advanced Education.

A remarkable result of these early years

of the scheme was that only two of the successful scholarship applicants failed to complete their training. Scholarship holders qualified in many fields, including law, medicine, arts, engineering, economics, science and veterinary science. Administration of the scheme, another support mechanism for the youth of the community by Revesby, was vested in a scholarship committee. The first committee comprised Jack McWilliam, Harry Thurtell and Reg Wright. George Johnstone was liaison director. Phyllis Johnstone was heavily involved in the scheme in the 1980s, followed by Jacki Campbell who continued to look after the project at the release of this book in 2012.



Social events at the club in these latter years of the 1960s included Saturday evening cabarets, Sunday films, Friday night wrestling, the introduction in 1969 of prawn nights and the big events: the annual ball, New Year's Eve, Melbourne Cup Day and Anzac Day. The club also satisfied the demands of a large majority of members and registered their *Club News* with the Postmaster General's Department as a periodical posted to each member.

By April 1969, the club increased joining and annual membership fees, the joining fee to \$10 and the annual subscription from \$2 to \$4, increases that would help facilitate the printing and circulation of the larger club journal and the establishment of the education bursary.

The troubled relationship between the Robert Askin conservative state government and the Registered Clubs Association (RCA) continued after Askin's re-election in 1968. Constant rumours of restrictions and controls against clubs in favour of hotels would not go away. In December 1968, the government introduced breathalyser tests which had a significant negative effect on both clubs and hotels. At this point, police could only breathalyse anyone involved in a car accident (random breath testing was still 14 years away). The effect on some clubs even at this time was regarded as drastic. By April the following year some inner city clubs reported falls in bar sales of up to 15 per cent.

The effect on Revesby Workers' was minimal judging by the club's impressive balance sheet. The club was virtually next door to Revesby Railway Station; membership was very localised, meaning short car trips to and from the club; and many members were in walking distance.

The major conflict with the Askin government at this time was its intent to restrict club membership. The 1960s had been a decade of extraordinary growth. In 1969, 1447 licensed clubs – with 1.3 million members – were registered in New South Wales. In May, Askin announced plans to restrict all new clubs licensed after 30 June to 6250; to limit

existing clubs with 5000 to 10,000 members to an increase in membership of 25 per cent; and clubs with more than 10,000 members to an increase of 12-and-a-half per cent or a maximum of 12,500 members – whichever was greater.

Askin explained that his government was concerned that some clubs had become so large that they had lost some of their essential characteristics. He was also concerned that some of the smaller clubs were having difficulty competing against the big clubs ... naive governing at best!

The plans surprised the RCA who had been given no warning of this major shift in policy. The last clause would hurt many of the larger clubs. The South Sydney Juniors would have their 40,000 membership capped at 45,000 while St George Leagues Club (31,000) would be capped at 34,875. Revesby Workers' which had a membership of 2290 at June 1969 were not immediately affected but that would change in the future as its membership grew rapidly.

Of concern to the industry were the many clubs, Revesby Workers' among them, who had committed to extensive rebuilding. They could no longer justify their outlay on new facilities if memberships were capped so severely. Revesby had bought land on which they hoped to build a much larger club and significant for them, in December 1969, they held nominations for 651 waiting members.

There was also the irony that Askin, a former serviceman, was a member of fourteen RSL clubs as well as the University Club and the New South Wales Leagues Club! As reported in "The New South Wales Club Movement 1838-2009", *Sydney Morning Herald* feature writer Helen Frizell reported that by 1969 the Sydney metropolitan area had 562 clubs, made up of 177 general clubs, 189 bowling clubs, 62 golf clubs, 15 leagues clubs, 115 RSL clubs and four workers' clubs. Country New South Wales had 882 clubs – 83 general clubs, 357 bowling clubs, 196 golf clubs, 22 leagues clubs, 196 RSL clubs and 98 workers' clubs.

Golf club winners on the steps outside the club in the late '60s. The club's official opening plaque can be seen on the wall to the right. The golfers are, back row from left: Nev Ironmonger, Jack Turner, Reg Wright, Val Salmon, Merv Elder, Keith Hely. Front row: Clive Baker, Ian McFetters, Steve Salmon, Jim Donovan, Nev Barlow.

What followed was an intense campaign from the RCA which included strongly worded press releases and a poster promoting "the biggest petition in the history of Australia" in which they advised "100,000 have signed: NO!". The attack on membership came as the RCA had been warring with the Askin government over the consequences of a new turnover tax imposed earlier in the year, and a subsequent receipt tax. A report tabled in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly revealed that poker machine taxation had contributed \$130,694,492 to state coffers since the machines were legalised in 1957 – \$122,694,492 to the Hospital Fund and \$8 million to the Housing Account.

Revesby maintained their rage against excessive taxes toward the government through its annual reports and *Club News*, Higgs at one point urging members to consider the impositions when voting at the next election. The club seemed more at odds with tax imposts than with the restriction on membership – at this point. According to Higgs: "The Receipt Duty [tax] only amounts to one cent in every \$10 but this will be increased in turn with other taxes as this State Government blunders further into mismanagement." It might not have escaped unnoticed that while crying poor – and rightly so over the increasing number of taxes – that Higgs should in the next breath be advising members that, "It is a pleasure to



be able to report on such an excellent year and balance sheet ..." Clearly, Revesby had not yet worn the effects of the new taxes.

Revesby patrons had shown themselves to be active members, hard workers and heavy drinkers. The club's net surplus for year ended June 1969 was \$95,061.62, more than \$30,000 over the previous year's surplus. The club industry as it was known in New South Wales was unique and had been a major player in the social revolution in the state over the previous decade-and-a-half.

As the decade came to a close, man had only just made his way on to the moon, a Boeing 747 took its first flight, and protest marches grew against the Vietnam War. Revesby Workers' Club left the 1960s behind full-on running. Some eight years earlier club doors opened to an expectant and willing membership of 235, ushering in a new social structure for Revesby, one that did not depend on selective socialising at the local pub. As the balance sheet underlined, the community which embraced the club so eagerly when it opened retained its enthusiasm and appreciation.

A club function in September 1968. Doris Donovan, second from left, sits next to her husband, Jim. Joe Kelly and his wife, Grace, sit opposite.

A stage fit for a local boy



1970-72

BY 1970, COL JOYE HAD ALREADY MADE HIS WAY ON THE ENTERTAINMENT STAGE. HE HAD PLAYED SOME "OFF-THE-CUFF" GIGS IN THE MID-1950S AT PANANIA BOWLING CLUB, A SMALL BUT ACTIVE CLUB WHERE HIS FATHER GEORGE (JACOBSEN) WAS A MEMBER. STAUNCHLY LABOR, HE WAS RAISED IN A WORKING-CLASS FAMILY AT EAST HILLS WITH BROTHERS KEVIN AND KEITH AND SISTER CAROL, AND JOINED KEVIN'S JAZZ GROUP, THE KJ QUINTET, IN 1957, JUST AS ROCK'N'ROLL WAS EMERGING AS THE "NEW MUSIC". THEY BECAME ONE OF THE FIRST SYDNEY ACTS TO TAKE UP THE NEW MUSIC WITH COL THE FEATURED VOCALIST.

The band was already a hit when they reached the Revesby Workers' Club stage in the 1960s, but no club gave Col Joye and the Joy Boys (a name hastily selected before their first major appearance) more stage time and more encouragement. These were local boys who had played in the local rugby league competitions and who had grown up with so many club members. While Kevin left the band to develop and supervise the Jacobsen's growing management and music publishing business, Col remained as lead singer. The band played to great and lasting acclamation and Col Joye, today, continues to be acclaimed Australia's first "pop" star.

Broader entertainment offerings were lifted a cog with the presentation of the Barry Crocker Show. Crocker was one of the most sought-after artists on the club trail and had won a TV Logie award for his performance in *The Sound of Music*. Efforts to secure him for future programs proved difficult. By the mid- to late 1970s, club

patrons were being entertained by not only Crocker and Col Joye and the Joy Boys but also by such Australian luminaries as Jimmy Little, Kamahl, Lucky Starr, Johnny Rebb, Lonnie Lee, Little Patti and Johnny (now John) Farnham. The escalating talent pool set a platform for the wide-ranging and special international artists that were to come. For the moment, there were sporting films on Mondays, western films on Thursdays, top pro-wrestling on the fourth Friday of every month and the latest films on Sunday nights. Members also had the opportunity to enjoy prawn nights, a feature on Mondays – with "top-line Artists".

The large dining room provided a wide range of meals for patrons. A three-course meal consisting of a prawn cocktail, whole snapper and peach sundae could have been had for \$1.50. The most expensive single meal was \$1.70 for lobster mornay!

The first full year of operation of the club's car park and an increase of 33.3 per cent in net membership brought the club a record surplus of almost \$140,000, a remarkable rise

uninhibited by the roadblocks being thrown in the way of licensed clubs by an out-of-touch state Liberal government. The persistent delays in approval of the club's extension plans by the Bankstown Municipal Council – "stalling tactics" according to a suspicious president Jim Donovan – would eventually be to the club's advantage.

BELOW: Club chairman, Jim Donovan, left, and David Lasker of Leighton Contractors (NSW), sign the contract in 1972 to build the new club. BOTTOM: The over-grown Cooke farm on which the club was built.



Club News editor Merv MacFarlane was at it again in a long article, taking the Liberal Party to pieces under a heading "WHAT DIFFERENCE - GORTON OR McMAHON?". Humoured, but only just, by what he called "The comedy staged in Federal Parliament between rival factions of the Liberal Party" as to whether John Gorton should be leader and the subsequent decision to replace him with Bill McMahon, which, MacFarlane penned, "will have no benefits to the Australian people".

He added: "To the victim it matters not whether his assailant is dressed in blue or grey, he has still been assaulted." He didn't have long to wait, however, for a change of government, and the Whitlam years.

An amendment to the Liquor Act late in 1969 would allow 18-year-olds to drink alcohol in clubs from the end of September 1970, though the act retained a set age limit on them playing poker machines until they reached 21. Revesby was at the forefront of moves to force governments to sanction full membership rights in clubs for 18- to 21-year-olds. Until this time, the law had allowed 18-year-olds into clubs but they could not become members, nor be served alcohol, nor play gaming machines. Allowing them to be served alcohol brought them into line with hotels. Granting them membership would rid the act of hypocrisy, but that was some years off. Many debated the nonsense of expecting 18-year-olds to fight wars for their country but not be considered old enough to join a licensed club. To understand how deeply this issue played on the minds of the Revesby Workers' Club Board, president Jim Donovan saw the decision to at least allow them to be served alcohol as a "red-letter event of the year" for the club movement.

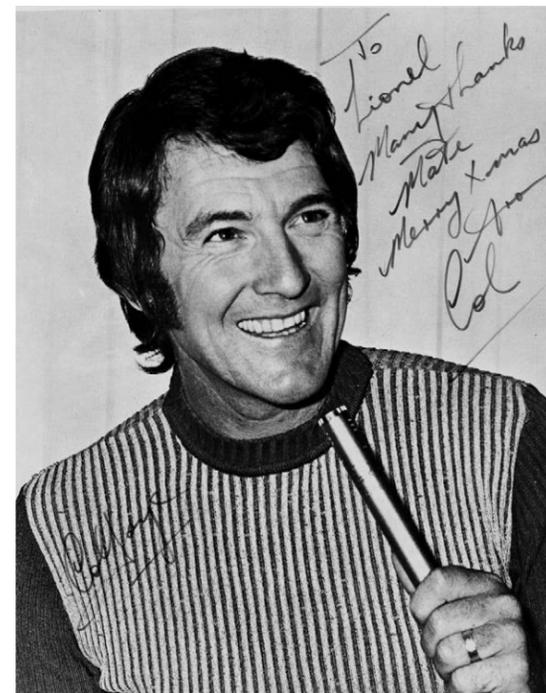
A near-fatal heart attack failed to stop the thrust and parry of Donovan in his busy, stressful schedule to ensure closure on a number of fields, not the least tidying up loose ends and securing a future for the land between Brett Street and Tarro Avenue as the next resting place for the club. Donovan managed to step back into his presidential chair on 3 August 1970 – held by vice-president Ted

Smith in his absence – after just four weeks. Mentally tough and passionate about the club, Donovan wasted no time taking on the many issues confronting the Board.

There remained little love lost between the club and the Bankstown Council, Higgs this time apologising to the 2746 club members for their discomfort because the council had laboured for 12 months without approving extensions on their current club that would have provided more room and more access for the growing membership before the move across the road. Donovan was more vitriolic: "As usual, Bankstown Council has allowed its bias against the Workers' Club to show through even in its Planning Scheme. A couple of years ago your directors, realising that the club would outgrow its present site and needing a large area for parking, purchased the farm opposite the club for \$130,000 and spent another \$11,000 on improvements." Donovan vowed to take the fight to the council.

Infuriated and distrustful

The delays and counter-measures taken by the bureaucratic authorities infuriated



and frustrated the Workers' Club Board. Donovan's ire might not have helped but he had every right to question the council's motives. Donovan also challenged the council's intentions over other issues concerning the Workers' Club, among them the fact that the council had preferred the Revesby Central Junior Rugby League Club tender over the club's use of land in River Road for "promoting junior rugby league", forcing the club to withdraw from junior rugby league in 1970 – for good, as it turned out. The club announced in June 1971 that the rugby league club had been wound up with a balance of \$99.78.

The club suffered, too, a lack of recognition of its \$7170 raised toward the soon-to-be-opened Panania Senior Citizens Centre. To add further insult, at the centre's official opening, another entity was credited with giving the money. Because of the perceived snub, Revesby decided against participating on the committee formed to conduct the centre. When urged by Joe Kelly to change their minds, Donovan was met with a "thanks, but no thanks" by the chairman of the committee (a Bankstown Council alderman). Donovan added bitterly: "So the governing body now consists of representatives from service clubs in the area who didn't lift a hand to assist in the fundraising for the centre."

Not surprisingly, meetings with the council aldermen through this period, on the whole, were strained and distrustful. Even on occasions when the council had genuine gripes over the land and building processes, Donovan and his Board saw each barrier as another unjustified obstacle. Not helping was the club's campaign through its *Club News* over the Bankstown Council's land rate increases. No benefit was achieved either by re-visiting the council's residential zoning of the Tarro Avenue land to preclude licensed clubs building on it – in favour of "homes and multi-storied flats", as Donovan put it. However, Revesby was to have its day in court. While Justice Else-Mitchell denied the club the right to extend on its existing site, Revesby was cleared to build on its new property. Coincidentally, the club cleared its debt on the Tarro Avenue land in September 1970, virtually at the same time court proceedings concluded. Since Mrs Westcott and her family had left the property, the club could take full ownership.

The court decision also brought to a head an agreement from the Bankstown Council to the Sydney County Council's sub-station being established in Tarro Avenue by July 1971. This was indeed the domino-effect. With the transfer of the sub-station access, the club would take over the Brett Street location of the sub-station

A BULLET INTO JOE KELLY'S DINING ROOM

Under the heading "BANKSTOWN OR GANGSTOWN", an editorial in the April 1970 *Club News* revealed some disturbing events involving Revesby Workers' Club directors and Labor Party members.

According to the editorial: "Both president Jim Donovan and vice-president Ted Smith have been receiving phone calls at all sorts of odd hours during the night and when they lift the receiver they are

either abused or there is just stony silence."

At about 5am one morning they both received phone calls from an unknown person repeating over and over: "There's a bomb in your car." While Donovan and Smith both admitted going back to bed, the message was relayed to police who called on both men and searched their cars thoroughly.

Further in the report, it was noted

that: "These terror tactics, plus the bullet that went into Joe Kelly's dining room ... it's more like a scene from 'The Untouchables' than Bankstown."

All three men were active in Revesby Club affairs and all were members of the Labor Party. The editorial concluded: "It looks as though someone doesn't like the Workers' Club and hates the Labor Party. I wonder who that could be?"

Col Joye, a local boy made good. Col Joye and the Joy Boys became iconic figures in Australian pop music. They were consistent visitors to the Revesby Workers' Club stage, pulling in grand audiences with each performance.



Snapshots of the Workers' Club in the late 1960s to early '70s. Good days in a tight-knit club community.

by April 1973. All these decisions would have significant impact on the plans for the new club; it meant the club could focus on an opening date in mid-1973. This had been a devilishly complex affair and if ever there was a red-letter day in any one year for the Workers' Club, it was this outcome. Within weeks of being granted permission to build on the Tarro Avenue land, the Board was meeting with architect Van Breda, requesting site plans and perspectives.

In February 1971, the Workers' Club suffered its first industrial unrest when club staff went on strike for three-and-a-half days. The dispute centred on two staff members, one a permanent, the other a casual worker, who were suspended after allegedly defrauding the club by setting up poker machine jackpots. The permanent member resigned immediately, but advised the club that he was not guilty and would take further action. The club had "duly signed" information, substantiated by Higgs who had checked past copies of the poker machine payout book.

Union representatives Jim Lennan and Lionel Ward (shop steward) sought the

permanent staff member's reinstatement. When the Board refused, the union men met with staff who agreed to go out on strike at 3pm on Friday, 5 February. The club had its first taste of the timing of most strikes in the club industry – on a Friday and over the weekend, at a club's busiest and most vulnerable time. In the meantime, the two men had been reported to the police who charged them with stealing monies from the club. Both cases were remanded to appear later in the month "for mention only". Each was given bail of \$50.

While the Board refused again to accede to union wishes, it was proposed by Ward that since the staff member in question had taken his annual holidays and had two-and-a-half weeks remaining, the staff agreed to return to work and determine further action once the holiday period was over. The strike cost the club, according to Higgs's calculations, approximately \$6000 gross. The case would linger on through the courts and into the following year at which time the two men were re-charged to face court. There was no further strike action.

The annual reports through this period do justice to the role the sport and leisure sub-clubs played in the scheme of things at the Workers'. Almost as much space was given to their yearly results as to the comprehensive financial reports. The continued support of the clubs confirmed just how true to their word were the original directors in their claims that supporting and developing sports clubs – senior and junior – for members and the community was uppermost in their determination to form a club.

Club News, the club's monthly journal, continued to cover a range of topics – divided between each month's entertainment, the sporting sub-clubs and the president's message were unabashed bulletins and editorials dealing with socialist issues of the day including urging

the membership to support Labor in elections and to "Get rid of the Liberals in NSW ... as a first step to ousting the Gorton Liberal Government"; explaining the political role of the trade unions; and in 1971, for instance, providing "The Wharfie's Views" on their refusal to load the cargo ship, the *Jeparit*, which was bound for Vietnam.

Revesby Workers' Club was brave and inspired enough to allow Merv MacFarlane a free rein. For them, there was no point hiding under a bushel. The club was founded on strong political leanings with not the slightest doubt as to where they stood – and they were proud of it. Having decided against interference, the Board's conscience was clear, despite the occasional cringe moment when the political

CHEESE AND BICKIES

The supply of free cheese and bickies throughout the club was as much a part of club culture as the sports bar and the pokies. But at what cost?

In the 1971-72 financial year, Revesby spent \$3342.38 on the staple club fare,

more than on legal expenses, telephone costs and an item under "badges, ties and blazers" and three times as much as on casual staff meals. By the following year, it had increased to \$3674.89.

Then one year later, in the 1973-74

financial year, it hit home. It was an expense clubs didn't need to have. The cost of cheese and bickies went down to a paltry \$91.34 – and by the following year it was zero.

And the beer still tasted the same!



Club president Jim Donovan gets into the swing of things at a theme evening at the Workers' Club. Far left is June Ashford, who continues to work at the club – after more than 40 years of service.

Revesby Workers' Club Board, 1971-72. From left: Bill Scott, Ken Prentice, Jack Pitty, Herb McDougall, Jim Donovan (president), Brien Higgs (secretary-manager), George Johnstone, Bill Hills.



views went as far left as the political maelstrom would allow. In many instances, however, MacFarlane, to his credit, raised important and thought-provoking issues and if nothing else pricked the national conscience.

Help is on its way

Revesby was imbued, too, with the spirit of giving that was standard for all licensed clubs – their charitable offerings saving governments millions of dollars annually, a factor often forgotten (and discounted by some) in the calls, from both the political and public sphere, to accept the heavy taxation imposts imposed on them, as well as the demands for reduced memberships and, thus, diluted gaming profits.

In 1970, in addition to the regular charity donations, the club generously presented a Toyota panel van to the Aid Retarded Persons (ARP) sheltered workshops, plus an additional \$300 to their general fund. Donations and welfare payments in the 1969-70 financial year, all up, amounted to \$11,146.16. It is not my intention to record donations year by year, though, where necessary, recognition will be given. An obvious and accepted aspect of the club's manifesto is the care and attention, financial and otherwise, offered the many needy welfare organisations.

The club's generosity also reached out to members and their families who had fallen on hard times, whether they were forced to sit out a strike without wages, through sickness and hospitalisation and, in some cases, simply because the member had suffered deprivations and loss of job. We have already provided examples of this comradeship. However, the plight of Joe Woods in 1971, a member since 1966, affords a deeper view of the ethos behind the special care for struggling members and, through Woods and his connections to both the Communist Party and the Labor Party, a deeper view of the club's declared equality for women.

Woods presents a compelling picture of a compassionate, charitable club with ideologies often misunderstood. Like friend and Workers' Club director in the 1960s, Vic de Saily, Woods was a member of the Communist Party and one of many workers sacked over the Atlantean bus dispute after workers went on strike. This was an attempt by the government to introduce one-man double-decker buses. Employees of the Australian Tram and Motor Omnibus Employees Association (ATMOEA), as it was known then, who refused to work on the buses were sacked. The ATMOEA opposed the one-man bus issue as a safety dispute, though the

impending loss of jobs was another obvious reason for their stand.

Woods, with a young family, struggled to make ends meet and, at age 81 when interviewed in 2011, clearly recalled the Workers' Club being highly sympathetic to the cause and on each Saturday of the strike provided food parcels and sufficient meat to see Woods and his family through the week.

While the dispute takes in much broader issues than normally found in the confines of a licensed club, it brings to account some of the strengths in the beginning of the Workers' Club and, as tenuous as the link may first appear, it helps us to understand just a little more the resolve among the all-male club pioneers, the seven directors, management and fringe supporters, to ensure women had equal rights when such entitlements were rarely contemplated, let alone invoked. Some major clubs today still discourage attempts by women to seek election to their boards.

Secretary of the strike committee was Jack Barlow, a tram and bus driver and a stridently militant member of the Communist Party who was sacked at the strike's conclusion. Barlow is introduced here because, through his and the Communist Party's open support for the equality of women in the workforce, there is a thread that helps to provide a glimpse of the reasoning behind Revesby Workers' Club's similar attitudes.

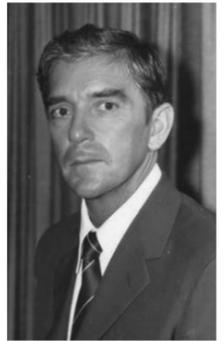
A number of Communist Party members were drinking confrères with Dickens and Donovan, and the like, at the Pacific Hotel at the time Jack Dickens and his team were gathering support to form the club and there appears to be a shared belief in equality for women which became part of the club's manifesto. Also, perhaps connected, perhaps not, but equal opportunity for women was also a policy of John Curtin's Labor government. Not surprising that Curtin formed a close relationship with Barlow and, in fact, attended Barlow's wedding.

The club proudly carried such ideals through its 50-year history, electing Norma Smith to the

Board in 1982 and, significantly, appointing her president on 3 February 1995, the first woman president of a major licensed club in Australia. This was at a time when many other avenues of society opposed the inclusion of women in their organisations. To understand how intrinsically rooted the opposition toward women was even in 1980, those deeply respected cultural bastions of Australian society, surf lifesaving clubs resisted the introduction of women as full active members to their very fingernails. A number of the clubs had to be dragged kicking and screaming to the anti-discrimination table – and only after the introduction of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* and its amended version in 1981. Today, the entry of women to surf lifesaving clubs is recognised as having saved a number of these clubs from extinction. The Workers' Club was clearly ahead of the pack, forging a path for women in their domain when others would have none of it.

There is some small irony in Revesby Workers' foundation membership in that it was dominated by males – only 14 women formed part of a list of 240 members presented to the licensing court. A number of women believed they had been denied membership because of their gender. However, it was well known within the board of management that to grow the membership, the numbers being restricted by the prevailing liquor laws and dependant on the size of the club, it was more favourable to promote male memberships first and women and other family members at a later date.

The membership complaints were not the single domain of women. Joe Woods, a local resident not without influence, also complained of having to wait six months before his membership was accepted in 1966, despite his close relationship with de Saily. Apart from being a member of the Communist Party, Woods joined the Australian Labor Party (Padstow branch) in 1952 and went on to become a senior vice-president at a time when Joe Kelly, later to become the state member for East Hills, was the junior vice-president. Kelly provides another link in this unfolding story.



Bill Scott.



Golfers' Corner in the last throes of the old club in 1973. Pat Crowley, front left, and George Johnstone, front right, with beers in their hands.

OPPOSITE TOP: The Hugh Snr and Neville Lawson Cup, a memorial golf trophy played for annually. Here, Blacktown Workers' accept the trophy as the winners in 1972.

OPPOSITE BELOW: Club members and management celebrate at the club's tenth annual ball with club president Jim Donovan.

Appointed the club's first patron on Monday, 21 December 1970, he was heavily supported during state elections in February 1971 through the Workers' Club journal and won re-election for the sixth term. He had been a stalwart to the club, helping and advising them through many disputes and contentious matters.

Jack and Bill join the Board

In March 1971, Bill Scott and Jack Pitty were elected to the Board, ushered on with some urgency, according to Donovan, after Ted Smith and Ken Books resigned for what Donovan obscurely called "personal reasons". Donovan called it a crisis and explained that it was in the best interests of the club if the "intending" resignations could be effected "immediately" since the Board was about to meet with the Rural Bank over their loan

requirements to build the new club. It was necessary, it was claimed, that in meeting with bank representatives it would be advantageous to "have the same body of men with whom all lending authorities would be dealing", and, in this case, would include the two newly elected directors.

There was more to Smith's and Books's departures than Donovan and the Board wished to make public – as much because of the very reason they were meeting the Rural Bank with their full complement of Board members, but also because it might have reflected badly on the club. They wanted no hint of a scandal to jeopardise their loan application chances. This was their largest loan to date and vital to the club's immediate future. The resignations followed a brief discussion outside the

club one Thursday evening after Smith was seen carrying a bag. When asked what was inside the bag, Smith, heavily involved in the fishing club, merely answered: "Sinkers." He later added that money in the bag had been in his locker and he was merely taking it to the Labor Party as part of election funds. Two club directors took it in turns to collect poker machine takings each night and place them in the club safe. Usually, they were the last to handle the money for that night.

Donovan and the Board gave both Smith and Books the option to resign and never come back to the club or the club would take it further. Both men wrote letters of resignation and the matter was taken no further.

The new directors, Scott and Pitty, were well known to club members. Scott had been a high-profile member since he applied for a

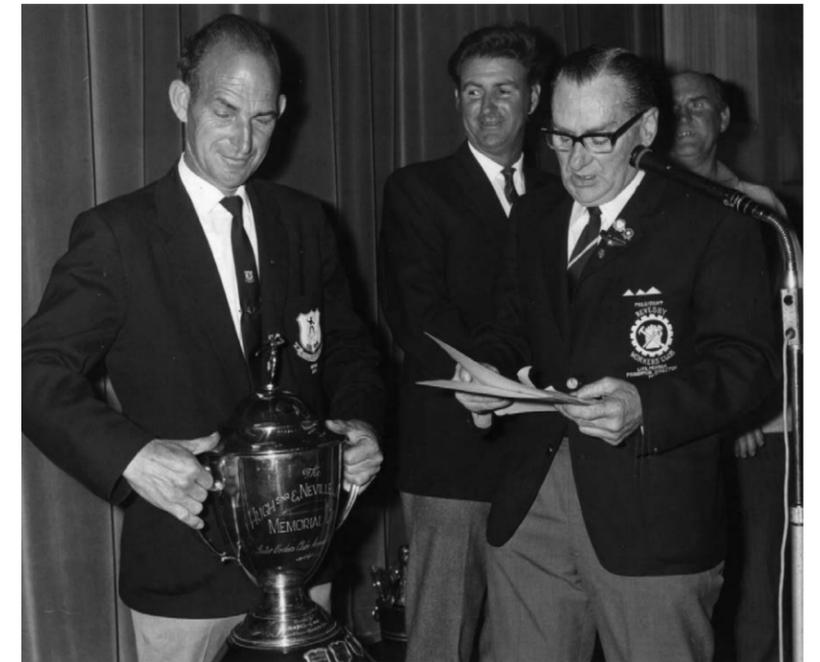
casual job as barman six weeks after the club opened. He was hired by the club as a compere, singer/musician and, at the time of his election to the Board, was the club's entertainment officer. Scott was also the liaison officer for the large fishing club.

Pitty left the car sales business to become head steward at Revesby. He was no longer on staff at the time of his election but had impressed the Board while he worked at the club and was popular with members.

It was also a special year for director Bill Hills, who was accorded life membership and later, in March, elected the new vice-president in a three-way vote with George Johnstone and Herb McDougall.

While the Bankstown City Council's tardiness in dealing with the Workers' Club continued, plans for the new car park in Brett Street were released on 16 May 1972 – the building of the car park overlapping the commencement of the construction of the new building on the Tarro Avenue land. Donovan cut short his Queensland holiday to sign the agreement with builders, Leighton Contractors Pty Limited, on 26 May. It was a red-letter day for the club which had shed itself – for the time being – of administrative encumbrances.

The club borrowed \$1.5 million from the Rural Bank, as well as from Mutual Acceptance Company Limited by second mortgage over the new club premises. Despite the continuing battle with the State government over increasing taxes, they were able to convince financiers of their ability to repay the debt. The club's net surplus for the year ended



30 June 1972 was \$163,273.90 and, though down by \$9000 the following year, was substantial enough to satisfy all financial demands. By the end of the 1973 financial year, the club had also raised \$207,810 in debentures, a remarkable response from members.

Industrial disputes disrupted club life on a number of fronts at this time. Several brewery strikes reduced the supply of bottled and bulk beer, thus affecting trading. The building program, too, was interrupted by building trade strikes plus disputes that affected petrol supply and electric power. A builder's labourers' strike and electricity supply rationing went as far as delaying the completion of the new club.

In this declining climate, before 1972 was over, Revesby Workers' Club would join with the Union of Registered Workers' Clubs (URWC) and sever ties with the Registered Clubs Association (RCA). The URWC were at loggerheads with the RCA over its non-conciliatory attitude toward the Liquor Trade Union. The rolling strikes hit the club industry where it hurt – at weekends when trading profits were at their highest. Donovan reported to club members that “we would be far better off by going it alone, even in spite of the old adage ‘in unity there is strength’, but it was our considered opinion that the broad spectrum of the RCA endeavouring to speak on behalf of the Clubs with so many varied interests has not proven the success that it was thought it might have been ... it was agreed that all member clubs of the union disaffiliate with the RCA”.

Donovan recognised that union problems were a fact of life and would challenge clubs from time to time, but recognised it was time to negotiate “in round-table conferences”, and did so with a current wages dispute with the Labour Council acting as mediator. The

Revesby Workers' Club was the first to accept the proposed wage increases, showing empathy for the club's staff, despite it costing the club an extra \$40,000 in wages. According to Donovan: “Our staff, in the main, with few exceptions, have served us well, and in our considered opinion the increases were justified.”

At the same time, the Board decided to divorce the role of secretary-manager, appointing Brien Higgs to the senior position of secretary and assistant secretary-manager Les Hopkins as manager. Higgs would remain the licensee. However the salaries would be the same. While Donovan noted that “both Brien and Les ... are working in complete harmony with the Board”, tensions had been growing between Higgs and Hopkins and between Donovan and Higgs that would eventually lead to Higgs walking away from his role at Revesby. For the time being he remained in charge of the executive management at the club.

If nothing else, fishing club members were happy with their lot, pleased that small boats had come into their own among the 80 members. The club had 10 small-boat owners among them, able to participate in outside excursions as well as estuaries – from trout fishing to hairtail fishing at Cowan. A small group even ventured as far north as Maroochydore in Queensland only to be caught in the tail of a cyclone and unable to fish – not even able to tell stories of the ones that got away! Sub-clubs were also growing. The ladies' indoor bowls club boasted over 80 members; a men's basketball club was formed in September 1971; and an underwater club was formed in May the same year.

More importantly for now, the club was about to enter an exciting new phase, a major step for a club that had been trading for just 11 years.

10

Entering the big league



1973-76

AS THE NATION PREPARED FOR THE LONG-AWAITED OPENING OF THE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE IN OCTOBER 1973, REVESBY WORKERS' CLUB, WITH A MEMBERSHIP VERGING ON 7000, BROUGHT TO BIRTH THEIR IMPRESSIVE NEW CLUB, OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED BY THEN-PRIME MINISTER GOUGH WHITLAM ON 18 AUGUST, LESS THAN 12 MONTHS AFTER WHITLAM HAD BECOME THE FIRST FEDERAL LABOR LEADER IN 23 YEARS. WHITLAM WAS NO STRANGER TO THE CLUB AND, IN FACT, WAS A STAUNCH SUPPORTER OF THE CLUB INDUSTRY, APPRECIATIVE OF THE ROLE CLUBS, PARTICULARLY THE WORKERS' CLUB, PLAYED IN THE COMMUNITY. THE CLUB HAD OPENED ITS DOORS TO MEMBERS ON 23 JULY AND WERE PREPARED TO WAIT FOR THE FIRST SATURDAY THEREAFTER THAT SUITED WHITLAM'S BUSY SCHEDULE.

The building covered 83,750 square feet of floor space, almost five times the size of the previous club. The final cost of land, building, car park, furnishings and fitting, was almost \$3 million.

Club member Heather Kennedy, in a *Woman's Day* article in 1974 extolling the virtues of Revesby and equality of the sexes in its membership, provides a clear account of how the new club looked when it opened. "Very plush, with thick carpets, discreet lighting and lots and lots of poker machines," she explained. "The circular entrance hall is lined with multi-coloured, silver glitter posters advertising coming attractions and planned club nights ... a billiard room with six tables, a big cheerful lounge with a strip for bowls, beautifully equipped gymnasiums for men and women



with all the machinery for a thorough workout, sauna rooms and a masseur called Bob Williams.

“There is a big dining room that takes 420 people and a snack bar where a couple of dollars buys a good lunch. There are two cocktail lounges – an intimate one and a bright one and a ladies’ poker machine room, a small room with thick carpeted walls and floors and two lines of poker machines.” The new auditorium was built to hold 1100 patrons where “big name international entertainers play Revesby Workers’ all the time”.

The club also remained faithful to their dedication to poet Henry Lawson, displaying illustrated verses of his poems – *Song of the Old Bullock Drover*, *The Wreck of the Derry Castle*, *The Glass on the Bar* and *The Good Samaritan* – above the reception desk, cloakrooms and kiosk. The huge circular foyer was dominated by imposing timber bas-relief of men working on various jobs, each of them sculpted by New Zealander Robert Hampton who worked with another celebrated New Zealand sculptor, William Trethewey.

A proud day in Revesby Workers’ Club history. ABOVE: Prime minister Gough Whitlam and his wife, Margaret, are treated like royalty as they make their way through the excited throng to participate in the opening of the new Revesby Workers’ Club.

RIGHT: Mr Whitlam unveils the plaque commemorating the official opening of the new club on Saturday 18 August 1973.



Donovan and his Board bathed in the warmth of their success – and rightly so, though Donovan was rarely short of showering lavish praise on his team, particularly when he was implicitly acknowledged in the compliment. In his best gushing style he told members that: “Such rigorous strides of progress have left most members spellbound. Who could have envisaged that in less than eleven years of operation as a licensed club we would now be domiciled in, and enjoying the amenities of a brand new \$2.5 million clubhouse so luxuriously and tastefully furnished with just about every conceivable amenity ... Is there any necessity for me to laud your Board for its wisdom, foresight and application to their job, devotion to duty and sacrifice to home life?”

Club News editor Merv MacFarlane sprinkled caution on the self-acclamations at the club’s first meeting in the new building – an extraordinary general meeting, which indicated a fair amount of dissension. According to MacFarlane, “The initial meeting ... saw a new intrusion into the conduct at the meeting, emotionalism and some bitterness. Perhaps the heat was engendered by the prior campaign of whispering and innuendoes. Whatever the reason, it must not become a feature of future meetings.” Donovan complained that “some people pulled every trick in the book to build up a degree of emotionalism” and was pleased to report that “in spite of gamesmanship and tactic the majority decision sides with the Board”.

Essential in the move was the need to increase the membership numbers substantially. The club was warned that to open the doors of the new club with less than 6000 members would have been an economic catastrophe. Donovan took it to heart, even admitting he had to enlist the aid of his wife “as a further unpaid member of staff” to help check and crosscheck the huge numbers of new members about to be elected to the club. “Interviewing alone was something of a full-time job,” Donovan admitted. It was only after prolonged court hearings that the club



was granted permission to lift the membership limit from 6250 to 15,000. The move to a larger club also necessitated an upgrade in executive staff, among them assistant managers Bob Boddan and Eric Callinan and sub-assistant managers Jim Sanders, Brian Kearney and Arthur Rogers.

Onstage performers in the early months after the new club opened included Jimmie Rogers, Normie Rowe, Lorrae Desmond, Tony Martin, the great English comic Norman Wisdom, Winifred Atwell, Judy Stone, Rim D Paul and Gordon Boyd. Eartha Kitt and Warren Mitchell were world-renowned stars who stepped onto the Workers’ Club stage in early 1974. The club also maintained its loyalty to the Australian entertainment scene, introducing a popular “The Happy Days of Rock’n’Roll” show, which included Ward “Pally” Austin (Australia’s best-known and most colourful disc jockey at the time), Jade Hurley, Johnny Devlin, The Devils, Carolyn Young, Barry Stanton, Tony Worsley, Lynne Fletcher, Tony Brady and Lonnie Lee. Ticket price was \$2.50. At the same time, you could see a Don Lane Show for \$2.



Gough Whitlam signing autographs at the club opening and the souvenir program of the day’s proceedings.

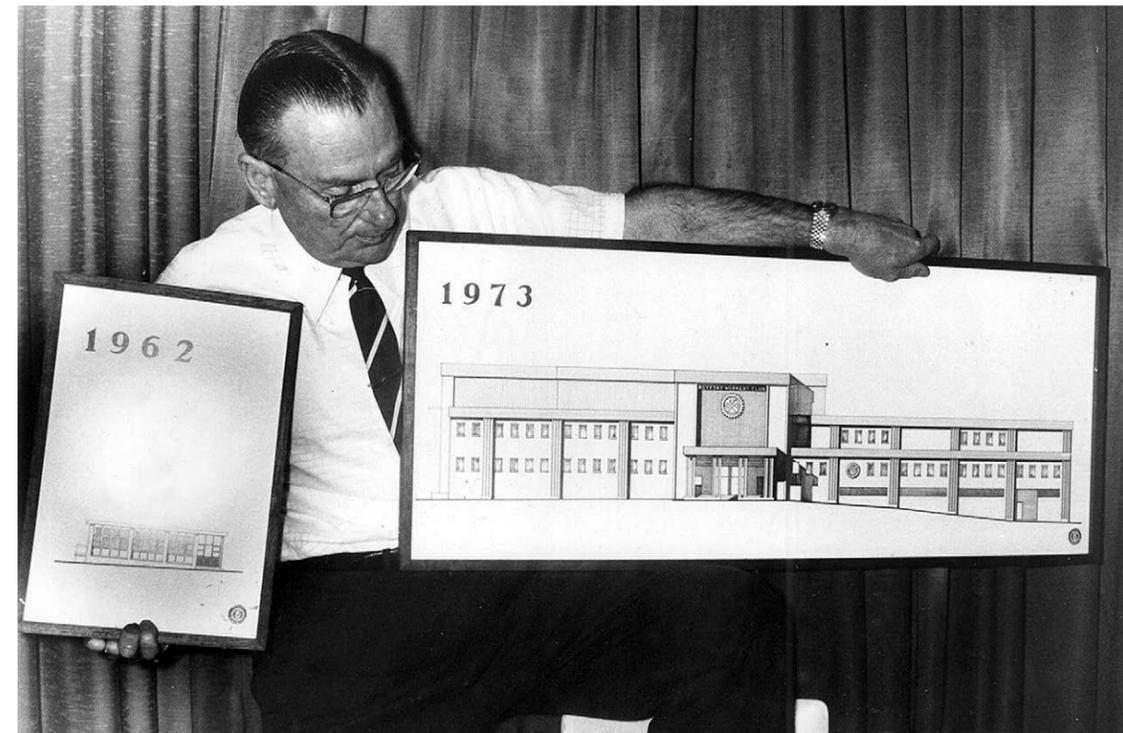
With the use of a bigger showroom, the Board indicated they preferred quality rather than quantity – and new entertainment manager Henry Hess obliged, bringing such shows as “Paris by Night” and “South Seas Night” which he advised had lifted Revesby to number four in club entertainment.

If Donovan and his Board felt comfortable in their new palace, they were about to experience the downside of club management. Wide cracks began to open the sins within – in management relationships and on the balance sheet. As the deterioration in morale escalated, manager Les Hopkins was the first to tender his resignation, in April 1974, “on the grounds of health and domestic circumstances”. However, when the club called for applicants to his position, Hopkins sought reinstatement, refuting his original reasons for resigning and showering, as Higgs called it, a “controversial and personal attack” on him. However, Hopkins was shown the door and in the confusion, at one point, Eric Callinan

was appointed the new manager, until Charlie Taylor, from the Canberra Workers’ Club, interviewed last because severe thunderstorms prevented his plane taking off from Canberra airport on the day of interviews, outflanked all applicants, commencing duties from 3 June 1974.

Higgs’s relationship with Donovan had been on the slide, too. He was never happy that his dual role of secretary-manager had been taken from him and he baulked at Donovan’s heavy-handedness. Control was very much about Donovan’s style and while he was seen as a stickler for members’ and staff rights, he strode the club carpets in the style of a man on too big a mission. In the case of Donovan versus Higgs, he had his Board to back him.

The Board called for Higgs’s resignation “owing to his inability to carry out his duties to the satisfaction of the Board of Directors”. The club had run into financial problems and after being informed of the loss by the auditors, Higgs was asked to leave the boardroom and



LEFT: Jim Donovan showing a then and now comparison of the two clubs, the 1962 original version on the left and the much larger new club across the road on the right in 1973.

BELOW: The 1973 Board. From left: Ken Prentice, Bill Scott, Jack Pitty, Herb McDougall, Jim Donovan (president), Brien Higgs (secretary), George Johnstone, Bill Hills, Les Hopkins (manager).

ONE FROZEN MOMENT

Political royalty was on its way to Revesby to help the Workers’ Club celebrate the official opening of the new club premises. It was a cool, windy Saturday in August, typical of winter, and Jim Donovan, watching on, set a scene worth capturing.

“... Womenfolk stood quietly with overcoats buttoned up,” he wrote, “menfolk gathered in small groups, probably airing their views on football or politics ... warmed only by the glow of anticipation as they stood on the footpath.”

The excitement and anticipation was palpable. In a Labor stronghold, the prime minister of Australia, Gough Whitlam, with

his wife, Margaret, was arriving to open the new club.

Donovan’s prose does justice to the expectation: “As the time of his expected arrival drew near, more citizens joined the throng, and a certain hush was evident in the air as watchful eyes carefully scanned every car which turned the corner ...

“The waiting group of spectators was certainly typical of one’s impressions of everyday Australians, but to me one really unusual, yet so much part of the true picture of an Aussie gathering, was a lad and his horse in their midst. The horse, tethered to a telegraph pole, stood patiently throughout proceedings.

“ ... ‘He’s here!’ went up the cry as two gleaming black limousines turned the corner.

“The prime minister, Mr E G Whitlam and Mrs Margaret Whitlam alighted from their vehicles ... and for a fleeting moment every eye was cast in their direction.”

After finishing official duties to a packed auditorium, Whitlam rushed away to other pressing engagements, but the gathered throng had been sated.

Donovan concluded: “Just the mere glimpse of their national figurehead gives fresh heart to many ...”.

when invited back into the room was sacked. The Board immediately abolished the split secretary and manager roles and united them as Higgs had wanted, but too late to enjoy. Higgs was highly regarded everywhere except in the boardroom and, with support from the Club Managers’ Association (CMA), challenged the legal ramifications of his termination. While the club stubbornly refused to attend the Conciliation Commission, Donovan reluctantly made it on the fourth request after being summoned by the commissioner.

Commissioner P J Johnson ruled that Higgs’s dismissal had been unfair and unjust and that the Board denied him natural justice. Higgs was reinstated “without loss of pay, rights or conditions” on 24 July. In a procedural requirement that bordered on farce and certainly a denial of the spirit of the



Conciliation Commission order, Higgs was given the appropriate keys to his office and asked to be seated at his former desk whereby Donovan then stated that “it is the Board’s instruction that I now ask you for the keys back and suspend you from your position of secretary of the club pending an appeal by our legal advisors to the court”.

THE GRAND DUKE FINDS A HOME

Pride of place in the sports bar at Revesby Workers' Club is the billiards table that once belonged to Walter Lindrum, suitably inscribed after a long history. While many of the famous Grand Duke models had been built in England from 1860, Lindrum's table was built in Melbourne by Alcock & Company in 1912 and purchased by the Lindrum family in the 1930s.

Following World War II, the table was bought by Tooheys Limited, and installed in Gordon House, part of the Tooheys complex in Elizabeth Street, Sydney. The first floor of the complex was converted into a first-class billiards room, with tiered seating for 200 people. It was here and on the table that the 1961 and 1969 Australian Open Billiards Championships were held.

After Gordon House was demolished, the table was moved and all and sundry

were allowed to play on it. The table fell into disrepair. However, Revesby Workers' member Bill Maher (badge number 480) and an employee of Tooheys from 1954 to 1985, took a keen interest in "the Duke" and, when the Tooheys head office was to be demolished, he approached Tooheys general manager, Lloyd Hartigan, suggesting he could find a suitable home where the table would be fully restored and cared for by professional people.

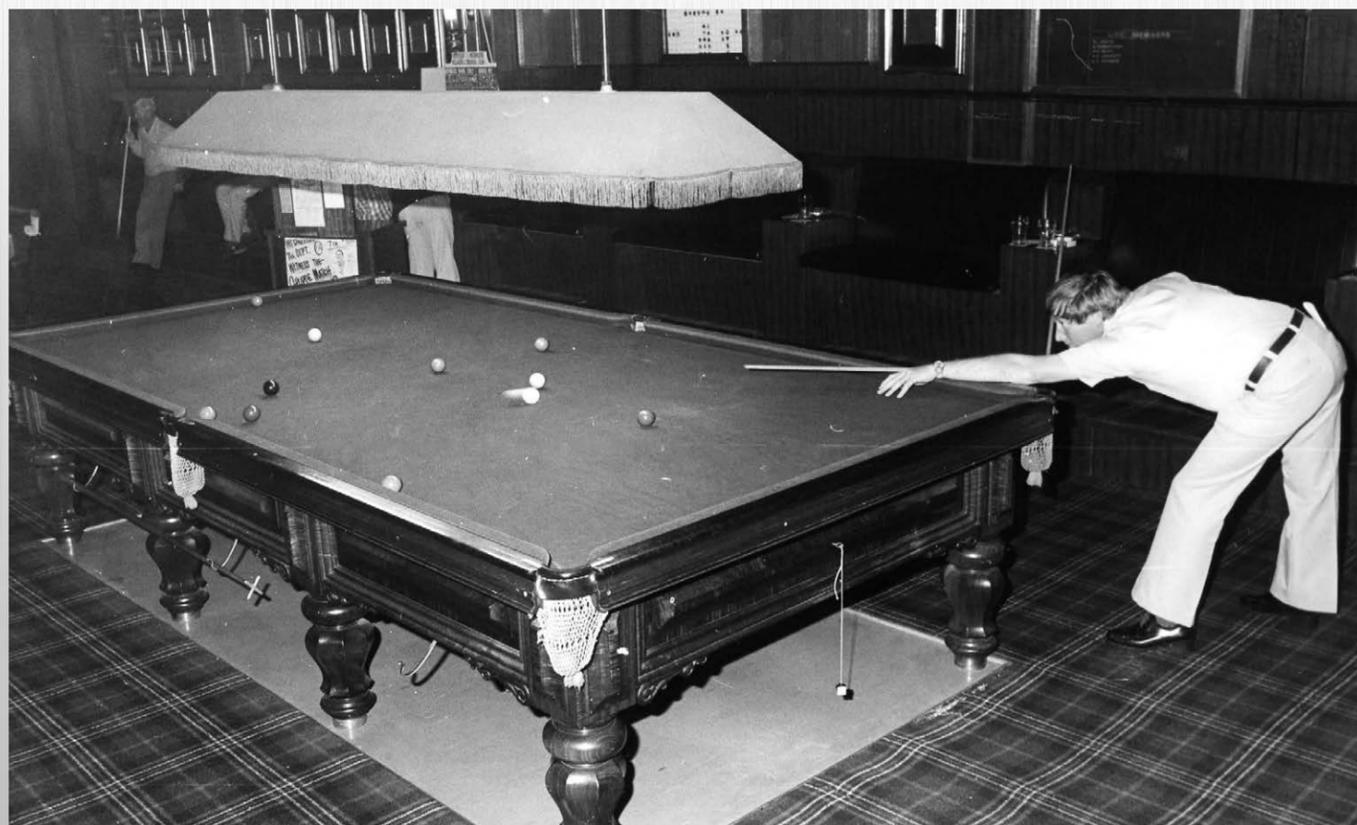
Maher approached club directors Ken Prentice and Jack Pitty the same day and, after brief negotiations handled principally by Prentice, Revesby Workers' bought the table for \$750.

It is believed that only 17 Grand Dukes were imported to Australia. The woodwork is cedar, with veneers of Tasmanian blackwood.

When professional billiards player Phil Tarrant arrived at Revesby to play in the 1976 Australian Professional Snooker Championships, he described the renovated table as the most magnificent he had seen. When Eric Callaway, who bought the table when president of Tooheys and, as a past president of the Australian Amateur Billiards Council, attended the ceremony officially dedicating the table, he also presented the club with Walter Lindrum's cue and rest, as well as scorecards and other relevant items.

The worn and faded inscription at the head of the table which is still used by club members in the ample sports bar reads:

This table was used by Walter Lindrum for the Tooheys tournaments. It was built by Alcock & Company Melbourne, 1912.



In the meantime, Higgs had accepted a role of secretary-manager at the Panania East Hills RSL Club. The saga didn't end there, however. The Board was of the view that Higgs and the CMA were simply after a cash settlement. Donovan recommended that Higgs be suspended and appear before the annual general meeting to show cause why his name should not be removed, this time from the register of members.

Escorted off the club premises with his wife, Joan, after meeting with the Board, he demanded to be told under what section of the Liquor Act he was charged, and that it be put in writing. The result was the lifting of his suspension – for legal reasons. Higgs finally ended the drawn-out affair by submitting a letter that amounted to a resignation, though he remained a member of the club.

Higgs had been unhappy with the direction in which the club was heading. The club's first and only secretary, he was appreciated, even by those impudent blue-collar workers who nicknamed him "cowboy" for what they perceived were his slow-moving ways. Significantly, yet not surprisingly, his departure received no mention in Donovan's president's report to members in the annual report – except for less-than-subtle references such as "it should not be regarded as a disgrace for employees to find themselves out of their depth in circumstances such as these", and that in such circumstances "you have a high percentage of turnover in staff and, in fact, failures".

Tangling with Jim a way of club life

Fine-tuning the way the club was run was also a necessity as Bill Scott saw it. Scott felt there was too much interference from the Board in management's running of the club. His view was that the Board should only establish policy and management should be allowed to get on with administering the club.

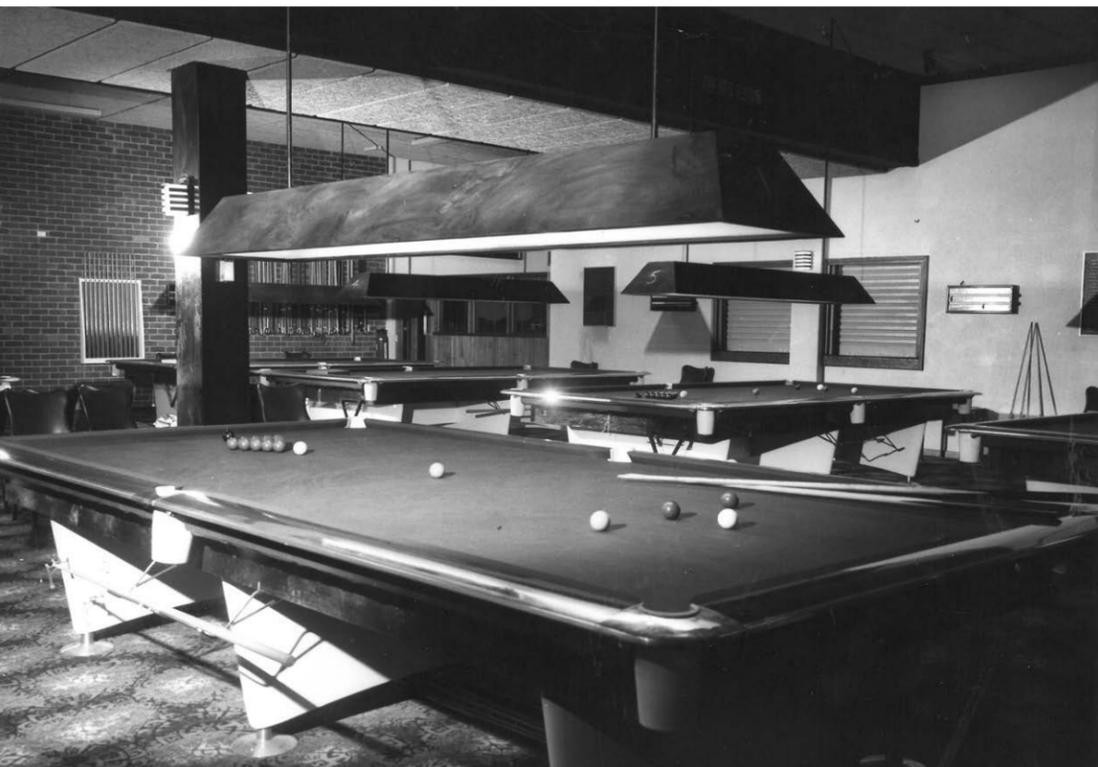
He tangled with Donovan on a number of occasions, often calling into his home on the way to work. "I would pass his home of a morning ... I had to vent my feelings with him

on a number of occasions," Scott recalled. "I fell into the trap a few times ... of deciding on policy and then trying to implement it – whether we were right or wrong. I didn't agree with that."

One of the problems broached by Scott was the fact six members of the seven-man Board were all working while Donovan, who was receiving a TPI disability pension, would spend virtually the entire day at the club. Donovan had set up an office for himself in the club and was on-call far too much for the liking of members and staff. "If Brien [Higgs] had to go away for a few hours, Jimmy was always there," Scott said. "The staff didn't dare make a move until they spoke to Donovan. Mind you, he made some very good decisions."

Through the protracted Higgs saga, the Board had to deal with staff discontent and concerns over staff discipline. The new assistant manager Bob Boddan had been assaulted in the club and another staff member pushed down stairs. An air of unease and discontent pervaded the club, Donovan lamenting that he had to spend as much as seven days a week – 50 hours, in his estimation – on the club premises. Worse still, he had to announce a steep drop in surplus in the 1973–74 financial year, from \$154,502.99 to a worrying \$62,272.78. He urged members to note the exorbitant overheads for the first twelve months of the new club and to appreciate the many contingencies the Board and management had to face. Donovan also, not without justification, complained of state and federal taxes which cost the club \$1.5 million. The amount spent on entertainment and artists jumped from \$45,035.48 to \$155,520.55 – an extraordinary leap, and a forerunner to the emphasis on hiring world-renowned – and the best Australian – performers who would stand Revesby Workers' out from most other clubs in the industry.

Concerned at the debt levels, the Rural Bank manager called in Donovan, Taylor and the club's accountant Peter Stapleton and was assured by Stapleton that the club could trade its way out of trouble.



How the new club looked in 1973. Clockwise, from top left: The all-important snooker room; the international-standard auditorium; the gaming lounge with its impressive corridor of poker machines; and the bistro dining area.

Back in the boardroom, if Donovan thought he had rid himself of Higgs, he was grossly mistaken. After a brief stint at Panania East Hills RSL and at Salisbury Golf Club (later named Kareela Golf Club), Higgs, who remained a club member, was ready for more sparring with the club president. Higgs's heart was at Revesby and when foundation director George Johnstone decided not to seek re-election, Higgs, Joe Kelly and Jim Healy, a qualified accountant with the Crown Street Hospital, formed a three-man ticket to infiltrate the Board. In a telling show of his popularity, Higgs was elected, with 1252 votes, while Kelly (886 votes) and Healy (739), despite their profiles, missed out. Noteworthy, too, that future director Jack Dennehy received 458 votes. Perhaps more significant was that Donovan polled the worst of the elected directors with 1157 votes, though clearly ahead of Kelly, the next best.

Kelly not only retained his role as patron but was joined by Vince Martin and Pat Rogan as co-patrons. Martin was the sitting member for the federal seat of Banks, which he held until 1980. Like Rogan, who had replaced Kelly as the state member for East Hills, Martin was a strong supporter of Revesby.

It took Donovan and Higgs just one month before they were feuding again. Donovan asked Higgs to leave a Board meeting in December 1974 because of a charge that was to be heard against him. It appears all Higgs was guilty of was not maintaining a dinner booking time; he had been called to the foyer because his mother had taken ill and he had to put her in a car to have her taken home. Three times Higgs was asked to leave the boardroom, but he stayed put, stating that he had no intention of leaving at all since he was a member of the Board and he felt it his duty to remain. Donovan adjourned the meeting and when it was reconvened 20 minutes later, he had invited two local police constables from the Revesby Police Station to be present. Donovan again asked Higgs to leave. Again, Higgs would not comply. Donovan was stymied and though he had the

From the outside, the Revesby Workers' Club oozed stability and energy. And while the facade varnished over the cracks within, the day-to-day grind needed attention along with other issues – some major, some minor – and among them:

- Auditorium patrons who refused to stand during the playing of *Advance Australia Fair*

- Brewery strikes risking beer shortages were common, firstly at Resch's Brewery, later at Tooheys where an overtime ban cut production by 40 per cent and which forced the club to import Courage beer, a less palatable taste to most beer-drinkers, but a thirst-quencher nevertheless;

- The Rural Bank, in association with eight other Australian banks, introduced the charge card scheme, Bankcard, which was to change the way Australians shopped and handled cash;
 - The question of Ray McCormack's reinstatement as a member was raised again, the Board agreeing that all council aldermen should be granted honorary membership. McCormack qualified under those conditions; and
 - At year's end, the club held a benefit night for the victims of Cyclone Tracy that devastated Darwin, as well as seeking donations from club members and staff – \$8500 was also given to the cause, through the Channel Nine appeal.
- A nice touch was the invitation by the club to Henry Lawson's daughter, Mrs Bertha Jago, to autograph books relative to her father's works on Saturday, 2 March 1974. She worked diligently to preserve her father's memory and was a writer and co-author of a book on Lawson.



Five performances in December, at a cost of \$1500 and a recommendation of \$2 a ticket. Thirteen years after his first public appearance and with the number-one hit *The Elephant Song* on the Dutch Top 40, Kamahl was widely accepted internationally and throughout Australia as a national singing treasure, and highly popular at Revesby Workers'.

Workers' maintained a strong connection to the Seaman's Union, understandable since many of its earliest members were wharfies. In July 1974, three members of a Soviet cargo ship *Polchek* visited the Workers' Club, entertained, principally, by Joan MacFarlane, wife of Merv, and their daughters, Robyn and Vicki, and son-in-law, Peter. It would appear the Russian members were accompanied by John Benson, secretary of the Seaman's Union. While at the club they were given a "grand tour" by director Jack Pitty before enjoying a club smorgasbord and Sunday concert. They were planning to attend a peace conference which was being held in Sydney around this time.

Deepening cracks – the club's first deficit

While the following year's balance sheet (30 June 1975) showed a 50 per cent improvement on the bottom line, it was the year after that helped to widen the deepening cracks – the club's first deficit, \$51,951.42 in the red. Donovan blamed the government and government instrumentalities alone for the deficiency. He continued to put out "bushfires" within his Board and management, firstly apologising in his 1975 report to members that the "main body of the Board rose to the occasion and were big enough to cast aside petty personality clashes". He also noted that, "the majority of your Board have served you well". Clearly, another reference to Higgs.

Donovan kept it up the following year when Higgs was re-elected for his second term, calling on more members to vote at annual elections to "get a more representative expression of opinion ... rather than have a comparative handful of members exert



force of the law beside him, as well as the power to ask Higgs to leave, he left the matter "for the sake of harmony" to be raised at a later date. Higgs had outstayed him.

Such tensions and Board disquiet were unhealthy distractions – too much energy was being spent on boardroom conflicts and personal vendettas. Besides ... Kamahl was coming!

ABOVE: A Soviet Trade Union delegation attending a peace conference in Sydney enjoys Revesby Workers' Club hospitality in early 1974. Back row, far left, John Benson (secretary of the Seamen's Union), Soviet delegate, Jim Donovan (Revesby president), Soviet delegate, Jack Pitty (Revesby director). Front: Ken Prentice (Revesby director and ex-wharfie), Ted Roach (Workers' Club union delegate), Merv MacFarlane (editor Workers' Club journal and ex-wharfie), Soviet delegate.

RIGHT: Merv MacFarlane and wife, Joan. MacFarlane was the inaugural editor of the monthly *Club News*.

SLUGGA AND A BIT OF BALLET CULTURE

Revesby Workers' patrons got a change of pace in their auditorium in mid-1975 when Sydney's new light opera company, the Touring Theatre Company, came to Revesby.

The improvement and upgrading of auditoriums in some of the bigger clubs such as Revesby Workers' gave production

companies the chance to perform in licensed clubs. Revesby's showroom was considered among the best in Sydney by the opera companies.

And members got among the action. In an earlier *Sydney Morning Herald* article that would do no harm to Revesby's reputation, club member and former boxer

Lou "Slugga" Smith (by name, hardly an opera type) was photographed attempting ballet poses with the Helen de Paul school.

"A bit of culture," added Slugga. Smith and a few of his mates – and wives – had already booked tables for three nights of ballet, light opera and Russian Cossack dancing. So what next!

a sentimental view which has not always been in the best interests of the club". This time Higgs formed a ticket with Dennehy and long-standing member Laurie Marks. Again, Higgs was the only one of the three to be elected.

The secretary-manager's job had become a "revolving door". Charlie Taylor lasted just two years, his place taken by assistant manager Bob Boddan in May 1976. Higgs, too, had had enough and resigned from the Board after two

terms as a director. With the aid of hindsight, there might have been a method in his decision. It was far from the end of his tenure as a significant presence in the development and management of the Workers' Club. The Board supported Graham Campbell who took the seventh director's spot narrowly – 763 votes to Warren Berry's 739. In a close election, D Clarke finished last of the nine candidates but still polled 619 votes.

The Revesby Workers' Ladies' Golf Club preparing to fly (by Trans Australia Airlines) to Coolangatta for their "Fly Away" trip in 1975 at Surfers Paradise.



While yet again Donovan refused to acknowledge Higgs in his report to members, the newly elected Neville Wran-led state Labor Party earned high praise for what Donovan termed helping the club get back to a profit. Labor and prominent ministers (Wran again) were accorded due praise the following year, and not without good reason. Wran for maintaining an election pledge to provide some relief with supplementary poker machine tax, and Ron Mulock, the Minister for Justice, for steering through the House an amendment to the Liquor Act, permitting clubs such as the Workers' Club (under certain circumstances) to lift their membership ceiling. On that score,

the Licensing Reduction Board agreed to lift the club's membership ceiling to 22,500. On 30 June 1977, the club boasted 18,176 members with 493 on the waiting list.

In view of the growing membership – and its benefit to the balance sheet – as well as the relief on the bottom line as Donovan pointed out in his report, the \$89,091.63 surplus did not overly excite those watching closely the fiscal handling of the club. They saw too many apologies each year for less-than-expected profits. Despite the need to present impressive balance sheets, the Revesby club Board was still able to donate generously – \$8300 to the victims of the devastating Granville train

disaster in January 1977. The compassionate, community spirit of Donovan and his team remained paramount.

A sense of foreboding and unease continued to cast shadows over the direction of the club. Exacerbated by an unstable and constantly changing executive staff and ill will in the boardroom, the warm, friendly community atmosphere had dissipated.

Rogan, the sitting state Labor representative for East Hills, and later to become Revesby club president and chairman of ClubsNSW, the peak body, recognised an anxiety and a change in mood within the club in this period. As he explained:

“Towards the end, there was an element of fear. It's hard to explain. You come into a club, you can feel it. I felt it when I had gone into prisons when I did inspections. Some prisons were relaxed ... open. You can't have an instrument to measure it but somehow when you walk in, there was fear.

NO SMILES FOR THIS REQUEST

Prudence and morality were acceptable bedfellows at a Board meeting in November 1976 when the secretary-manager, Bob Boddan, sought the Board's approval to screen the film *The Case of the Smiling Stiffs*.

The film, first released in 1973, is set in the city of Miami, plagued by a mysterious string of murders which occur after each full moon. Each corpse is male and the victim of a (beautiful) female vampire who, instead of draining her victims from the neck as Dracula did, chose to drain her victims from a more discreet part of the male anatomy. The victims are found in bed with huge grins on their faces.

The movie was never a classic and considered tame by today's standards. However, the Board, as moved by Jack Pitty and seconded by Ken Prentice, ruled the film was inappropriate for the taste of its members.



BELOW: A scene without the hustle and bustle of the evening patrons. This photo was taken not long after the new club opened in 1973.

OPPOSITE BELOW: The butcher and the butchered! A remarkable photo of the club's butcher shop in the mid-1970s.



At one stage you'd come into this club and you'd feel it. People didn't want to be seen talking to someone who was offside with the Board for fear they would be targeted. It got to that stage and that's why when the big purge came, it was a complete clean-out and even good directors like Kenny Prentice were swept out."

This was a much bigger club now and had grown significantly through the early to mid-1970s. Many believed the club needed re-energising and a renewed vision to take it to the next level. Within its concerned membership was a gathering realisation that something had to break. Donovan's strength was in his blustery, domineering personality – he

dominated in the boardroom and he garnered sufficient members to maintain his place on the Board at election time.

Donovan, at 57, looked old beyond his years and presented, if only in Board photos, as a tired, ageing man. He had only recently survived a near-fatal heart attack and his daily routine at the club required an afternoon siesta in his office, hidden from staff and members, to help him stay on the premises well into the evening, remaining until eight and nine o'clock on some non-meeting nights.

Though his passion remained, as he and his Board headed for yet another election – in September 1977 – a new dawning was about to bring the largest upheaval in the club's history.



ABOVE and OPPOSITE PAGE TOP, LEFT AND RIGHT: In 1976, dodgem cars and tag-wrestle were staple fare at the popular club picnics. Nor were they lacking in humour. A sign posted on the lost children's tent simply said: Lost Adults.

RIGHT: The annual president's XI versus the Workers' cricket club match was a much anticipated event. This photo in the mid-1970s shows Jim Donovan accepting the trophy from Bill Hills on behalf of the president's team.

FOLLOWING PAGES: The Big Club not long after it opened in 1973.





REVESBY WORKERS CLUB LTD.



NOTICE
DRINKS ARE NOT ALLOWED
ON THESE PREMISES
UNLESS BY THE AUTHORITY OF A
RESPONSIBLE DRINK MASTER

There's gonna be a revolution



1977-79

REVESBY WORKERS' CLUB REMAINED IN CRISIS. IT HAD BEEN A FAMILIAR PATTERN FOR A FEW YEARS – A CLUB WRESTLING WITH BOARDROOM QUARRELS, WEAKENING STAFF MORALE AND STRUGGLING ON THE BALANCE SHEET.

In the bowels of its membership, concerned parties were in private conference, planning a coup to dump the Board. The success of the mission was so complete and incisive that it would become known, appropriately, as “The Revolution”.

The stratagem would carry the trademark of a young student lawyer, Daryl Melham, who, while endeavouring to stay in the back room, was nonetheless recognised as a prominent figure in the new Board's stunning victory. Melham would step out of the shadows by the end of the decade and prepare himself for a life as a bulwark for Revesby prominence. He became the club president in 2010.

Melham was Panania-raised, first generation Australian-Lebanese. His grandfather and father migrated from Lebanon to Australia in the mid-1920s. They initially went to Crookwell and then to Queanbeyan, taking out citizenship in February 1931 before moving to Panania during the 1930s. Melham's father was variously a market gardener, hawker and bootmaker. Market gardening was a suitable occupation for anyone moving to the area and he asked for people to be on the lookout for land for him and his family. He bought land in Victor Avenue, Panania and then later in Dickenson Street.

Once settled, Melham's father went back to Lebanon in 1946 to marry and brought his wife out to Australia to settle in 1948. They had ten children – eight boys and two girls. All were raised in the area along with cousins.

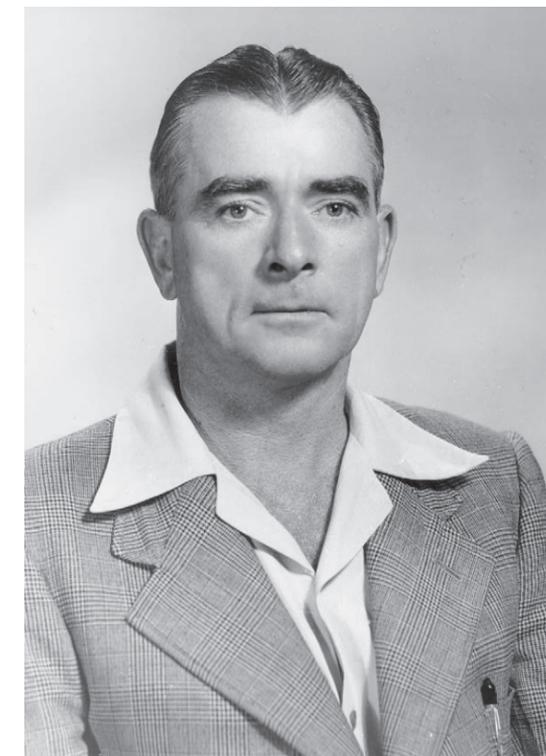
While the family was imbedded in the local community, it was not a political family. Melham only became political when he went to university to study economics in 1974, and subsequently a law degree. He joined the Labor Party at the time of the 1974 elections. It was good timing for a young, ambitious and motivated university graduate with political ambitions to the Left. Whitlam was prime minister; Neville Wran was the leader of the state opposition and on his way to governing New South Wales. Whitlam, according to Melham, had “opened up” universities and Melham took the view that he wanted to put something back into the party that allowed him to go to university.

Melham learned to pull beers at the Millers Domino Hotel at Riverwood and worked as a casual barman and tray steward at Revesby from November 1974 to June 1978; he became a member of Revesby on 30 June 1976. He studied economics from 1974 to 1976 and law in 1977 and 1978. It was the start of his politicisation, most evident in 1977 when the club attempted to replace cleaning staff with contract cleaners. During a stop-work meeting on 22 June over the issue, Melham spoke out strongly in support of the staff cleaners.

Board members were handed a full account of the meeting the next day and took on board the disapproval of the three featured speakers, Ted Roach, Peter James, a union industrial officer, and Melham. The immediate effect was a reduction in Melham's shifts from three per week to one. Initially, Melham, with union support, chose to accept his reduced workload to test the club's claim that the reason for dropping most of his shifts was related to a reduction in shifts being available. However, it became obvious that more shifts were being offered – but not to Melham. In fact, Melham was taken off the roster and only restored after union intervention – still to just one shift a week.

The staff condemned what they regarded as “gross victimisation of Mr Melham for exercising his democratic rights” and

demanded his reinstatement as an employee. Melham's case precipitated a number of strikes through this period and it became just one of many issues brought before the Conciliation Commission. Stop-work meetings on Fridays, in particular, seriously affected the club's business. The longest strike – in July '77 – ran for four days. “My crime,” Melham recalled, “was standing up for the current employees



Ted Roach, Revesby Club member and militant trade unionist, who led the refusal by the south coast branch of the Waterside Workers' Union to load the ship *Dalfram* with pig-iron destined for Japan prior to World War II. Roach was also a key figure behind the coup to overthrow Jim Donovan and his Revesby Board in 1977. BELOW: The cargo ship *Dalfram*.



against bringing in contract cleaners. The staff supported me because I had a reputation for honesty. You had men and women going on strike when this was their only job – their only source of income – going on strike for a bloke who was a casual. And you have to understand, the union was wanting to use this club as an example as well. The Board wasn't liked and they were trying to break the will of both the Board and the management."

The Board disputed Melham's membership, not only a clear attempt to prevent him attending the annual general meeting but penance for his criticism of the club. Melham had joined the club in June 1976 and attempted to renew his membership when the Board stepped in. The dispute was, according to Melham, a private matter – not a union issue – and as was proved, it had no basis. As Melham contemplated legal action, the Board backed down, sending a terse letter to union delegate Ted Roach and James, which said in part: "The Board have lifted the suspension on Daryl Melham forthwith, and as to the payment of his 1977 to '78 subscription, the Board have agreed that he be permitted to pay the subscription (without going into the pro's and con's of his conduct prejudicial to the interests of the club in the short time he has been a member)." It was a Board in retreat.

At the same time, the Board also sought to get rid of Roach – and seven other senior members of staff – by introducing a compulsory retirement age. Roach was 65 and the Board saw an opportunity to force him out. However, the Liquor Trades Union took the matter to court where the judge ruled that a retiring age could not be introduced overnight without consultation.

Roach worked closely with Melham over his dismissal. He was a Revesby club member, club union delegate and ex-wharfie. But he was more than that – much more. Roach was known the length and breadth of Australia for the roles he played in major union-government conflicts – a hero to many but a militant and interfering communist to right-wing governments and conservatives. It was Roach who approached Melham and suggested they run a ticket against Donovan and his Board at the coming elections. Roach was no small-time fly-by-nighter. His notoriety stretched back to pre-World War II – to 1938 when Port Kembla wharfies, led by Roach, refused to load a ship called the *Dalfram* with a cargo of pig-iron destined for Japan, classed even then, some 12 months before war broke out, as an "aggressor nation".

This was no strike about wages or working conditions – this was political, and Roach, shortly to become the assistant general secretary of the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) and the then-secretary of the militant south coast branch of the WWF, rallied the wharfie workforce to strike in the face of a vigorous campaign by the attorney-general, and soon to be prime minister, Robert Menzies. The *Dalfram* dispute was regarded as one of the most significant disputes in Australian industrial history – and led Menzies to the nickname "Pig-Iron Bob", a sobriquet that was to haunt him for the rest of his political life.

Roach was jailed twice – the first in 1949 at the time of a miner's strike when he was found to be in contempt of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration when he withdrew union funds to help starving miners, their wives and children. He was sentenced,

along with Jim Healy, another staunch member of the Communist Party, to six weeks in Long Bay. Roach was jailed again in 1951 for contempt during a basic wage case, this time to nine months and 18 days in isolation in Long Bay.

Roach had been the returning officer for the Revesby Workers' Club during the 1970s and was close to a number of the directors. However, he, like many, had fallen out with Donovan, not the least reason that he had fought Donovan (and the Board) over their treatment of Melham.

The disputes took the club to the eve of the annual general elections. Members had had enough and were about to take their disenchantment out on the incumbent Board – and dump them.

There had been earlier challenges to the Board but they lacked organisation, and subsequently failed because they were fragmented. Brien Higgs, Joe Kelly and Jim Healy (no relation to the Healy who was jailed along with Roach) formed a ticket and challenged for places in the 1974 elections. Although all three were highly credentialed, only Higgs won election.

Initially, Melham wasn't comfortable with the idea of running a ticket to oust the Board, principally because he didn't want to become involved in club politics. But he had people who were interested – and there was his support for good Labor men! Neither Bill Bullard nor Howard Bush, two men on the ticket, wanted to be associated with Roach. Melham assured them Roach would be fine, telling them he was not there to betray the team. The inevitable falling out came when Roach tried to assert control over the group. Roach stood against the Board at the 1979 elections but managed only 465 votes (eighth), well behind the last-placed elected director, Jack Dennehy, who received 1612 votes.

There was a mood for change and the underlying unhappiness in 1977 with the incumbent Board bubbled to the surface as Melham and a group met on Saturday mornings at the Revesby Community Hall.

McCormack, who was an honorary member of Revesby at this stage, was a South Ward councillor, who was often in separate meetings at the same time but acted as an advisor. He was a mentor to Melham and highly respected by him.

Bring back Higgs

Higgs was the catalyst. The group saw him as the obvious leader of the push to oust Donovan and his Board. He received 64 per cent of the votes at the 1974 elections and 62 per cent in 1975. He did not contest the elections in 1976. According to Melham, "Brien Higgs was an astute political player and, in the end, he was elected twice to the Board and the reason he got out was that he was one out. We asked him to head the ticket – he didn't end up being one out. He took the seven [nominees] in and without him we might have won three or four [positions]. You've got to have a bit of credibility. Brien had a soul. He had a philosophy and he understood what the club was all about."

Bullard and Bush approached Higgs at his home on Sunday, 21 August 1977 and asked him to head the ticket. Higgs was apprehensive because he worried that he might be the only one to be elected. However, he agreed, explaining to *The Torch* editor Phil Engisch in an article on 7 September that "a new board attitude" was long overdue. Higgs gave the ticket credibility.

In newspaper notices, the Higgs team targeted nine undertakings in their message to members, specifically:

- To conduct the club in a businesslike manner.
- To provide member participation in forming club policy by a series of committees to cover all phases of club activity and thus involve broad sections of the members in policy making.
- To revert to quarterly report meetings.
- To provide all persons with the right of appeal against disciplinary action by management or Board.

Something of a last supper for Jim Donovan (right). This photo was taken not long before Donovan was voted out of office. Joe Kelly (far left), the state member for East Hills, and Ron Lockwood, the mayor of Bankstown, share the meal.





Brien Higgs.

- To permit all persons charged the privilege of calling witnesses.
- To review all suspensions from membership.
- To provide cheaper drinks and afternoon savouries in competition with other clubs to bring members back.
- To give more financial assistance to club sporting bodies.
- To allow membership to 18-year-olds.

These were well thought out conditions – basic, but at the very crux of membership concerns.

Melham's youthful political hand was behind much of the strategy. He was a 23-year-old law student working casually at the club as a barman, but seemingly already astute in the ways of the boardroom/political stoush. He was seen as young and aggressive; he admitted he made enemies. He was in some ways a conundrum to members: a backroom boy with ambitions to help the club prosper. He was not a "clubbie", but felt a need to put energy back into an institution that had already helped and supported him. What we were witnessing in the back rooms of Revesby Workers' Club was a cameo of his future in politics at the highest level.

Two nominees, Jim Healy and Pat Ring, the latter supported by the Higgs group, were eliminated before voting began. They each printed their names on the nomination form instead of signing them. Donovan ensured it meant automatic disqualification from the voting process. Ring's rejection left the Higgs group with six candidates, one less than the ideal maximum. Donovan also called in Jack Dennehy and told him his nomination was unacceptable because he had signed the nomination form as "Jack" when his real first name was "John". However, Dennehy had the final say: he was christened Jack from birth. Donovan backed off.

With the election looming, Donovan was about to play even dirtier pool. A week before voting, Donovan went after Higgs, threatening to "spread a story" that would damage

his reputation if he did not withdraw his nomination. Higgs refused to bow to the threat and returned fire with a letter from his lawyers, threatening defamation.

Donovan went ahead and attached a letter to the club noticeboard alleging Higgs's involvement in a suspected fraud over sale negotiations of the old club premises in Macarthur Avenue. Higgs refuted the allegations in a letter dated 5 September 1977 and circulated to all members (the **bold** emphases are Higgs's):

Attention: **Members Only** of Revesby Workers' Club

As you know, I am a candidate for directorship at the approaching elections.

I have conducted a **clean and open** campaign in the interests of the Club. My long association with the Club is well known.

Notwithstanding my good reputation, **and perhaps because of it**, and because they quite justifiably fear defeat, the members of the existing board have stooped to a **smear campaign** and I refer to the notice recently placed on the Notice Board of the Club.

I categorically deny and refute the allegations made against me.

I believe the allegations are fabricated and that they serve only to reflect dishonour on their author.

The fact is that I have not been interviewed by any person in any official capacity in relation to any proceedings relating to the Club whether of a criminal or civil action, nor am I aware of any such proceedings being afoot.

Most certainly, I have been charged with no offences.

I have taken legal advice in relation to what remedies I am to pursue against the existing directors and in due course I will pursue those remedies.

In the meantime, I am anxious that **you should know that I am quite clear of any of the false accusations and I again commend myself to directorship.**

Yours faithfully,
BRIEN J HIGGS

The desperate tactic only appeared to energise members. The move also divided the Board. Despite Pitty declaring that "the Board must stick together ... united as a team", three Board members, Herb McDougall, Ken Prentice and Graham Campbell, disassociated themselves from the accusations and placed their own handwritten note on the noticeboard explaining that Donovan's letter was placed on the board "without our prior knowledge". The disclaimer was placed on the noticeboard on 6 September – and removed two days later on 8 September!

Donovan's attempt to discredit Higgs and have him wiped from the election process failed miserably. Higgs's popularity within the club was well documented in the voting results at previous elections and he was seen as being as honest as the day is long and highly respected. As the subsequent election result disclosed, members were galvanised by the treatment and voted accordingly.

Another respected member of the Board was Bill Scott. Although he was aware his directorship was on the line, he rejected an offer to join the new team. "Like every other group, we might have got tired," Scott admitted. "I say that with reservations. I could not live with the thought of sitting with these blokes for a number of years and telling them my intentions [to vote against them]. I think we were a better group than that. So we went down together. The founding members were particularly hurt."

Scott, too, was hurt. He felt changes could have been made without wiping out the entire Board. After the clean-out, Scott virtually cut his ties with the club, visiting only occasionally. If nothing else, it gave him more time to spend on his bookbinding business.

We're starting afresh

Like most, Scott, too, had missed the point that the challenge was as much about wrenching control of the boardroom away from Donovan as it was about giving the club a fresh start. In the minds of those behind

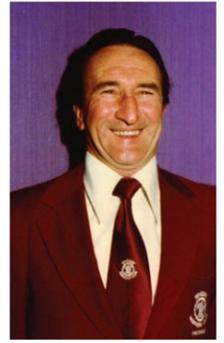
"The Revolution", the club had to start afresh without any impediments from the past. As such, good men were expended. There was also recognition of the groundwork laid by previous boards in delivering a club that had grown so substantially since it began with less than 250 members in September 1962.

The election was held over four days – 8, 9, 10 and 11 September – and the Higgs team worked tenaciously to distribute how to vote cards. According to Melham, "We were going to Panania RSL, Revesby Heights, Padstow RSL, the Crown, Revesby pub and to the Panania pub, scooping them [the members] all up. A lot of members were at these pubs and clubs. They were too frightened to patronise the club because they didn't want to lose their membership." Melham admitted playing a role, "but it wasn't a dominant role. I provided a lot of energy and ticked everything off. I knew how to conduct a campaign."

Donovan and his Board managed to get out how to vote cards but only in the last two days of the campaign. Melham recalled how hard Donovan worked for his re-election. "For two days he handed out how to vote cards – right to the very end. He did not stop working. I admired him for that."

To make the Higgs ticket work they needed seven names on it so that voters could follow a path of selecting seven names and crossing seven names off – seven for seven. To find their seventh member, they turned to Bill Gannon, a mathematics teacher with strong support from the fishing club. Gannon was standing as an independent and wasn't interested in being on any ticket.

However the Higgs group made him their number seven, despite protestations from Gannon. According to Melham, "Gannon said he was not going on any ticket. But we said, 'That's your decision, Bill.' We do what we want. We put him on our ticket so that it was seven against seven. It was a case of us making our own recommendations. You see if you don't run enough people you end up throwing votes to the other side. If you run too many ... like if



Bill Gannon.



Howard Bush.

those two names had not been knocked out, I doubt there would have been a clean sweep.”

Another error of judgement made by the incumbent Board was to retain the asterisks denoting the sitting directors. In normal circumstances they are seen as an advantage, an easier voting pattern to follow. In this case, it had the reverse effect. Not only did it make it easy for the dissenting members to put a line through them, but the ballot paper mimicked the Higgs-backed team’s how to vote cards – seven in, seven out.

The turnout of voting members was, to that time, the largest in Revesby Workers’ Club history – 2146, which consisted of 2070 plus 76 informal votes. Voting numbers in 1975 were 1802 and 1304 in 1976. In a club with membership of just under 15,000, the numbers were significant and enlightening.

Higgs topped the poll with 1445 votes, 69 per cent of the vote – a colossal result. Donovan finished last of the 14 candidates with only 28.3 per cent (586 votes). For all the wonderful achievements of Donovan over 18 years – from the time the club concept was first conceived

in the Pacific Hotel – he had gathered enough enemies in the more recent years to signal his demise. One would also have to say his attack on Higgs in the lead-up to the election was defining and the work of a desperate man, leaving him to fall on his sword – a sad ending for a man recognised by all for the sterling role he played in developing the club.

The new Board and final voting figures were: Brien Higgs (1445), Bill Gannon (1389), Howard Bush (1327), Jack Dennehy (1247), Bill Bullard (1204), Vic Clift (1178) and Vic Pavlick (1075). The unsuccessful candidates polled as follows: Ken Prentice (969), Herb McDougall (937), Graham Campbell (857), Bill Scott (789), Bill Hills (762), Jack Pitty (725), Jim Donovan (586).

It had been an unmistakably well-constructed campaign, and as much as some good men went down with the ship, it was a coup the club “had to have”. Not before and not since has Revesby Workers’ Club witnessed a clean sweep of directors and such a clinical boardroom cleansing like it.

Bush was a foundation member of the fishing club and highly regarded. He had a long history with the club and was a supportive member of the Labor Party. His closest ally on the Board was Bullard, who later formed a strong link with Melham and Higgs. Dennehy, another long-standing member of the club, ran the service station on the corner of The River Road and Sphinx Avenue, across from the police station. He lived opposite the Pacific Hotel in The River Road. He was badge number 246, just outside the foundation subscribers, but would have been in the foundation membership list except the person he and some friends gave their one pound membership fees to ran off with the money.

Dennehy, another who locked horns with Donovan, explained that there was a belief that unless change came, the club wouldn’t survive. “Members had drifted away – to other clubs – and the club was charging public bar [hotel] prices for beer,” he recalled. “The poker machines were old and everyone was robbing them.” The perception was that the old Board panicked and began raising prices; they had lost touch with their membership. When the dust had settled, the Board bought new poker machines after meetings with the Ainsworth Company and George Anthony. The result was 50 new replacement machines – 35 from Ainsworth and 15 from Anthony.

The new Board handed the keys to running the club back to club management, Melham reflecting on the importance of separating the roles of a Board and managers. “In essence we handed the club back,” he explained. “There used to be directors who closed the club every night – one director every night at two or three in the morning. We handed all the keys back, we didn’t want any of that stuff. Donovan and his Board ... I think it’s fair to say had been more hands-on than the management. Let’s be clear, managers can’t sack directors – directors can sack managers. In a nutshell, that tells you where the power traditionally is.”

In those days, elections were held over four days – Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday – with the annual general meeting held the following Sunday. In 1977, an unprecedented 623 members attended. In the gap between the last day of elections and the annual general meeting, at which time the voting result would be announced, the incumbent Board renewed the contracts of secretary-manager Bob Boddan and catering manager Jim Carter, both to two-year terms. As a result, the rules were changed for subsequent annual general meetings so that the elections were held over two days – on a Thursday and Friday with the annual general meeting held on the Sunday, leaving no time for the outgoing Board to be offering contracts to employees.

The question of election of directors to casual vacancies on the Board was a confusing and ever-changing one. Since the formation of the club the rule has varied depending on the whim of the Board at the time. In the earliest days – 1964 – replacement directors were chosen by club members. It was later changed and in the mid 1970s – and leading into the 1977 annual general meeting – the Board made the appointment in the interim until they faced the members in an election.

It was an aspect of club rule that did not sit well with the new Board, or with Melham from his position of influence in the backroom. At a general meeting in November, a month after the boardroom coup, the new Board decreed that to fill a vacancy required a by-election at which members would vote on the candidates. The rule has remained stable and in place to the current day.

Higgs, who headed the ballot, was appointed president by his fellow directors, and Bill Gannon, who stood as an independent, filled the vice-presidency by virtue of his having polled the second-highest number of votes.

In October 1977, the new Board advised that although 18-year-olds were able to enter the club as visitors, as yet the articles had not been altered to allow them to become members. The question of them becoming members was passed at the next extraordinary general meeting, on 28 November 1977. As an indication that members were not about to rubberstamp the new Board’s policies, three of the 11 special resolutions listed were rejected.

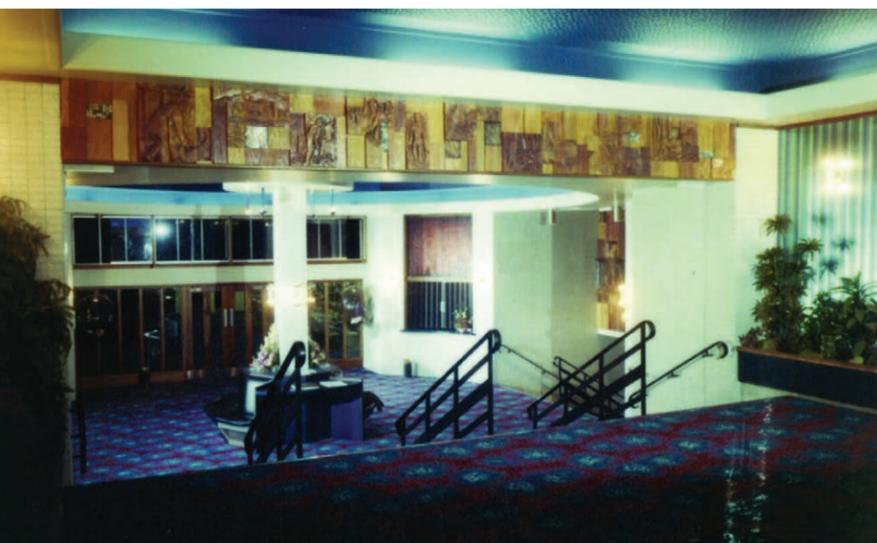
By May the following year (1978), Higgs had returned to his more familiar – and more suited – role as secretary-manager. To ensure the position was available, Boddan, under contract to the club, resigned, unhappy and unwilling to accept the extra workload and inconsistent shifts expected of him by the new Board. In the meantime, Bill Bullard, while remaining vice-president, was appointed to the role for six weeks (from 20 March to 30 April) until Higgs was in a position to take the job. It had been an amazing roller-coaster ride for Higgs, perhaps unique in



Pat Ring.

Club patrons socialising in the gaming lounge in the late 1970s.





New South Wales licensed club history. He had gone from his post as the original secretary-manager to a directorship, then to a year in hibernation, back to the boardroom as president and, finally, to secretary-manager where he would remain for another 13 years.

Higgs was happy to relinquish the presidency. He wanted to return to management where he was more comfortable with club structures and a hands-on role. At the subsequent by-election on 19 June 1978 to elect the new Board member, Jim Donovan stood again, hoping that his defeat at the 1977 elections was simply an aberration. He was handed a stinging rebuke and sad reminder that his days were truly numbered. He received just 128 votes out of 797 formal votes. Pat Ring was elected with 431 votes.

Board meetings were not without serious debate and Gannon explained that meetings were often fiery, but without any lingering animosity. With Higgs gone, Gannon, as vice-president, stepped up to the presidency. Gannon had polled well at the elections, indicating his popularity, and in some ways, the Gannon appointment was an olive branch from other directors to someone who was reluctant to join them on their ticket. It would not hurt for his fellow directors at this time to be seen as generous.

New Board, bigger profits

The new Board was quickly made aware of the worrying financial concerns by their principal financier, the Rural Bank, receiving a letter outlining the seriousness of the club's growing debt, said to be around \$800,000. The letter has long been lost from the club archives, but it was clear that the bank was troubled and surviving Board members from that period clearly remembered the tenor of the letter. The club had on occasions greatly exceeded the overdraft arrangements. In one instance, the \$100,000 overdraft limit was exceeded by \$173,000.

The seriousness of the situation was not lost on Doug McLaughlin, headhunted by Higgs not long after the new Board had been

elected to clean up the club's worrying gaming malaise, a role that would virtually save the club from any chance of insolvency. "The bank was a few months from foreclosing on the club," McLaughlin recalled. "It was in a mess. The club was dirty and run-down and gaming money was leaking all over the place." McLaughlin worked at St George Leagues Club for ten years before joining Revesby and became one of the foremost authorities on gaming worldwide, enlisted by government departments to help them deal with gaming machine fraud and to set parameters for future training programs. In essence, it was his expertise that saved Revesby. Gaming profits lifted immediately – and dramatically.

In the nine months following the boardroom coup, the profit level went from just \$89,092 (the previous Board's final year) to \$469,404 at the end of June 1978. The profits increased even further the following year to \$721,316.

Two other significant appointments around this time were accountant Tom O'Brien and catering manager Kevin Gallagher who, along with Higgs and McLaughlin, were the foundation members of the Club Managers' Institute, an offshoot of the Club Managers' Association which set up accreditation schemes and training courses for every facet of club management. The institute started out of Revesby Workers'.

O'Brien was a critical appointment also; he was renowned as a quality "figures man", brought to Revesby by Higgs to "save the club millions". He understood the workings of licensed clubs and, in his time at Revesby, provided economic strategies that were vital in lifting profits in all departments. Higgs's role here was vital. He recognised the deficiencies and then sought the best personnel to handle them. From the time O'Brien was brought to the club, Revesby began to show improved and, often, impressive profits.

Gannon outlined some of the attitudes and expectations of the new Board, confirming election promises based on a platform of

change and improvement, a greater interest in the club's sporting bodies and on methods that would make the services of the club more freely and economically available. The most immediate objective in the first year was to rid the club of its enveloping debt. The club set a plan to repay the entire bank debt, due by 1982, by 1980. They were six months early, finalising the full payment in July 1979. It was the first time since the club opened in 1962 that it was completely out of debt.

Having set a secure financial platform, the new Board carried the club to the end of the 1970s with great anticipation and plans to renovate and upgrade the facilities of the club. There was a new "step" in the mood of staff and Gannon proudly announced in his first president's report in September 1978 that not a minute's trading time was lost due to industrial disputes in the nine months the new regime had been in office.

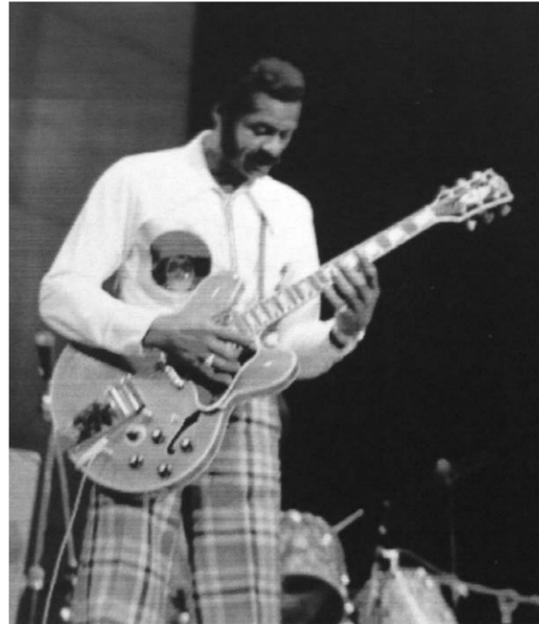
Telltale signs of a more warm-spirited atmosphere was not only noticed in staff and management but in the very tangible aspects of club life – notably the marked increase in poker machine revenue, due to security and updating of machines, according to Gannon, and an increase by some \$3000 in the average weekly bar takings despite a drop in the price of beverages. There was, as Higgs saw it, an air of confidence in the future of the club.

One slight the new Board wanted to redress was the exceptional number of members who had been removed from the club register for alleged and, in some cases, proven – but minor – misdemeanours under the Donovan reign. According to Melham, it got to a stage that it was hurting the club. People were staying away, including one foundation member who stayed overseas for a time so he didn't lose his badge! The rugby league club members, who disobeyed a Donovan directive in 1967, were among those who sought re-admission. Vic de Saily, Harry Ryall, Harold Delauney, Jack Collins, Colin Wood, Danny Kehane and Norma Buckley penned a letter to the Board seeking redemption, and it was granted.

OPPOSITE PAGE: The eastern entrance (top and bottom) as it was after the new club was built in 1973 and the club's dining room (centre). The bottom image displays the bas relief, carved from wood, depicting the working element in the club's traditions.



ABOVE: Henry Hess, the club's entertainment manager and right, Chuck Berry, who wanted to be paid before he would perform.



OPPOSITE PAGE: The annual fisho's club smoko, celebrated at Christmas 1979. These were rowdy but enjoyable days. Sitting front – and clapping – is Harry Waldron. Sitting at right are, Fred Morgan (with cigarette), Howard Bush and Bill Bullard.

Terry Semlitzky, who retains a long and rewarding association with the club – a director since 1993 – recalled the story of two members, aware that fighting in the club was obviously forbidden, went to a local park to negotiate their differences. Donovan found out – and still barred them from the club.

With Henry Hess as entertainment manager and a Board-supported increase in the number of high-profile Australian and international entertainers to the club auditorium, Revesby Workers' was not only enjoying buoyant times on the balance sheet but in the hearts and minds of much of the Sydney population. Revesby Workers' was seen as a go-to place for some of the city's best entertainment.

Hess was right for the times and put his thoughts on how to drive the club's entertainment to the Board. Hess told the Board that experience had shown that the best results were obtained when artists of reasonable standard were booked and then, generally, only on their first appearance at the club. He wanted the Board to understand that the high cost of engaging such artists could be by-passed by circumventing the "importing" management agents and dealing directly with, say, the New

York agencies. Hess was looking for exclusivity in the Sydney metropolitan area and farming the artist out to clubs outside the metropolitan boundaries to allay costs. It would mean a representative of the club going to the United States to negotiate terms.

The cost of entertainment and artists had risen gradually at first, through the early 1970s, from \$32,000 in 1970 to a substantial \$235,641 in the financial year ending June 1979. By the 1979-80 financial year, it had jumped to just over \$400,000. The quality of the artists was undeniable in these latter years of the 1970s and included Johnny O'Keefe, Des O'Connor, Max Bygraves, Julie Anthony, Billy Eckstine, Kamahl, Warren Mitchell and Jerry Lee Lewis.

Show me the money

Not everything in entertainment runs smoothly and most hitches are confined to the seclusion of backstage. However, Chuck Berry made his grievances public to a bulging auditorium crowd who had come to see the famous American rocker. Berry demanded that he have US\$1000 in his back pocket before every performance, which was a considerable problem when he arrived at Revesby Workers' for a Sunday performance. Unaware of Berry's intending demands, Hess and club management were sent into a spin. Despite turning over large sums of money, this was Sunday and the club kept little cash on the floor. Where would they find the required US\$1000?

According to authors Jon Hayton and Leon Isackson in their book *Behind the Rock*, a history of "Oz Rock", Berry told management: "That's your problem. You better get the cash or I ain't going on." When the crowd became restless, Berry went on and played one number. He then told the audience he wanted to continue but he hadn't been paid! He told them: "I'm gonna go off now and when I get paid I'm gonna come back and play for y'all." It is also the recollection of others that he demanded more and that the US\$1000 was only part of his agreed fee.

THE GHOST OF LAWSON HOUSE

Ed Camilleri was a 19-year-old trainee manager in 1979 when he followed orders one night to lock up Henry Lawson House, the "old club" across the road. He had heard stories of a ghost in the old club, but as a brave and bold teenager he rebuffed all suggestions of a ghost in the house.

It was about midnight when duty managers Frank Granta and Jack Swiderski sheepishly urged him to close up. He turned the key and went inside, turning left toward the dark and eerily quiet auditorium.

A long room with high ceilings that could accommodate 250 patrons, it felt strange standing in the quietness of

a room that generally was noisy and celebratory.

As Camilleri sought to adjust his eyes to the darkness, a large purple light suddenly zigzagged its way along a wall of the auditorium and made its way down the fire stairs next to the stage and into the old gymnasium below.

Struck by the quietness of its movement and its suddenness, as if it had just been disturbed, Camilleri froze. "It was a thick beam of purple light – about six inches in width, all the way down the auditorium wall," Camilleri recalled. "And I wasn't going downstairs to see where it went. I just wanted to get out of there."

When he went back to the club, he

was ashen-faced. "You've seen the ghost, haven't you?" Swiderski asked. He needed no answer.

It was the last time Camilleri would enter Henry Lawson House at night by himself. Staff believed the ghost might have been that of assistant manager Bruce Flockhart who was killed outside the club in March 1967.

Whatever it was, it was as real to Camilleri as the bricks and mortar that surrounded it. The building was bulldozed in the early 1990s, Camilleri back as the club's CEO – in time to order the demolition.

Not long after, it was replaced by a car park: no more ghosts!

The crowd was enraged, screaming out for the club to "Give Chuck his money". Behind the scenes, Hess and management were desperately rounding up the cash, which they did, but the show was delayed one hour. Hayton, co-author of the book, played lead guitar for Berry on this night and recalled that Berry had so much money stuffed into his black crinoline pants that during his rendition of *My Ding-a-Ling*, the zipper on his fly broke. When Berry asked why the crowd was laughing, his band members said: "Because your fly is open". Berry was horrified and played the last two songs with his back turned to the audience. However, many who witnessed the performance rated it a "magical night" and one of the best acts seen on the Workers' Club stage.

The night was significant for one Revesby Workers' Club's bar staff Roy Hawkins, who bore an uncanny likeness to Elvis Presley. Renowned rock historian Glenn A Baker asked Hayton if it was possible to teach Hawkins to sing. Hawkins was already popular at Revesby where everyone called him Elvis.

He appeared on Channel 7's *A Current Affair* and when Elvis died only a few months later, he was invited to be a part of an Elvis Presley tribute special to be compered by Ward "Pally" Austin. Hawkins stole the show.



The 1979 Board of directors. From left: Vic Pavlick, Jack Dennehy, Howard Bush, Bill Gannon (president), Vic Clift, Bill Bullard, Pat Ring.



It was time for the Federation of Community, Sporting and Workers' Clubs to return to the licensed clubs fold. Having cut their ties with the Registered Clubs Association of New South Wales in 1972, the federation (known then as the Union of Registered Workers' Clubs Association) agreed to end their exile at a meeting at the Sydney Trade Union Club on Saturday, 12 May 1979. Revesby were represented by Gannon and Higgs who told the meeting that Revesby Workers' Club would only consider rejoining on condition that the federation "would review the situation in the future". The club's Board, at a subsequent meeting, supported the decision to affiliate but "if any untoward action should be taken by the RCA then this club would withdraw immediately". The federation's secretary Jim Cudmore was recommended as the federation's representative on the RCA's State Council.

Changes to the club's interior continued. The sports bar was completely renovated and improvements made to the dining room, members' lounge, the auditorium and new, more modern touches were given to the foyer. These were a case of tampering compared to the large new extensions that would be proposed

and completed in the early 1980s. Not lost in the need to update and make facilities more economically viable were the old club premises, by this time re-named Henry Lawson House. The facilities had lain dormant for too long and would soon receive a much-needed facelift. The former Revesby Board had been unsuccessful in endeavouring to sell the old club.

Life behind the scenes at the Workers' Club changed to an extent with the "powerbrokers" – a collective which included some directors, but not all, the likes of Ray McCormack and a supportive member, Jim Finn – meeting to discuss various agendas, principally who they would back at subsequent elections. There appeared to be a need to do some tinkering to get the feeling and tone of the Board right. Not all the chess pieces were in place just yet. The political nous of Melham is implicit in these events, though he cautions that he was in the back room in these early days. Others argue otherwise. He very clearly anoints Bullard as the one who was calling the shots. Both he and Bullard were close and supported similar principles on how the club should be run.

By the end of the 1979 financial year, the club not only boasted a three-quarters of a

million dollar profit but also a membership of 22,493 with a waiting list of "approximately 2500". A graph reproduced in the club's annual report in 1979 underlined the promising growth of the club's finances following the extensions completed in 1966, before a sharp and worrying decline from the moment the new club was opened in 1973, and finally, a steep climb (and still climbing) after the 1977 coup.

Club News editor Merv MacFarlane was at it again under a heading of "Union Bashing" in which he castigated the Fraser-Anthony Coalition government for "intensifying its attack on the trade union movement ... it is necessary that the general public clearly understand the role of the trade union movement as the economic crisis continues, unemployment climbs to staggering proportions with the prospect that a majority of school leavers this year will go straight onto dole queues. The Fraser Government backed

solidly by large sections of the news media make it quite clear that they consider it the fault of the trade union movement."

It wouldn't be the last time MacFarlane would extol the virtues of the trade unions and denigrate anyone remotely associated with right-wing politics. Characters abounded at Revesby – and he was one of them.

The boardroom stoushes were not over – just more temperate and without malice. Over the following three years the Board would get a gentle massage – a new president and a couple of new, carefully selected directors before a lengthy period of boardroom calm and stability.

With careful manipulation of the boardroom, Revesby Workers' Club set sail with renewed prosperity. The Board challenge of 1977 was worth it. Fresh faces at the back office meant a re-invigorated club, a cleansing that would take the club into the 1980s with great confidence.

CTC TRAVEL

The CTC Shipping Line Company, through a subsidiary, CTC Travel, set up a travel business at Revesby in the mid-1970s with Joe Calleia as its managing director. The travel company operated in a small office at the southern end of the original Workers' Club building, later to be known as Henry Lawson House.

Calleia developed a close relationship with Bill Bullard, who became the Workers' Club president in 1982, and offered a cruise around the Pacific Rim as first

prize in whichever major charity Revesby, through Bullard, was supporting for that year.

Calleia and his small staff worked the travel business successfully when Calleia

left to return to the city to continue his work with CTC. Staff members stayed at Revesby since they felt they could not look after clients from as far away as the city and staff member Rebecca Tsoa-Lee and

husband, Richard, bought the business.

As Revesby Travel, the business was set up within Revesby Workers' Club in 1992, the first private business to operate from the club precinct. The business continues at the time of writing this manuscript as Revesby Travelscene, still under the guidance of Rebecca and her husband.



CLUB, COMMUNITY AND CARING

Over and above the regular donations to charities and organisations, the Workers' Club selected the Multiple Sclerosis Appeal as its major charity in 1978 in which over \$20,000 was raised, and the Children's Leukaemia and Cancer Foundation in 1979 which realised \$36,145.12. The following year, the club chose a worthy charity close to home and to heart – the financing of the South Bankstown Frail Aged Homes village which would, on completion, house some of the Workers' Club members. The generosity of clubs was a never-ending function of the industry and a vital process in developing good connections with the community.

As the 1970s decade came to a close:

- A jazz band, bingo and a computer (their first) became club necessities in 1979. The 20-megabyte in-house computer was installed to speed up intra-club transactions and business and set them on the way to the digital era;
- The full management executive staff consisted of Brien Higgs as secretary-manager, Eric Callinan, Steve Fraser, Kevin Gallagher, Henry Hess and sub-

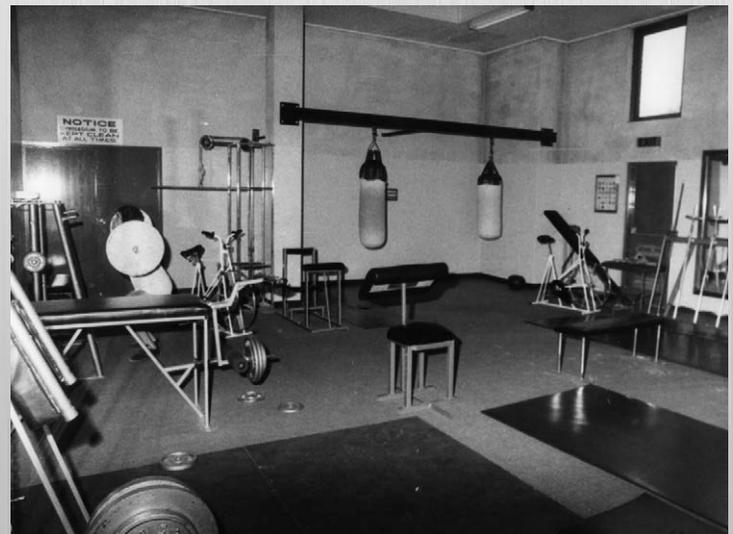
assistant managers Arthur Rogers, Doug McLaughlin, Ken Comerford (beverages manager) and Eddie Camilleri (trainee manager);

- An estimated 16,000 members and their families attended the annual picnic;
- The club was offered Greenlands Golf Club for purchase. While the Board felt it was reasonably priced they declined the offer because it would have placed too much of a drain on club finances;
- Joyce Sheppard, secretary to Brien Higgs, resigned, reluctantly, because of her move to Umina on the central coast. Phyllis Johnstone took her place;
- The last major show of the decade was the Tina Turner Revue, which came to Revesby in all its seductive glory. Promoted as "The gorgeous goddess of raunchy rock'n'roll", Tina was appearing for "6 sexualtonal performances only"; and
- A strong range of sport and leisure clubs were all prospering under the Revesby Workers' Club banner. The sporting and leisure clubs consisted of darts, ladies' indoor bowls,

billiards and snooker, hockey, netball, baseball, tennis, soccer, golf, the singles club, softball, fishing, ladies' golf, outdoor bowls, gymnasium and karate, 26-and-under club, chess, mixed indoor bowls, cricket club, underwater club, amateur athletics and junior darts (which had begun in 1978). The scholarship committee was in the hands of Bill Gannon.

These clubs benefited from the newly formed Sports Council which endeavoured to bring fundraising under the one banner. The new Board had been concerned at the haphazard nature of each club selling their raffle tickets, for instance, within the club. They felt it impinged on club members' space and time. The Board's decision had significant benefits for the clubs. It was at this time that Revesby introduced regular subsidies to replace the raffles.

Raffle ticket selling was still allowed, under Sports Council control, at interval in the auditorium during the entertainment. Each of the clubs would take it in turns. It not only helped them to raise further money but it also gave ticket-selling members the chance to see high-class artists – for free!



ABOVE LEFT: Women's athletics team before leaving for competition in Fiji in 1979. ABOVE RIGHT: The men's gymnasium in the late 1970s.

The storm before the calm



1980-82

SUCCESS ON THE BALANCE SHEET AFTER THE MOST SUCCESSFUL TAKEOVER OF A BOARDROOM IN NEW SOUTH WALES LICENSED CLUB HISTORY – RUTHLESSLY CLEAN AND NOW WELL BEHIND THEM – WAS IMMEDIATE. THE CLUB WAS ALREADY A GATHERING FORCE IN SYDNEY’S TOUGH CLUB AND ENTERTAINMENT SCENE AND AS MUCH AS THE FINANCIAL SUCCESS OF THE CLUB WAS PARAMOUNT, THE BOARD VOWED TO MAINTAIN AND UPHOLD THE ETHOS OF A CLUB BUILT ON STRONG SOCIALIST PRINCIPLES.

The club’s trading profit for 1980–81 reached \$905,946 and the membership limit was raised to 30,000. Under such a banner of success, it was hard to reconcile that in the mid-1970s, the club suffered a deficit on the balance sheet, staff and member morale was low, a number of members drank at other outlets for fear they might commit some minor indiscretion and lose their membership, and the Rural Bank was pressuring the club to repay its debt.

Yet it would be folly to expect the club to live in a bed of roses and move smoothly through the ages. This was the club industry, an unpredictable moving feast seemingly always in the gun sights of government strategies. Early in 1980, the club movement, and the Workers’ Club along with it, was thrown headlong into an industrial dispute with the Liquor Trade Union over an \$8-a-week over-the-award claim. The union called a stop-work meeting in late January, despite an ongoing work-value case that had not yet been completed. Most of the larger metropolitan clubs agreed to the payment, which was met with anger by the Registered Clubs Association. Initially,

WE SING FOR YOU, COMRADE

Soviet Union artists, who were guests of the Socialist Party for the Socialist Festival in Sydney in November 1979, offered their talents to a number of workers' clubs. Revesby accepted the offer and a night was organised at the Henry Lawson House.

Though proceeds for the night were donated to the Children's Leukaemia and Cancer Research Foundation – as a contribution to the Year of the Child – attendance was poor.

Artists mingled with the audience during the interval, answering questions about the Soviet Union. Not surprisingly, *Club News* editor Merv MacFarlane, who rated the evening as "very enjoyable", was keen to promote further Soviet artists, despite the small attendance.

of 18 to gain entry to unrestricted areas of the club. The change was an appreciated concession for families who used the club for family meals, social functions and the like.

The larger clubs, Revesby Workers' among them, had clearly become big business; employing large numbers of people and generating, in the main, vast profits – though the latter only made them bigger targets for tax-hungry governments.

As the 1980 annual elections neared, Melham was about to step out from the shadows and become a far more public figure in the running of the club. With its improving balance sheet and ascending status within the club movement, the way was cleared for a new Board member when Vic Clift decided not to contest the coming September 1980 annual elections. Melham's elevation to the Board was as predictable as the next Workers' Club annual profit: it was a matter of timing. He had been asked a year or two earlier but declined until he finished his law degree. It was Bill Bullard who convinced him to run in 1980. Melham saw it as the time to accept the challenge – no longer needed in the back room of club politics. Besides, he could give more back to the club as a qualified decision maker.

However, it wasn't all one way. The Board considered both Melham and popular bowling club member Warren Berry for the vacant

position. They felt Berry had strong credentials. When Berry missed out on the Board's backing he decided to contest the election anyway, a decision that would diminish his chances of Board backing in the future and, thus, limit his election hopes. At the annual elections, the vote was about the direction of the Board and its allegiance to the Labor Party. Berry wasn't in the Labor Party and it worked against him, though he polled well – 1150 to Melham's 1296. Bullard, as he did in almost all the annual elections, headed the voting with 2104 votes with Gannon five votes behind.

These were difficult economic times and clubs suffered along with the rest of the business world, though the Board's strong fiscal policies and larger-than-most membership continued to supply impressive, though smaller profits. In the financial year ending 1982, Workers' showed a trading profit of just over \$500,000, impressive by most standards, but down on the previous year and not large enough for the club to continue with plans – drawn up and ready for presentation for approval to council – to risk a \$4 million outlay on renovations. Increases in taxes and other major items that impact on clubs, such as wages, goods, fuel and licence fees, forced them to re-think.

Interest rates were at record levels and the country was suffering the highest rate of unemployment since the Depression years. With fallen attendances in the first six months of the financial year – the second half of 1981 – the club introduced some novel methods of rejuvenating interest among their 28,000-plus members, offering half-priced drinks, doubling jackpots and doubling coupon bonuses. It was about getting "bums back on seats". Helping the cause at this time, too, were the 200 new members each month.

You come to understand at this point just how much Revesby was in the "Big League" – salaries and wages \$3,135,515; poker machine revenue at \$5,645,078; poker machine supplementary tax \$1,153,992; and \$450,000 spent on artists and entertainment, an area in most large clubs, in particular, that consistently

ran at a loss. This was a club's "loss leader" – in this case, the quality of the entertainment putting Revesby on the map. True to the "Henry Hess blueprint", the club saw it as getting to the hearts and minds of not just the Bankstown community but to wider Sydney.

Performers who were at the height of their artistic powers in this period included Leslie Uggams, The Hollies, The 5th Dimension, Gene Pitney, Roy Orbison, Tina Turner (at a cost of \$10,000 a show for six shows – and \$10 a ticket), Rolf Harris, Max Bygraves, Cilla Black, Harry Secombe, the Dianna Trask Show and Australia's perennial favourite, Col Joye and the Joy Boys, not to mention the Debbie Reynolds Show, a lavish Las Vegas production, including a 22-piece orchestra, dancers and singers. Reynolds was hugely popular the world over and patrons at Revesby flocked to see her as she sang, danced and related showbiz yarns: professional in every sense of the word. Members could also see the Don Lane Show (\$5000 a show for three shows – at \$7 a ticket).



Gough Whitlam, with his wife, Margaret, enjoyed many special evenings as guests of the Revesby Club.

LEFT: Whitlam is photographed with Tibby Gannon (left) and Karlene Bullard.

BOTTOM: Whitlam is the centrepiece in this photo. From left: Vic Pavlick, Howard Bush, Bill Gannon, Mr Whitlam, Ray McCormack (mayor of Bankstown and former Workers' Club director), Brien Higgs, Daryl Melham, Bill Bullard, Jack Dennehy, Pat Ring.



The storm before the calm



had guaranteed her \$30,000 plus \$600 for her support. One of the highest grossing shows at this time was the Jokers and Queens Show, which starred Marcia Hines and Jon English. It brought in \$9541.80 on its best night at which 1116 patrons attended. They played to virtually full houses on the other two nights and 578 at their Sunday show. Major artists at this time like Bobby Rydell cost \$5500 for two shows, Lonnie Donegan \$3000 per show and Rod McKuen \$6000 per show.



ABOVE: Jon English (left) and Kamahl were as popular as any performers at the Workers' Club, both returning regularly to packed houses.

BELOW: Catering manager Kevin Gallagher behind the carvery with staff, 1979.

The Board was re-elected in 1981, though there were challenges for the seven positions, the most surprising being that of Vic Clift who had retired from the Board the previous year. He was well off the pace, receiving 772 votes to Melham's seventh place, 1393, almost double Clift's tally. While Melham was relatively popular among the voting members, receiving 69 per cent of the vote at these elections, he admitted being "a bit of a lightning rod for some of these characters". He was young and energetic. He wasn't a "clubbie". He was Labor to his bootlaces and in boardroom scraps he rarely lost. Not missed in 1981 was the granting of life membership to Merv MacFarlane.

union delegates asked to see the report. Any effort to appoint outside contractors was met with vehement opposition, firstly by Melham and by Bullard, and it may not be coincidental that within six months of the note to staff, the three signatories – Ring, Gannon and Bush – were no longer members of the Board.

Catering manager Kevin Gallagher was highly regarded within and outside the club and his five-page reply to the Board after

The Board was at pains to douse staff concerns that the club was to sack its catering team and introduce outside caterers to start a Chinese restaurant. The club appointed the Sutcliffe Catering Company to look at the overall catering management and costs and, while the survey was taking place, Gannon, Bush and Ring sent a note to club staff assuring them a Chinese restaurant was not on the radar. The issue threatened to spill over when



The storm before the calm



An evening in Vienna

In August of 1982, club management brought culture to its impressive auditorium stage: the Melbourne Philharmonic Orchestra was presenting its touring program, *An Evening in Vienna*. The car parks were full and members responded by filling the auditorium, the chance to dance – awkwardly by some – not denting their enthusiasm for the waltz. As with other clubs, Revesby sought to balance their entertainment losses (around \$250,000 a year by this stage) by encouraging the 1100 patrons to spend time – and money – in other parts of the club after they left the auditorium. It's a grey area: no one can absolutely quantify how much patrons spend outside the showroom, but the prospect of them spending helps the Board and entertainment management to feel some comfort with the losses.

Ticket sales on the Debbie Reynolds show indicated that it finished slightly in the black, the exception rather than the rule. She and her large entourage performed six shows, returning ticket sales of \$30,588.80. Revesby Workers'

Again, not lost in all of this was entertainment manager Hess, described in club literature as "an international entertainer/vocalist and compere", though it appeared that performing on cruise ships was as "international" as he got. Friday and Saturday show nights at Workers', just as they would be for years to come, were packed to the rafters.

CLOCKWISE, TOP: Don Lane, an all-time favourite of the club scene; local boy Col Joye, an icon of Australian rock 'n' roll; Rolf Harris and his "Jake the Peg" routine and international superstar Tina Turner.

reviewing the Sutcliffe findings was not without answers, adding that the Sutcliffe Report was “short on facts and completely without original thought.” Gallagher kept his job – and the catering department got on with satisfying customers, though suitably chastened by the findings of the \$5000 report.

By 1982 there was further unease in the boardroom – on a number of fronts. Annual and extraordinary general meetings in this period could be fiery and rambunctious. Board manoeuvring meant the end of Pat Ring’s stay as director. He had been on the Board since 1978 but had clashed with Higgs, and other Board members, too often and it rankled. Bullard called him a “de facto secretary-manager”, a strong enough reference to what everyone suspected – Ring wanted Higgs’s role. One month before the annual elections an irate and volatile Ring had gone to Higgs’s office, slammed his walking cane on the desk and, in view of staff, berated Higgs over a decision which he felt was contrary to a Board directive, threatening to have Higgs sacked.

Higgs described the tirade in a report to the Board: “Mr Ring had become very angry and his voice was becoming very loud. I asked Mr Ring to keep his voice down ... Mr Ring continued to speak in a loud voice. He once again said that he would see me deprived of my position and stated he was of a mind to suspend me on the spot. He continued to make accusations such as I was trying to put the Board down – that I was acting in a devious manner – that I told lies – that I was conniving against persons on the club political plane ... The fury of Mr Ring’s tirade abated after some ten minutes. This was one of the worst experiences of this nature in my twenty-year association with this club ... This is not the first time that Mr Ring has carried on in this manner, but this occasion is by far the worst.” Higgs threatened to go to the Registered Clubs Association and the Club Managers’ Association if there was a repeat.

The separation of power was vital to the smooth running of Revesby and meshing

the roles of Board and management was frowned upon by Board members. Donovan, a heavyweight carrier of club fortunes for its first 14 years, meddled – on a higher plane than anyone since his demise – and suffered. Ring was about to endure the same fate.

Bullard had enticed John “Lofty” Gibbons, a wharf labourer, to run on the Board’s ticket instead of Ring. With Board support, Gibbons polled handsomely among the 12 standing candidates, with 1496 votes. Ring polled 722, ninth in the ballot, behind Warren Berry, 798 votes. Vic Clift tried once again but was even further down, polling just 586 votes.

Ring was neither sacked nor asked to leave the Board, it was just that the Board didn’t support him. It re-enforced the notion that election ballots should not be looked at in isolation. Board support was paramount and a number of directors, as well-intentioned and as worthy as they might have been, would not have made it to the boardroom without a Board ticket.

Battlelines were about to be drawn as the annual general meeting continued. The most hotly debated issue was over a contract drawn up and about to be signed by Higgs. The request for a five-year contract was the direct result of the rant from Ring. Higgs realised his vulnerability to the vagaries of the Board and wanted security.

Clift, smarting one would think after two successive defeats at the ballot box, told the meeting he found it “unbelievable that Mr Higgs would even consider a contract for his services”. Not surprisingly, Ring, speaking from the floor, urged the Board to “totally reject” the contract. Higgs admitted at the meeting what most knew, that Ring was the reason he requested the contract. Equally, Higgs was embarrassed that the matter had been broached at the meeting. The Board, in keeping with policy, decided against offering a contract. It wasn’t until Ed Camilleri was in his eighth year as chief executive officer in 1998 that the Board introduced contracts to management. To underline the aggressive and tense nature

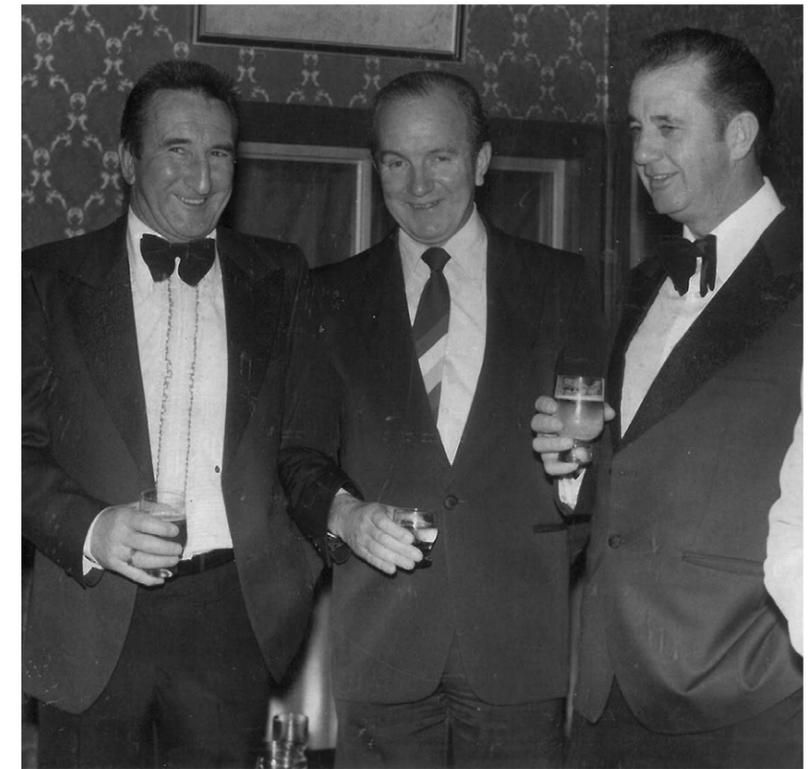
of the annual general meeting, one member observed to members that divisions caused by the recent election “would take some time to heal”. As the meeting wound down, club patron Joe Kelly added a level-headed, composed tone, appealing to all members to forget their differences.

Battlelines drawn

Yet, the annual general meeting was just an entrée to the main course. As the Board, with Gannon at the head, got on with the job of guiding the club through the rough waters of a struggling economy, there was no inkling of any disruptive matter to cause members any further concern. However, this was a delicately balanced boardroom and tensions had been growing.

During a lengthy Board meeting on 26 October 1982, just four weeks after the rancorous annual general meeting, Bullard called for the termination of accountant Jack King’s employment. King, a close friend and confidant of Gannon’s, was appointed accountant by the Board soon after the coup of 1977 when Gannon was first elected president. There had been no open indication of Board unhappiness with King’s performance – at least as far as Gannon, Bush and Dennehy were concerned. Each of them dissented when the motion was put and it became immediately clear that the other four directors, Melham, Bullard, Vic Pavlick and John Gibbons would vote against Gannon.

Gannon was shocked. His reaction was spontaneous and precise: he stood up, threw his club keys on the boardroom table and walked to the door – with just one further question. He turned and asked: “Was King ‘touching’ the club [taking money]?” Unequivocally “no” was the answer. Gannon continued on – opened the door – and just as he did, Howard Bush called out: “I’m coming too – I’m out.” It was 11.20 at night and when Gannon arrived home (most Board meetings at this time finished at 3am), his wife queried him: “You’re home early,” she said. “They sacked Jack King, so I walked out.”



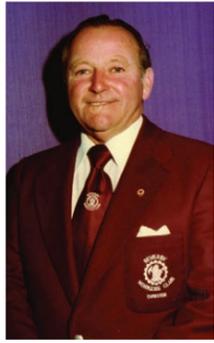
Gannon, while retaining membership, rarely set foot in the club again, turning to the Revesby Heights Ex-Servicemen’s Club on Hero’s Hill before moving to Woolgoolga on the New South Wales north coast. “What disappointed me,” said Gannon, “was that I was good friends with Bill Bullard – and I had twice asked Daryl [Melham] onto the Board but he wanted to finish his law degree first. When I suggested he come on the second time, he agreed.” However, this was a professional Board decision based on concerns of conflict of interest, just as it was Gannon’s and Bush’s decisions to leave the Board.

Bush retained his membership and his strong connection with the club. He was a strong Labor man and a foundation member of the fishing club. He was on committee for 40 years and also the fishing club’s treasurer until 2002. While he did not seek re-election to the Board, Bush understood that the conflict in the boardroom was not personal. He was made a life member of the club on 24 September 1995 and later acted as its returning officer.



TOP: Three Workers’ Club presidents enjoy a social moment in early 1982. Left, Bill Gannon (1978–1982), Pat Rogan (2008–2010) and Bill Bullard (1982–1994).

ABOVE: A youthful Daryl Melham. He had been voted onto the Board in 1980 and by 1982 was in an arm-wrestle that ended Bill Gannon’s short tenure as club president.



Jack Dennehy.

King and his co-worker, Barry Wilkinson, were good accountants, which wasn't the issue. There was a simple concern over a conflict of interest which a majority on the Board felt was not in the best interests of the club. Part of the conflict dealt with Bush and Ring working on tax returns for King, as casual employees.

The decision to terminate King's employment has to be seen in context with the balance of power within the Board, which changed with the decision not to support Ring at the annual general meeting a month earlier and replace him with Gibbons. It gave Bullard and Melham the power to call for the end of King's role at the club, terminating his services – with one month's notice to the end of November 1982. "We knew the ramifications," Melham added, "but they [Gannon and Bush] were the ones that walked off. You never know until these things happen. These people were emotionally attached ... I think that's commendable. I'm not critical of that. At the end of the day, when you walk, you walk. For us, it wasn't personal. We didn't have anything against these guys. There was a difference of opinion. We just wanted to go in a different direction."

Dennehy, sympathetic to Gannon and Bush, stayed in the boardroom and saw out the meeting. However, at the following Board meeting, Dennehy indicated he was resigning but wouldn't say when. He removed his belongings and left, telling the remaining directors he was going downstairs to fill out his resignation. In what appeared to become more comical than anything else, Dennehy attended the next Board meeting, complaining that he had been left out of a special meeting held in the interim. Bullard informed him that since he had informed the Board he was resigning, there was no need to advise him.

It was clear to the Board that Dennehy had decided to stay on to act as a "spy" for Gannon, a fact Dennehy later admitted. Gannon, in the meantime, was in the process of gathering a force to oust Bullard and the incumbent directors. Despite Dennehy's protestations, the

remaining members of the Board were able to hold further "special" Board meetings without him, two of them vital since they were with legal representatives which determined the framework of the Board's strategies.

Gannon left the boardroom that night harbouring no further inclination to take the matter further – until, he said, fired up in the following days by friends and supporters who agitated for both he and Bush to seek answers and, in the end, to form what Gannon called a "breakaway" group to challenge the remaining directors. It was, in the largest sense, game on.

To meet the challenge, the Revesby Board – minus Gannon and Bush and soon to be without Dennehy – set in train plans to hold an extraordinary general meeting on 6 December, at 7pm, to elect two replacement directors. The planning needed careful legal application and, again, there was no better man at it than Melham. The notice for the extraordinary general meeting stated that the meeting would be called to "elect such Directors to the Revesby Workers' Club Ltd as required by Article 17 of the Articles of Association" and "to hear a report from the returning officer who shall declare the result of the ballot". Among other things, the notice advised that the ballot would close at 8.30pm.

In a remarkable turn of events, Gannon's group sent a requisition – signed by the required number of members – to secretary-manager Brien Higgs, petitioning to hold an extraordinary general meeting of the Revesby Workers' Club Ltd at the club premises on the same night the Board had called for an extraordinary general meeting, but at 8.30pm, a time critical to the battle for control. Business for this meeting was:

- 1 To consider the recent resignation of the president, William Gannon, and Howard Bush, director, with specific reference to a consideration of the reasons proffered by the said members of the Board when tendering their resignation.
- 2 To put a vote of no confidence in the remaining members of the Board.

- 3 To declare all positions on the Board of Directors vacant and call for election to all positions.
- 4 To examine the day-to-day management of the club.

The requisitionists' team was Gannon, Bush, Dennehy, Jim Bradford, Max Burt, Warren Berry and Peter Sprotte. In their single-page brochure, they urged club members to attend the scheduled 7pm meeting "and support an adjournment". Winning the adjournment they advised would then enable members to "elect an impartial free-thinking board".

Bullard's Board had the upper hand from the start. It was vital that the election of the two replacement directors be held at the first meeting. Melham and the acting secretary-manager while Higgs was on holidays, Eric Callinan received letters from the requisitionists' solicitors, Geoffrey C Brown, Howlin & Co, pressuring the Board to meld the two meetings into one and threatening court action if they failed to do so.

The Board was fortunate to have Melham's expertise, firstly in challenging the club lawyer Michael Flynn, who, while agreeing with the wide spectrum of requirements in preparation for the impending extraordinary general meeting, differed with Melham over the right to set a closing date for their Board nominations. Flynn argued that nominations had to be called from the floor at the meeting. Melham argued otherwise, believing the Board had the right to close nominations beforehand.

Bullard, Melham and Higgs sought the counsel of John McCarthy, QC, on 19 November in a lengthy meeting just two weeks before the proposed extraordinary general meetings. McCarthy supported Melham's view that the Board was entitled to set the closing date for nominations and that once

nominations had closed it would be acceptable, thus allowing the Board the chance to issue "how to vote" brochures and to prepare with greater certainty. It was also McCarthy's view that "the resolutions of the Board of Directors on these matters would not be open to a successful legal challenge" – and there was none!

This was perhaps the most vital meeting either side had held. McCarthy also advised that:

- He considered the extraordinary general meeting had been properly called;
- The Board had the right to take whatever actions were necessary providing they did not clash with the Articles of Association;
- It would be accepted that the only two positions to be balloted would be those of the directors who had resigned; and
- That an item to be dealt with at an extraordinary general meeting would necessarily have to be a special resolution. Such special resolutions would have to be carried by 75 per cent of the persons in attendance and who were qualified to vote.

Forearmed and confident

Melham was clever and politically savvy. He understood it was to the Board's advantage that they should have the first of the extraordinary general meetings. The meeting with McCarthy

A coup in waiting. This was the last photo of these directors together. By the end of 1982, three members had resigned – Bill Gannon, Howard Bush and Jack Dennehy – and Pat Ring was not re-elected. The Board from left: Vic Pavlick, Jack Dennehy, Pat Ring, Howard Bush, Bill Bullard, Daryl Melham. Seated: Bill Gannon (president).



The storm before the calm

also confirmed Melham's understanding that Gannon and Bush's petitioned extraordinary general meeting would not survive legal scrutiny, nor could it have any worthwhile outcomes, and, forearmed, the Board tackled the meetings with confidence and understanding. The Board would also have Michael Finnane, who had been appointed a Queen's Counsel in October 1982 and later a respected criminal judge, in the meeting should any further points of law be required – as was the case. Finnane, a friend and mentor to Melham, had moved from the eastern suburbs to Padstow and had been a member of Revesby Workers' for some time.

Dennehy, finally on 27 November, did as he promised: resigned from the Board, none the wiser and frustrated at having been left out of all recent meetings.

As the meeting began in earnest on Monday, 6 December 1982, the interjections, counterclaims, points of order and personal battles flavoured it from the beginning. When the chairman, Bullard, opened the meeting he warned the 1207 members that they should conduct themselves in a befitting manner ... that while a member was speaking the other members were required to follow general courtesy and no interjections would be tolerated.

That the meeting was going to be vigorous and heated, and Bullard's warning would go unheeded, could be gleaned from the very early moments when Bullard requested assistance from the returning officer and his staff to handle the large turnout. Bullard asked those in favour to raise their hands. Bill Gannon interjected immediately.

And so began a series of attempts to have the meeting adjourned. From that first moment, Ted Roach was back in the thick of it, this time as a supporter of the wounded men – Gannon and Bush – and immediately moved an adjournment of the meeting because it was not in accordance with the Articles of Association.

While Roach was ruled out of order, Gannon returned to the floor ... another

member "condemned" the attitude of people standing outside this building with other persons' names crossed off a ballot paper. The chairman informed this member that he was out of order.

As the returning officer, Mr Cowles, brought his staff and assistants to the table to conduct a ballot, Gannon's team continued in their efforts to have the meeting deferred. Bruce Clarke, a strong ally to Gannon, condemned the Board, claiming that "certain actions to be carried out by the Board of Directors ... was not being done" and he, too, moved that the meeting be adjourned. Gannon was back on his feet as a seconder.

The loud interjections all but drowned out Gannon and, when put to the meeting, the request for adjournment was overwhelmingly defeated. Once again Bullard called on the returning officer to begin the ballot. Members were asked to approach their respective tables, show their badge numbers and cast their vote.

It was clear that the petitioners understood, too late, that they needed to hold their meeting first if they were to be successful in overthrowing the incumbent Board members. While the scrutineers counted the votes, the first meeting was adjourned and Bullard opened the second extraordinary general meeting that had been called by the petitioners, calling on Gannon and Bush to give their reasons for resigning.

Gannon told the meeting in essence that he resigned because of the principles that would not allow him to work with people who terminate employment for no reason. He reasoned that Jack King had carried out his job as required by the Board and that two of the remaining members of the Board had moved and seconded a motion to increase his fees. Bush gave similar reasons.

Gannon and Bush had significant support and the members in the petitioners' group would not go quietly, asking to hear the minutes of the Board meeting and to hear the reasons for King's sacking, with Melham advising that the Board "was not protected"

and "some of the information should be classified". Yet Melham acknowledged that members should be given answers and that the minutes should be read and as he did so, questions arose as to Melham's right to read minutes and Gannon's frustrated call: "Who is running this meeting?"

As Melham read out the reasons for King's dismissal, Gannon was on his feet again, interjecting, and querying the minutes as they had been quoted. It was also pointed out to him, however, that Dennehy had been at the original meeting and the subsequent meeting when the minutes were adopted without question.

And so the interjections and fight for higher ground went on, members calling for minutes of further meetings to be read, a question put to the meeting if any of the outgoing directors were employed by King, which was never answered, of "rumours" in the club that cast doubt on Mr King's honesty and Melham's immediate response that "Mr King's honesty was not in doubt" – and then to the second item of the meeting, the vote of no confidence in the remaining directors and the call for them to vacate their positions so that a full Board of seven members could be elected from the floor.

A key figure in the Board's armoury was Finnane who, at this point, rose on a point of order, informing the meeting that the motion of no confidence was out of order on two counts – firstly that the motion did not conform with the motion that had been given in the original notice of the meeting and, secondly, the motion could not be affected because it was contrary to a number of acts governing laws pertaining to licensed clubs.

While Bullard accepted Finnane's explanation, he still went ahead with the no-confidence motion, by this time well aware that he and the other directors held the whip hand. When Gannon called for a division, as non-voters, members of the staff began to move out of the auditorium, but were recalled on a motion by members and assembled on the dance floor of the auditorium while hands

were counted: some staff members helped in the count. The motion was put again and the chairman declared the motion lost convincingly.

However, "convincingly" might not have been exactly true. Many of the supporters of the Board voted at the ballot and left before the petitioners' meeting began, believing their duty had been fulfilled. It left Bullard and co, to deal with the motion of "no confidence" in the Board to those who were left and, according to Melham, there was only an 81 vote difference (462 to 381). There was a sense that Gannon's supporters were more angry and were more prepared to stay. The numbers were never made public and Gannon's party never knew just how close they got, although as Melham knew and Finnane advised the meeting, the no-confidence motion meant nothing – it was of no legal consequence.

As to the need for the meeting to deal with the item (that all positions on the Board of directors be declared vacant), Finnane moved that the chairman rule it out of order without need for any further discussion. (Melham seconded the motion.) Again, the issue was meaningless.

Gannon's attempt to dump the Board was flawed from the outset. The fourth item – to examine the day-to-day management of the club – went the same way, one member in moving to terminate the resolution adding: "A lot of vitriolic comment has been heard tonight and I don't think that it brought any useful purpose."

Ironic – even Jim voted

When the second extraordinary general meeting finished, the scrutineers returned with the voting results. The two Board-backed nominations, Norma Smith and Ron Polley, won in a canter. The final votes were: Doug Kelsey (85), Peter Sprotte (247), Warren Berry (301), Norma Smith (638), Max Burt (140), Ron Polley (659), informal (61). The six Board members were then left to convene a further brief meeting at which Smith and Polley were



TOP: Norma Smith elected to the Board in 1982.



ABOVE: Ed Camilleri, a trainee manager at this point who left the club after being denied a management role as promised. Camilleri would return in 1991 as the club's chief executive officer and has been there ever since.

welcomed as new Board members and Bullard was elected president and Melham vice-president.

Gannon and Bush were, on all accounts, good, hard-working directors – and popular. Melham saw Gannon as credible. He had polled well at elections. When the split came Melham recalled that those supporting Gannon were more about engaging each other at the bar. They were clubbies through and through and their routine took them to the bar each evening where they would discuss the prospects of the coming election. In stark contrast, the Bullard–Melham team were out organising the numbers and rarely ventured into the club.

“In a lot of instances [at the ballot] I’m at the bottom [of the elected directors],” Melham explained. “I was always targeted in the early years. Everyone thought I was unpopular. That’s not true. This is where Ring and the others didn’t understand: doesn’t matter that you’re at the top, it’s a question of where you’re going to be if we take you off the ticket. The people on the ticket were popular but you had to stick as a team ... that’s why a lot of the earlier challenges to the Board didn’t go anywhere. People were not organised. Even some of the challenges against us – it wasn’t one ticket. They were running against each other, cutting one another’s throats.”

One irony not missed at the meetings was that Jim Donovan, the large-as-life former president, who had been swept out of power five years earlier by a Higgs-Bullard-Melham orchestrated coup, threw his support behind Bullard and Melham. One last matter was the ballot to elect the one vacant Board position, necessary after Dennehy resigned. Because of the cost of preparing and arranging an extraordinary general meeting – just for the sake of electing one director – the meeting agreed to wait until March when nomination forms could be included with that month’s *Club News*. The meeting was set down for 28 March.

Adding further heat to directors’ meetings at this time was the Board’s decision to renege on a promise to Ed Camilleri to appoint him a

manager at the end of his four-year traineeship. Acting on a recommendation that Camilleri should be appointed a sub-assistant manager, Jack Dennehy and Pat Ring led the charge to deny him a role at a Board meeting on 14 September 1982. Melham dissented from the vote and an amendment proposed by him lapsed. When Melham lodged a rescission motion, a peeved Ring walked out of the boardroom. Ironically it would be Ring’s last time in the room. Ten days later at the annual general meeting Ring was voted off the Board by members. At the first Board meeting following the elections – on 28 September – with John Gibbons as the new director, Melham and Bullard moved to have Camilleri reinstated. Gibbons voted with Melham but Vic Pavlick, a swinging voter at the best of times, did not support them. Despite support from the Club Managers’ Association, Camilleri left the club over it.

Australian-born of Maltese parentage, Camilleri started at the club in 1978 and within six months had stepped up to trainee manager – he was clearly a young man born to the club industry.

He recalled that the club was performing well. There were major shows in the auditorium and he was able to go backstage to meet the likes of Tina Turner and Roy Orbison – “an amazing era” as he put it. The club put Camilleri to work in every department. At the same time, he began a club management course at Ryde College and found it second nature. He recalled as a child at home, his father kept an old poker machine in the garage. “It was legal to take an old one home in those days,” he explained. “I remember playing with it as an eight-year-old, a five-cent poker machine. Today, it’s illegal to have one. Everything now has to be licensed.”

The club industry was clearly Camilleri’s future. He learned quickly about gaming, catering, beverage and entertainment and worked with some good people. He was able to fill in when managers went on holidays. He recalled one time when four of the department

managers went on holidays or extended sick leave at the same time. It meant working six days a week to cover it. He was asked to come to a Board meeting to explain why a young trainee manager could do four managers’ jobs. He was careful with his answers, realising he could have made himself unpopular. But he did sense resentment within the club. “They could see me coming through the ranks quite quickly,” he remarked. “I was only 19 and in a manager’s suit. The outcry was that I was the highest-paid apprentice in Australia. That came from a director. I was only being paid the award rate: no different to anyone else. The nickname they had for me was ‘Creeping Jesus’. I used to walk around and observe ... in those days I used to play it up a little and walk around with a clipboard and pretend to write something down. People would start to get sweaty ... pulling collars. I found it was a way of getting people to work.”

As he neared the end of his traineeship in 1982 – in the shadows of the boardroom upheaval – Camilleri asked Higgs what plans he had for him. He was well versed in management procedures; he felt good about it and as confident as a 23-year-old could be. Higgs indicated he wanted him to become beverage manager and took his suggestion to the Board. He was rejected. The Board, far from unanimous, voted not to give Camilleri a role anywhere in the club.

The resentment Camilleri had felt from certain members of the Board was now reality. He knew where the rancour emanated. Melham and Bullard, he knew, had been strong supporters, but for him there was never any sense to the decision than clouded feelings about his ethnicity.

Catering manager Kevin Gallagher consoled him. He told him: “You can do better than this. You’ve got to toughen up. You go from walking in there thinking you were going to be a beverage manager to nothing, not because you had done anything wrong ... because there is an element on the Board that didn’t want you.” Camilleri was unaware at the time of the

commotion – and disruption – his rejection caused. “A lot of people said, you put this kid through training ... spent money ... a well-paid apprentice and then you flick him off.”

Angry and resentful, Camilleri searched for other job prospects and at 23 years of age found a willing Baulkham Hills Sports Club who appointed him their secretary-manager, the youngest in the club industry. As the Workers’ Club began its journey back to management stability, Camilleri would maintain a keen interest in events at the club, long enough to be welcomed back one day as its chief executive officer.

TOP: Club members on a Fly Away weekend to Woolgoolga in the early 1980s.

BOTTOM: An annual picnic would be incomplete without the egg and spoon race, an event for all ages.



13

A lady in the boardroom



1983-84

IN VIEW OF THE CLUB'S POLICY OF EQUALITY FOR WOMEN MEMBERS FROM ITS VERY INCEPTION, IT SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN A SURPRISE TO CELEBRATE THE CLUB'S FIRST FEMALE BOARD MEMBER, NORMA SMITH. IT WAS NOT AS IF SHE REACHED THE BOARDROOM UNSCATHED. DESPITE HER CREDENTIALS AND HER CLEAR-CUT ELECTION RESULT, SHE WAS AWARE THAT SOME MEMBERS OF THE CLUB WOULD NOT BE VOTING FOR HER – SIMPLY ON THE BASIS SHE WAS A WOMAN.

However, she had the imprimatur of Bill Bullard and Daryl Melham. Bullard was the liaison officer to the netball club and observed Smith at close quarters. She had been the netball club's secretary and president over a long period and it had been the reason she joined the Workers' Club in 1973. Her three girls wanted to play sport and it was not only the nearest club but it offered the most opportunities.

When invited to stand for the Board, Smith saw it as an opportunity to give women a voice. "I did take it seriously because I thought that maybe a woman on the Board might be a good idea," Smith recalled in an interview in May 2011, not long before she passed away on 22 July. "It was because most other clubs didn't have women members. They had associate members. I was never a member of the [Bankstown] trotting club until years later because they didn't take women. I got very annoyed with the fact I couldn't go into this room or that room or I couldn't play snooker – not that I wanted to play, but it was for men only."

Smith had no illusions about the likely strength of her nomination – even without Board support. "I suppose being president of the netball club I had a pretty large

following ... plus support from the Labor Party. You can't forget them because they were the strong people. I went to the meeting [the extraordinary general meeting at which Smith was elected] and waited for them to read out the numbers [votes]. I just thought oh well, this is it. You've had your fun. It was a big surprise really."

Breaking up an all-male domain, despite the club's policy on women, did not sit well with some members. "They'd had an all-male Board for many years ... it's very hard to get in," she said. "I was told by some members [male], we're not voting for a woman. I thought, 'Please yourself.' It was quite a difficult time." Smith recalled the scepticism at her nomination from some of the male bowling club members, though simply based on the result of the ballot she was an overwhelmingly popular choice. And she had the unequivocal support of her husband, a strong advocate for equal rights for women, and her three like-minded daughters.

Smith reflected on dealing with important club issues with six male directors: she was not about to make waves, nor was she the type. She was strong in her beliefs and her views. Everyone knew that, and she admitted feeling her way in the early years. "The hardest thing was the adjustment ... coping with the fact there were six men and one woman. Sometimes you didn't know whether to speak up or shut up. You felt as though it wasn't the thing for you to speak out. Other times you did because of what you thought was right. Being in a woman's sport you didn't have a lot of men there although as a young person I was mixed up with cricket. So I did have the grounding I suppose of mixing with males and keeping quiet when I should."

For the men on the Board, they had entered a new environment. It would be about courtesy, about respect and acknowledgement that Smith, and Ron Polley, would bring a fresh feel to Board meetings. "I don't know what their language was like before I was on the Board," she wondered. "I should imagine sometimes it was a bit earthy. You learn to shut your ears



Norma Smith settled in as the Board's new member – breaking up a male domain.

sometimes and just ignore it. My father was a very strong personality and, I mean, he never swore at home in front of my mother or me but he always used to say, if it feels like something is right, speak out, say what you've got to say, although sometimes you had to curb it a little. Not be so blunt. There were times when they disagreed with me and I disagreed with them."

Smith didn't belong to the Labor Party when she was elected but her leanings were very much Labor-orientated. She had been brought up in a Labor-supporting household and understood she would not have been invited to nominate for the Board without Labor-inspired sentiments. "My father and my husband were strong Labor men," she said. "When I started out at work – in an insurance company – I joined the clerical union." It took Smith some time before she joined the Labor Party. She went to meetings and while she didn't feel obliged to join, she respected Daryl Melham's place in the Labor movement and felt joining the party gave her the opportunity to be of assistance to him.

Polley was of the same mould as Smith – dedicated and hardworking, not afraid to get his hands dirty. Significant also that Bullard was the liaison officer for the soccer club, as well, and as such formed a good relationship

with Polley. A toolmaker by trade, Polley was secretary then president of the soccer club – and a life member. Polley recalled that when he heard that two directors had

resigned he mentioned to Smith that “maybe we should stand for the Board”. When Bullard approached him, he was already in a frame of mind to take up the challenge.

Bullard was seen as trustworthy, a strong influence for voting members. He was named Bankstown Citizen of the Year in 1981 and when he came on as a Board member, he

was carried along with the flow, a beneficiary of a well-constructed campaign. His initial annual report was low-key and relatively short. However, he would – in his 11 years as president – prove to be a well-regarded leader and a close ally of Melham and Higgs.

By March 1983, Workers’ had their full complement of directors when Keith Heaslip, president and life member of the cricket club, was elected as Dennehy’s replacement. Some 445 members attended: five nominated for the one position – yet again Pat Ring (93 votes), Len Emery (23), Keith Heaslip (298), Terry Mellor (16) and Laurie Arthur (2 votes). Clearly, by now, the incumbent Board was a strength unto its own. As the voting numbers had shown, they had weathered a large storm and for their sake and the sake of the club, they set out on what they hoped would be a calm sea where the growth of the club and the wellbeing of members would be paramount. The Board was unopposed from 1983 to 1989 and, according to Melham, there haven’t been any divisions on the Board since. It would be another ten years before a new director was appointed.

By early 1983, Workers’ had new accountants. After whittling tenders down to three, the club chose R (Robert) and AR (Alan) Hill. They were conversant with the licensed club industry and were accountants for Bankstown RSL Club, Padstow RSL Sub-Branch Club Ltd and Deepwater Motor Boat Club.

A non-alcoholic bar ... No way!

The battle of wits at the boardroom coincided with the introduction of random breath testing (RBT) in New South Wales, introduced in December 1982. By March 1983, its impact on the club was already considerable. Bar trading was down by 25 per cent on the same period the previous year. Melham recalled that when he worked at the club, Revesby patrons drank 300 18-gallon kegs of beer per week, confirming the notion that it was a “drinking club”. (In 2011, the club traded on a third of that amount.)



A relaxed new director, Ron Polley.

LEFT: An aerial view of Revesby in the early 1980s. The club stands as a monument in the right-hand foreground.



The non-alcoholic bar, an innovative opportunity introduced to combat random breath testing which had impacted heavily on clubs and hotels. Despite its prime position, the bar had run its course after two years.

While the Workers' Club welcomed the life-saving measure as a genuine attempt to reduce the state's road toll, they opposed the alcohol limit (.05) and questioned the validity of the fear campaign associated with it. Brien Higgs spoke for the club when he argued: "Random Breath Testing has been thrust upon the citizens of

New South Wales in a very frightening manner. Scare tactics have been used with TV ads showing a citizen being incarcerated after failing tests that show he has alcohol in his blood system. This could be brought about by the consumption of less than three middies of beer or their equivalent.

"While we agree with the government that something had to be done about the traumatic death toll on our roads, we believe that the 'overkill' that has been used will prove detrimental to the social life enjoyed in our society, not to mention the adverse effect on an already ailing economy."

The Revesby club, through Higgs, wrote to the premier, Neville Wran, after a meeting of members, asking that the government lift the blood alcohol limit to .08. Wran's letter back was explicit, pointing out that the current blood alcohol limit had been in force in the Motor Traffic Act since 1980 when the level was reduced from .08 to .05 and that since then "the present measures are clearly saving lives and there is consequently no proposal before the government to alter the blood alcohol limit from its present level".

Most concerned appeared to be golf club members. Early in the campaign, the club wanted to know what the parent body was doing regarding RBT because they were concerned

about "trips to Penrith and other outlying areas". The camaraderie developed at the "nineteenth hole", which often turned into a drink-a-thon for some members, was already waning.

With the limit firmly established, the Workers' Club offered measures that would entice patrons to continue to use the club, such as a non-alcoholic bar, chauffeured limousines (operating from 10pm on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings), and a club valet service, whereby a professional, fully licensed driver would take members to their destination at a rate of an initial fee of \$3 and 75 cents per kilometre thereafter. By the next month, Revesby became the first metropolitan club to install a taxi service each day of the week from 4pm to 7pm and a club driver service any evening in which a specified driver would drive a member and passengers to their residences in the member's car. Another vehicle would pick up the driver for his return to the club. However the driver service lasted less than a month, disbanded since it was only required on two occasions.

A non-alcoholic bar, the brainchild of catering manager Kevin Gallagher, was a non-profitable though novel attempt to engage members. The bar was brightly decorated with large signs urging club members to "Take the Alternate Route" with "Drive Safely" messages and offering such drinks as "Tropical Fruit Punch", "The Transylvania Twist", "Pineapple Cream", "The Breathalyser Bomber" and a range of non-alcoholic wines and spirits. Sales never reached above \$35,000. Despite its prime position in the club, the bar showed losses of \$5157 in 1983 and \$9020 in 1984. By 1985 the club felt it had run its course. Random breath testing had consumed the public conscience and become a fact of life. Full acceptance came with time, though the profit line took some time before it was healthy again.

One concession introduced by the government was the multi-coin poker machine. Clubs also welcomed the introduction of Footy TAB, another positive innovation. For his part, Higgs saw the depressed economy as more of a

reason for the continuing downturn in profits than the breathalyser and, as the membership nudged the club's 30,000-limit in September 1984 and patrons suffered the inconvenience of major alterations and renovations, the trading profit dropped dramatically, enough for Bullard to warn the "golden days" were over: it was now survival. The net profit had slumped to just \$63,285, the lowest since 1976, the year before the boardroom coup which despatched Jim Donovan and his Board. Higgs also blamed the downturn on "competition from many gambling games the government is authorising".

The interruption to trading by the builders, Reed Constructions, was considerable, though necessary in the long term. This was a significant revamp which would include renovated front and rear entrances and foyers, provisions for fire escapes to comply with sterner fire act ordinances, a long-awaited internal 15-person lift for members and goods lift at the rear, access for the aged and disabled, a new bottle shop, new colour schemes, new carpets and additions to dining room, bars and lounges – all necessary to maintain the modern feel of the club. The members' lift was the first to be built into the club and enabled many of the club's older members to move around the club to areas such as the auditorium, dining room and cocktail bar where once they were unable to reach higher floors. Patrons were constantly reminded of the upgrade as they passed a large sign in the foyer which read: "\$1,000,000 New Look!"

New also was the Tara Theatre Restaurant in Henry Lawson House, run in conjunction with Brendan Locke, an Irish-born tenor who came to Australia in the 1970s, and Sean Kramer, also Irish, who was well-known at the time for his antics on a local television show *Almost Anything Goes*. Locke ran the Bunratty Castle chain of theatre restaurants and was the first Irish tenor to perform at the Sydney Opera House (in 1974). Kramer had similar theatre restaurant experience having spent three years at the Bankstown Civic Centre theatre restaurant.

The 38-hour working week was introduced in clubs in 1984 and industrial strikes on a number of issues were not uncommon. The metal trades were the first to gain the reduced working week in 1982 before it became national standard. Worth noting was that the union movement remained strong through this period where union membership stood at 3,028,500. Clubs continued under pressure from a number of proposed government initiatives, not the least in 1984 the licensing of video draw poker machines in hotels. At a specially convened meeting of the Registered Clubs Association at Paddington Woollahra RSL Memorial Club in March 1984, following an emotional debate, a motion requesting all club members not to vote for Labor politicians in the forthcoming state elections unless the video poker machines were withdrawn within 48 hours was lost narrowly on a show of hands.

While the introduction of the machines (five video draw machines per hotel) did not seriously challenge club balance sheets – simply because the jackpots were decidedly small compared to licensed clubs' gaming machines – it did give hotel operators a taste for the revenue riches of poker machines.

For its time, some measures introduced by the club were entrepreneurial and innovative, to say the least: a free legal service, art classes, a masseur (who worked both the female and male gymnasiums), a State Bank-operated "green machine" (the first automatic teller machine),

Premier Neville Wran with his wife, Jill at a club function in 1984. From left, Vic Pavlick, Daryl Melham, Norma Smith, John Gibbons, Jill Wran, Neville Wran, Brien Higgs, Ron Polley, Keith Heaslip, Bill Bullard.



A lady in the boardroom

No one filled the auditorium at Revesby Workers' Club like singing superstar Tom Jones – and he did it 12 times (twice a night) on his tour in 1983. Buses arrived from as far as Adelaide and movement in the club between shows was chaotic. Bottom right, staff members Arthur Rogers and Jan Ritchie (white dress) assist patrons on one of the big nights.



a Mitsubishi Magna SE as first prize connected to playing the poker machines, champagne breakfasts in the Casino Lounge and, in the International Year of the Youth, a concentrated effort through its sub-clubs in enhancing the leisure possibilities and lifestyles of their own youth. While they might not have been measures that impacted greatly on the bottom line, they were worthwhile club and community initiatives that focused on and added extra benefits to the membership.

Few events in Revesby's history added more to the club's image than the week of Tom Jones in October 1983 – exclusive in New South Wales to Revesby Workers'. Many believe it put Revesby on the map and saw it as a tribute to Henry Hess's entrepreneurial skills. Today, the halcyon years of entertainment are often referred to as the "Tom Jones days", highlighting the importance of the big shows and great artists who graced the Revesby stage during Hess's watch, though none bigger than Jones.

Jones played Revesby for six consecutive days (from Tuesday 11 to Sunday 16 October); two shows nightly, the first at 6.45pm and the second show at 10pm. It was spectacular and



TOM CAME AT A PRICE

The comfort demands and requirements of the superstar entertainment elite often know few bounds.

Tom Jones was about as big as you could get in the early 1980s (and beyond). He came to Revesby on the back of a carefully worded eight-page (foolscap) contract that made it clear he was in the very top echelon of world entertainers.

The numbers who came from so far afield to see him only confirmed his star in the firmament. So, Tom asked for and got what he wanted:

"... four (4) properly maintained, clean, adequately ventilated, well light [sic] dressing room facilities for all personnel furnished by the Producer (Revesby Workers'). Such dressing room facilities shall contain sink with hot and cold running water, table mirrors, chairs, lights for make-up, racks for hanging clothes, adequate towels, soap and power outlets.

"TOM JONES' dressing room shall be supplied with, in addition to the foregoing, a working shower with hot and cold water, couch or settee, twelve (12) clean towels, twelve (12) glasses, and ice bucket, ice, distilled water, tray, one gallon coffee, regular milk, Sweet 'n' Low, regular sugar, six (6) wash cloths, carpet on floor, one (1) bottle Dom Pérignon champagne, one (1) bottle Pouilly-Fuisse, one (1) bottle Johnny Walker Black Label scotch, twelve (12) glass cups and saucers, spoons, one (1) box Kleenex, one (1) case assorted diet soda for each performance hereunder.

"No less than four experienced competent security guards throughout the performance –

"(i) One of which shall be posted at the door of the dressing rooms at least thirty (30) minutes prior to admission of patrons to the venue

"(ii) At all access areas to the stage."

And that was not all folks ...

"TOM JONES shall receive one hundred per cent (100%) sole star billing in any and all publicity releases and paid advertisements ... No other name shall appear on the same line or above the name of TOM JONES."

In addition, it was noted that the fee payable to Omen International, the entertainment agent representing Jones, by Revesby Workers' would be \$34 out of every ticket sale of \$35. One dollar stayed with Revesby. All tickets were to be sold at the one price – \$35 – and Revesby guaranteed a minimum of 1300 seats per show. These were but a few of the requests.

Tom came, and conquered, and the value to Revesby in reputation and future income was inestimable: some say the making of the club.

enriching ... almost as if all roads led to Revesby Workers'. Promoted by the club as "The Event of '83", buses arrived with fans from as far afield as Adelaide, patrons paying a whopping \$35 a ticket at a time when patrons paid \$12.50 to see Kamahl and Gene Pitney, \$8 to see Des O'Connor, and \$2.99 could buy you a bottle of Arrowfield Hunter Riesling and a Wyndham Estate Cabernet Sauvignon cost \$3.99.

Revesby sold more than 10,000 tickets, the auditorium packed at every show, just to see Jones, the master showman. This was a time when the Entertainment Centre at Darling Harbour had only recently opened: when the old Sydney Stadium at Rushcutters Bay had closed and the only other venue worth considering for such a concert was the Hordern Pavilion at the showgrounds in Moore Park.

However, the Jones phenomenon didn't necessarily make club accountants and all of management happy. The logistics of emptying 1400 patrons from the first show as a similar number waited to fill the auditorium to overflowing for the second was a nightmare. Areas of the club – stairways and foyer – filled to capacity, so disruptive that gaming machines couldn't be played and by 10pm, according to manager Doug McLaughlin, the club was virtually empty. "During that time our poker machine takings were down 40 per cent," he recalled. "Members just couldn't get to them nor were they comfortable with the overflow of crowds waiting for the next show."

Not surprisingly, regular evening beer drinkers complained they couldn't get into the club on some nights such as the commotion



From left, Daryl Melham, Revesby vice-president, Ray McCormack, the mayor of Bankstown, Alan Ashton, at the time an alderman on the Bankstown council, and club president Bill Bullard review architect plans to renovate and refurbish the club. The rebuilding was completed in mid-1984 and opened by premier Neville Wran in June of that year.

and fanfare surrounding Jones. Some were glad to see him gone. The intangible, however, was the impact a week of Tom Jones would have on Revesby's reputation. The "joint" had been jumpin' like never before and never after.

A strike like no other

The euphoria created by Tom Jones was forgotten in the months ahead when, in mid-1984, Liquor Trade Union staff went on strike over catering manager Kevin Gallagher's handling of staff relations. Gallagher was accused of treating staff members in an "aggressive" manner. The issue reached the New South Wales Industrial Commission where the Federal and Allied Employees' Union of Australia proposed, among a number of demands, that "Mr Gallagher accept this as a final warning ... that Mr Gallagher's manner must improve", and later, "that he be sacked".

Gallagher, an Irishman and a chef by trade, was, according to Board members, very good at his job and one who "would call a spade, a spade". The incident, on 2 June, involved staff members, including a supervisor, at Henry Lawson House where Gallagher noted a lack of staff "on the floor", some of them gathered in front of the bar in the Jasmine Room, while "most of the tables had several empty glasses and dirty ashtrays on them". In a recent

interview, Gallagher admitted that the real reason for his ire was because members of staff were drinking on the job, though he made no such direct accusations in his initial report.

The supervisor and the union also saw the issue as a demarcation dispute. The harangued supervisor, a member of the poker machine and bar department, took umbrage at a catering manager giving him orders which he believed was out of his jurisdiction.

Attempts by the Board to negotiate with the LTU were avoided by the union. The Board also noted that no specific charges had been laid against Gallagher at this stage, nor had any evidence been presented by the LTU, the Board thereby denying the LTU's request that they sack Gallagher. The lack of communication at this early stage suggested the LTU had a broader agenda in their demands. Clearly, these were going to be hard days at the office.

In what would become the longest and most crippling strike in the club's history, on 5 June, 230 LTU staff members voted to walk off the job, thus shutting down Revesby Workers' until they returned nine days later, on 14 June, after a recommendation by Justice Liddy at a compulsory conference in the State Industrial Commission.

It took the club some time to return to normality, perhaps no more evident than in a large club advertisement in *The Torch* newspaper on Wednesday, 13 June, a day before staff agreed to return to work. The advertisement, highlighting two shows by "Superstar Des O'Connor" among other club happenings during that week and the following week, was stamped with the word "CANCELLED" across its entirety.

Gallagher had his wings clipped, forbidden, under threat of dismissal, from speaking to any member of the LTU – even if the LTU member wanted to speak to him. He requested answers as to why he had been confined to an area of the club (the old boardroom) from which it was practically impossible for him to perform his duties. It was described by McLaughlin, the acting secretary-manager at the time, as

like working in a dungeon. "He had no power whatsoever. It was like he was wiped off the face of the earth." Gallagher remained on the payroll but, at this point, was no longer working at full capacity as catering manager and, as the dispute continued well into September and October of 1984, it was clearly affecting the profit and loss in the catering department.

As the dispute reached the Industrial Arbitration Court, the LTU issued the Revesby Board with a "package" of demands, directed at both Gallagher and the club. The Board refused to give in to the union, finding the LTU's "package" unacceptable in its entirety. The Board reiterated that they endorsed the finding of Brien Higgs who issued a statement under the heading "MATTERS OF CONDUCT OF ALL EMPLOYEES OF THIS CLUB" on 28 June which read in part that "Mr Gallagher ... is to modify his approach to the staff both in words he uses and the attitude he displays".

There was never any question that Gallagher had the club's welfare at heart and, in fact, his disdain for staff drinking on club premises and any lack of good working principles were anathema to him. In this era, staff were allowed to drink during their meal breaks and after work, and would use the "quiet room" to socialise.

Denise Follers, who in the mid-1990s became a union delegate, recalled Gallagher as a manager who "ran a tight ship, but a good ship. A lot of us got on well with him. I remember he wasn't allowed to communicate with us. He sat in his office for quite a while." Gallagher's manner might have been brusque but in all of this, as recognised by the Board, the LTU was looking for much bigger fish – a broad undertaking to force the Revesby Workers' Club to bow to LTU demands.

The supervisor accused by Gallagher was later shown the door by the club for the very reason Gallagher took exception on the night in question in Henry Lawson House. Gallagher remained at Revesby until 1987 when he left to join the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation (known today as Meat and Livestock Australia).

Follers celebrated 30 years with the club in October 2011 and remembered this period in the catering department as having a distinct "upstairs and downstairs" posture. She first began in the bistro ("downstairs") and rarely engaged with those who worked in the more rarefied air "upstairs" in the à la carte dining room. The uniforms were different, clearly defining the contrast, and it took some time before catering staff from both floors mingled.

If Gallagher was able to leave of his own fruition, Hess, the club's colourful entertainment manager, did not have the same luxury. Despite his entrepreneurial skills and his "Tom Jones coup", Hess was about to test club management's patience for the last time. He had been the conduit to Revesby taking the high ground in the state's licensed club world; the club was the number-one licence fee holder in the Sydney metropolitan area and the high profile of the club, helped along by the quality of the entertainment Hess was able to bring to the stage, had much to do with Revesby's standing in the wider community.

Ed Camilleri, who became chief executive officer in 1991, recalled Hess from his trainee days in the early 1980s when Hess lived at



Catering manager Kevin Gallagher.

Entertainment manager Henry Hess, in control of the music? Standing, from left, Daryl Melham, Bill Bullard, Ron Polley and Phillip Boulten, an alderman on the Bankstown council and now a leading criminal defence barrister.



A lady in the boardroom

Chiswick. He was a big man, conspicuous in his tweed jacket and, according to Camilleri, “strutted around the club like Henry the Emperor”.

During these trainee days, Camilleri was intimidated by a black-and-white photograph Hess had posted of him on the wall of his small office above a fire stair in the auditorium. When Camilleri asked him why he had the photo, Hess just said: “I like looking at you.” “He didn’t like me at all, but I learned a lot



ABOVE: Premier Neville Wran talking to an attentive audience, which included Pat Rogan (in dark suit to the right) and his wife Eunice next to him at the official opening of the club’s renovations on 27 June 1984 and, RIGHT, officially opening the club with Revesby president, Bill Bullard.



from him and to his credit he brought acts out to this club that no one dreamed of ... beyond Brien [Higgs], beyond anyone.”

Hess and club management were always on edge. He ran the entertainment like a showman, a law unto himself, forever walking the fickle path of the entrepreneurial spirit, but stepping outside the boundaries once too often.

In May 1984, Hess booked John Rowles for three venues – the St George Leagues Club, Hornsby RSL and Revesby Workers’. At the same time as Rowles was performing at Hornsby, acting chief executive officer Doug McLaughlin was with Bill Bullard in the Workers’ Club auditorium when he noticed that the \$30,000 light and sound desk was missing. Hess informed McLaughlin that the equipment was being repaired. However, checks with the repairer revealed that the desk was not there. Armed with the knowledge that Hess had lied, McLaughlin noticed the return of the desk the next day on the back of a one-tonne truck – not from the repairer but from Hornsby RSL where it had been used to good effect for the Rowles show.

Rowles was oblivious to any of Hess’s dealings and just happened to be the artist performing on the night. Hess continued to deny the equipment had gone to Hornsby when the Board, through McLaughlin, ordered him to provide an itemised account of all light and sound equipment.

The following morning Hess was out the door. McLaughlin, with instructions from the Board, called Hess into a meeting, presented him with a cheque and told him he was finished – and not to come back. When he threatened to go to Bullard, McLaughlin informed him that Bullard’s signature was on the cheque. It was an unhappy ending for a man whose entrepreneurial energy was significant in Revesby’s growth.

George Thornton, a drummer in the Revesby club band, took over as acting entertainment manager and though the club received 38 applications for the position, Thornton was retained. Later in the year, Thornton operated in the role as a club contractor under his company name, Thornton Enterprises.

The club finally took an axe to expenditure in the auditorium; the Board promised to maintain the quality of artists, though perhaps less of them. The direct cost of artists and entertainment dropped from \$916,441 in the 1983–84 financial year to \$380,709 the following year: ticket sales dropped comparably – from the \$829,989 spent by patrons in 1984 to \$304,071 in 1985. On the economies of scale, the bottom line was not affected as much as the club would have liked; the operating loss in the auditorium stopped at just over \$200,000 and while the deficits were reduced in the immediate years (\$150,000 in 1985–86), entertainment continued to run at a loss. What was also noticeable in the 1983–84 year was the near \$20,000 trading loss of Henry Lawson House and the gym (\$16,596).

The poor figures in 1984, in the light of history, represented a mere blip on the radar.



ABOVE: Charity workers for The Little River Band concert. LRB performed in concert to help raise thousands of dollars for charities. From left, Vic Pavlick, Keith Heaslip, Yvonne Pavlick, Laurie Sultana, Trevor Heaslip (ribbon), Bill Bullard, Jack Davidson (staff), Jack Apter (staff). Seated are Karlene Bullard and Pat Heaslip.



LEFT: Three life members of the Revesby fishing club. From left, John Howe, Kevin Williams and Terry Semlitzky show their catch (snapper) at Gunnamatta Bay after a day fishing against the underwater club – a day they called, appropriately, an “unders and overs” day!

The following year – after the renovations had been completed, and club life returned to normal, the trading profit rose accordingly – to a more than respectable \$498,580. A remarkable effort when one considers that the profit from the first two trading months, July and August, was just \$299.84.

While Revesby had suffered a sharp decline in profit, the club entered its most stable period. The Board remained unchanged until 1993, a blessing for a club that for its first 20 years or so had been bedevilled by boardroom battles.

14



1985-89

It's official! We are number one

THE HEAVY HAND OF MERV MACFARLANE REMAINED ON *CLUB NEWS* WELL INTO THE 1980S. HIS RAMBLINGS CARRIED SUCH HEADLINES AS "EFFECTS OF THE ARMS RACE", "RIGHT WING POLICIES THREATEN WORKERS", "ACTU CALLS FOR TROOP WITHDRAWAL", "TRADE UNIONS FIGHT ON BROAD FRONT" AND "LIBERALS CHANGE LEADERS", WHICH INCLUDED A SHARP REBUKE TO SYDNEY'S MEDIA: "THIS STRUGGLE WAS WELL PROMOTED BY THE CAPITALIST MEDIA," HE VENTURED. AS WELL, HE ALSO URGED READERS TO "RETURN HAWKE LABOR GOVT" - SUCH CLEAR POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE COMMON FARE FOR READERS OF REVESBY'S MONTHLY JOURNAL.

It often brought public rebuke and sometimes letters to the editor of the journal. On one occasion a member castigated him for his perceived support of Russia's invasion of Afghanistan in 1980. The member wrote, in part, "In your articles on the Afghanistan invasion, you make the killing of people from that country sound so proper and wholesome that I felt we should ask them to do the same in Australia ... It seems to you that when Australia went to Vietnam to aid the South Vietnamese repel the advance of communism, they were wrong, but when the Russians invade a country to spread its philosophy, it's okay." MacFarlane never allowed the criticism to go without a stinging reply. He was consistent in his views, sometimes entertaining and often educational. Nowhere in clubland was there a more trenchant public advocate for deep left-wing politics.

To ensure middle-of-the-road Labor views were not ignored, the club invited the member for East Hills, Pat Rogan, a club member and later to become director and president of the club, to write a column in each month's *Club News*. Rogan was up to the task, often covering two full pages of the journal. While members continued to blanch at the unabashed portrayal of left-wing sentiments, the Board was determined to remain true to the virtues of those who laid the platforms so many years back. MacFarlane remained on solid ground.

Even consistent attempts by members and the occasional management employee to have the club upgrade its logo - the hammer and wrench - to more modern standards were turned back with defiant appropriateness for the same reasons: to stay true to the pioneering spirit of the club's founding fathers.

While Julie Anthony made the front page of *Club News* in February 1986, described as a superstar and ready yet again to wow audiences at Workers', only one topic was ever going to make it to the *Club News* front page two months later in April. In large, proud letters, the cover proclaimed: "It's Official! The Number One Club." Revesby Workers' Club had achieved the highest licence fee of any club in the Sydney metropolitan area, the result of having the highest liquor sales, suggesting that members not only enjoyed the atmosphere within the Workers' Club environment but that many were, in the main, thirsty, hardworking men ... still! They remained number one in 1987 and, in a list of the top clubs in that year as reported in the *Daily Mirror*, seven of the top eight clubs were from outer-western suburbs, Blacktown Workers' and Mt Pritchard and District Community Club following Revesby in the top three.

Revesby provided ample variety for club members at a time of considerable change for society and the club industry. Sky Channel and a Totalisator Agency Board (TAB) outlet were both added in 1987-88. So too was a bottle shop and, though they rarely made headlines, senior citizens enjoyed monthly concerts. Even club

staff and Board members enjoyed their luxuries - Club Plus, a compulsory Liquor Trades Award Superannuation for staff and, for directors, a hefty reduction in the number of Board meetings.

A loss in 1986 of just \$153,832 on entertainment, the lowest figure for years, reflected the club's keenness to reduce costs. Since the opening of the Sydney Entertainment Centre at Darling Harbour in 1983, attracting the biggest names in the international entertainment world, things had become more difficult. Promoters were far more anxious to book a 15,000-seat venue for their stars than an 1100-capacity auditorium at the Workers', despite the successes of the past.

Patrons flocked to the Workers' Club when Roy Orbison came to town. These images show the "Big-O" on stage with his backing musicians and singers and a view of the packed auditorium lapping up one of the legends of music.





TOP: Bill Bullard.



BELOW: Brien Higgs.

The overall standard of international artists waned when compared to the early '80s when such stars as Roy Orbison graced the Workers' Club stage. Even so, Revesby was still able to attract Australian and world-renowned performers, among them such club favourites as Gerry and the Pacemakers and Freddie and the Dreamers, as well as Little River Band, Bay City Rollers, Reg Varney, The Monkees, Rolf Harris, Freddie Paris, Des O'Connor, the perennial favourite, and such shows as the Black and White Minstrel Show, Moscow Nights and a Ladies Night, starring the Raging Rascals. These were high-quality artists who could fill an auditorium. There was also the advantage of reputation. Revesby Workers' Club, by this stage, was already a proven venue on Sydney's entertainment roundabout and patrons' sometimes insatiable taste for overseas performers was implicit in Bullard's regret that in booking high-quality Australian artists, "many an excellent [Australian] show passes through the club without the recognition from patrons".

The show-biz era in New South Wales clubs started in 1956 and, mainly because of the increase in the number of larger entertainment facilities, lasted until the mid- to late 1980s. Many of Australia's finest artists, including the likes of Peter Allen, Frank Ifield and even the Bee Gees, received their start in clubs.

Veteran comedian/entertainer Bruce Sacre recalled these times in *The New South Wales Club Movement 1838-2009*. He told author Nick Hartgerink: "Without clubs, the entertainment industry as we know it in New South Wales wouldn't exist ... Most of the new clubs had auditoriums, and put on live entertainment because that is what people wanted in those days. The clubs put on shows to get people through the doors, hoping they'd stay and play the pokies."

According to Sacre, who was still performing even into his 80s, he took tours to clubs across the state, "to big clubs in Wollongong like Illawarra Leagues and Wollongong Leagues; places like Rosellas and Souths in Newcastle; Bathurst Leagues Club. We'd put together the whole package

– performers, lighting, sound equipment ... There'd be people like Sandy Scott, Johnny O'Keefe, Bryan Davies and sometimes overseas performers like the Ink Spots and Billy Daniels ... we'd have a lot of fun."

Directors also had their occupations listed in annual reports: Bullard, self-employed as an upholsterer; Gibbons, a caretaker; Heaslip, technical officer; Melham, solicitor and public defender (barrister); Pavlick, gardener, leading hand; Polley, a toolmaker; and Smith, a clerk. Importantly, this Board had been able to maintain a calming influence on club governance and in the eyes of its membership was steering the club in the right direction. The Board was re-elected unopposed in 1987 and 1988, and in 1989 Jim Healy (after a long absence) stood against the seven incumbents without winning a place. There had been no changes to the Board since 1983. Some eight years of turbulence at the boardroom table had given over to quiet resolve, not necessarily without heavy debate and the cut and thrust one expects from club boardrooms, but with a sense that the Board members were, at least, pulling in the right direction.

Noel Edward (Bill) Bullard was awarded life membership of the club in 1986. Brien Higgs was recognised the following year. Both men were wonderful servants to the Revesby club cause. Higgs's appointment was unusual, only in that some clubs do not qualify paid staff as life membership recipients. However, Higgs qualified on many counts: as the original secretary-manager, a Board member and president (though briefly) and also on the basis of longevity. Higgs had been a lifeblood of the club and very much in the thick of boardroom and political battles of the late 1970s and early 1980s, never afraid to get his hands dirty for the sake of the club.

The entrepreneurial spirit and marketing nous of Workers' was evident in the introduction in March 1987 of a marketable character/mascot, Wally Worker, the brainchild of club manager Geoff Provest. The attraction for the Workers' Club Board in approving the

concept was the character's instant association with the club: the appeal to children, and recognition in the wider Bankstown precinct.

While holding immediate fascination and interest for the very young, development of the character intrigued all ages. Wally Worker was produced on a number of levels – as an illustrated character in one-off promotions; as an illustrated cartoon story; in larger-than-life cardboard posters promoting club events; and as a roving mascot, used in promotions throughout Bankstown at club functions, on club picnics and at sideshows.

Wally had already been active throughout the community with appearances at Bankstown Hospital and the Children's Hospital at Camperdown, as well as at sporting functions and fetes and on excursions where children were each given a Wally Bag.

The club promoted Wally at length in *The Torch* newspaper, at community functions and extensively throughout club journals, including a full page in the August 1987 *Club News*, resplendent with the club logo (hammer and wrench) on the front of his overalls. Wally lasted until the late 1980s, seen off principally because of the cost to staff him.

Club and municipal resignations and retirements affected both Workers' and the Bankstown City Council. Co-patron Ray McCormack, formerly the mayor of Bankstown and foundation director of the Workers' Club, retired as an alderman after 19 years on the council: he was mayor for five terms. Catering manager Kevin Gallagher, a nine-year servant of the Workers' Club, resigned to take on a new business venture in Queensland and long-term auditors David Hoggett and Peter Stapleton also moved on, replaced by Ian Rae and Associates.

Welcome Panania!

With the national economy finally on the rise, ever so slowly, Revesby stepped outside the square and acquired another club – the Panania Bowling and Recreation Club. Panania approached the Workers' Club in March 1986

proposing they take over the club and all its assets and liabilities. The Panania club was heading for financial ruin and only a merger, more succinctly a takeover, by a cashed-up club could save it. Revesby was primed. The Workers' Board saw the synergies for both Revesby and Panania and club president Bill Bullard was upbeat. "For many years," he reasoned, "Revesby Workers' Club had problems catering for the needs of our sporting bodies. Besides giving amenities to our members, it will greatly assist our community."



Wally Worker was a popular character developed by the Workers' Club. He was much revered and embraced by children, not only at Workers' but in the broader Bankstown precinct. Club vice-president Daryl Melham occasionally wore the Wally Worker suit in aid of charities and club functions. Next to Daryl, dressed as Santa Claus at a Christmas function, was fellow director, Keith Heaslip.

BELOW: Wally behind the bar – on his day off!



The Panania Bowling and Recreation Club in 1956. The first clubhouse, RIGHT, was a shed remodelled from a Renault car packing container.

BELOW: The clubhouse when the merger was completed in 1986.



The Revesby Workers' Club members approved in principal the resolutions of the extraordinary general meeting at the Panania clubhouse at 22 Homelea Avenue on 21 May, which allowed Revesby to acquire all the assets of the Panania club and pay all the debts and liabilities as at 30 June 1986. After approval by the Licensing Court of New South Wales and agreement by Bankstown City Council of transference of the lease from Panania to Revesby Workers', Revesby moved in. The

club provided management services at cost to Panania and the directors of the Panania club resigned, at which time the directors of Revesby were appointed in their place. The name was changed to the Revesby Workers' Sports and Recreation Centre. The first committee of the new club was Warren Berry (president), Stan Blunt (secretary) and Dave Adam (treasurer). They took over the day-to-day running of the club and Panania members were required to become members of the Workers' Club.

Not everyone believed the club needed to merge. Ted Sankey, a Panania member since 1958, believed the club could have been saved without Revesby's help. Sankey had been brought in as secretary/treasurer, at the request of newly elected president Bob Clements, after the club's executive resigned suddenly, six months before the club sought help. He believed a debenture issue he had put in place, as well as new operating procedures, would save the club. The members disagreed and, despite Sankey's good intentions, voted to go to Revesby.

Isolated next to the Bankstown tip and situated on swamplands, the Panania club had its beginning in 1956, four years before the Workers' Club was formed. The first clubhouse was a shed remodelled from a

Renault car packing container – members merely reassembled the wooden crate and added frames. Revesby Workers' bowling club members first used the Panania bowling greens in the late 1960s and played for the Friendship Cup from 1971. The trophy was donated by the then-president Dave Adam, a great stalwart of the Panania club, to promote fellowship and goodwill between the two clubs.

Adam recalled that Panania had struggled to survive back in the mid-1960s when it was dragged back from bankruptcy by president Harry Collins and a newly appointed committee. It was never easy despite the camaraderie within the Panania membership and any new tax impost by governments or severe downturn in the Australian and global economies added another blow to their bottom line, sending them closer to insolvency.

Like most at Panania, Adam was reluctant to let go, despite the inevitable. There were many meetings with Bill Bullard, Daryl Melham and Brien Higgs. "I cried ... I put so much work into it, from 1958 to 1986," he admitted. "Then after it was over it was the best thing that happened to the club. Revesby paid off the debts. Paid the staff. Paid taxation ... compensation ... the greenkeeper ... for everything."

At the time of the merger, the club consisted of one very large room, enough for a lounge/bar and poker machines, and a further "main" room where the club held its entertainment, which could be petitioned off by folding doors if necessary. It was basic, but functional.

Until the merger, the Revesby Workers' men's and women's bowling clubs had been virtual nomads. They had, at varying times, used the greens at Panania, Padstow Bowling Club, Revesby Bowling Club and Picnic Point. Perhaps ironic in the union with Panania, the Revesby and Panania bowlers had, at one time, a falling out over the Panania club's decision to increase playing fees. According to Sankey: "They were giving us \$5 per player. With that they had the use of the green and they didn't have to find anything else. They objected and went elsewhere." After stopovers at a couple

of clubs, the Workers' Club bowlers finished at Revesby Bowling Club. The further irony in that move came much later, again, when Revesby Workers' amalgamated with the club!

The essential focus for the Workers' Club's ladies and men's bowlers in Revesby's acquisition of Panania was the three good-quality greens. Yet the club also served many masters, not the least country and western dance nights and providing a further home for Revesby Workers' leisure and sports clubs, including the golf and fishing clubs, who were among the first to use the facilities, and cricket, whose members were to become long-term users of the club for post-match enjoyment on Saturday afternoons.

In its time, the Panania club was a mini-hotspot for Australian music. Col Joye, before the days of the Joy Boys, played some of his earliest gigs at the club. George Jacobsen, the father of Col and his brothers, Kevin and Keith, was a member of the club and encouraged his sons to play there. Dave Adam recalled Sandy Scott, Judy Stone and other *Bandstand* luminaries playing at the club. Musical talent emanated from club members also. A small group formed a skiffle band, which not only played at the bowling and recreational club but was also engaged by other clubs in the area.

It was essential that the newly acquired club did not place a drain on the main club and, indeed, the first-year deficit of \$17,415 was an acceptable result. Time would tell just how feasible the merger would turn out to be. The club sat on council land and, as a leasehold property, it reduced its investment potential significantly. Salient in Revesby's decision, however, was the inherent need to look after their own – the bowlers and the sub-club members.

Charity begins with Bill

The Revesby Workers' Club president, Bill Bullard, maintained his acute interest in charity work. Genuinely selfless in his application to so many needy causes, Bullard was a resourceful promoter of charity events and the necessity for club members to support



Norma Smith, Daryl Melham and Alan Ashton at a fundraising presentation for the Menai Fire Brigade, one of many causes supported by Revesby Workers'.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Revesby made good use of its previous club premises – so named Henry Lawson House. This was a function in the Jacaranda Room, which had once been the club's auditorium.

those less fortunate. The club industry, from the time it was conceived, has been renowned and appreciated for the amount of money donated to charities and organisations, from schools and educational institutions (Revesby supplied \$11,000 to 22 schools in the district in 1986) to the highest-profile charity bodies, such as The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul and the like. Yet much of it was, and is, “hidden” without fanfare in annual reports. Few presented the assistance to charities as earnestly and as consistently as Bullard, his president's reports each year rarely without strong emphasis on the charity works of the club. In the 1987–88 financial year, the club listed their donations at \$126,672.52 – \$20,150 to Bankstown Hospital and \$73,750 to the Kelso Park development in which the club, on a dollar for dollar basis with the Bankstown City Council plus \$28,000 from the NSW state government, helped to construct a hockey field, mini-soccer and two soccer fields, athletics oval and four tennis courts, together with their amenities and parking facilities, as part of stage one.

Bullard also took time out to laud the club's ethnicity. “Racism,” he wrote, “is one of the world's major problems with people of different colours and creeds in constant conflict. It is comforting when we view our membership, and see the wide range of nationalities included, that no conflict exists within our club, and this example could be followed by others.”

With a net profit of \$662,291 in the 1985–86 financial year, Bullard and his team could crow about other successes and it gave the Board the confidence to plan large-scale club extensions. As the country prepared for its long-awaited bicentenary celebrations, the Workers' Club Board was busy preparing to extend and renovate – doubling the size of the casino and sportsmen's lounges and adding a new restaurant, bistro, coffee shop, promotions area, sports lounge, games area and poker machine room with four bars and offices. This would be the first step in a bid to modernise and increase the size of the club. Directors envisaged this would be the first stage in taking the club to the twenty-first century, a substantially sized structure estimated to cost \$4.28 million. It eventually cost in excess of \$5 million. The extensions and improvements upgraded the image of Revesby as a modern, high-achieving club and set a platform for future plans to renovate.

Henry Lawson House was getting a make-over as well. The club added some glamorous features such as a refurbished Jacaranda Room, which could accommodate 325 persons, the Jasmine Room (for 200 people) for smaller weddings and functions and the development of a courtyard garden.

In April 1988, Revesby members received new personalised membership cards. Gone were the coloured metal badges that carried each member's club number. The nation had become a card society and, as explained by Revesby management, “This [card] will be plastic and similar in composition to many bank and discount cards. On the reverse will be a magnetic strip.” The new cards entitled members to discounts at the bar and in the bottle shop.

In this bicentennial year, 31 sporting and leisure clubs enjoyed subsidy and support under the Revesby Workers' Club banner, and a long jumper from the athletics club, Nicole Boegman, performed at the 1988 Seoul Olympics where she finished an outstanding eighth. She would later win Commonwealth Games gold in the same event. The club never lost sight of its duty to the sporting clubs which included so many children of club members.

In 1988, Thornton's short role as entertainment officer was coming to an end. The replacement for the irrepressible Henry Hess, Thornton found it necessary to stand down due to the pressure of his boating business, but would continue in the less demanding role as band leader. He also agreed to assist his replacement, Geoff Provest, who was faced with maintaining Revesby's reputation on the entertainment stage without embarking on a spending frenzy.

In a tight-knit community of workers' clubs, regret and sadness affects all when one of its members closes, as was the case in March 1988 when the Cronulla Labor and Workingmen's Club closed its doors when its bank foreclosed on it. The Cronulla club, on prime land, just



100 metres from North Cronulla Beach, had been a supporter of Revesby in the earliest days when, as the East Hills Workers' Club, Revesby sought its liquor licence.

AN EXPLANATION FROM THE HEART

Bill Bullard's devotion to charitable works was always seen as a selfless act of a man committed to helping others. In his report of 1988, Bullard allowed members into his world of benevolence and compassion:

“As with most people, I considered that if you tried to be a good person and brought into this world and raised children, you would indeed be a true citizen.

“About twelve years ago (1977) I was elected to the position of Chairman of

Charities. This was a position I didn't look for, as I considered it would encroach on my recreational time – and it did! I wouldn't be truthful if I didn't, at times, wish it to billyo.

“While attending a function years ago at Prince of Wales Hospital, guests were entertained by a group of youths both male and female who were undergoing treatment for that dreaded sickness, leukaemia. I couldn't help wondering why they were so pleasant, singing an arrangement of songs that were looking

for hope and happiness. It was then that I realised they were hoping and searching for something I had – health!

“From that time on I fully appreciated the importance of the position of Chairman of Charities.

“Mr Jack Kasses, who was chairman of the cancer and leukaemia fundraising for that particular hospital, explained to me, as a friend, the problems and frustrations that families go through when one of their members is stricken. To Jack I say thank you.”

List of life members in 1988:

M J Donovan, E L Smith, G A Johnstone, H J McDougall, W N Hills, R J Kelly, M MacFarlane, J Webster, N E Bullard, V Pavlick, B J Higgs.

Membership was at 26,446 (30 June 1988).

Have a bet, Arthur

The long wait was over for punters in July 1988 when the club opened its TAB operations. Two long-standing members, Arthur Raper and Hugh Deller, were the first to invest. Arthur was the father of the Raper boys, among them John, one of the greatest rugby league players

of all time, and Terry, a much admired and loyal member of the club for many years, who died in 2006. Arthur Raper was well known within the club, dressed to the “nines” in his tuxedo, as an umpire in the Vets Cup snooker competitions.

One of the much-loved stalwarts of the snooker room was Jack Apter, a spray painter and colour matcher by trade, who first worked casually at the club as a car park attendant. Apter, a staunch Labor man, worked for the Department of Supply and was chosen to colour match repairs to the Royal Visit Car Company Daimler landaulettes that were to transport the recently crowned Her Royal Highness, Queen Elizabeth II on her first tour of Australia in



TOP LEFT: A special visit from one of Australia's greatest snooker champions, Eddie Charlton, appreciated by then club director John Gibbons and popular Jack Apter, who, while best known in snooker circles, was “mates with everyone”. Jack was a Revesby stalwart, as was his wife Jean, who worked at the club for nearly 20 years.

BELOW LEFT: The combatants, Jock Keanie (far left) and Ray McCormack (far right), former mayor of Bankstown, promote the 1989 Snooker Veterans Cup final. Second from left is Arthur Raper, father of the famous footballing Raper boys, who acted as marker. Next to him is club director John Gibbons.

1954. The cars, used sparingly and kept almost exclusively for royal occasions, were taken out of storage where it was noticed that strong sticky tape strapped to the coverings over each car attached itself to the vehicles and peeled off small fragments of paint when removed. Apter, it was felt, had the expertise to complete the delicate task.

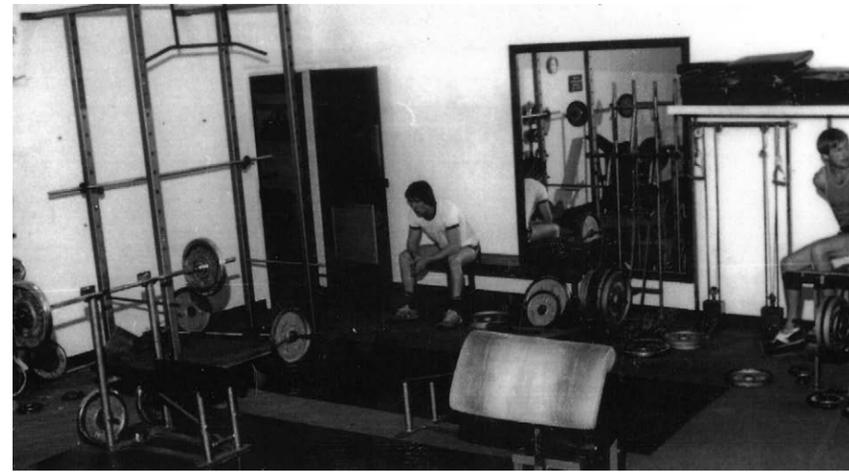
At the Workers' Club, Apter enjoyed less royal tasks. He moved from the car park in 1981 and took up a position as the snooker room attendant, later making it a full-time position. He was known by all – a civil, courteous man and, according to Daryl Melham, “mates with everyone”; at various times he became secretary and treasurer of the club. He was joined at Revesby by his wife, Jean, in 1978. She also worked casually before accepting a full-time position, working mostly in reception. As part of the multi-functional staff system in place at the time, Jean even got to call bingo – and work with Henry Hess! “He called me his ‘pension lady’,” she recounted. “I think he would have been happier with a dolly bird working for him.” By 1995, both Jack and Jean were ready for retirement and called it quits on the same day – Jean after 17 years and Jack after 26 years.



Jean expressed a deep pride and love that both she and Jack felt for the club, which had become a major part of their working lives.



OPPOSITE PAGE: A special Christmas function for senior members of the club. Club vice-president Daryl Melham is onstage far left; club president Bill Bullard is at the rear while Brian Howe, Minister for Social Security, campaigns in the leadup to the 1990 federal election.



So many of the innovations in this period – plastic membership discount cards, TABs in clubs, Sky Channel live racing and the like – have long been accepted in today’s modern society but were exciting and eye-opening then to an appreciative club membership: all this in the year of Australia’s bicentenary. Another innovation for club members was the Link Progressive Systems on poker machines. Thanks to poker machine manager Doug McLaughlin, Revesby was at the forefront of approving the new system, having been one of four clubs – along with North Sydney Leagues, Canterbury-Bankstown League and Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL – chosen to trial these machines called “Lucky Lynx Bank”, which produced jackpots as high as \$100,000.

When Australia’s first domestic satellite began transmitting in 1985, the Registered Clubs Association was quick to recognise its benefits. Club Superstation was established in partnership with Robert Holmes à Court’s Bell group, the RCA taking a 20 per cent share (at no cost but with no right of resale on the shares). However, it was short-lived.

Two years later – in 1987 – the Bell group experienced financial difficulties and was struggling to obtain sufficient live racing coverage. In the same year, the RCA agreed to allow rival station Sky Channel to absorb Club Superstation as long as it received full live racing coverage for its clubs. Club TAB and Sky Channel would become common fare in licensed clubs from that moment – Sky Channel increasing its coverage in the years ahead though not without some battles along the way, not the least the introduction in 2005 of Thoroughbred Vision (TVN), a live racing television channel owned by the various racing clubs of New South Wales and Victoria.

As a record 44 clubs joined the RCA in 1986, the state Labor Party lost its leader, Neville Wran, who resigned and handed the reins to Barrie Unsworth. The RCA, which bought its own property in the CBD of Sydney at the same time, had become disenchanted with the Labor Party. Particularly galling for the RCA was the government’s continual refusal to set up Club Keno, a numbers game that linked players at participating clubs to a central jackpot.

CLOCKWISE, OPPOSITE TOP LEFT: Club director Ron Polley shares a joke with then Revesby junior soccer club president Dennis Hayward; the snooker tables ready for the day’s play; the men’s gymnasium, as it was in the late 1980s; women playing for the annual Herb McDougall Shield, an annual interclub darts competition, in Henry Lawson House in 1987; golf in 1987 retained a strong presence within the sporting sub-club culture of the Workers’ Club.

BELOW: Ron Polley, Revesby director, presents Little Athletics president John Rodwell with a cheque as part of the club’s financial commitment to the Little Athletics club.



1989 – AN OVERVIEW

In 1989 the club appointed Power Pacific Marketing Pty Limited (PPM) to provide a survey of the club to help the Board and management better prepare for the future in a changing club and entertainment market.

Who and what was Revesby Workers' Club? Approximately 40 per cent of the membership base was represented by persons over the age of 50, both male and female. This equated closely to the local area demographics in which 40 per cent of the adult population above the age of 18 fell in the 50-plus age category.

The average length of club membership was a strong 8.32 years; 60 per cent of the members had belonged to the club for more than eight years.

Combined East Hills, Panania, Padstow and Revesby represented 42 per cent or 10,500 of total members.

Almost 60 per cent of members earned up to \$700 per week (\$36,400 per annum) with home ownership at 73 per cent.

The members, in the most part, preferred the club or a restaurant as their

major source of entertainment. Sadly, the restaurant wasn't in the club.

The rating of club entertainment was high; attendance at the club's restaurant was extremely low.

Preference for restaurant type saw traditional and seafood rated highest. Chinese (restaurants) rated extremely poor, as the support for this style of food in Sydney had fallen rapidly over the previous two years.

On poker machines, 10-cent poker machines were the most popular with 20-cent machines second.

In summation:

- PPM declared the club was dated and lacked many of the essential ingredients in "today's" competitive environment;
- The club needed to take the initiative and both expand and renovate the facilities offered to the members and visitors in a bid to increase the base of members and attract a far greater clientele to the club;

- Membership base was disproportionately high with persons over the age of 50 – a clear indication that the club was not attracting the younger age groups; and

- Planned extensions to the existing building saw little more than an upgrade and enlargement of what were traditional club activities. They may not attract additional membership or customers.

PPM also urged Revesby to renovate and extend with the objective of developing new concepts and innovative ideas in overall family entertainment; to design bars to service multiple locations; include a quality restaurant; a swimming pool; children's facilities; diverse entertainment not always restricted to the auditorium; a staff newsletter; and incorporate boutique type operations.

The thorough 63-page survey provided a professional base for the club's step into the '90s and ultimately to the new millennium: money well spent.

While not prepared to agree to the introduction of Keno at this point, state treasurer Ken Booth was keen to grease the palm of club industry leaders. In an indication of the value the government placed on club support, he offered a package of initiatives, including raising the exemption level on the supplementary licence tax from \$50,000 to \$100,000 (meaning that 690 clubs would not pay anything above their licence fees for their poker machines), lifting jackpots from \$5000 to \$10,000 and reducing the amount of revenue clubs needed to spend on welfare contributions before qualifying for a tax exemption. The

government also allowed one- and two-dollar poker machines.

The government further removed restrictions on the number of clubs that could unite – significant for Revesby, at a time when it merged with Panania Bowling and Recreation Club – and the number of different premises any club could have. They also lifted the prohibition on charities conducting bingo in clubs and introduced optional three-year terms for club directors. Though profits were never lavish, the decision in 1988 to increase the number of video draw poker game machines, known as "cardies", from five to 10 in hotels was

another wound in the club industry's side. It was seen by club insiders as a small step toward hotels one day gaining approval for poker machines.

The concessions, however, were not enough to save the Labor government at the state elections when Nick Greiner's Liberal Party swept to power in March 1988. For all the weaknesses the Labor government had shown in its latter years in power, the alternative would never be acceptable at Revesby – Bullard warning of the "rocky road" ahead was more a statement against the new conservative government than a concern for the Workers' Club. Time would prove that, in this instant, Bullard got it wrong.

On the face of it, club members never had it so good: a club of considerable stature; holiday cabins at Fingal Bay and Sussex Inlet; quality entertainment in their own auditorium; a range of poker machine and gaming choices; sport and racing channels; more than 30 sport and leisure sub-clubs; dining and social drinking facilities for all occasions; and fitness and health amenities (including gymnasium, yoga and drama classes), just to mention a few.

The club also embraced Little Athletics in 1989, affiliating with the East Hills Club which was struggling and looking for support. It further brought John Rodwell to the club. Rodwell, the athletic club's president at the time, approached Revesby and received an immediate subsidy and directives from Bullard and their appointed liaison officer Ron Polley on requirements and expectations. In the years ahead, a combined grant of more than \$100,000 from the government and the Workers' Club for the upgrade of the proposed home ground, Amour Park, was transferred to upgrade

facilities for athletics at the Bankstown Oval at the Milperra Campus of the University of Western Sydney when it became apparent that Amour Park would be unsuitable for athletics. At last, the Revesby Workers' Little Athletics club had a place they could call home.

The enthusiasm of a new Little Athletics president, Robyn Ball, lifted membership from 120 to more than 350 and the club thrived as the Revesby Workers' Little Athletics club. Rodwell, who retained a strong interest as a committeeman with the club, was elected to the Revesby club Board in 2007.

With net assets of more than \$7 million, Revesby Workers' Club headed into the next decade strengthened by its very resilience. Invigorated with a newly renovated club, a bright future for Henry Lawson House, and an acquired club that was beginning to pay its way, Revesby remained a market leader, despite concerns over the dwindling profits. The calm alliance in the boardroom over the previous seven years, though broken by fiery debate at times, added a settling effect on club life – for the Board, management and for members.

The club headed into a new decade with an operating profit below budget, but with a renovated club that included a new poker machine lounge, a new brasserie, a new snack and coffee section, cocktail bar and catering section. Licensed clubs – big and small – often survive on a fine balance. It takes little time for low profits and diminishing membership to alter the equilibrium. With one eye on the slow recovery of the world-wide financial crisis and the other on management procedures and the balance sheet, a restless and uneasy Revesby Board were soon to look for alternative answers.

15



1990-94

A changing of the guard

THE COMPLETION OF EXTENSIVE RENOVATIONS AND THE IMPENDING INTRODUCTION OF CLUB KENO TO THE LICENSED CLUBS' GAMING PRODUCTS WERE ENCOURAGING ENTRÉES INTO THE 1990S FOR REVESBY WORKERS' CLUB.

The Revesby extensions, at a cost \$6.25 million, were opened by then prime minister Bob Hawke on 19 August 1990. They were long overdue, at a testing time for a club struggling to reach budget figures, as much because of the restricted access to some parts of the club during renovations as anything else. Poker machine revenue improved the year after the renovations were completed (1990-91) – the attraction of a new gaming lounge no doubt playing its part.

Refurbishing clubs was an art in timing and financial outlay, and, while the balance sheet was buckling, members enjoyed a new family brasserie, the Coolabah Café with its fast food and espresso coffee; new and relaxing lounge areas; a double-level casino lounge with more than 240 poker machines; new members' and sports lounges; as well as some minor changes to the men's and women's gymnasiums which had been operating since 1973. The rebuilt brasserie and self-service café was able to seat 500 patrons. The upgrade also included an extension of the car park. It was a club in motion.

By early 1991, Revesby Workers' were searching for a new chief executive. Brian Higgs was leaving the club over which he had such a significant influence. He and the Board had agreed that his time had come. Since 1960 when he joined the pioneering directors as secretary, he had, but for two years, been at the vanguard of

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Mayor unveils strategic plan

Bankstown City Council has officially unveiled its strategic plan for the next years, and according to Mayor Ian Stromborg, it is a plan with a vision.

vision is that the city will become a city of the future where people will live and work together to achieve a quality of life in a safe, pleasant environment.

Mayor Stromborg told the council that the draft plan is the culmination of a year of work by councillors and staff.

The strategic plan is divided into six different areas:

- To increase the city's income by encouraging business and family forming in the city;
- To increase income to support council's services and priorities.

Mayor Stromborg went on to say "that the strategies have already been agreed upon and I suspect there will be only some minor fine tuning before the final document is adopted."

"The community of Bankstown can now feel safe in the knowledge that forward plans can be made knowing council's social, environmental and commercial attitudes and objectives."



Ian Stromborg

PM re-creates history



Prime Minister Bob Hawke with former Labor PM Gough Whitlam together again for the opening of the Revesby Workers' Club extensions. They are pictured with club president Bill Bullard (second left) and Daryl Melham (right).

History was created last Sunday when Prime Minister Bob Hawke officially opened the new \$6.25 million extensions to the Revesby Workers' Club.

Although having previously visited the club, it was Mr Hawke's first visit since becoming Prime Minister.

Adding to the occasion was the presence of the former Labor Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, who presided over the opening of the main club in 1973.

Both dignitaries were well received by the large crowd which had gathered for the event.

Mr Hawke and Mr Whitlam were delighted to accept honorary membership of the club, which was granted to them by the Board of Directors.

Mr Hawke praised both the Board of Directors and members for the continuing success of the club and said it served as a model to other clubs throughout Australia.

Former Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Whitlam QC, officially opened the new Revesby Workers' Club on August 18, 1973, in Brett Street, right opposite the original building, opened up so much hope 11 years before.

In late 1979 another string was added to the club's bow when the Henry Lawson House Function Centre was opened.

Comprising the Jacaranda Room with stage and dance floor and the Jasmine Room, a smaller more intimate area, Henry Lawson House was officially opened on May 8, 1990.

After performing the official opening, Mr Hawke mingled with the crowd before trying his hand at a game of snooker.

Story: Anthony Oteri
Photos: Kim Cohen

• For more photos and stories on the opening of the new extensions to Revesby Workers' Club, turn to feature pages 25-28.



Bob Hawke is a picture of concentration as he displays his skills on the snooker table in front of a group of interested onlookers.

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The Torch newspaper front page captures the importance of the club's major refurbishment officially opened by former prime minister Bob Hawke on 19 August 1990. Gough Whitlam attended as a special guest.

BOB VERSUS GOUGH

In August 1990, it was the reigning prime minister Bob Hawke's turn to preside over the opening of major new extensions to the Revesby Workers' Club.

As much loved as he was by the strongly supportive Labor membership, according to a report in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 20 August, Mr Hawke was dwarfed in the popularity stakes by the aristocrat of Labor politics Gough Whitlam, who joined him on stage.

According to the *Herald*, "Mr Hawke received some rippling applause when he turned up to perform at the opening. But

nothing like the applause that shook the roof when Mr Gough Whitlam suddenly thread his way through the pokies to the stage."

Relations between the two men had been testy in previous weeks. Gough had criticised Hawke over his response to the Gulf crisis, and Bob had returned serve in spades. However, Hawke took the conciliatory course when he remarked that the day was very important because Gough and Bob were sharing "the same thoughts and emotions, being absolutely at one with you and your club".

But Gough, ever the wise older statesman who had opened the club's main building 17 years previously, wasn't going to let a golden moment pass him by, remarking, according to the *Herald*, that it was "a great joy to be here with Bob Hawke", as it was "whenever he extends and continues something my government opened ...". The rest of the sentence was drowned out by the applause.

The two men were each given \$4 to put through the pokies – and noted that when Hawke, the seasoned punter, had finished, the machine refused to work again.

decision-making, most of it in management. The Workers' Club was, in some ways, a monument to him. He had exerted his influence over numerous projects and in his "second coming" as chief executive officer in 1978 formed a formidable association in the late 1970s and '80s with Bill Bullard and Daryl Melham.

At age 63 and after three decades, plus a year or two, Higgs left a club that was in good order though somewhat tired. It was with considerable irony and sadness that Jim Donovan, the club powerbroker in its first two decades, died in the same year of Higgs's retirement. In the latter years of Donovan's reign which ended in 1977, he and Higgs butted heads many times, forcing Higgs to leave the club briefly before returning to spearhead the takeover of the boardroom – and the demise of Donovan. Donovan is forever recognised for the role he played in the early development of the Workers' Club, with Higgs alongside him.

Finding a suitable replacement for Higgs was easier, and more satisfying, than the club had anticipated, though fortunate for

Ed Camilleri that the Board had forgiven him, though not forgotten, his accepting and then declining, virtually in the same breath, an invitation in the late 1980s to join the club as an assistant manager. Now he had another chance. Having read a notice calling for applicants to replace Higgs in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Camilleri wondered if it would be worth applying. He, rightly, considered he may have burned his bridges. His initial inclination was to pass up the chance, even though he felt more than suitably qualified – and it was still his favourite club. As a trainee manager at Revesby in the early 1980s he had impressed those that mattered.

"I was always interested in what was happening back at Revesby," Camilleri recalled. "I felt strongly about the club, even during those eight years at Baulkham Hills. I thought I'd done my dash because I rejected the assistant manager's job. I used to ring Brien and he came to see me a couple of times at Baulkham Hills with his wife, Joan, just to see how I was going. He liked fostering people who left Revesby ... he kept in contact with their careers. I thought it was admirable of him."

Camilleri did apply, as did many others. This was a coveted job in the club industry. He was called to a Sunday morning interview in the club's boardroom. The Board peppered him with many questions and he recalled Bill Bullard asking him if he got the job would he move to the area. Camilleri saw it as a leading question and wondered if the answer might hold sway in the decision-making. While Camilleri failed to give a definitive answer, he never did move into the Revesby precinct. But he did get the job.

This was a new beginning in many ways: Higgs left as the outgoing *secretary-manager* and Camilleri entered with a new title as the *chief executive officer*, a modern and more prestigious fit. Revesby saw off Higgs in May 1991 at a special farewell night befitting his longevity and loyalty. He was respected and valued immensely for the role he played in the formation of the club and its ongoing success.



He was Labor to his bootlaces and a perfect fit for the club.

Camilleri's memory of the first day and those that followed is clear. He had been unimpressed as a trainee manager nine years earlier with some of the procedures on the floor of the club. He believed them unacceptable, by his standards and those of the club. The staff who gave him hell, as he expressed it, as a trainee were still there. He likened it to a time warp. It was the start of a long battle on many fronts, but with instructions given to him by Bullard "to turn Revesby into a business again" ringing in his ears, he was ready for it.

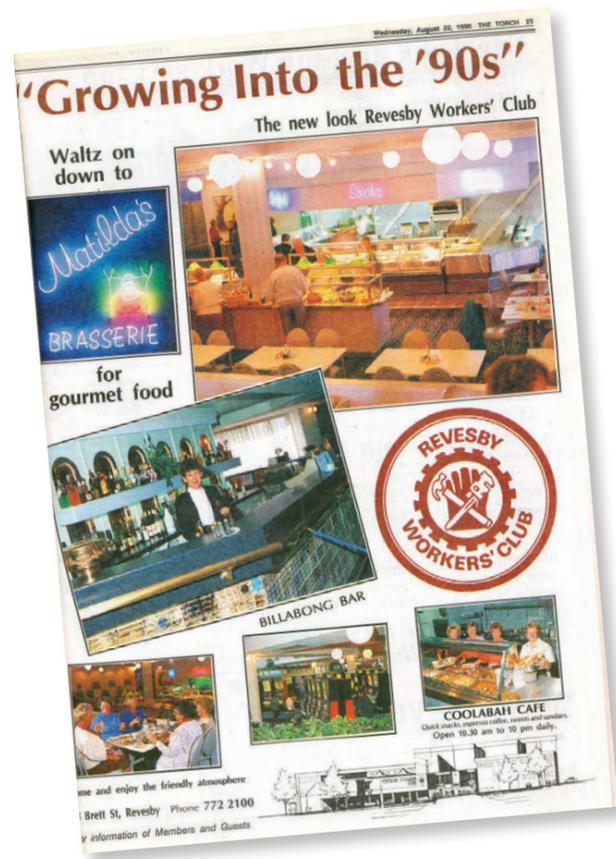
The club changed lawyers, hiring Brett Boon, a licensed club specialist, and in September of that year changed their auditors – to KPMG Peat Marwick, a recommendation that required the agreement of members at the annual general meeting.

Camilleri surrounded himself with qualified expertise and he was under no illusion that the principal problem was related to its gaming income. The club had built a new gaming room but filled it with outdated poker machines. He was fortunate in that he had a high-quality gaming manager in Doug McLaughlin, who had been frustrated that the club had spent sparingly on new poker machines. McLaughlin and Camilleri both recognised the need for new updated machines to attract the large gamblers.



TOP: Ed Camilleri is appointed the new chief executive officer to replace Brien Higgs who had retired.

ABOVE: Gaming manager Doug McLaughlin.



A proud club celebrates.

According to McLaughlin, it was essential for Revesby to have not just new machines but the right style of machine. The average age of the poker machines at the time was 11 years and Camilleri explained that the average age of a machine in those days should have been between three to five years. The current machines had merely been refurbished: they were second-hand. The club ordered 68 new machines – all from Aristocrat. According to Camilleri, “That was the time when things started moving.”

Born to the industry

A tall, personable man, Camilleri was ushered into the club industry on the back of influences from his Maltese grandfather – who owned a bar in Malta and ran black-market alcohol to British and Australian soldiers during World War II – and a father, Tony, who “was born behind a bar” and had left Malta in the 1950s when he was 19 to find a home and hospitality in the New South Wales licensed club business.

Malta was decimated by the war and Ed’s father’s first club job after reaching Australia was working at the Journalists’ Club in Chalmers Street, Sydney, as a barman. When

Sir Robert Menzies opened the club in 1939, he threw the key out the window and declared this club will never close. It was the first 24-hour, seven days a week club in Australia. Tony Camilleri would, in his latter years in the industry, become the club’s last chief executive officer. It was he who closed the door for the last time (in 1997) on the club that never slept.

With a father who worked at other clubs, including the Phoenician Club and Sutherland District Trade Union Club (“Tradies”), Ed was destined to find his niche in club management. His first role was working at “Tradies” at Gympie at age 16 as a projectionist showing movies to children on a Sunday. His father framed the first dollar he earned and Ed still has it. Later, it was through his father’s connections that Camilleri arrived at Revesby Workers’ Club on 19 April 1978, the first step in a journey that has yet to run its course.

Camilleri’s return to Revesby in 1991 – as chief executive officer – coincided with the much anticipated arrival of Club Keno, a numbers game that linked players at participating clubs to a central jackpot. Registered Clubs Association management, with president John Whittle at the vanguard, saw Keno as having the potential to provide strong revenue streams, a boon, he believed, to the smaller clubs.

The state Labor government rejected the industry’s initial plan to implement Club Keno for clubs in 1986 in favour of a government-run Keno operation at one city location – the proposed Darling Harbour casino! Through Whittle’s and the RCA’s persistence, the government cracked and committed to its introduction. However, Labor’s reign as the New South Wales governing party came to an end, thrown out by Nick Greiner’s Liberal team in March 1988.

While there was no dancing in the corridors of power at Revesby Workers’ Club, Greiner, while in opposition, had agreed to support proposals to implement Keno and legislated as such in 1989. The Registered Clubs Association’s 100 per cent-owned subsidiary ClubKENO Holdings Pty Limited was granted a licence to operate Keno on behalf of clubs and 13 clubs in Newcastle were chosen to trial the new gaming product before it commenced, officially, in September 1991.

In its first nine months – from September 1991 to June 1992 – Keno raised \$56,034 in revenue for Revesby Workers’ and \$102,888 in its first full year (1992–93), well above the commission from the TAB (\$51,428) in that 12-month period. By 1995–96, the Keno commission would rise to \$157,156.

This was a period of re-adjustment for the club industry as Greiner and his government, firstly, re-activated proposals for a casino-hotel complex at Darling Harbour, a project that was abandoned by the Wran government in 1985 after a public outcry over the inappropriateness of the successful tender. The RCA prepared a submission to the Street Casino Inquiry warning of the need to protect the club industry from private gaming. While Street recognised the club industry as a “social institution” that provided benefits to so many, he also found in his inquiry (27 November 1991) that there were grounds for granting casino licences in Sydney, conditional, he added, “on securing for Sydney much needed world-class entertainment facilities such as additional theatre accommodation and recreational developments.”

Street also found that: “The nature and extent of the casinos’ effects on registered clubs cannot be reliably forecast, but there is likely to be a shift of some patronage from registered clubs with consequent decline in gross profits in the first year or so of casino operations. The shift is not likely to pose a long-term threat to the viability of the registered club industry.”

While Bankstown Sports and Canterbury League were friendly rivals to Revesby’s business, it was they who were more threatened



Alfresco dining at Revesby Workers’, such was the variety offered by the club.

by a Sydney casino, more so since they relied heavily on their high-rollers of principally Asian ethnicity at Bankstown Sports and Middle Eastern ethnicity at Canterbury. Revesby’s main players were an ethnic mix, but mostly Anglo-Saxon and, as such, the casino had minimal impact.

The addition of the casino to the Sydney gaming landscape needed to be put in perspective. According to Camilleri, compared to the introduction of random breath testing in 1982, the establishment of a casino was no more than a pinprick for Revesby Workers’ Club. “RBT changed this club completely,” he said. “When you think of the sports bar and the men ... all drinking their beer there. It changed everything overnight. I think RBT was the biggest hurt this club has felt. I can’t rely on bar sales like the club used to. We sell more in food than we do in beverage.”

More confronting for clubs at this time, however, was the state Coalition’s attempt to introduce a damaging turnover tax on poker machine income, a proposal that Brien Higgs viewed in his final annual report as secretary-manager as crippling to Revesby Workers’ and the industry. With Panthers head honcho

Former Labor prime minister Bob Hawke launched a commemorative limited edition port at Revesby Workers in 1992 as a fund-raising venture for the local Australian Labor Party. Standing, at back, Ed Camilleri and John Gibbons. Front, from left, Norma Smith, Ron Polley, Vic Pavlick, Mr Hawke, Daryl Melham, Keith Heaslip, Bill Bullard.





TOP: Director Keith Heaslip.



ABOVE: Catering manager Kevin Gallagher.

Roger Cowan as its president for a brief two years, the RCA convinced Greiner to drop the proposed legislation. With government-RCA relationships at their most cordial, the Coalition government backed away from the stifling tax and allowed clubs more breathing space – at least for the time being.

After much discussion and with the acquiescence of the Board, Camilleri set about cleaning out the problems confronting Revesby. Much of it centred on work practices and staff attitudes to members. It was accepted that there was a crying need to provide a warmer and more friendly atmosphere within the club. A fresh face in Camilleri was expected to bring fresh ideas. That the club had become a “tired old place” was no reflection on Higgs. But it was recognised that there is a time for everyone to move on and no one more than Higgs had given such heart and soul to Revesby Workers’. Higgs made it clear to the Board that he was ready for retirement.

Perhaps the most significant crusade was the decision by Camilleri and the Revesby Board to take on the unions – the club was prepared to bunker down for the long haul ahead. The alternative was less appealing. They had experienced staff strikes for long enough and it was their opinion that the club could not function to its maximum until there was clear air and no disruption from the unions. Camilleri, though nervous and apprehensive at the conflicts that faced him, was, nonetheless, willing and ready for the fight.

“When I came back in 1991 the union was really out of control,” Camilleri explained. “They made Brien’s job really difficult. For instance, staff would basically bring their own alcohol into the club. In the staff room there would be a fridge where they would put their alcohol and drink in their breaks or, if not that, would go for extended meal breaks. I remember one time I was with Brien in the transition period of three months before he left, the union delegate from the club walked in off the floor – no appointment made. He barged in ... I was sitting in Brien’s office. He

said: ‘We demand that you drop the price of steaks for staff by 50 cents.’ Brien said: ‘Okay ... I’ll get it done.’” For Higgs, it was easier to give in to the request, perhaps a minor one, than the alternative, a union row that might lead to another strike.

For Camilleri, it was an education and ammunition for when he took over. It underlined the strength of the unions at this time. Some of the staff and union delegates were working in the same positions when Camilleri was at the club as a trainee manager ten years earlier. He was well versed on what represented poor workplace practices and, as he explained, he spent the first five years in the Industrial Commission of New South Wales getting the staff to work to the club award.

“They fought me on everything,” he recalled. “I remember the staff at the court knew me so well they would make me a cup of tea the way I liked it without asking, but I had to weed out the troublemakers from the club. There were a lot of good people at Revesby but also a lot of people who weren’t doing the right thing. They were holding back the business. In my first month, the manager of the State Bank, the club’s financier, phoned me. The club had taken out a loan for renovations. After going through the monthly accounts, they were wondering what the club was doing to pick up the business. They couldn’t see any movement in trade. There was no threat ... but there was pressure.”

“German Jack” – a mighty ally

Camilleri had some good and hardy allies in his staff, none more so than a sub-manager, Jack Swiderski. Nicknamed “German Jack”, he was trained in hotels. He could be, as Camilleri explained, “crude and rude ... rough and ready”. He was a giant of a man with gold teeth who went opal mining in his time off. He was good with staff and good with rostering. He shared Camilleri’s disdain for those who were drinking on the job and thus shared his determination to clean up the club. According to Camilleri, “Jack knew I was young. I was thirty-one ... and

I knew it was to be a real quick learning curve. He would tell me things ... ‘Boss,’ he would say, ‘you’ve got to do this ... boss, you’ve got to do that.’

“I remember one time I dismissed a union delegate to the club for theft. I had a very strong case. Jack noticed when I had meetings with the union that I was a little bit nervous. My hands would be moving around a bit. He would say: ‘Boss, when you talk to them, sit on your hands. You look a bit nervous.’” Camilleri did just that – sat on his hands. He recalled the confrontation as one of his worst moments. Both the delegate and the union organiser attacked him verbally. He stood his ground and the case was handled in-house. The delegate was dismissed. For Revesby, it was a conflict they needed to win and for Camilleri, the staff had to see that he was in the job for the right reasons and that he was serious in his endeavours to make it a worthy club in which to work.

On another occasion, Camilleri called in a staff member who had been misusing the members’ card system. Camilleri sat with three folders on the table, with blank bits of paper protruding from each of them. The staff member was accompanied by a union delegate who threatened to strike. Camilleri touched the folder, explaining to the staff member that he had been at the club just three months and had done an investigation. “As soon as I was about to open the folder,” Camilleri recalled, “he said, ‘I resign.’ I only had to touch the folder a second time: he said, ‘I resign,’ again.”

Camilleri’s tough-mindedness with the unions was strongly supported by the Board. Bullard quietly encouraged him, impressing upon him the need to turn the club back into a business. Another director, Keith Heaslip, urged him to be even tougher. “I went in hard. In some ways, it was like a war,” Camilleri said. Encouragement came from other unexpected quarters, even from the sports bar as Camilleri walked near the snooker tables one afternoon. A long-time member, who had been watching the new boy on the block, reached out and said, simply: “Son, you’re doing a great job. Keep at it.”

For Bullard, Camilleri’s preparedness to take on issues without rushing to ask his opinion on everything was a blessing. Bullard was an upholsterer in a little shop in Peakhurst. He told Camilleri of the need for managers – and that included Camilleri – to run the club as they saw fit. “He told me when I first started that his managers would ring him all the time asking what they should do next? He said: ‘I’m just an upholsterer. I want you to take this business ... I’ll talk to you but I shouldn’t be deciding things for management.’ The club was paying these managers and they weren’t managing.”

Swiderski’s support had been consistent, just as it had been with Higgs, and with Gallagher and Doug McLaughlin, both of whom mentored him in his trainee manager’s days – and he never forgot them. They were good club industry managers and, to Camilleri, high-quality people.

In keeping with their committed Australian Labor Party affiliations, Revesby reserved a full page in their 1990–91 annual report for a Labor-sponsored advertisement promoting club member Ian Stromborg’s aspirations to the Bankstown City Council elections. The advertisement presented him as “enthusiastic, accessible and effective”. Stromborg had been a member of the club for 23 years and would later become a member of the Board.

The 1993 Board. Back row, from left: Vic Pavlick, John Gibbons, Ed Camilleri (CEO), Keith Heaslip. Front: Norma Smith, Daryl Melham (vice-president), Bill Bullard (president), Ron Polley.



SON, THIS IS A SCHOONER CLUB

Ed Camilleri saw the coming of the “Coffee Generation”, perhaps before most others, the very reason in 1992 that he went to the Board to request an upgrade of the Coolabah Café to a quality coffee outlet. Few clubs at this time had upmarket coffee premises and, indeed, some clubs even today still underestimate the value of a “good coffee” to a business.

Not everyone shared the vision. “I remember one director, John Gibbons, said: ‘Son, this is a schooner club. We sell schooners

of beer: we don’t sell coffee.’ It was a reasonable response, but Camilleri saw it differently. The culture of Sydney was in change and, as the next decade was



to show, coffee shops would dominate the Sydney/Australian city landscapes. “I regarded coffee as part of food. You provide good food and people will come.

Now we are into our fourth generation of the coffee shop. We are devising another in our retail area. Coffee is a very important part of the club operation.”

To their credit, the Board agreed to his request. Quality coffee became the order of the day for the improving taste of the community – and members could still enjoy the “schooner club”!

By the mid-1990s, the unions had started to lose their grip throughout the country, and certainly in the club industry. From 1991 to 1995, union disputes had been disruptive, not only on a new chief executive officer, but also on a Board that, at the end of the day, had to answer to the membership: the buck stopped with them. During the 1980s, union strikes had been getting out of hand and people were tired of them. Camilleri recognised that Revesby needed to return to the days of running the club under the Club Employees Award. “A lot of staff were going beyond that and they had union support. Time and again I had to go to the industrial commission to fight different matters. It was in the 1990s that I started off an HR team for the first time and we started sorting out problems with the staff before they went to the unions.”

Camilleri often warned staff who threatened to go on strike that he would never close the club – not for one day. “I remember one time when the [liquor] union tried to bring the club down on a Friday afternoon. The organiser was walking around intimidating

staff who were working as cashiers and in other places. Only a handful of staff walked out. I had all the managers and directors here: we kept the club going. I said to the staff who stayed on that you can go on strike but, at the end of the day, you will lose wages. You all have families. The club will operate. I will never allow the club to close.”

Camilleri has been true to his word, though only by the skin of his teeth when staff members went out on the Monday before the next day’s running of the 1995 Melbourne Cup. With the help of the remaining staff, supervisors and management, the club stayed open. Revesby won an injunction to end the strike at 2pm Tuesday, an hour before the Cup was to run, but none of the recalcitrant staff could be contacted. They had gone “missing” – most congregating at another club while the Cup was run.

While the club needed re-invigorating, Camilleri took over an organisation that was, by industry standards, successful with all the potential ahead of it. A club profit of \$417,168 for the 1990–91 year – Higgs’s last (he was

essentially gone by March when Camilleri was appointed) – while under budget was impressive. But better days were ahead.

As Revesby moved into 1992, their sporting sub-clubs continued to ratchet up numerous successes. They were an important facet of club life. They had the benefit of the new Kelso Park Sporting Complex and, as subsidised members of the Revesby flock, they were well looked after by the club Board.

If Bullard and his Board urged Camilleri to “bring it back as a business”, they did not have long to wait for the results. Maintaining a promise that the club would never close its doors to the pressure of the trade unions, Camilleri – and the Board – announced to its members at the annual general meeting in September 1993 one of the highest profit figures recorded in the club’s 30-year history – \$2,098,077, before deductions for depreciation and interest. The bottom line was a profit of \$860,918 – double the surplus of just two years earlier. Gaming machines were responsible for 54 per cent of the club’s income (\$8.627 million) and the poker machine contribution, after all expenses deducted, crossed the \$5 million mark for the first time.

The club was able to spend \$2 million upgrading a new à la carte restaurant (Lawsons), three function rooms, a roof terrace and completion of the upmarket coffee shop. The Hon E G (Gough) Whitlam opened the renovations on 13 May 1993.

When Camilleri became chief executive officer in 1991, Revesby was ranked number 26 in the state for gaming revenue. It hovered around numbers 15 and 17 for a period and later improved to 11 where it remains in 2011–12. Revesby never expected to reach the revenues of Bankstown Sports Club and Canterbury League Club since they are located in the respective “CBDs” of their suburbs where they relied heavily on the high-rollers in their Asian and Middle Eastern communities.

The demographics of the Workers’ Club also helped to explain an incident that concerned Camilleri when he arrived at the

club one Sunday morning not long after he started as chief executive officer. He noticed an Asian man who was somewhat agitated. The staff wouldn’t let him in. When Camilleri questioned them, they told him: “We don’t want him coming in here: he is a chink”. “The man was very angry,” Camilleri observed. “He spat on the club’s wall on the way out. He was so degraded ... Bankstown Sports and Canterbury League would have welcomed him. This club was very Anglo-Saxon ... probably the way they treated me when I was a trainee.”



OPPOSITE TOP:

Gough Whitlam was both honoured and honourable in his close relationship with the Revesby Workers’ Club. Here he officially opens the club’s renovations on 13 May 1993. Also in the photo, Ed Camilleri (CEO), Bill Bullard (president) and Daryl Melham (vice-president).

OPPOSITE BELOW:

Some light political banter between two men with common ideals, Mr Whitlam and club vice-president and Labor member for Banks, Daryl Melham.



TOP: Terry Semlitzky.



ABOVE: Dennis Hayward.

Camilleri explained to the staff that the club welcomed everyone and set about changing the culture, even asking staff that if any of them spoke another language to let him know. He would put it on their name tag.

Resignations in the boardroom

This was a time of great activity at Revesby – of recognition from its peers and of change in the boardroom, the first resignations in ten years. Keith Heaslip was the first to resign, completing his ten-year tenure on 20 August 1993. Heaslip, though popular, had a habit of threatening to resign over issues. On one occasion Bullard, the president, had had enough and accepted it. Heaslip sent a letter of resignation to the Board through Higgs, though there was a sense that Heaslip was expecting the Board to reject it. However, once a letter of resignation is received, the club is legally bound to accept it under the Companies Act. Heaslip had been a director since March 1983, at the time completing the jigsaw of Board changes when he replaced Jack Dennehy.

Ron Polley did not seek re-election at the annual general meeting on 26 September 1993 because of ill health. He was voted onto the Board, with Norma Smith, just four months before Heaslip, in December 1982 as part of the same boardroom upheaval.

Polley, described by Bullard as a “quiet achiever”, was a life member of the Revesby Workers’ soccer club while Heaslip was a life member of the cricket and baseball clubs who worked diligently as a Workers’ Club representative on the Bankstown Frail Aged Homes Trust and was a member of the club’s charity fund-raising committee.

Polley’s replacement, Terry Semlitzky, was a perfect fit for Revesby’s Labor-orientated ethos and, one would think, born to club life. His mother was the first lady president of the Panania East Hills RSL Women’s Auxiliary and his father was on the club’s committee. Newtown-born, but raised in East Hills and Panania, he recalled his father buying a block land in Panania for £30 which was surrounded

by poultry farms – and paspalum. He was earning £2 a week as a barber. Terry joined the RSL club before he joined the Workers’ Club, since his father made him a member as soon as he turned 21. He did his apprenticeship at New Century Press as a compositor and moved on to Canberra in 1964 where he helped prepare the first edition of *The Australian* newspaper.

Semlitzky joined the Workers’ Club in 1966 and, as a dyed-in-the-wool ALP man and active trade unionist, he was asked to stand for the Board in the early and mid-1980s but declined because, at the time, he was a senior delegate to the Printing and Kindred Industries Union (PKIU) and was forever negotiating redundancy agreements. “I had the trade union activities and I’d just got married,” he recalled. “I told them I’d be divorced if I came on board, so I declined.” By 1993, as a life member of the darts club and the fishing club, and with the acquiescence of an understanding wife, Sue, he was ready to stand for a directorship.

Dennis Hayward, a soccer club life member, replaced Heaslip. A Balmain boy, Hayward met his future wife, Margaret, who lived at Greenacre, and settled in Milperra after they married. A top-grade NRMA technical inspector, Hayward joined the club in the early 1980s through his interest in the soccer club. His decision to take up an invitation to join the Board was based on the compassion the Board had shown members and community. Hayward was impressed and he was to develop the same empathy in his role in the years ahead.

On the back of further record profits, a sense of energy and prosperity surrounded Revesby. With a pre-tax profit of \$1,554,212 underpinning confidence, the Board and management set in place a number of objectives, redefining their business model – at a time of public recognition for their achievements. In a fast-moving club world, Revesby offered:

- A review of a five-year proposal to renovate and extend the club, with the work to begin mid-1995;

SO MUCH ... AND THERE’S MORE!

So much club activity passes virtually unnoticed in the bigger scheme of things, particularly in a club the size and strength of Revesby. While major reconstructions of club premises, significant boardroom decisions, high-achieving headlines and club politics often dominated, it was the plethora of other club undertakings that underlined the value and importance of licensed clubs.

Such as, at Revesby, in 1993: raising \$59,000 at a bushfire appeal night, the money needed to purchase mobile headquarters for Bankstown State Emergency Service; sealing netball courts

constructed at the Sports and Recreation Centre at a cost of \$110,000; winning 13 awards (five gold, five silver and three bronze) in two culinary competitions; record profits through 1993 to 1996; \$175,000 donation to the Bankstown Frail Aged Persons’ Homes Trust and \$86,573.50 to the Whitehall Children’s Home; extension, in 1995, of club closing hour to 3am; a free picnic day for members; \$18,000 on practice nets for the cricket club; new and larger renovation proposals; continuation of the very successful scholarship scheme (it was still running in 2012); funding for relocation of the

Little Athletics centre to the University of Western Sydney’s Milperra campus; bingo in all its glory (almost daily); senior citizens’ free concerts; and the continuing support for all its sport and leisure sub-clubs.

Again, these were, in some ways, just the tip of the iceberg. The promise of bigger and better things to come was implicit in these heady days where Revesby’s 1994–95 annual report front cover carried a headline: “RENOVATION CELEBRATION ISSUE: BUILDING A BIGGER AND BETTER CLUB FOR OUR MEMBERS”.

It’s exactly what they did!

- The purchase of a number of properties – a shop and residence in Revesby Place and, in July 1994, the Revesby Post Office with the purchase of a portion of Brett Street not far away; and
- Renovations to the Sports and Recreation Centre at a cost of \$270,000 which included a major refurbishment and the installation of Sky Channel. The facade remained, but the club was gutted, bringing new life to it and to members, many of whom felt neglected by the main club.

Hollywood legend Mickey Rooney headed the bill of entertainment at Revesby in mid-1994, performing just one night. The days of consistently attracting the big-name stars from abroad and the lavish shows that were a backbone of Revesby’s night life in the early to mid-1980s had subsided by the mid-1990s. Apart from the difficulty competing with single entertainment venues such as the Entertainment Centre, entertainment was no longer the club’s main business driver. According to Camilleri, the club focused on gaming as their number-one priority. However, engaging Rooney suggested Revesby had not

lost its touch – nor did Rooney disappoint.

Not all entertainment worked as it should have. In September 1994, Club Troppo nightclub was closed, reluctantly, by the club management following persistent complaints from nearby elderly residents. The venue was popular with the youth and was a money-spinner for the club. The nightclub was the only suitable venue in the Bankstown area – a safe haven where rules inside the club were strictly adhered to, but difficult to police outside on the surrounding streets. So keen were the youth to maintain the nightclub, a delegation asked to front the Revesby Board. They were informed that a police directive, to close or else, could not be ignored. The nightclub was replaced in the auditorium by karaoke, directed more at adults than young patrons.

The club endeavoured to find a focus for their youth. Terry Semlitzky suggested to management that they turn the sports bar into



Hollywood legend Mickey Rooney.



Executives of Revesby Workers' Club, and their wives, celebrate the club's 1993 Club of the Year award. From left: Joan Higgs, Brien Higgs, Karlene Bullard, Bill Bullard, Ed Camilleri, Georgina Camilleri.

a music venue on Friday nights since the bar on most nights was virtually empty. The sports bar had been used as a music venue when Henry Hess was entertainment manager in the early 1980s; Semlitzky was one of the musicians, playing in a makeshift band with like-minded mates. A singer/guitarist, Semlitzky and friends would drink at the Panania RSL until it closed at 9pm and then head to the Workers' Club where they would play a gig for patrons. The sports bar became so successful, Semlitzky and his band were shifted out, replaced by Tony Clout and his club band.

On that basis, once again the club headed into the rock'n'roll arena. The sports bar was the unlikeliest venue, but it worked until noise became an issue again, despite the club doing all they could to make the club and the surrounding properties soundproof. After being forced to stop again, the club later found holes in the ceiling of the club through which the sound had been escaping! The good news to emanate from the closing of the rock'n'roll venue was improved poker machine takings. Members who stayed away from the club returned to a quieter and –for them – a more relaxed atmosphere.

As the young people of the area lamented the loss of their favourite nightclub/rock'n'roll venue, Revesby got on with impressing all that counted in the club industry – yet again.

The most stunning public recognition for Revesby Workers' Club was winning the Registered Clubs Association of New South Wales's annual Club of the Year award in 1993. This was the ultimate accolade in the New South Wales licensed club industry – acknowledgment by their peers. In a packed auditorium at the Bankstown Sports Club, Bullard and Camilleri enjoyed the camaraderie and bonhomie within the room, listening to and applauding winners of the various categories.

Camilleri had been forewarned however. Director Terry Semlitzky, working as a compositor with News Limited, had been inadvertently shown a page of *The Daily Telegraph* already locked in for the following day with the heading TOP HONOUR TO REVESBY WORKERS' after Revesby had won the award. The story was released to the paper – a common practice – a day early on the condition it was not released until the next day. However, a fellow compositor innocently showed Semlitzky, thinking he already knew.

Semlitzky immediately contacted Camilleri that afternoon, since the club had not booked a table for the event. Hasty last-minute preparations ensured Revesby Workers' was represented, thus averting considerable embarrassment for the club. President Bill Bullard, accompanied by Camilleri onstage, graciously accepted the award, though Camilleri had given him only minutes before the award was announced to prepare a speech.

Bullard turned to Camilleri and asked: "What did we win it for?" Camilleri recalled: "I had to think quickly. I just said: 'We won it because they could see the reforms we were putting in place to turn the business around.' It wasn't for a brand new club or that we had built this Taj Mahal. When the judges came out to inspect the club as part of the selection process, they could see there were changes in process to turn the club around."

That the club had not seen the award coming so soon after implementing their new work practices only accentuated the fact that

PHYLLIS JOHNSTONE – A WOMAN OF CHARITY

Phyllis Johnstone broke all the moulds. By her own admission, she was not a "clubbie", nor a Labor-voter, yet a much-accepted and loved member of the Revesby Workers' Club workforce and membership.

She was the second of only three recognised personal assistants to the secretary/chief executive in the club's 50 years, sandwiched between Joyce Sheppard and Jacki Campbell.

Phyllis arrived at the club in 1978 as a backstop for Sheppard, Brien Higgs's PA, after they had met when Phyllis helped with a multiple sclerosis quest at which her daughter was an entrant. One year later, Phyllis had the job full-time when Sheppard resigned to live on the New South Wales central coast.

Brisbane-born in 1932, but well travelled after she married a husband who was a Commonwealth Bank manager, Phyllis arrived at Revesby via Ayr, Mount Morgan, Yeppoon, Orange, Forbes and Queanbeyan, the final move on the advice of medical opinion that her daughter's skin problems would ease if they lived in a climate similar to Sydney's.

Phyllis was an early guardian of the club's scholarship scheme, handling all

the necessary paperwork and ensuring all aspects of the scheme met its guidelines. She also wrote – on an old typewriter, she recalled – the minutes of Board meetings.

By 1988, she felt her days as a full-time employee were over and handed the reins to Jacki Campbell. Brien Higgs had another three years left in the job and handed over to Ed Camilleri in 1991.

Her selfless roles in aiding the many and varied charities of the Workers' Club earned Phyllis the City of Bankstown



Citizen of the Year in 1994. She had been granted life membership of the club in 1992, the first woman to be granted such recognition at Revesby.

Her life membership award was made all the more special by an appreciated gesture from her replacement Jacki Campbell, who asked Phyllis to take the minutes of the annual general meeting because, as Jacki had told her, she couldn't make the meeting.

"I agreed to take the minutes as a favour," Phyllis recalled, "not realising of course they were going to announce my life membership. When they did, I turned around and there was Jacki at the back ... grinning. She had even arranged to have all my family there."

Phyllis's role was as much a working relationship with the club as anything else, and while she respected the political leanings of the club, she wanted it made known from the start that she did not vote Labor.

A foundation member of the Workers' garden club, Phyllis today carries the fondest of memories of a caring club that accepted her for who she was and in return got a woman of substance, and of charity.

management and the Board had been so deeply entrenched in improving its finances and the culture and ambience of the club, as well as the distraction of a succession of industrial disputes, they had not had time to smell the roses. The club won the RCA Club of the Year Community Service Award the following year,

another prestigious award and the ultimate accolade for a club so committed to the youth, the elderly and the disadvantaged and generous to so many worthy charities and community organisations.

It would not be the last time Revesby Workers' was so honoured.

Let's go to Vegas

1995-96

LICENSED CLUBS HAD BECOME A MAJOR INDUSTRY IN NEW SOUTH WALES. ACCORDING TO FIGURES RELEASED IN 1990-1991, WHICH APPEARED IN THE CLUBS NSW BOOK *THE NEW SOUTH WALES CLUB MOVEMENT 1838-2009*, THE NSW GOVERNMENT COLLECTED SOME \$400 MILLION FROM LIQUOR LICENCE FEES, KENO AND POKER MACHINE TAXES. THE 1551 REGISTERED CLUBS WELCOMED TWO MILLION MEMBERS, EMPLOYED 62,000 STAFF AND DISTRIBUTED SOME \$500 MILLION IN COMMUNITY SUPPORT. THE INDUSTRY WAS AS DYNAMIC AS IT WAS DIVERSE, FROM CLUBS WITH LIMITED MEMBERSHIP OF JUST A FEW HUNDRED TO THOSE SUPPORTING 35,000 TO 40,000 MEMBERS.

The wider gaming industry was growing, too, and it just seemed that clubs were being hit from all angles. If it wasn't increased taxes or calls to minimise poker machine numbers or opening up the hotel trade to poker machines – a licence for publicans to make money, as many saw it – it was the introduction of casinos.

The John Fahey New South Wales Coalition government granted the state's first casino licence in 1994 to Sydney Harbour Casino Pty Limited. The casino opened from temporary premises in 1995 while the company built the massive Star City Casino at Pyrmont, on Sydney Harbour, which opened in 1997. The RCA fought doggedly on behalf of the 243 clubs within a 10-kilometre radius of the casino, but to no avail.

In the ensuing years, successive governments – state and federal, Labor and Liberal – would attack the industry, unmercifully it seemed on occasions, affecting the very livelihoods of the clubs and, at the same time, destroying not only a lifestyle, and culture,

unique to New South Wales, but crippling support for so many communities and charities who depended on licensed club donations – money denied them by governments. The major issue at state level was, and would continue to be, liquor and gaming taxes; at federal level, the biggest threat – problem gambling ordinances – was still well down the track, but no less threatening. The election of a Bob Carr-led New South Wales government in 1995 did little to ease the concern.

The saddest of days

The death of Revesby Workers' much-loved club president Bill Bullard on 23 January 1995 saddened a family, a club, a community and a club industry that knew him and his high principles and dedication. He had been at the front office as a director since the "great coup" of 1977 and was club president from 1982. The start of his reign brought to an end five years of internal turmoil and set the club on a path of relative boardroom calm. Bullard was a man of charity who did much for the local community. His respect for and friendship with Brien Higgs and Daryl Melham helped in the smoothing of the ways: his legacy was in leaving Revesby as one of the industry's high achievers.

Editorials and epitaphs eulogised him as a man of great soul. Survived by his wife, Karlene, and four children, he was friend, mentor, father figure, compassionate almost to a fault, unassuming, modest and, at the end of it, as Pat Rogan added, "just a good bloke". Three days after his death it was announced he had been awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Australia Day honours list for service to the community, particularly through his involvement with the club's charity fundraising committee. Not to be missed at the same time was Phyllis Johnstone, the long-time secretary of the club's charity committee, who was named City of Bankstown Citizen of the Year.

Ed Camilleri recognised Bullard's predilection toward charitable works. He recalled Bullard telling him the reason he did



the charity work, apart from helping those with needs, was to unite the members. He found that organising a charity united people and inspired them to do something together. Camilleri recalled: "He was a very well-liked man. He was quiet but had a lot of respect. Sometimes you would bump into people who had been at the club for a long time. His name would come up ... there was almost reverence for him."

Dramatically and sadly, the death of Bullard was followed 18 months later, on 15 September 1996, by that of Higgs. In fact, Higgs was in hospital for treatment and unable to attend any of the funeral and memorial services for his friend. Joan Higgs explained that the only person her husband was "really close to" was Bullard. "He and Brien related to one another; they were very similar," she explained. "I can remember going over [to the hospital] and telling him [about Bullard]; tears rolled down his cheeks."

Both suffered cancer. Joan Higgs recalled Bullard and his wife, Karlene, having dinner at the Higgs's. "It was when he had to tell Brien that he would have to give up the club." Higgs's own cancer was detected 12 months after he retired from the Workers' Club.

In February 1995, a month after Bullard's death, Revesby introduced Norma Smith as the new president, though she needed to survive an initial boardroom challenge from Terry Semlitzky. A three-all deadlock shifted to 4-3 in Smith's favour on the casting vote of Bullard at the Board meeting before he died. It was Bullard's wish that Smith be the new president. In deference to Bullard, when Board members sat

Friends to the end. From left, Bill and Karlene Bullard and Joan and Brien Higgs at a Revesby Workers' Club function not long before Bill Bullard, the club president, passed away. The Bullards and the Higgs had formed a close bond. Sadly, Brien Higgs died 18 months later after his great mate.

NEXT PAGE: The impressively refurbished Revesby Workers' Club, 1997.



MISSISSIPPI WORKERS



THE BUCKLE UP
IN MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI



NO
LEFT

THE BEST OF QUALITY
HARDWARE
SINCE 1900

down to elect their president, Semlitzky did not reissue his challenge which meant the Board was not compelled to vote, thus ensuring Smith the presidency. The Board was down to six members for this meeting: Pat Rogan was yet to be elected.

Semlitzky's earlier challenge was based on his belief that he didn't think having a female as the head of the club was a good image for Revesby. "It was my male chauvinist approach at the time," Semlitzky admitted. "I never challenged her again and she developed into a good and respected president."

Smith was the first woman to govern a major licensed club – in keeping with the club's constitution which decreed equal membership rights for women. Bullard and Melham each believed Smith would grow into the position and its responsibilities. It was Bullard, according to Smith, who called to ask if she was prepared to take on the job. Smith, with no serious ambitions to head the Board, assumed Melham, as the vice-president, would become the next president.

Camilleri, too, questioned Smith's appointment, though he was to develop a strong working association with her. He was on holidays on the far north coast of New

South Wales when told the news that Bullard was dying. "Bill was on his death bed. He said, we've just had an informal meeting of directors and I want to let you know that we have supported Norma Smith as club president. I was taken back a bit. I was being judgmental; she was female and I knew what the Board was like. I thought she didn't stand out as being a leader. She was a good worker, a director, but I didn't see her as the leader."

"She was a very good person, a very good club member and very strong on charity. I had a lot of respect for her for taking on the role. There was a lot of resentment on the Board about her being there. I could feel it. But she gained respect over the years. I was really pleased, when she did retire, the amount of accolades she received."

Smith, who was made a life member of the club in 1994, was strong in her convictions but understood she would need support to handle the boardroom stoushes and to show some authority; this would be her greatest test. The fact the club supported equal membership rights for women from its very beginning did not negate chauvinistic attitudes in the boardroom at times. Melham encouraged her and fed her ways of dealing with Board issues that were foreign to her. She was already attuned to the occasional "blue" language of heated debates, having spent enough time in the boardroom (since 1982) to understand the foibles and whims of the different Board members.

"It was a bit rigorous at times," she admitted, "and if you wanted to put your point of view across, well you had to speak up and say what you thought. I was a bit starry-eyed, I think. It took a while to make an impression on a lot of people, for them to realise that I could handle the job. Sometimes you felt a little out of place ... gradually it altered. Now [2011] there are a lot of women who are attached to clubs and holding high positions as presidents."

Camilleri recalled that Smith was the only director in all the years of planning who would come to every planning meeting. "We all wanted to make the club better," she explained,

"and so we did quite a lot of building and alterations. I was on the building committee most of the time. It wasn't just a men's club, it was for both. Women should have the comfort as well. I think sometimes a woman's point of view was needed." Whatever the case, she had put her hand up for the presidency and there was no turning back.

The reason for Melham's continued rejection of the presidency was simply his busy political schedule which prevented him attending all Board meetings. Noteworthy, too, was Melham's contentment playing second fiddle. "I was happy behind the scenes," he explained. "I didn't crave positions, though I understood that in time it was only right that I would accept the position." Such was Melham's efficacy and boardroom nous; club members were comfortable with him in the passenger seat. His turn would come.

A new member

The Board was strengthened by the election on 27 March 1995 of state member for East Hills, Pat Rogan, as Bullard's replacement, though it was not a one-sided by-election. Keith Heaslip was keen to return to the Board and announced he was going to stand. Knowing that he was popular, the Board approached Rogan. He was well known and highly respected in the public and political sphere. But he was still in parliament and his inclination was to refuse the invitation. However, he appreciated just how good the club had been to him over the long years and decided to accept. As it turned out, in a field of five candidates, two stood out – and the Board got it right, just! Rogan won a close ballot, 266 to Heaslip's 202.

Rogan was not only politically erudite but savvy in the ways of licensed clubs and the club industry. He was widely respected and within four years of joining the Board he was elected president of ClubsNSW, as it was to become known in 1999, a position he was to hold for five years. What's more, it was no surprise that Rogan became Revesby's president in 2008 after Norma Smith relinquished the chair.

WORTHY OF AN EDITORIAL

The appointment of Norma Smith was seen as noteworthy and newsworthy enough for *The Daily Telegraph Mirror*, on 9 February 1995 to write this editorial under the heading "Fine Tradition":

"Revesby Workers' Club has always prided itself on its friendly, inclusive atmosphere, on the warm welcome it extends to visitors – and on its opposition to discrimination in all its odious forms.

"The election of Norma Jean Smith as president of the club, the first woman to hold the post, is in keeping with that spirit of determined equality.

"In Sydney's west, traditional values are strong and the prevailing approach to questions of equal rights, whether for women, for migrants, for the elderly, or for the disadvantaged, is a pragmatic one. People tend to be judged by their deeds rather than by the colour of their skin, their gender, their possessions.

"Mrs Smith's appointment is in that fine tradition."

Born in 1936, Rogan came to the city with his family, including a sister and two brothers, to receive an education. The family moved to Auburn and, after Rogan married, he moved to Padstow, and so began a long and fruitful association with his future constituency and with the Workers' Club. He recalled that he didn't have a car and the only way to get to the club was to walk. An electrical tradesman living in a garage while building his home, Rogan studied engineering at night and became an automation sales engineer with Honeywell. He also served with the Royal Australian Citizen Air Force. He entered politics in 1973.

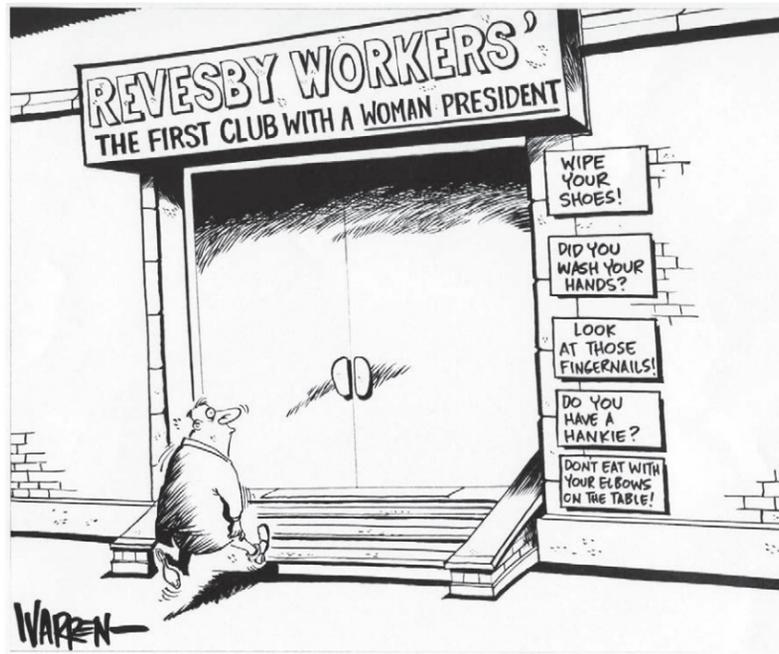
Rogan developed a keen interest in politics. "I think it stemmed from home. I remember sitting around the kitchen table debating current events with my father and brothers. My mother didn't take great interest but she'd have her say."

He later worked for a petroleum chemical corporation, which was part of the Boral group,



New club president Norma Smith accepting the 1996 Club of the Year award, the second time Revesby Workers' had won the honour.

The humour of Warren Brown, *The Daily Telegraph's* award winning cartoonist, was not lost on the management at the Workers' Club where a framed image of this illustration hangs beside the boardroom.





Pat Rogan.

where he became a shop steward. A political career was still a long way from his mind. "I was one to have my say," Rogan admitted. "Then when we moved to Padstow, I was voting one day and said to the chap on the polling booth handing out the ALP tickets, 'Where does the ALP meet around here?' I said I might join. I just wanted to get in and have my say because any discussions you'd have with friends at the club or wherever was always interesting but, at the end of it, I would think, that was good but what did I achieve? Didn't change anything! So I felt that any change needed had to be done within the party itself. I took the view that the party that represented my views was the ALP so I joined them. Again it was like getting on a moving train ... it just picked up speed. The more I got up and had my say, the more people said you should do this or do that. Next thing I know I'm president of my branch."

Rogan's association with the Workers' Club stretched back to 1973 when he wrote a letter to the then president Jim Donovan seeking his and the club's support in his bid to succeed Joe Kelly as the Labor member for East Hills in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. By this time, Rogan had been a member of the Australian Labor Party for ten years and his service to the cause was impressive. Among his many duties, he was president of the Banks Federal Electorate Council, president of the East Hills State Electorate Council, and president of the Padstow branch. He not only received Donovan's, and the club's, backing, he won pre-selection. It would be the beginning of a long and rewarding partnership between Rogan and the club. He was never seriously challenged in all subsequent state elections until he retired in 1999. Rogan was elected to the Revesby Board on 27 March 1995.

Major reconstructions and renovations of the club, the largest to date, began in August 1995. This was the first stage of a ten-year \$35 million plan to extend and renovate Revesby to a world-class standard. The first stage would cost \$15 million-plus. Revesby were negotiating to buy a property in Brett Street from the

council and turn it into a temporary car park. These were confident and buoyant times for the club. Builders, Clifford Constructions, set about refurbishing and remodelling a club on the rise, the first stage of the project financed by borrowings of \$10.4 million.

Significant increases in both turnover and profit from poker machine trading in 1994-95 produced a \$2.278 million operating profit after tax, almost \$1 million more than the previous year's profit figures - achieved despite club membership sinking below 20,000 for the first time in more than a decade-and-a-half to 19,463. More often than not, an increase in club profit equates to a jump in membership numbers - but not at Revesby!

The completed first stage of extensions was impressive. "I don't think people realised how big they were [going to be]," Camilleri explained. "We gutted the club. To me, the club was disjointed. They had done various renovations, but cheaply. We went out and started looking at what we could do. A lot of clubs at the time were going to Las Vegas - and we wanted a little version of Las Vegas."

When the club went out to tender, Camilleri outlined to each of the builders that the club was looking for an international hotel ambience. "When I go somewhere," Camilleri told them, "I always feel good in an international hotel: nice, comfortable finishes, big seats ... people pay extra money. Why couldn't we do that at Revesby? Why couldn't we have a five-star Revesby hotel in Revesby?"

Internationally known, Australian-based architect Michael Dysart was appointed to handle the design. Among his many previous designs were Jupiters Casino and the Cairns Casino. "He could see what I was talking about," Camilleri explained. "He came back with some plans and I remember Daryl saying, 'This isn't right,' and so Bill Bullard said, 'Why don't you guys go to Las Vegas, and see what's going on there?'"

Camilleri, Dysart and two of the Clifford Construction builders took their creative souls to the gambling capital of the world. The spark that would influence the major renovations

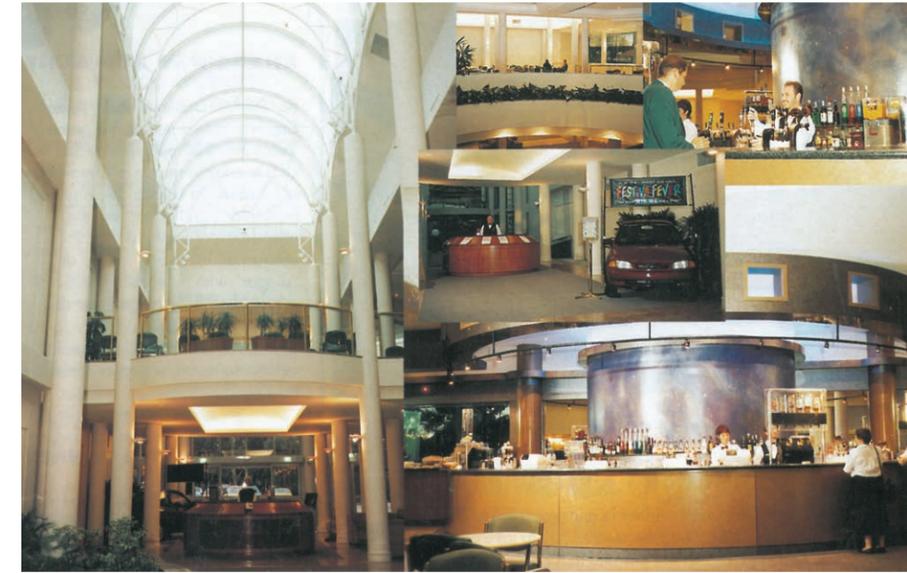
back at Revesby came while the four men were sitting in the casino floor of their hotel, the Las Vegas Hilton.

According to Camilleri, the hotel had a very large casino floor and all around it were restaurants and shops. "We were sitting in the Hilton at 3am having drinks and I said to the architect and builder, I like the feel of the floor: everything is centralised. There are no walls. You can walk around. I remember the architect getting some paper and a pen. He drew out this plan and came back to Sydney and perfected the drawing. I remember Daryl saying, this time, 'This is it. We've got it right.'"

Once plans had been drawn up, the club hired interior designer Gillian Gray. According to Camilleri, she had done all the Australian Hilton hotel refurbishments. "Gillian would come in with carpet samples ... they are still the same carpets [on the floors] today [2011]. Some said this is too good for Revesby. When we put the carpet down I remember the bingo ladies asking for samples to show their families. They were so proud that we had turned the club from a vinyl place into a place people were proud of. This was their own five-star hotel. They could leave their fibro houses for the day and come to a place that was their escapism - still paying their \$5 membership fee - and it's a palace. That's what really attracted a lot of people."

A significant inclusion in the overall rebuilding was the club's first unisex gymnasium - finally a gym men and women could share, no more segregation: equality of the medicine balls! Until this time men and women trained in separate gymnasiums. Both lacked adequate equipment, the women suffering more than the men, some of whom compromised on their fitness with a beer or two as they sweated it out in the sauna! Support for a gymnasium/health centre had long been a priority. While many large to mid-range sized clubs shied away from them, Revesby felt they were a boon to membership and were destined to provide the best-of-the-best for its patrons.

The major reconstruction was completed by Christmas 1996 at a final cost of \$17.5 million,



These were the largest renovations to date and who better to perform the official opening duties than former prime minister, Gough Whitlam, launched officially on 14 December 1996.

NEXT PAGE: The strikingly spacious foyer with the five-star ambience, looking back toward the impressive western entrance.

Gough Whitlam once again performing the official opening. Revesby paid back the secured loan of \$10 million within three years and set about planning the second stage, which is basically what patrons still enjoy today up to the publishing of this book in 2012.

On the back of sustained impressive profits, the club continued with its real estate acquisitions, purchasing additional properties in Revesby Place, including the old State Bank, medical centre and real estate agency. The purchase of a portion of Brett Street from the council provided the club with parking spaces for 440 cars.

Once again, the future was paramount. Despite the recent completion of the largest extensions to the club since it opened in 1973, the Board and management were already planning ahead.



New club, best again

17



1997-99

REVESBY WORKERS' CLUB WAS *THE* CLUB OF THE MOMENT. IT WAS THRIVING ON THE BALANCE SHEET AND HAD JUST UNDERTAKEN THE LARGEST AND MOST EXPENSIVE EXTENSIONS IN THE CLUB'S HISTORY, TO THAT TIME. AS IF TO CONFIRM REVESBY'S STATUS, THE CLUB WON THE 1996 REGISTERED CLUBS ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES CLUB OF THE YEAR AWARD FOR THE SECOND TIME, THE FIRST CLUB TO WIN THE AWARD TWICE.

The hub of its community, the club set out to establish rapport with its members and those in the surrounding precinct. Though dark clouds were hovering over the industry as a whole as Bob Carr's government dug their taxation claws into club success, Revesby portrayed itself as a bulwark – understated, yet prosperous without a sense of arrogance.

The opening of the largest extensions undertaken by the club helped to sustain Revesby's already high ranking, particularly in the wider licensed club family. The spanking new, renovated areas of the club opened gradually as part of the \$17.5 million facelift: a new reception area, Colonnade Brasserie, the Starlight Lounge, a new sports bar, the new Treasure Island Bar and gaming room, while the new gymnasium opened in December 1996 virtually at the time the renovations were complete.

Club management saw the development of a state-of-the-art gymnasium as an investment for the future, although gymnasiums and health centres were not a guaranteed success despite society's growing need for exercise.

Celebrating the club's second Club of the Year award – 1996. Among those identified at the back, John Gibbons (centre), Terry Semlitzky, Ed Camilleri. Front: Pat Rogan, Deborah Feening, Vic Pavlick, Norma Smith (president), Daryl Melham, Dennis Hayward.



OPPOSITE PAGE: TOP: Eastern entrance to a new look club. CENTRE: The equally impressive western foyer where the escalators lead patrons to the engine room – the gaming area – and to a selection of lounges and dining areas. BOTTOM: A wedding reception room was just one of the services offered by the club.

Camilleri had gone to the Board with a plan to upgrade the tired and inadequate facilities. It was going to cost the club more money. However, the Board reasoned that if they broke even, and the gym brought in a thousand new members, they would be happy. They were more than happy: they were laughing. In July 1997, six months after it opened, the Health Mates Fitness Centre, as it was called, signed up its 1000th new member. The club commissioned a sports design specialist to create “the most up-to-the-minute sports environment”, including over 50 exercise stations, “fabulous” shower facilities and change areas, and fully qualified fitness instructors to devise individual exercise programs, plus health and diet advice.

“We needed to run it as a business,” Camilleri recalled. “We had some very good people. The manager there now, Christina Vegners, started as an assistant: 2011 was her sixteenth year. The decision to invest heavily in fitness and health has paid handsome dividends

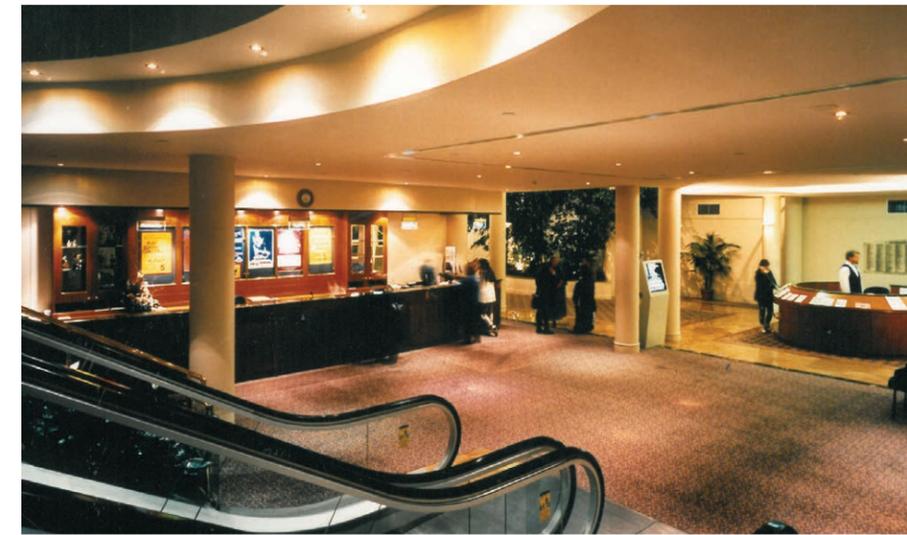
and remains a significant factor in the daily life of the club. In 2009, the centre was upgraded significantly, instantly attracting new members and, in 2010, the club made \$1.7 million profit; membership was over 4000 and growing. This was part of a diversification program that Revesby understood would be needed into the third millennium as governments raised poker machine taxes and buckled under the heavy pressure of problem gambling doomsayers who homed in on the club industry as if it were the lone purveyor of gaming issues.

Camilleri, too, had described in his chief executive officer’s report to the annual general meeting in September 1997 just how difficult trading and moving about the club had been during the building period which ended at the halfway mark of the 1996–97 financial year. He described it as “more pain than glory”, explaining that members “gained entry to the club by a series of tunnels, often not air conditioned, and concerns were raised when cold winds blew through the various lounges”.

All very graphic and perhaps not the image associated with a Club of the Year winner. Yet it underlined that, in spite of adversity, Revesby thrived.

By the end of June 1997, the results for the second half of the trading period were so strong that not only was the profit over \$1 million, the net revenue from poker machines (\$16,041,554) beat the previous year by \$1.5 million. An important factor, too, was the increase in membership and recognition of the bright new “five-star hotel” style of club! The record trading increased greatly through the next year where profit was \$3,517,897, \$2.5 million greater than the previous year when the club was under reconstruction. It beggared belief. Club membership in 1997–98 had moved to 22,253 and by August 1998, the club had repaid \$3.9 million of its principal loan. Significant in the profit increase was that all departments of the club achieved record trading and Camilleri was quick to praise the role of department managers, a group that might well have been among the best, collectively, in the club’s history.

As further confirmation of the quality of operations at Revesby, another award from outside the industry demonstrated the wide scope of appreciation. Revesby Workers’ won the Arthur Andersen 1997 Business Enterprise Award for Motivating and Retaining Employees. The national award was highly prestigious and a reward not only for Revesby but the industry. (Arthur Andersen was once in the “Big Five” of world accounting until they voluntarily surrendered their licences in 2002 after being found guilty of criminal charges arising from the firm’s handling of the auditing of Enron Corporation, an American energy company that suffered the largest bankruptcy reorganisation in American history to that time – and, for Andersen, the biggest audit failure.) Camilleri, in particular, saw motivation within staff ranks as a vital component to the club’s renewed growth, and he and his wife, Georgina, were flown to the Arthur Andersen head office in Chicago for the presentation.



World championship boxing came to Revesby in 1996, for only the second time, when “Break-even” Bill Mordey promoted a WBC welterweight championship between Australian Spike Cheney and Russian Viktor Baranov. Titleholder Cheney, who had won a silver medal at the 1988 Seoul Olympics and fought only 20 professional fights, lost to Baranov by TKO in the fifth. The only other world championship fight held at the club was a WBF super bantamweight stoush in April 1993 when Puerto Rican Orlando Fernandez beat Australian Tony Wehbee on points over 12 championship rounds.

The club remained generous to many charities and community projects, donating \$51,000 alone toward research for cancer and leukaemia at the Children’s Hospital at Westmead. They offered \$10,000 to assist with the local unemployed in the community, donated between \$200 and \$350 to each of the six Australian Labor Party branches in the area and held numerous other benefits to those in need.

However, the industry was preparing to bunker down for a bitter battle with the state government over the introduction of poker machines in hotels and a new and ruinous tax impost. In April 1997, the Labor government, despite protests from clubs, introduced a “Pubs Package” which allowed hotels to install 15 poker machines and upgrade the number of “cardies” to 15. The deepest cut for the club industry was that in allowing poker machines into hotels, Carr was allowing private investors/publicans to reel in heavy profits without any return to the community: it made some hotel owners millionaires almost overnight. The “sting” for clubs was that as not-for-profit organisations, they returned liberal amounts of money annually to charities and to local communities, as well as pouring profits back to members in the form of better facilities, subsidised dining, entertainment and health and leisure activities.

Just one month later, in May, treasurer Michael Egan handed down the state Budget which carried a wicked surprise for the larger

clubs, such as Revesby: an increase in top marginal income from 24.75 per cent to 30 per cent – a 21 per cent increase! Some 415 clubs were in this tax bracket across the state and it was calculated that the increase would cost clubs over \$100 million. Based on its current trading, Revesby management estimated the tax would cost the club \$1.4 million.

RCA director Keith Kerr, in a circular to all RCA members, described the tax as “the single most regressive measure ever taken by a government against the welfare and interests of registered clubs in this state”. While some of the clubs in the tax bracket with major borrowings struggled to stay afloat, “Fortress Revesby” moved on regardless, though, like the rest of the industry unimpressed with Egan’s dogmatic approach.

Out of the damage came the Community Development Support Expenditure (CDSE) scheme, which formalised an agreement with the state government in return for tax relief. Under the scheme, clubs with gaming profits of more than \$1 million would contribute 1.5 per cent of those profits to community projects, including those recommended by the local CDSE committee. It was enough for the government to drop its plan to introduce a top marginal tax of 30 per cent, though as time would tell, it was just a lull before another storm.

We’re opening earlier

At Revesby in 1997, a new daily opening time of 9.30am was introduced; rugby league great Bob Fulton and swimming legend Dawn Fraser featured in two new television commercials for Club Keno, both filmed in the Revesby Workers’ sports bar; a hairdressing salon, the only leased service in the club, attracted a strong clientele in its first year; and the Federation of Community, Sporting and Workers’ Clubs, of which Revesby was a long-term member, acquired the Urunga Golf and Sports Club Limited which had fallen into receivership. Redevelopment of the holiday resort would provide Revesby club members with further holiday accommodation, similar to Fingal Bay and Sussex Inlet.

In the same year, the Workers’ Club elected Dick Moroney to replace the club’s longest-serving director, Vic Pavlick, who had decided not to seek re-election at the September 1997 annual general meeting. A life member of the club, Pavlick joined the Board in 1977 at the time of the “Revesby Revolution” and was the last remaining director from that notable year. The first director to serve 20 years on the Board (1977–1997), he had been the club’s delegate to the RCA, its representative on the Bankstown Frail Aged Homes Trust and a member of the club’s Charity Fundraising Committee, as well as liaison director to a number of sport and leisure sub-clubs.

Moroney was “old school” in that he drank with and occasionally fraternised with the pioneering directors before the first club was built. He didn’t become a member of the club until 1967 because of the restrictions on membership numbers due to the Liquor Act requirements. This was a time, he said, of “good camaraderie and you knew everyone in the club”, a time when “we had a lot of wharfies who did shift work” and “you would battle to get on the snooker tables”. In the shadows of a new millennium, Revesby presented as a far different club for Moroney, though his very election suggested he was in touch with the modern club and adequately prepared for his new role. Moroney had been a member of the now-defunct West Revesby branch of the Australian Labor Party and was politically active – and interested. He was immediately appointed the club’s alternate delegate to the Federation of Community, Sporting and Workers’ Clubs.

As Revesby went into further profit records – \$3,857,092 net in 1998–99 – the club geared for the second stage of its major extensions and for a new look for the beginning of a new millennium. Excitement had been growing as Sydney prepared for the Olympics in 2000. The last time the Games had come to a southern hemisphere city was Melbourne in 1956. Revesby was a mere hop, step and a jump away from the centre of the Games’s main

thrust at Homebush, and although the club had no hotel accommodation surrounding it to entice visitors – and even competitors – to the club’s doorstep, the spirit of the Games was noticeable.

The new \$15 million second stage of rebuilding began in January 1999 by James Clifford Constructions, and this time disruption was less confronting than the interruptions of stage one. When the renovations were completed in February 2000, the club had a new 300-seat family restaurant, an extension to the popular River Café featuring wood-fired pizza, a new cocktail lounge with an extension to the gaming floor, the long-awaited renovation of the auditorium, and a supervised play area for members’ children called Kids Korner, which had been one of the last of the changes to be completed.

The auditorium with its 1000-seat capacity was named The Whitlam Room and once again gave Revesby the facility to host high-quality shows and performers. Such was the size of the renovations, when they were finished, the then-premier Bob Carr, accompanied by the Minister for Racing and Gaming, Richard Face, was invited to open the extensions. The quality of the renovations won the club an Excellence in Construction award from the Master Builders Association.

Hospitality – a Revesby priority

The club pre-1996 was virtually gone. A relaxed comfortable atmosphere and the open spaces of the main foyer gave the club the feel of an international five-star hotel. Behind this facade was a club with something for everyone, except perhaps the younger members. The high-quality rock bands that had entertained the youth on Friday nights were no longer, persistent complaints from local residents finally forcing the club to abandon the entertainment. While the decision not to engage the rock bands had a negative effect on beverage sales, it generated more income from gaming and catering where the older, bigger-spending members felt more comfortable



TOP: Dick Moroney was elected to the Board to replace Vic Pavlick.

ABOVE: Pat Rogan, elected ClubsNSW chairman in 1999.



Celebrating the opening of the \$15 million second stage of renovations which was officially opened by the then premier, Bob Carr. From left: Richard Face (Minister for Gaming and Racing), Ed Camilleri, Mr Carr and his wife, Helena, Daryl Melham, Norma Smith (president), Alan Ashton (state member for East Hills).

without the “loud noise” and the youth presence.

Hospitality and service to its members were by now high priorities for clubs. Revesby recognised the point of difference and the need to service its customers well, and encouraged and supported staff training courses under a joint partnership agreement with Loftus TAFE.

As part of the club’s overall training and development agenda, many of the club’s staff took part in a number of fully accredited training programs, firstly in the catering area where Revesby was the first club in the industry in New South Wales to participate in a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) program, along with a Food Hygiene and Safety program.

Where this was leading for all departments was in quality customer service training, as well as Responsible Service of Alcohol programs. The club understood that increasing the skill levels of staff not only benefitted the club significantly but also provided staff with a number of career pathways within the industry. Extensive training was also provided for the club’s duty management and supervisory teams. Another positive side effect of the training was that it not only encouraged

improvement in service to members but also loyalty among the staff. In the 1998–99 financial year, staff turnover fell significantly by 13 per cent and workers’ compensation claims by 33 per cent.

Grants to maintain the scholarship scheme; the addition of a sports scholarship awarded to the University of Western Sydney; ever-increasing donations (\$183,000 in 1998–99, including \$70,000 to Camp Quality); purchase of another property in Brett Street; the acquisition of three holiday units at Urunga; and the addition of a “happy hour”, restricted to the sports bar and the Sports and Recreation Centre at Panania, were part of the fabric of the Revesby Workers’ Club year.

It was also time for an overhaul of the image of the Registered Clubs Association of New South Wales. In search of a new, more modern profile, the RCA changed its trading name to ClubsNSW. Under the reign of chief executive officer Mark Fitzgibbon, the RCA introduced new structures and new business practices with an image and logo to match, the logo and name change introduced in November 1999. Fitzgibbon, who had been general manager of the Bankstown City Council, carried impeccable Australian Labor Party connections. His father, Eric, had been a long-serving federal Labor parliamentary minister from Newcastle and his brother Joel continued to represent the seat of Hunter in the federal parliament.

As if to coincide with the new look at headquarters, one of Revesby’s own – Pat Rogan – was elected the new ClubsNSW chairman, the first “chairman” instead of “president”, as it had been known. A committed Labor member of parliament for 26 years, he had only just resigned from his parliamentary duties when he stood for the chairmanship against the incumbent Jack Ball. Rogan had been on the Revesby Board for just four years. However, he was well informed of club business and there was a view that having a former Labor minister as their chairman would not hurt their cause in any future dealings with the state government.

A DIRECTOR’S LIFE ... EXHAUSTING!

Boardroom duties are one thing for directors in licensed clubs, but what really is the role of the individual Board member? There is a requirement well beyond the four walls of a boardroom – particularly so for Revesby directors. While the roles – and achievements – have changed for those directors who remain on the Board in 2012 (at the time of publication), the following snapshot of director duties for 1999 was exhausting by any measure.

Norma Smith (life member of Revesby Workers’ Club – club president):
Liaison director – ladies’ indoor bowls, ladies’ golf, netball and wine appreciation clubs; club’s representative – Bankstown City Aged Care; chairman - club’s charity fundraising committee; life member – Revesby Workers’ netball club (president/secretary); club’s representative – Federation of Community, Sporting and Workers’ Clubs; club’s delegate – Registered Clubs’ Association; club’s representative – executive of the Now ‘n’ Then Occasional Child Care Centre; member – club’s street fair committee; member – Revesby Workers’ scholarship committee; club’s representative – Bankstown Seniors’ Week committee.

Daryl Melham (life member of Revesby Workers’ Club – vice-president; federal member of parliament; barrister at law):
Liaison director – bridge, underwater fishing and basketball clubs and scholarship committee.

John Gibbons (life member of Revesby Workers’ Club):
Liaison director – billiards and snooker, activities, tennis, physical culture and karate clubs; life member – Revesby Workers’ billiards and snooker club; member – club’s charity fundraising committee.

Terry Semlitzky:
Liaison director – softball, cricket, fishing and senior athletics club; life member – Revesby Workers’ darts and fishing clubs; member – club’s street fair committee; club’s representative – Bankstown City Aged Care; member – club’s charity fundraising committee.

Dennis Hayward
Liaison director – men’s golf, junior tennis, baseball, soccer, hockey and little athletics; life member – Revesby Workers’ soccer club; club’s delegate – Federation of Community, Sporting and Workers’

Clubs; club’s delegate – Registered Clubs’ Association; club’s representative – executive of the Now ‘n’ Then Occasional Child Care Centre; member – club’s charity fundraising committee; member – club’s street fair committee.

Pat Rogan (retired state member of parliament; president – Federation of Community, Sporting and Workers’ Clubs):
Liaison director – men’s and women’s lawn bowling, swim and domino clubs; patron – number of community groups; president of Bankstown East Hills Handicapped Association for two years; worked actively with many community organisations.

Dick Moroney:
Liaison director – mixed bowls, darts and garden clubs and welfare committee; club’s alternate delegate – Federation of Community, Sporting and Workers’ Clubs; member – club’s charity fundraising committee; member – club’s street fair committee.

Rogan would find that only too true in the years ahead. For the time being, his first year was marked by relative calm since ClubsNSW was an appreciated major sponsor of the 2000 Olympic Games. Premier Bob Carr wrote glowingly to Rogan, thanking ClubsNSW for its support in the lead up to and during the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

At a time when the Workers’ Club profits

were at an all-time high and club morale was strikingly evident, the Board had manoeuvred Revesby into a position of strength on all fronts. The prospect of slipping over to a new millennium, and with an Olympic Games on their doorstep in September and October of 2000, brought added excitement and expectation. It was a good time to be a member of the Revesby Workers’ Club.

18

Winning ways and smokin' days

THE WORLD SKIPPED INTO THE THIRD MILLENNIUM IN A ROUSING CELEBRATION OF THE LAST NEW YEAR OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY WITH HANGOVERS APLENTY BUT WITHOUT THE PREDICTED DISRUPTION TO BUSINESS AND DAILY LIFE FORECAST BECAUSE OF WORLD-WIDE NON-COMPLIANCE OF COMPUTERISED SOFTWARE. THE "MILLENNIUM BUG" WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.

Revesby Workers' Club entertained and partied in a special night that might also have been a celebration of their own fabulous "nineties" – a decade that built substantially on the pioneering and formative groundwork of those who built the club through the previous three decades. Record profits in the '90s gave rise to a grander, larger club building and to a confidence in the future.

Where many smaller clubs would suffer under further tax imposts, soon to be thrust upon the industry, and the imminent smoking bans, Revesby began the twenty-first century a bastion of health and good planning.

The combined concerns over the introduction of a goods and services tax (GST) and switching all electronic and digital systems to comply with the Year-2000 time zone were more fanciful notions than reality. The GST was an unpopular sales tax which passed legislation under the John Howard-led government in June 1999 and began operation on 1 July 2000. Licensed clubs were among businesses and organisations busily preparing for the changeover, a nightmare for some but at a well-prepared Revesby Workers', where part of the process was the restructure of

accounts and administration, finance staff made the transformation easier whereby members were able to take the change in their stride.

The ease with which computer compliance was tackled in the changeover from 31 December 1999 to 1 January 2000 slayed the gloom merchants who had been forecasting all kinds of world catastrophes on the back of predicted serious malfunctions and non-compliance. The changeover was smooth and without debacle, though considerable time and effort was needed to ensure "Y2K" passed quietly.

Remarkably, stagnated membership numbers did not restrict the end of year profits. The club started the 1990s with 24,462 members and finished it with just over 20,000, a consistent annual figure during the decade that reached as low as 19,463 in 1994-95. Not surprisingly, a major focus of the year ahead – and the years beyond – was growing the membership. Not only was it important in itself to build membership but it would also improve the club's bottom line – the more members and visitors that came into the club, the less company tax the club was required to pay. The company tax for non-profit organisations is calculated based on the Waratahs formula, which requires the club to isolate member and non-member contributions. It is not an exact science but one the taxation department determines from a formula which relies on the accuracy of visitor and member registers, as well as survey results.

If Revesby needed any cause to doubt their status among the leading licensed clubs, it was washed away in a fitting ceremony at the Convention Centre in Darling Harbour with the announcement of the club's third prestigious ClubsNSW Club of the Year award. The award was for the 1999 year; they had won it previously in 1993 and 1996. They were the first club to win the award for the third time, an achievement matched to date only by Mounties. Significant in this case was that the club was nominated in all categories.

Adding further to the weight of opinion on Revesby's status was the awarding of Fitness Centre of the Year to Revesby's Health Mates Fitness Centre by Fitness NSW in a category including 1600 registered clubs throughout NSW.

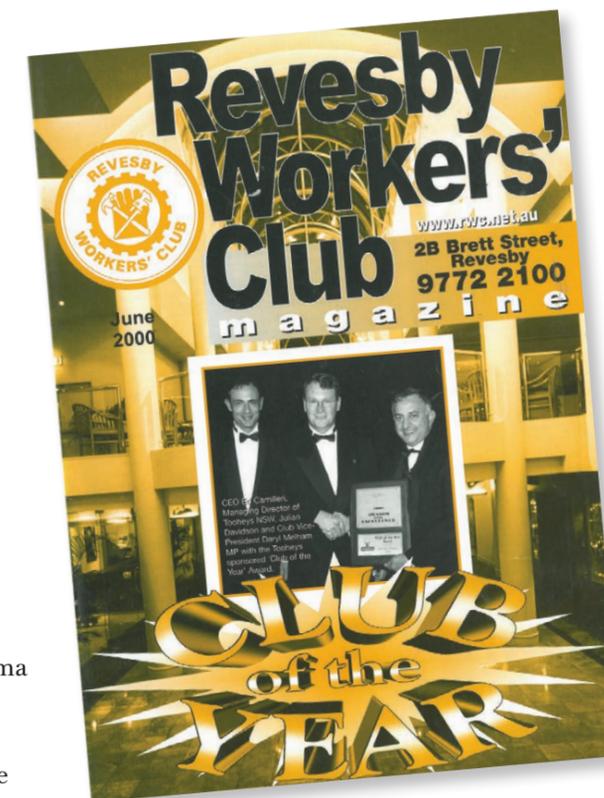
In her report to members in 2000, club president Norma Smith advised of the introduction of Responsible Service of Alcohol and Responsible Gambling

Initiatives, which were among a number of reforms targeted by club director Pat Rogan in his new role as chairman of ClubsNSW.

Rogan was at lengths to ensure that directors were better educated and better informed of their responsibilities and duty of care and, thus, helped create the Club Directors Institute. Rogan also helped commission the Allen Consulting Group to undertake the industry's first socio-economic impact study, detailing the contributions clubs make to the community, as well as the ClubSAFE Responsible Conduct of Gambling program.

The initiatives also helped to re-unite the club movement. According to Rogan, in 1999, small clubs, golf and bowling clubs among them, felt their needs were being ignored in the interests of larger clubs. Rogan, at the coalface of the issue as a member of one of the largest and most successful clubs in the state, worked to ensure that the smaller clubs had a greater sense of purpose within the wider club movement.

Rogan brought new energy to ClubsNSW, as he had done as director of the Workers'



Revesby Workers' Club journal for June 2000 tells all – Club of the Year again for the third time.



Revesby celebrated numerous awards for excellence both inside and outside the licensed club industry. This was a time of great achievement and only confirmed the club's high status within the community. Here Dick Moroney (left), Norma Smith and Norma Moroney, enjoy another moment under the spotlight.

Club. He was genuinely interested in, and supportive of, licensed clubs and would help to initiate a number of practices at Revesby Workers' that would sustain the club in the years ahead. As part of the Responsible Gambling Initiatives, Revesby imposed a daily limit of \$200 on all cheque-cashing facilities from 14 October 2000.

Recognition for its support of problem gamblers came the following year when Revesby won the Club of the Year award for Responsible Gaming. The club entered the Office of Western Sydney Industry Awards for the first time and was awarded a Highly Commended for Industry Training and was a finalist for Excellence in Human Resources. The swiftness with which acknowledgment came was valued and highlighted the scope of their operations and how well they had implemented them.

Revesby also joined in the true spirit of the Olympics by presenting tickets to the ClubsNSW-sponsored corporate box to members and to children from underprivileged homes. The ClubsNSW box was strategically placed next to the official box. The club bought large numbers of tickets to share out evenly to

members and to the community. Revesby also hosted the United States women's gold medal-winning softball team at a special club function. As with most overseas visitors, they were agog at the size and quality of a community club.

The club continued to be generous to the sporting sub-clubs, providing \$2500 to the baseball club, \$1293.28 to darts, \$1890.95 to the hockey club, \$2200 to the swimming club, and further donations to the wider sporting community of Bankstown: a \$2000 sponsorship to Bankstown City netball; \$1850 to Bankstown/Canterbury cricket; \$2500 to sponsor a Basketball NSW under-16 team; and, for the Olympics, \$15,000 to the Australian Olympic team fund and \$5000 to the Australian Paralympic Committee. A fundraising dinner, held in the new Revesby club's auditorium, raised a further \$200,000 in support of the Australian Paralympic team.

Along with Responsible Service of Alcohol and Responsible Gambling Initiatives, training programs for staff, donations to charities and community projects remained a determined focus. It was further notice that the club industry was not all poker machines and bright lights.

The official opening of the completed second stage of the major building reconstruction by then-premier Carr on 25 March 2000 fulfilled a five-year plan proposed by the club in 1996 when the first stage of the extensions was completed. The areas featured in the completed second stage were two new restaurants, a cocktail bar, entertainment lounge, bottle shop, travel agency and child crèche facilities. The final peg in the extensions was refurbishment of what had become a tired, old auditorium, completed on 18 March 2000 and renamed, appropriately, The Whitlam Room. The room was regarded as the best-equipped showroom among licensed clubs. Gough Whitlam enjoyed a special attachment to Revesby Workers' where kindred spirits gathered and the community hailed him as a great leader. He presided over the very opening of the new club in 1973, which

included the original auditorium and, thus, it was appropriate that he should open the new auditorium in 2000. Whitlam also performed official duties on two other special occasions – on 13 May 1993 when he opened the Waratah and Wattle rooms and on 14 December 1996 at the opening of the club's major extensions, the largest renovations since the club opened in 1973.

Now for stage two

It would be the club's second five-year plan that would be hardest to implement. In 2000, the club set out on a business plan to be less reliant on gaming income. The success of the proposal would be dependent on both internal and external programs. An initial course of action was to find higher levels of profit in the catering department. Catering is subject to continual losses in most clubs and Revesby was no exception. The club implemented a financial

accounting system, designed specifically for that purpose, which required some commitment from the catering and accounting department and turned an \$800,000 loss to a reduced cost of \$100,000 in 2001–02.

Significant was the profit in excess of \$500,000 of the club's impressive fitness centre, Health Mates – despite competition from a new facility at Bankstown. The fitness centre won, for the third year in succession, Fitness Centre of the Year for Registered Clubs. The centre was an important facility in the diversification plans and in 2002 boasted 2800 members, ranging in ages from 12 to 88.

Membership numbers started to increase significantly in these early years of the decade and by the end of the 2001–02 year had climbed to 29,042. At the same time, assistant manager Ken Comerford resigned. He had been a loyal and long-time employee, who started off in the cellar and worked his way through the



This Board remained unchanged from 1997 to 2006 when Ian Stromborg replaced Dick Moroney. Behind them, appropriately is the workingman's bas relief, carved from wood, situated just outside the boardroom. Standing, from left: Ed Camilleri (CEO), Dick Moroney, Terry Semlitzky, John Gibbons, Pat Rogan, Dennis Hayward. Sitting: Norma Smith (president), Daryl Melham (vice-president).

ranks to, among other positions, supervisor and beverage manager. Camilleri said of him: “He was very well liked. He used to tell me [when Camilleri worked at the club as a trainee manager] to keep your nose clean. ‘If I can do this work as a garbo, you can do it.’” His wife, Mary, worked at the club as well, while Ken retired “in his own time”. Ken was replaced by Deborah Feening.

Kids Korner, initially a crèche for all club members but later specifically for fitness centre users, celebrated its second year in 2002 and had 2400 children enrolled. The facility was open seven days a week and offered a wide range of entertainment for children.

Not insignificant in 2003 among the generous support of the leisure and sports sub-clubs, which were a strength of their own within the Revesby structure, the club became a major sponsor of Canterbury District Junior Rugby League, the first time in 37 years that the club had supported the game. Consistent financial problems within the Revesby Workers’ rugby league club in the early years forced the club to end support in 1971. The annual reports of 2000 and beyond, in particular, sometimes

carried five large pages of sub-club events and successes for the previous year and underlined the importance the club placed on the sport and leisure clubs.

By now, net profits were consistently over \$2 million and expected to grow. New technology helped to change the look of the gaming floor and while there was a commitment to diversifying income streams, gaming was, and would remain, the main source of club income into the foreseeable future.

That notion was left strewn on the gaming floor when treasurer Michael Egan announced a massive new gaming tax in the June 2003 state Budget that would progressively strip \$1.8 billion from the industry over the following seven years. The announcement shocked and angered ClubsNSW. Egan had promised in his 2001 commitment to consult with the industry before making any changes to the tax structure. Rogan, chairman of ClubsNSW and a director on the Revesby Board, was dismayed at the changes – and the impending impact on all clubs.

Rogan and executives of ClubsNSW were called in on Budget day and shown the changes. When Rogan asked, “What about the review?” Egan replied arrogantly, “This is *my* review.” Rogan surmised that Egan and Carr thought they would have a compliant chairman because of their shared political ethos. “Because I had been part of the government, they might have expected me to roll over,” he said. “My loyalty was to the ALP, not to Carr and Egan.”

The new tax regime was aimed, particularly, at larger clubs, and Revesby Workers’ was right in the firing line. Club president Norma Smith, awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for her services to the community in this same year, accused Egan of a complete lack of understanding of how clubs operate. “Mr Egan seems to have forgotten basic business principles: revenue does not mean profit,” she argued. “The tax rate will more than double over the next seven years, and will mean an operating loss for the first time in Revesby Workers’ Club history.”

The current club taxation rate was 17.5 per cent which by 2010 would increase to 40 per cent. The impact, chief executive officer Ed Camilleri determined in financial figures, based on 2002–03 trading, would have affected Revesby by an extra \$4.6 million. This would have resulted in a club trading *loss* for the year of approximately \$2.5 million.

The giant tax grab, which was to come into effect on 1 September 2004, had an immediate impact on Revesby when the Board placed the new building project on hold until it was clear whether large public protests and urgent meetings between ClubsNSW and government would lead to a revision. Out of a stubborn government resistance to negotiation, ClubsNSW began an “Axe the Tax” campaign. Posters went up all over the state urging members to “Fight Egan’s Mean Tax”. Revesby sought, and received, immediate support from local state members Alan Ashton and Tony Stewart, and from the member for Peats, Marie Andrews (Revesby’s recent purchase, the Mooney Mooney Workers’ Club, was in her electorate). Revesby members, management and staff were prominent in the public rallies – an estimated 15,000 in a march on the premier’s office and treasury, and 20,000 in a march on Parliament House to deliver 100,000 protest letters to the premier. Pertinent to the announcement by the government was Revesby’s remarkable \$351,124 in donations in the 2002–03 year. Who was going to fill the gap in the future?

As the industry took the fight to the government, clubs were about to deal with a further potentially crippling drain on revenue – the proposed smoking ban. In early October 2004, the state government released its timetable for licensed premises to invoke complete smoking bans in indoor areas. The timetable set out three stages to be followed, starting in July 2005, with the final stage, a complete ban, in July 2007. Revesby understood, as did ClubsNSW, that while the move to comprehensive bans was inevitable, the ban would have serious revenue and

employment consequences, particularly if the restrictions were phased in too quickly. While the majority of the population welcomed the ban, the reality was that 80 per cent of those who played the poker machines were smokers. Revesby and the rest of the club industry understood, too, that where bans had been introduced in other jurisdictions there was a significant reduction in gaming revenue, particularly at venues that had not prepared adequately.

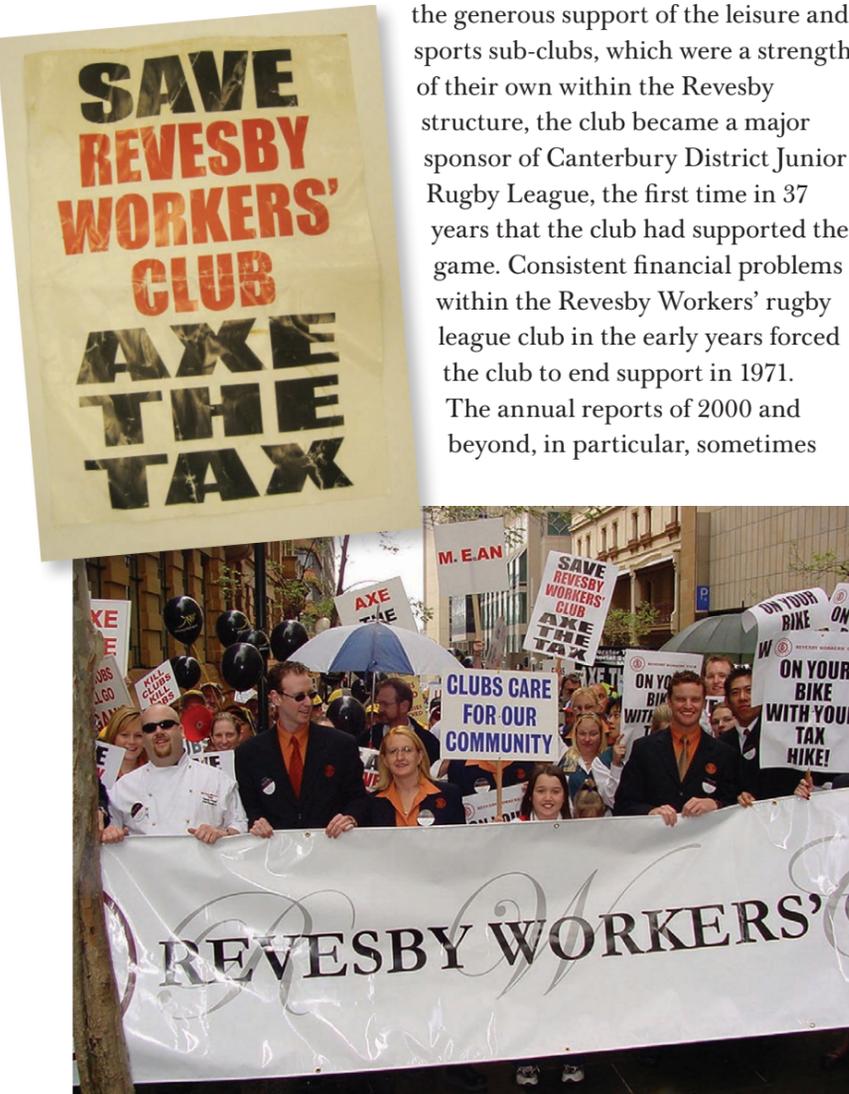
A club on the Hawkesbury

With the industry under such siege, Revesby’s search for alternative income streams to gaming continued. The amalgamation with Mooney Mooney Workers’ Club, a small licensed club on the shores of the Hawkesbury River with spectacular views across the river toward Brooklyn, commenced in February of 2003 and was ratified by the New South Wales Licensing Court on 1 March 2004. The club was in the hands of an administrator and needed a suitor with financial grunt to keep it afloat.

Workers’ Club patrons were encouraged to visit the serenely located club, a 45-minute drive north of Sydney, on their way up the F3 motorway to and from the central and north coast. The clubhouse and its private wharf facilities desperately needed a face lift. The club had been fortunate to have a facility by which members and guests could arrive by boat – as long as it was safe! Enticing to the Revesby Board in the decision to amalgamate was the purchase of the 2.5 hectares of adjoining land which was an old Road Transport Authority depot site used during the building of the motorway. The club later increased land accumulation to 3.2 hectares.

This was foreign territory for Revesby. Past and future acquisitions were with clubs virtually in their own backyard. Camilleri recalled his first visit to talk to the Mooney Mooney Board. “At the time we took it over, it was an old army hut, full of oyster farmers. I remember walking in to meet the Board on a

Revesby Workers’ Club joined the protest against the state Labor government’s massive new gaming tax in 2003. ClubsNSW began an “Axe the Tax” campaign which resulted in public rallies and protests.



After the amalgamation with Mooney Mooney Workers' Club, Revesby spent \$5.5 million revamping a club with one of the best outlooks in the club industry – views over the Hawkesbury River. Patrons could also arrive by boat, moored at the rebuilt wharf.



ONE GOOD TURN ...

Winning the hearts of the Mooney Mooney club members was a minefield from the start. The Revesby Board had to convince them to accept Revesby's offer to amalgamate – and thus retain it as a functioning club – or sell to a local developer.

Revesby chief executive officer Ed Camilleri accompanied the Board to a special meeting attended by some 100 Mooney Mooney members when the developer began putting his case – and referring to members by their first names!

There was a sudden realisation that Revesby was behind the eight ball ... until

an unknown ally addressed the meeting. According to Camilleri, "After we went through our spiel of what we could offer the club, a chap sitting in the front row, in a pair of shorts and a t-shirt, got up to speak." He told the meeting how his mother and residents of Sandy Point, a suburb on the edge of the Bankstown precinct, were taken in by a compassionate and caring Workers' Club after severe bushfires forced evacuation of the suburb in 2002.

"He talked about how we had children and families in our auditorium and told how we fed them," Camilleri recalled. "He said: 'And this is what they can do for

us as well.' None of us thought we had a chance in the world of winning the bid. The fellow was so praiseworthy of the club and what we had done for the community, we received 95 per cent of the votes."

The bushfires were severe and Camilleri recalled even taking in family pets – cats, dogs, goldfish, even a horse – all the animals corralled across the road in the Henry Lawson House precinct, including the garden area, where Revesby staff volunteers helped care for them under the guidance of the RSPCA.

One good past deed was repaid in an instant.

Friday night. These [members] were sitting on their stools: some were in flannelette shirts and thongs. I had a dark suit on, briefcase ... they called me the undertaker. That became my nickname. But you know, we've gone from 800 members to 8500 [in 2011]."

The improvement in Mooney Mooney in its five years under amalgamation with Revesby, which took some \$5.5 million in rebuilding and refurbishment, was dramatic and set the tone for the future, though it would take many years before annual profits would repay the heavy outlay. The club, for instance, made a profit of \$40,000 in its first full year (2004–05) of operation under the Revesby Workers' banner – a positive start if nothing else.

Mooney Mooney's reputation has been based on food and catering, particularly the quality of its food in the Coastal Restaurant/Function Room, with its decks facing the Hawkesbury River. Bookings have been so substantial that Sunday at the club now has double bookings. It was further confirmation that licensed clubs generally had to get their food – and service – right. According to

Camilleri, people have too many choices. "They don't go to the club [for dining] because it's Revesby Workers' Club or Bankstown Sports, or whatever. They go because they get good service, good food and surroundings – clubs have got to maintain that. They can't sit back in the glory of it all. You have to work hard at it at all times."

(In 2011, with Monique Fors its very capable club manager, Mooney Mooney was a finalist in Best Club Restaurant in 2010 and 2011 in the ClubsNSW for Excellence awards and was the winner of Best Dessert in the Chef's Table awards.)

At the same time the club purchased Mooney Mooney they also purchased the baby health centre on the corner of Brett and Blamey Streets in Revesby from the Bankstown City Council. The baby health centre came with a covenant which required the club to find suitable similar premises for it, which they did, buying a disused medical centre in Macarthur Avenue. With the growth of modern medical centres there was less use for baby health centres, and the club later on-sold the property



Further recognition for Revesby in 2004 for innovation at the Western Sydney Industry Awards. From left: the then premier Bob Carr, Michelle Appleby (Revesby Human Resources manager), Ed Camilleri (Revesby CEO).

to a developer. The purchase of the baby health centre, and the subsequent demolition of the centre and Henry Lawson House, allowed the club to build its car park on the eastern side and eventually set in place major commercial building plans.

The industry awards did not stop for Revesby, either, nor was the consistency with which the awards fell Revesby's way lost on then-premier Bob Carr. The club was the first to have an in-house television station to show their commercials. When Revesby won the award in 2004 for innovation at the Western Sydney Industry Awards, Carr turned to Camilleri onstage in front a 1000 people and asked, "What did you win *this* for?" Camilleri answered, "We put our own TV in the club." Camilleri recalls, "He gave me a bit of a grunt. The clubs were fighting Egan and Carr at the time ... I'll never forget that."

The smoking ban you had to have
When the first stage of the smoking ban at clubs and hotels hit home in July 2005, Revesby set about developing three smoking balconies, although only two were built, located at the front and rear of the club, as well as a refurbishment of the main trading floor. The outdoor smoking areas were located close to the main floor operations, enabling members and

guests an easy access. The outdoor plan was, in some ways, a welcome compromise. A select group of clubs, which included Revesby, found a loophole in the legislation which gave clubs the opportunity to legally house their smoking poker machine players in outdoor facilities within the club's premises – a first anywhere in the world.

With a pre-tax profit of \$4.2 million, accumulated cash reserves of \$6 million and clearance of all debt, the club was also able to suffer the impact of the government's first year of the new tax regime in the 2004–05 year, which resulted in the club paying an extra \$1 million in tax for that year. Camilleri later pointed out in his 2008 report to members, at a time when the bans had a chance to impact on trading, there had been a major downturn in gaming revenue across the board in licensed clubs, but that at Revesby, trading picked up in the first six months of the 2008–09 year to pre-2006 before the smoking ban legislation was implanted fully.

Modernising the club was a constant focus for the Board and executive. The club commissioned a catering consultant to assist in updating three outlets: the revamping of the brasserie in style and in name to the Family Table Restaurant; the River Café to the Opus Restaurant, again with a new, more modern style of cuisine; and the Coffee Shop with new seating and a more comprehensive coffee and snack-style menu. Such changes may not have had the impact of a gaming room revamp, but they kept the club alive and energised – a something-for-nothing for club members.

There was a sense of something-for-nothing in the entertainment scene at the Workers', too, where, despite the long-finished heady days when a consistent stream of renowned international artists would cross the auditorium stage, the careful selection of its music and artists in this era gave members a worthy variety of some of the best entertainment available.

In the early years of 2000 some of the artists engaged by Revesby included The Whitlams,

John Williamson, Russell Crowe's band 30 Odd Foot of Grunts, Jimmy Barnes, Jebediah, Killing Heidi, Troy Cassar-Daley and Kate Ceberano. In a two-month period in late 2006 and early 2007, Revesby continued to stage shows by local products, the internationally acclaimed vocal quartet Human Nature, jazz maestro James Morrison, country singers Sara Storer and Felicity Urquhart, old rocker Ian Gillan from legendary British band Deep Purple, New Zealand rock band Evermore, British singer Leo Sayer and veteran Australian rock band Mondo Rock. Throw in a performance by hypnotist Peter Powers, a special *Sound of Music* sing-along show and the Hooley Dooleys Christmas children's show and it was clear that live entertainment at Revesby flourished still.

Not surprisingly, in 2005, Revesby won the clubs' industry association Best Club Entertainment for a Large Club and Best Gaming Venue for a Large Club, as well as Best Entertainment and Best Bistro in 2006. To cap off a memorable 2005, Pat Rogan was honoured with a special presentation for Outstanding Contribution to the Club Movement.

In the same year, Alan Ashton, at the time the sitting member for East Hills, was appointed patron of the club. Camilleri likened Ashton to an "eighth member of the Board", such had been his support of the club through the years. He was a councillor on the Bankstown City Council from 1977 to 1983 and 1987 to 1995 and represented East Hills from 1999 to 2011, suffering defeat, by a mere

494 votes, at the 2011 New South Wales state election. It was the first time Labor had lost the seat since it was established in 1953. Ashton was true to his convictions and one of the few state Labor members of parliament to fight Bob Carr and Michael Egan on the gaming tax. He was made a life member of the club in 2011.

With the developing crises in the club industry, as a result of the ongoing crippling government taxes and the smoking bans, Revesby Workers' Club's future went on show at a special general meeting on 25 June 2006. Members voted overwhelmingly to support a master plan outlined to them following research commissioned by the club revealed the need within the area for retail shopping, health club facilities and a hotel. The club developed an initial plan to build a supermarket and 25 specialty shops, on long-term leases, and at this point signed a heads of agreement with supermarket retailer Coles Myer. An AMF bowling centre was added to the project at a later date.

Part of the plan was to expand the Health Mates Fitness Centre to approximately 4000 square metres and to be updated to include aquatic facilities, including learn-to-swim and rehabilitation pools.

Research had shown a need for hotel accommodation to fit within the club precinct and one that would complement the current facilities. Cost of the new commercial development, plus some club refurbishment, members were told, was a not unreasonable \$100 million, particularly for a plan that would



Alan Ashton, state member for East Hills and solid supporter of Revesby Workers', was appointed patron of the club in 2005.

While the halcyon days might have gone, Revesby still reigned as a popular venue for entertainment, offering such acts in the 2000s as, from left, Human Nature, Rose Tattoo, John Williamson and Lee Kernaghan.





Ian Stromborg, a board member in 2006.

ensure long-term income for the club, as well as providing an extra 1000 jobs. However, not everything would work to plan and the club, because of the changing nature of the industry and the world economic crises, would need to revise the cost and size of the project.

Diversification had, for some time, been the name of the game for Revesby and the development of the commercial project was a vital, and grander step in that direction. In 2006, Revesby Workers' was approximately 80 per cent reliant on gaming. The development of a successful master plan was calculated to reduce the dependency to 50 per cent.

Oh no! Mick and Bob gone

In January 2005, one sensed that emotions ranging from relief to wild excitement greeted the news that state treasurer Michael Egan had resigned. Egan, who began his tenure as treasurer in 1995, gave his reason as "after 35 years of political combat, I think it's time for me to move on". "Combat", of his own choosing in the war against clubs, might well have been the operative word: the clubs had worn him out. There would have been dancing in the boardrooms at the news, one suspects, even in the Australian Labor Party fortress at Revesby. Six months later, Premier Carr followed, surprising everyone with his own resignation call.

With the door to negotiation prised open, ever so slightly, the club industry hoped for a more objective new leader in Morris Iemma, who had the advantage of understanding just how much Labor's strength had eroded in the electorates over the damaging tax imposition. With a brief to "fix the clubs problem" before the next election, due in March 2007, Iemma met with ClubsNSW executive. Two subsequent offers by Iemma were rejected. The industry was standing firm in the name of fair play. The tide had turned against the government and ClubsNSW turned the screws a little harder, accelerating its fight to include advertisements, such as "Labor – hurting the heartland". When the two parties came together again

on 27 March 2006, the government was ready to do a deal and Iemma and new ClubsNSW chairman Peter Newell signed a memorandum of understanding.

The clubs would not get away scot-free. The main components included a top marginal tax rate of 39.99 per cent on gaming revenue above \$20 million – down from 49.09 per cent as proposed by Egan – and a tax threshold, lifted to \$1 million. Just as important, the tax rates were frozen from 2007 to 2012. The new structure meant that the larger clubs would still contribute more than \$1 billion in extra tax up to 2010–11 – \$800,000 less than would have been paid under the Egan plan. There were casualties in the fight – some 2000 jobs lost up to 2006 because of the increased taxes.

Revesby, like all clubs, suffered on the balance sheet. Its net profit for 2005–06 was a creditable \$2.5 million, but down \$1.2 million on the previous year, although it needs to be understood the club bought new gaming machines and spent well on its catering outlets during the year. With net assets of \$41.5 million, a membership of 31,518 and cash reserves of \$8.5 million, Revesby was well placed to handle the challenges. There was neither complacency nor arrogance in the boardroom, just a steady resolve to provide for their members and community – for the present and for the future.

Changes were afoot in the boardroom. Dick Moroney was the first to go. A septuagenarian who had been a member since 1966, and on the Board since 1997, Moroney was resting old bones and it was recognised that the Board had aged, collectively, over the previous decade. Fresh – and younger – faces in a stable boardroom setting were necessary for the long-term future of the club. Moroney's replacement, Ian Stromborg, came with impeccable credentials and he needed them. Twelve candidates stood for positions, four of them members of the Australian Labor Party, a reminder for the Board that even among those with the same political persuasions they would still be held to account.

Stromborg was first elected to Bankstown City Council in 1987 and served five terms as mayor, his final term, 1998 to 2000, enabling him to celebrate the Sydney Olympics as the principal local administrator of the Bankstown district. A lifelong resident of Bankstown, Stromborg served his West Ward constituents well in his long career as councillor. With his strong Labor values, he was a perfect fit for the Revesby club Board.

Within 12 months, another new face, John Rodwell, was elected to the Board. Rodwell replaced John Gibbons in a by-election on 19 November 2007; Gibbons stepped down after 25 years because of illness. Rodwell had made a significant mark in librarianship, having written extensively on the subject and presented conference papers both in Australia and overseas. He had joined the Library Association of Australia as a new graduate of the University of New South Wales in early 1975 and etched out an impressive career, firstly, as he admits, as "a serial joiner of library and other associations". He spent 15 years in law librarianship before moving into the broader stream of university librarianship. He had also been Director, Humanities and Social Sciences Libraries at the University of Sydney.

Important, too, was Rodwell's Lilyfield/Balmain upbringing to value strong Labor principles, leading to the presidency of the Padstow branch of the Australian Labor Party after he moved to Revesby in 1977. He came to the Revesby Club Board with a long record of leadership in professional and community organisations. To say he ticked all the boxes was an understatement.

The ability to replenish Board positions with quality people was paramount. There was no doubt, despite any humble mummings to the contrary, that Daryl Melham – vice-president since 1982, mentor, devil's advocate – had been a guiding force in the club's development over three decades. His departure was not immediate, but preparing for the day when he would relinquish his place in the boardroom required preparation and forethought. Melham had shied away from suggestions of major influence and political maneuvering. He is entitled to his say. The record of the club's achievements and the opinions of many who have sat on Boards with him – and in the back room – suggest otherwise.

Developing a Board for the future would remain under the heading "current project" – a moving feast without an ending.



John Rodwell replaced John Gibbons on the Board in 2007.

We'll keep the hammer and the wrench

2006-II



AS REVESBY HEADED TOWARDS ITS FIRST 50 YEARS – A GOOD FIVE YEARS DOWN THE TRACK – IT DID SO AT A TIME OF TURBULENCE AND ACRIMONY IN THE CLUB INDUSTRY. IT WAS BOTH GOOD AND BAD TIMES TO BE SETTING AGENDAS AND DELIBERATING ON MAJOR CONSTRUCTIONS AND INTERNAL CLUB REFORMS.

Revesby had the management credentials and financial acumen to handle the variances better than most. The strong, committed principles on which the club was founded continued to hold it in good stead: loyalty was rewarded and the inevitable Board changes were controlled professionally and with an eye to the future. Two new presidents, and two new Board members, in this brief period underlined nothing short of probity and good management. One sensed that Revesby Workers' had never before been in better hands.

It was in this environment that the club suddenly found itself hit by its first electronic fraud, the largest swindle in the club's 46-year history. The \$1.5 million fraud, perpetrated by two senior employees in the accounts department, of which \$1.1 million was committed electronically, was detected in August 2008 by an accounts assistant in the finance team who reported back to chief executive officer Ed Camilleri of some irregularities. Writing off smaller amounts was a common practice in auditing, but \$123,000 was an amount the Board would never have sanctioned.

Made aware of the irregularities, the Board called for a forensic investigation to pursue the money trail. The investigation led to their arrests and the recovery of a

good portion of the money stolen. Assets of one of the miscreants were frozen and the other repaid the misappropriated funds in full. The fraud led to a delay in the annual general meeting – not held until 30 November 2008.

Because of the short time frame (from discovery of the fraud to the club's annual general meeting) the club had not had sufficient time to determine the extent and nature of the fraud and therefore could not present a balance sheet to members. Not finalising the reports in time has serious consequences to the point that if orders had not been received by the Federal Court, club officials could have recorded criminal convictions under the Corporations Act. The club sought an application in the Federal Court to have the annual accounts presented to members in the first quarter of 2009, which was given after much debate, the judge determining that "time for the plaintiff to lodge its annual report be extended to the 31st of January 2009".

Significant, too, was that the Board had lost confidence in their auditors, KPMG, and

wanted to replace them. Two factors were of concern to the Workers' Club Board. What if KPMG didn't consent to the decision to cut them and what would Revesby's position be if the Australian Securities Industrial Commission (ASIC) didn't approve of the move? Delays in the ruling from ASIC concerned club vice-president Daryl Melham in particular and he sought a back-up plan, reviewing relevant sections of the Corporations Act which would allow the Board to remove KPMG if they couldn't get approval from ASIC in a reasonable time.

At a Board meeting on 24 October, Melham tendered a notice seeking the removal of KPMG and replacing them with Ernst & Young. The Board then moved that the notice be considered by the members at the delayed annual general meeting. After Melham and Craig Powell, a partner of the legal firm Thomson Playford Cutlers, one of the legal companies used by Revesby, each provided comprehensive reports at the annual general meeting, the members voted 108 to nil to remove KPMG.



The 2008 Board of directors not long before Norma Smith stepped down. Standing, from left, Dennis Hayward, John Rodwell, Ian Stromborg, Terry Semlitzky, Pat Rogan. Sitting, Daryl Melham (vice-president), Norma Smith (president), Ed Camilleri (CEO).



Roads still led to Revesby Workers' Club for quality entertainment – at least that's the way the club industry saw it. Revesby won the Best Entertainment Award four years in succession – from 2005 to 2008 – at the ClubsNSW Awards for Excellence.

While the club recovered \$1,514,060 from the two perpetrators of the fraud, the club spent \$1,869,965, firstly, in conducting its forensic investigation – for considerable legal fees, both in the recovery process and in the hefty legal costs of replacing KPMG – and secondly, for preparing a comprehensive brief to assist police in their pursuit of the two miscreants. The Revesby Board wanted to send out the strongest possible message that any future attempts to defraud the club would be pursued to the fullest. It was the depth of the club's brief that helped police to charge the two perpetrators.

Veer Kumar received 18 months full-time imprisonment starting from 5 May 2010: not all the money was recovered from him. Andrew Lam, who had been the chief financial officer, repaid all misappropriated money owed by him (\$418,000) plus costs. He was convicted and sentenced to 15 months periodic detention.

In appointing Ernst & Young, Revesby retained yet another of the worlds' largest accounting firms. Like KPMG, Ernst & Young were international and the Board and the Revesby club members expected quality service and quality advice. Neither the Board nor management saw the club as small fry. They were in the big league and they wanted big league advice. The club subsequently appointed

Daniel Imbert, an ex-Department of Gaming and Racing senior inspector, in a new role, as the club's compliance manager where he was to maintain a check on business and financial systems.

Just one more job, Pat

The newly elected president Pat Rogan had walked headlong into the fraud proceedings, although he was a director when it had first come to notice and was well aware of the nature of the case. The retirement of Norma Smith was accepted with compassion and understanding. She had been 27 years on the Board – the last 13 as president – and her time had come, deciding, through ill health, not to stand for election at the annual general meeting on 30 November 2008. The day she resigned from the Board she was unanimously appointed club patron to serve with Alan Ashton. Rogan would join them as co-patron on his retirement in 2010. Revesby was in heady times as it planned for the future and continued its amalgamations. It was the perfect time for a new person at the helm.

Rogan was well liked and highly respected. He characterised efficiency and integrity, a professional in his long political career with the Australian Labor Party and professional in his role as Revesby Workers' Club director. He was quick to assure members that more stringent measures to prevent future misappropriation of funds had been implemented. He was gearing up to lead Revesby into a bright new world of acquisition and development.

The search for a Board replacement for Smith took Revesby to the sub-clubs and to a number of potential candidates, but more specifically to Christine Benham: a mother of one son, secretary of the Workers' cricket club and a woman with high financial and business acumen. This was not about selecting a "token woman", nor would she have been happy with that scenario, anyway. It was about maintaining the gender balance and Benham's commitment and organisational skills qualified her as the Board's choice.

What Board members didn't know until interviewing her was the expertise she would bring from her finance and investment background. Prior to accepting a redundancy package in 2000, Benham had been the deputy group investment manager for the QBE insurance group. Intense and lengthy committee and board meetings were nothing new to her. She also investigated and understood her responsibilities and accountabilities as a director of a not-for-profit organisation, a position she reasoned could never be taken for granted.

Raised on a sugar cane farm in the Tweed valley, Benham has been a full-time volunteer since leaving QBE – volunteering at the Sydney Olympics, along with her husband, Ray, in 2000, as well as numerous school and community ventures. She is secretary of the Workers' cricket club and assistant secretary of the Bankstown Cricket Association, and a life member of both. She was awarded the

Bankstown Citizen of the Year in 2009 and Chris has also been a principle organiser of the cricket component of the Bankstown-Broken Hill Sister City Sporting Exchange, which celebrated its twenty-fifth year in 2011. While it is a Bankstown City Council initiative, clubs such as Bankstown Sports and Revesby Workers' have been prime supporters.

Revesby Bowling Club, saved by the amalgamation with Revesby Workers' in 2009, provided a home for the Revesby Workers' Bowling Club.



BELOW: A clearly relaxed Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard officially opened the new state-of-the-art Health Mates Fitness Centre on 10 July 2009. Pat Rogan, president, and Daryl Melham, vice-president, enjoy the moment.

OPPOSITE PAGE: TOP: Dusk settles on the impressive Mooney Mooney club. A good place to be!

OPPOSITE PAGE BELOW: The official opening of the Mooney Mooney renovations in December 2007. From left, Pat Rogan, John Rodwell, Alan Ashton (state member for East Hills and Revesby Workers' patron), Terry Semlitzky, Daryl Melham, Norma Smith (Revesby Workers' president), Graham West (Minister for Gaming and Racing), Marie Andrews (state member for Peats), Dennis Hayward, Ian Stromborg.

From an enquiry some 20 years ago after seeing an advertisement for mini-cricket, Benham now sits on one of the most respected Boards in the club industry – and she understands its qualities. “I’m impressed. Not only do we have a strong Board, we have a strong management, good people in their specialist positions,” she noted.

On 30 November 2008, the amalgamation of Revesby Workers' Club with the Revesby Bowling Club was approved by members (and sanctioned by the state government in April 2009). The purchase was both an investment and a benefit to the Workers' Club's bowlers and followed a meeting at Revesby Bowling Club on 24 August in which its club members voted overwhelmingly (100 in support, ten against and three abstentions) to support the amalgamation. Despite its financial struggles, the bowling club was seen as a good fit, perhaps more so than the Sports and Recreation Centre (formerly the Panania bowling club) and came with \$5 million worth of assets. The land on which the Revesby Bowling Club stands is freehold whereas the land at Panania is leasehold and under contract to the Bankstown City Council and of little value as an investment. The lease on that property was to expire on 23 September 2017. The Workers' Club had attempted to buy the land in 2003, but rejected the substantial price set by the council.

The Workers' Club Board also allayed the fears of Revesby Bowling Club members who believed the Sports and Recreation Centre at Panania would be moved to the Revesby Bowling Club. The Workers' Club gave the bowling club members a ten-year commitment that their club would continue to operate. Uppermost in the Board's decision through all of this was a guarantee that the Revesby Workers' Club bowlers would have somewhere to play in the future.

At the same time the Workers' Club amalgamated with the bowling club it also purchased residential properties adjoining and surrounding the club for future expansion. Although losses continued to accrue at Panania and the Revesby Bowling Club, the Workers' Club Board was keen to retain both premises – as a show of faith to the older members of the clubs and to provide amenities for a number of Workers' sub-clubs, particularly the bowling clubs.

Camilleri, with attention focused on the respective balance sheets of the two clubs, was less inclined to retain them but understood the Board's determination. Income began to fall away at the Panania club once the Workers' Club management removed many of their poker machines and installed them in the main club. “The philosophy was: we can make more money on the machines at the Workers' Club than they ever make there,” Camilleri explained. “A person might play a poker machine at either of the two clubs but we've got over 500 machines on the floor [at the main club]. We've got laser machines, games and everything here, so most want to go where the best of whatever they want is. It's very difficult to compete against yourself.

“For the moment, the Board is keen to retain the Sport and Rec club, believing there is a synergy with the past. They like the communal feel ... of the sporting people who usually go back to the club after their events and days out to have a post-play barbecue. Important, too, was that the old regulars still drink there; it goes back to the early days.



Revesby Bowling Club is in the same situation.” John Taylor ran a 16-team darts tournament, and Terry and Dean Semlitzky a darts tournament on the first Friday of the month, both at the Sport and Recreation Centre. Twilight bowls and barefoot bowling had also become popular during the warmer months.

The acquisitions, such as Mooney Mooney and Revesby Bowling Club, were completed with cash, according to Camilleri, a factor important to the Board. “At Mooney Mooney, we bought a fair amount of land from the Road Transport Authority ... Everything we've done, we've done in cash. We have bought everything.



We haven't taken any loans out. At Mooney Mooney, we can see that the club has to grow. Maybe not now – maybe it's another generation away by the time we use some of the land."

A sense of the new

The club also appointed a number of new executive members, notably Scott Bennetts as chief operating officer, Paul Boswell, financial controller and a new executive chef, Robert Green. They joined a strong management team and the value of their service could be seen in the immediate years ahead where the membership grew exceptionally and operating profits remained high. Significant, too, was the instigation of a staff rewards program which encouraged and rewarded commitment from what was an impressive team who were integral to Revesby's success in these latter years. An after-tax profit of \$3,826,401 in the 2010–11 year, an increase of more than \$1 million on the previous year, does not come without a devoted and loyal management and staff – getting it right "on the floor" was essential. The impressive balance sheet, allied to a low level of debt, were contributing factors in the club being awarded the Outstanding Financial Management Award for 2011 at the ClubsNSW Awards for Excellence.

Celebrating long-term memberships was also a factor in Revesby's club life. In 2008, the club held a special function to honour members with 40 years membership. They had been honoured after 25 years and 35 years service, and every two years the club had hosted a foundation members' luncheon. Not to be missed, too, was the annual trivia night run by director Terry Semlitzky, which hit its twentieth consecutive year in 2011.

Revesby's successful diversification plans which had been in place for some years were evident through the Tree House Early Childhood Centre and Health Mates Fitness Centre. Despite some questioning as to its viability, the child-care centre attracted a 98 per cent occupancy rate in its first year and 100 per cent in the second year. An architecturally

designed learning centre, catering for 90 children from birth to school age, the Tree House fulfilled all expectations: at the end of 2011, 340 children were on its waiting list. The club continued to purchase adjacent properties to the facility with a view to doubling its size.

The relocation of Health Mates in 2008 after 12 years of operating within the club brought an increase in membership by 2011 to 4000, spurred on by the centre's award as the number-one health club in the nation. It also underlined not only the broader public's taste for health and fitness but the quality of the centre itself, laced with state-of-the-art modern equipment and basic, as well as specialised, training programs. While the centre didn't have aquatic amenities, the facilities were second to none. Members were proud, many of them taking their children and grandchildren through the health club to show off the facilities.

The final report of the federal government's Productivity Commission's public inquiry into problem gambling left many issues untouched, according to club president Pat Rogan. It was Rogan's strong view that the report was unbalanced and raised issues about its impartiality. Revesby Workers' was the lone club visited by the commission agents, selected on the suggestion of ClubsNSW, based on the club's balanced and diversified club structure, from a strong gaming base to a childcare centre and fitness club as diversified income streams.

Rogan's letter, written on behalf of the club to the Productivity Commission in December 2009, was damning and underlined what he saw as an incomplete analysis. He wrote, in part: "It would appear the government's Terms of Reference in some significant instances have not been addressed or simply ignored ... we note Clubs Australia's further submission ... where-in the question is posed 'In Clubs Australia's view, the absence of cost-benefits analysis raises questions about impartiality'."

Rogan was taken aback after reading the Commission's draft that it gave the impression the club movement made no submission at all. Based on 25 years as a State member of

parliament and having read and prepared dozens of reports and submissions, Rogan found it incomprehensible that the Commission would take what he felt was "a most cavalier and indeed one would say an arrogant regard to the club movement's submission".

"Overall," Rogan concluded, "one would take issue with the fairness and impartiality of the Productivity Commission Draft Report" and "I regret we are all probably wasting our time." The Revesby club management might well have had a preview of the Commission's interest in an overall view of the structure of licensed clubs when the Commission's investigators warned, on arrival at Revesby, that they had just 40 minutes in which to complete their inspection!

While the Commission appeared to be solely transfixed on the issue of problem gambling, it is worth noting that at virtually the same time praise was being lavished on Revesby by the New South Wales Commissioner of Police Andrew Scipione for the manner in which they dealt with alcohol-related incidents in, and outside, the club. The club had gone from eighteenth on the state's black list to 238th in just 15 months. Scipione added that Revesby was an example to all clubs and hotels in the state.

Rogan's short tenure as president ended in October 2010. He had led a fruitful and rewarding public life: 25 years as a state member of parliament, five years as chairman of ClubsNSW and 15 years on the Revesby Club Board, 22 months as president, from 30 November 2008 to 26 September 2010. It was time to put the feet up: his contribution to the club and his insistence on maintaining the ethos set in place by the pioneers were invaluable. By virtue of his role as president of ClubsNSW, he was chairman of the State Council of that body and today remains the president of the Federation of Sporting, Community and Workers' Clubs.

Rogan recognised the exciting period ahead. In his final president's report, he acknowledged the club's important social

responsibilities in support of the community, noting that \$500,000 had been committed by the club to Bankstown City Aged Care over a five-year period and highlighting that in his final year \$779,976 had been given to various community causes. Rogan might also have gloated over the dramatic increase in membership during his time – well over 40,000 and climbing.

Director Kym Cole and her staff outside the impressive Tree House Early Childhood Centre built and developed by Revesby Workers'. Despite scepticism over its potential, the centre attracted a 98 per cent occupancy rate in its first year.



It was no surprise that the Board backed Christine Butters as his replacement. She had been neck-and-neck with Christine Benham when Norma Smith resigned in 2008. Known as a committed “can-do” person, Butters was involved with Little Athletics, cricket and soccer and was well known to Daryl Melham and John Rodwell. Born in New Zealand, the mother of three Australian-born children, Chris was the secretary of the Revesby Workers’ Little Athletics club and had shown herself to be a selfless hands-on worker. She was oblivious to the licensed club scene when she arrived in Australia in 1984. The closest New Zealand got to licensed clubs was RSA clubs, the equivalent of Australian RSL clubs. Having married Barry, a fellow New Zealander, and moved to the Revesby area, it was through her children’s interest in sport that she first made contact with the club. “I was impressed with what the Revesby Workers’ sporting clubs offered, firstly with Little Athletics,” she explained.

A registered nurse, specialising in midwifery, Chris admitted to having too many commitments when she was courted by the club two years earlier. When the opportunity came again, Butters was ready. “I had a good understanding of how committees worked and I had a good knowledge of this community,” she explained. “I found the Board meetings more intense than I had expected. It was not a case of simply telling your family, ‘I’m just ducking down the road for a bit of a meeting’



The Workers’ Club sports bar, a welcome meeting place where members gather to play snooker and darts; a TAB agency is located to the right (out of picture).

Loyalty recognised!
Three members of staff, front (from left), Edna Kelly, Trevor McBlane (white jacket) and Marlene Bain retired with a combined service of 97 years. Appropriately, they are surrounded by Ed Camilleri (CEO) and all Board members, from left, Chris Benham, Ian Stromborg, Terry Semlitzky, Pat Rogan, Daryl Melham, Dennis Hayward and John Rodwell.



... none of that, but it has been immensely fulfilling and I am starting to get my head around it.”

Part of the motivation for Butters was that she was another woman on the Board. Knowing that half the members at Revesby were women gave her a sense of purpose and belonging. Though not politically inclined, she was a strong supporter of Melham and Alan Ashton, the state member for East Hills until the 2011 state elections, not for their political leanings but as individuals who had done much for the community.

Young men and women of Revesby!

The transition from an ageing Board was complete with the election of Butters. The Board had decided on a regeneration plan some five years previously. According to Melham, the Board realised it was getting too old. “We had four directors over 70. We replaced Dick Moroney, who was 78, with Ian Stromborg; we replaced John Gibbons, who retired a year early, with John Rodwell. Gibbons got his 25 years – he died a year later. We had Chris Benham replace Norma Smith and Chris Butters replace Pat Rogan. In the last four



The Revesby Board in 2011. Standing, from left, Chris Benham, Dennis Hayward, Terry Semlitzky, Ian Stromborg, Chris Butters. Front, Ed Camilleri (CEO), Daryl Melham (president), John Rodwell (vice-president).

or five years, we virtually engineered single vacancies.”

When Moroney was elected to the Board in 1997 he was ushered in as the Board’s choice on a 4–3 vote – far from unanimous. But once nominated as their supported candidate, and subsequently elected by the members, all the directors, thereafter, supported him to the hilt.

Moroney, like the rest of the Board, would enjoy a time of sustained stability in the boardroom and, though he might have only just snuck in as the Board’s choice, he enjoyed such support that five years later at the annual elections on 27 September 2002, the first nomination from the membership since he was elected, he was easily able to withstand the challenge from Bankstown City Council One Nation councillor Lynn Abrahams, recording 86 per cent of the votes to Abrahams’s 28 per cent.

Complacency can also be the devil in a non-attentive boardroom. One could rarely have accused Revesby Boards through the years of being arrogant – it wasn’t in their nature. But for all their purposeful manoeuvring of

Board positions, they needed to maintain a keen eye on the mood of the membership. In the 2008 elections, club member Sharon Bailey got within eight votes of ousting Stromborg – 644 to 636. Stromborg had done nothing wrong: he was part of a hardworking and conscientious Board, but as Melham surmised, “There is a resentment, you should realise, to a member of parliament ... and because Ian’s a councillor, he was vulnerable. There is more of an acceptance of me because I’ve been there a long time.”

Sporting events continued to set Revesby apart. Australian – and world – darts focus descended on the club in August 2010 when it hosted the \$47,500 Australian Open. Britain’s twice-

world champion Dennis Priestley headed a contingent of overseas entries in the five-day event. Despite the appearance of Australian champion Simon “The Wizard” Whitlock, Priestley won the event. The Australian Open has “grand slam” status around the world and attracted keen interest in Sydney. Darts had survived remarkably at Revesby. The Workers’ Club has played Newcastle Workers’ every year since 1968 and there is hardly a licensed club still in existence that didn’t start with darts as one its staple leisure events.

The highly public and controversial proposed introduction of a mandatory pre-commitment on problem gambling as promised by the Julia Gillard-led Australian Labor Party in return for the support of Tasmanian independent Andrew Wilkie in the 2010 federal election would become a thorn in Revesby’s side, though one they would deal with.

Wilkie’s vote was essential in Labor’s one-seat victory, the first hung parliament since 1940. However, Wilkie, who had forged ties with South Australian independent and anti-poker machine senator Nick Xenophon, promised to

take his support to the Coalition opposition if Gillard backed down.

The conundrum for Revesby rested with the role of president Daryl Melham, the head of Labor caucus. Melham, faced with voting against his own party and thus putting its future in jeopardy, announced he could not lobby for his club and would also abstain from voting on the matter in caucus, which would result in him stepping down from his caucus chair during the debate. However, Melham would support the bill in parliament, a crucial vote only slightly less critical following the subsequent appointment of Peter Slipper as speaker in the House of Representatives after Harry Jenkins resigned, a move that gave Gillard a two-seat majority.

Melham had been upfront and unequivocal about his decision from the start and met hostile receptions, mostly from within the club movement, because of it. Melham informed caucus on 27 September 2010 that he would support the bill and advised the Revesby

Workers’ Board on 5 October of his decision. He saw his duty as upholding the constitution of the Workers’ Club which decreed that the object for which the club was established was: “To promote and assist in the promotion of workers’ interests and organisations including but not limited to trade unionism and the Australian Labor Party.”

While the pre-commitment issue had become a hot topic by the end of 2011, Wilkie’s May 2012 deadline for legislation was, in political terms, a distant focus and it appeared, after meetings with Gillard in January 2012, that Wilkie’s time line could not be met, nor did it appear that the Gillard government had any definite resolve to take the issue further, although they were committed to pursuing the problem gambling agenda. Melham had been around the corridors of power too long not to believe that all manner of hidden possibilities could turn the issue on its head. A sense of relief gripped the club industry following the Gillard-Wilkie meetings.

TERRY – A FAMILIAR FACE

As recognisable as Johnny Raper was as one of the true greats of Australian rugby league, his brother Terry was the face at the table at Revesby Workers’.

One of the characters of the club, Terry led a battalion of Rapers (there were nine boys) to the club at one time or another, but of all of them, it was Terry who found his niche behind its four walls.

Raper senior, Arthur, was already a club stalwart, the first member to place a bet at the new TAB in the sports bar and the club’s snooker umpire on Vets Cup competition nights. The lineage continued with Terry’s son David, who won the club snooker championship.

Terry was an apprentice compositor at *The Daily Telegraph* before moving on to *The Torch* and then to Bankstown Council where he studied several courses and transferred to Parks and Gardens. He later hired a room at the club to conduct his courses on road, health and safety in the workplace; his son Andrew continued to run the courses in the club.

He enjoyed a long association with the Revesby Bowling Club and a special day was struck after his premature death on 19 January 2006, known as the Terry Raper Triples, proceeds for the melanoma society.

A keen sense of humour was never far away. During his time working for the

council’s Parks and Gardens department, he was on hand for the Revesby Workers’ traditional annual cricket match between the president’s XI and the Revesby cricket club at Amour Park. Except that the club hadn’t invited him to play. With typical Raper mischievousness, he waited until play had been in progress for a while – and turned the sprinklers on.

In appreciation of the role Revesby played in Terry’s life, his brother John organised to have a St George jumper signed by himself and two of the club’s greats, Reg Gasnier and Graeme Langlands. The framed jumper hangs in the sports bar in Terry’s memory.

In July 2011, Norma Smith lost her long battle with cancer. Memories of a quiet, hardworking achiever came flooding back.



She was much loved in the netball arena and had the distinction of being the first woman director and president in Revesby club history.

A member since 1973, she was a staunch supporter of the club's culture and values and was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2003 for her services to the NSW club movement and awarded Bankstown City Council Citizen of the Year in 1999.

Smith remained relentless in her advocacy for the less privileged in the community and worked arduously as chairperson of the Bill Bullard Charity Foundation. She was survived by her daughters Eleanor, Bronwyn, Lynette and families.

Revesby's reputation for producing good-quality management continued, often at the club's expense, a price the club had to pay. Many of the staff trained at Revesby moved on to senior

positions at other clubs. The most recent was Scott Bennetts, Revesby's highly regarded chief operating officer, who accepted the chief executive's role at Eastern Suburbs Leagues Club, a club with high expectations of their senior management. Bennetts had been at Revesby for three-and-a-half years. In leaving, he expressed some regret, claiming that if it had not been for the time spent at the club he would not have acquired the role at Easts.

The merger of the bowling operations of Revesby Workers' and the Revesby Bowling Club in September and another ClubsNSW award, this time for outstanding financial management, were worthy achievements in 2011. Bringing the two bowling clubs together was inevitable and widely accepted by the clubs.

Despite winning four ClubsNSW Best Entertainment Awards in succession, from 2005 to 2008, the days of the bright lights and big entertainment showcases had long gone from the Revesby roster. The club's auditorium was closed in December 2010, the club suspending all major events during the construction of the new western car park, and remained shut down for more than 12 months. While the closure was never going to be permanent, it did disclose one salient fact: Revesby no longer relied on entertainment to bring in the crowds or to bolster its bottom line. Although entertainment rarely showed a profit, it did, in days gone by, bring patrons to the club – and it was part of the culture of the place.

In 2011, Revesby was able to achieve record profits without a working auditorium and while the club built its \$20 million car park, an inconvenience that should have been a major disruption to trading and, thus, to profit figures. As Camilleri saw it, no one was making money out of entertainment. "Why are we trading so well with half a car park?" he asked. "No entertainment, no major events and we are doing record trading and we have record numbers of members ... a touch over 50,000, and without a major show at the club since December 2010."

Was an auditorium a wasted space? Heretical for those who remembered and

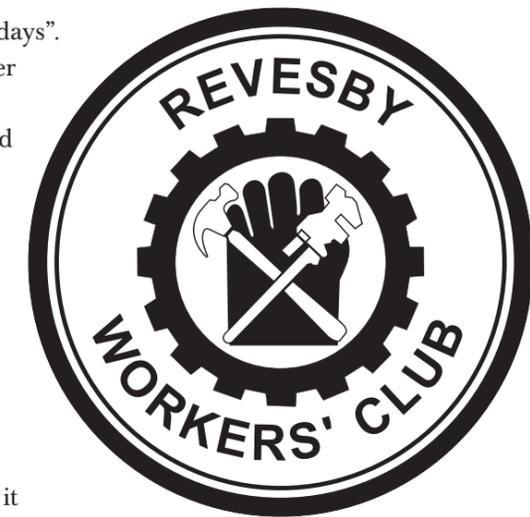
yearned for "the good ol' days". For a chief executive officer hell-bent on maintaining healthy profit figures – and at a time when the club industry was under fire from governments and anti-gambling legislators – ridding the club of its profitless auditorium was not as fanciful as it seemed.

Not everyone agreed with Camilleri. Some saw it as tampering with the culture of the club. The club might not have made whopping profits out of entertainment but it was how the club made its name. Shows were on the agenda for 2012, among them a number of big acts – and to support the view that entertainment will always have a place at Revesby, the Board approved \$350,000 worth of improvements to the auditorium's sound system!

Entertainment returned, indeed, in January 2012 with a well-supported Jessica Mauboy and Stan Walker show. Mauboy was the highest-selling female contestant from *Australian Idol*, where she made her name in 2006.

The logo – such a wrench

The retention of the club's insignia – the hammer and the wrench – has been one of contention for many years. Recent attempts in 2011 to replace it with a more modern, stylised version have failed – and are likely to continue to fail. Modern marketing decreed that the logo was old-fashioned, with no expression of style. The traditionalists – the carriers of history – saw it in a different light; they possess the heavy hand of authority and they are not letting go. The logo, with hammer and wrench imprinted on a gloved hand, surrounded by a cogwheel, embodied the spirit of a new club 50 years back – in 1962 – and a succession of Boards ever since have honoured the tradition it represents.



The logo – as it is now, as it was in the beginning.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Health Mates Fitness Centre, a jewel in the crown in the club's decision to diversify. Club industry awards and broader national recognition place it in a class of its own. By 2012, the centre had in excess of 4000 members.



JUNE ASHFORD – A LESSON IN LOYALTY

If loyalty could be measured in poker machine jackpots, June Ashford would be a millionaire.

On a whim and a need to earn some extra cash, June walked into the club in December 1969 looking for some work. At the end of that week, the club rang her: could she start as a kitchen hand?

It was the simple things that got her started. "I just wanted some extra money to buy a tube of lipstick and a pair of stockings," she recalled. This was the old club, too, well before the move to the current premises on which the club rests now.

Her memory of those times was crystal clear. "In '69 we had a lovely auditorium and small restaurant, but absolutely first class," she explained. "We had three sittings a night in the restaurant on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. If there was a big show on and you didn't book in early, you didn't get a seat in the restaurant.

"In those days if there was anything on, like boxing, we gave patrons complimentary suppers; the complimentary food came around about nine, nine-thirty ... the likes of party pies, sausage rolls and frankfurts.

"The kitchen was very small. Everything was in one room; the washing

up, the preparation, the cooking. We had a roller shutter at the end of the kitchen that went into another room where we served hamburgers, steak sandwiches and whatnot. At the bottom end we had the poker machine room and a gym downstairs."

June reached the status of supervisor, her family commitments over the years preventing her accepting a duty manager role. Her most consistent work role has been in function work. She was working in catering the nights Tom Jones presided over the auditorium stage in the early 1980s, supervising and catering for the overflow which forced the club to run a



June Ashford

bistro and restaurant in the old club on the nights Jones performed.

June recognised the loneliness in the lives of members. "I really love it because it's the communication of the people. You get to know so many people over the years. I think there are a lot of lonely people. For them, it's the comradeship ... they like to see familiar faces, feel they are recognised and that their needs are met. We get a lot of people coming in to eat on their own. I think it's because they are probably lonely at home and they know the staff by name. We know them all." Offering a sanctuary for the lonely is a benefit of club life often discounted.

"After 42 years with the club, June's main working environment was the Family Table restaurant. She has a daughter and a grandson who are members and she was appreciative of the lengths to which the club had gone to maintain staff harmony, from the special awards within the club to the transportation of staff by bus to and from the club during the construction of the new car park when the club provided off-street parking at the Sports and Recreation Centre.

And it all started with some extra cash for a pair of stockings

Chief executive officer Ed Camilleri made no excuse for butting heads over the logo, claiming it was outdated, "a cogwheel with an iron monkey wrench," as he described it. "It was based on the demographics of the membership of the time – most of whom were blue-collar workers. Even when I started in 1991, I did a demographic check. We went from blue to white collar by that stage." A succession of marketing managers have supported Camilleri.

They have been, however, on a different wavelength to its supporters. For Daryl Melham, perhaps the strongest advocate for the logo's retention, it is about loyalty and honouring the past. "I know there are some people who don't like the logo but it's who you are. You can't deny your history; you can't deny your beginnings ... I think we've been true to the values of those early pioneers of this club."

As recently as 2011, the issue was brought before the Board once again – retention of the

old logo as an official crest but a more modern logo for corporate use. Once again, the Board resisted compromise and voted unanimously to retain the original logo for all club business.

There was no doubt the club had moved on and though the hammer and wrench survives, the club is no longer referred to as the Kremlin or Red Square.

The future plans for the club were exciting. Commencing in 2012, the club would add a new outdoor gaming lounge, accommodating 220 poker machines in "five-star" surroundings, as well as a refurbished internal gaming lounge and completion of its \$20 million 770-car parking facility on the western side of the club.

Most exciting of all was the proposed new retail and leisure precinct, though its final make-up was dogged by the changing political climate, the most damaging to Revesby's plans, and the mandatory pre-commitment on

gaming machines in licensed clubs. Few clubs were prepared to commit to any significant projects until the result of government legislation was known.

Revesby was well placed to commit. Their new car park facility was completed in May 2012 and the new retail/club complex was to take in the area to the east of the club, past the old club site to Dixon Lane. It is planned to consist of underground parking for 300 cars, a level of retail, including a Coles supermarket (3500 square metres), and six shops. On the next level, above Coles, a medical super-clinic and a new club lounge area and above that an AMF bowling centre. The club would also install infrastructure, from the basement, to one day cater for the construction of a 120-room hotel. The hotel, though approved, would be a separate plan. Cost of the complex would be a tidy \$54 million.

The new Revesby Workers Brien Higgs Car Park was officially opened by Brien's widow, Joan Higgs on Saturday, 26 May 2012. Higgs's dedication and contribution to the club over three decades deserved permanent public recognition. Foundation member number nine, Higgs filled the roles of secretary-manager, director and president. Joan was foundation member number 120. The multi level car park comprised 762 spaces and was a component of the club's masterplan.



While the club will have an entry from the AMF bowling centre straight inside, by law they cannot have the same option with a retail outlet. Members and retail customers can't have the same car park, and shoppers in the retail section who wish to use the club must leave the retail premises before entering the club. Revesby instigated a special regulation from the government to have a retail precinct butted up to the club, as long as there was a 150-metre separation from the entrance to the retail and the entrance to the club. According to Camilleri, "What government officials didn't want to see was a shopping trolley parked beside a poker machine. And we agreed with that."

The future for Revesby was not simply about bricks and mortar and balance sheets, as impressive as they were as the club prepared to head off into its second 50 years. It has been so much a people's club where the values and spirit of its pioneers has been paramount

among successive Boards, particularly in the manner in which the club has honoured their legacy.

It was about never shying away from its Labor-orientated high ground ... about maintaining its support for its sub-clubs ... about humane issues ... the meat trays for out-of-work members and their families ... the generous donations for charities, always with an eye on the local community ... the Scholarship Scheme and even about allowing *Club News* editor Merv MacFarlane to portray and define his fervent political



A FINAL VIEW FROM THE PRESIDENT

Daryl Melham, appropriately, provides a final brief yet sharp view of Revesby, the club of today. It is by no means definitive but an almost off-the-cuff look at a club that he has committed to for the past 37 years:

"We've come a long way from our beginnings but I think we've been true to the values of those early pioneers of this club.

"To me, it's not just a place to come and gamble. It's a family-friendly club. We've got 40 sub-clubs; we've got food outlets; we're involving ourselves in charity and a whole range of other things. We are providing facilities in the lounges, in the sports bar where people can come along and watch the footy and enjoy themselves

in a safe atmosphere. Anyone can run a poker machine palace. I don't see this place as a poker machine palace. We are reliant on pokies. But we started seven years ago on a diversification plan and by the time we are finished, that reliance will be greatly reduced. It's going to be because of the fitness centre; because of the child-care facility; and because of the retail complex with Coles and tenpin bowling ...

"The ghosts keep coming at me, the Bill Bullards, the Ray McCormacks, the Joe Kellys. All these people were alive when I first got involved in the club and I feel an obligation and duty to continue their vision and philosophy for the club.

"The thing is, I don't take anything

from the club. I don't take an honorarium. I hand it all back. It's not a power thing; it's not the issue. I've lived here all my life ... I want to be able to showcase it – and we have ... to prime ministers, premiers and ministers. They all walk away shaking their heads; they can't believe what's here. There are a lot of people who have put a lot of effort [into this club]. I'm not claiming credit for any of that, but I'm part of a facilitation process. People like Brien Higgs and whatever you say about Donovan, he took it to a certain level ... and the years that Norma [Smith] was on the Board and Bill Bullard – all those people. When you combine them all together, it's been a wonderful effort."

views. Revesby has always been a welcoming club for its honoured Labor politicians and mates, among the elite Gough Whitlam, after whom the showcase auditorium is named, Bob Hawke, Paul Keating and Neville Wran.

Yet for all that, what becomes crystal clear in the last throes of their first 50 years is that the role of women has never been more entrenched in management of the club and beyond. For a club that went beyond the norm in 1961–62 and engaged women as equal shareholders in the rights to club membership, it is fitting that the Revesby club Board in 2012 contained two female members, Christine Benham and Christine Butters – and as we have shown through the Revesby story, it doesn't stop there.

The club was one of the first with a woman director, Norma Smith, as far back as 1982, and foremost with Norma as the first female president in a major club and threaded throughout the club's history have been loyal, committed women: Phyllis Johnstone, Bankstown citizen of the year in 1994 and Revesby club life member; Jacki Campbell, privileged eyes and ears of club

affairs as personal assistant to Ed Camilleri since he returned to the club in 1991 (Jacki has been at Revesby since 1988); June Ashford, a catering supervisor who had been on staff since 1969; Denise Follers, a union delegate in a potentially turbulent period in the 1990s, still a committed member of staff and celebrated by the club in 2011 for her 30 years service; and Edna Kelly and Marlene Baine who, along with Trevor McBlane, retired in 2011 with a combined 97 years service (Bruce Kilkardy was another with more than 30 years service).

The lineage even goes back to the start, to Doris Dickens and Doris Donovan, the first and second wives respectively of the first two club presidents. Wonderfully patient and empathetic women, Doris Dickens virtually gave of her home for two years as the official club meeting place, and Doris Donovan held the home fort as her husband dedicated himself to guiding the club through its first two decades.

Doris Donovan's view of the club might seem most appropriate as we look back (and then forward) at the great strides made by Revesby

The impressive western entrance, a Revesby fairyland at night.

A GROWTH SPURT

A remarkable aspect of Revesby's success since 2000 had been the dramatic growth spurt in membership numbers. Increasing its membership had been a foremost initiative at the turn of the century – with some startling results.

At the time of release of this book in late 2012, Revesby Workers' membership had climbed past 50,000 for the first time in its existence ... 50,000 in its fiftieth year!

Membership began at 21,139 in the year 2000 and had its biggest percentage increase the following year to 27,785 with further significant increases from 2009 to 2011. In 2008 membership was still only 31,394.

It is also worth comparing the first ten years of membership. While the figures are less imposing, they underline just how significant the growth was in these formative years.

Below is a list of membership numbers since 2000:

2000 – 21,139
 2001 – 27,785
 2002 – 29,042
 2003 – 31,889
 2004 – 32,439
 2005 – 31,588
 2006 – 31,518
 2007 – 28,479
 2008 – 31,394
 2009 – 35,432
 2010 – 41,742
 2011 – 47,763
 2012 – 50,000-plus

Membership when the club opened in September 1962 was 236 and thereafter from 1963 to 1972 was:

1963 – 288
 1964 – 292
 1965 – 295
 1966 – 542
 1967 – 957
 1968 – 1545
 1969 – 2290
 1970 – 2749
 1971 – 2895
 1972 – 3200

and just how important – and rare – was the pioneering view that women should have equal rights in a licensed club. According to Doris:

“The humiliating status granted associate members in other clubs and institutions has been skirted by giving female members their full entitlements. Few areas are barred to them. In both sub-committees and general meetings their voices and opinions have dignified proceedings, frequently offering perspective to the problems and issues that beset a club of this size. No second-class citizens here!

“It is a sad comment that so few clubs are so enlightened ... Revesby Workers' have

offered the entire family an alternative lifestyle. Women and children welcome the opportunity to dine at the club, releasing them from the relentless drudge of the kitchen ...

“Recently we witnessed the amusing charade of males mincing and grinding away in a beauty contest. A whimsical and satiric attempt to focus attention on the demeaning postures some women are forced by our culture to accept. Such fluff and flummery is all in fun but the women of our club can smirk gleefully up their sleeves. They have progressed beyond the attention-seeking techniques of the liberationists. They enjoy equality now.”

Rounding off all the success of a robust 50 years have been quality leaders, men such as Dickens, Donovan, Higgs, Bullard, Rogan, Camilleri and, of course, Melham. There have been many others and their dedication to the cause has been recorded in these pages.

It is not without exaggeration to portray Revesby Workers' Club as one of a kind in licensed club history in Australia. The sense of space in one's first impression on entering the club, the mix of its socialist, Labor-voting values and its equality of the sexes, and, in the end, the very success of the club, place it in a pigeonhole where no other club could fit.

The future for Revesby Workers': an artist's impression of the retail complex that is to be a significant addition to the Workers' Club network.



Appendices

Acknowledgments

Many people were responsible for the successful completion of this work, all of them integral in its ultimate delivery. There were those who were called upon to give more of their time than others, but I am truly grateful to all who contributed. And a special thanks to all the smiling faces at reception and within an obviously friendly club.

Among the many were Janelle Harris, Bob Gradwell, Merv and Marjie Elder, Dave Adam, Joan Higgs, George Anthony, Margaret Gray, Bill Scott, Dr Brian Owler, Samantha Ladd, Ken Booth, Merle Van Der Weyden, Brian McDougall, Dennis Hayward, Ron Polley, George Wilson, Ed Camilleri, Doug Kelsey, Dick Moroney, Charlie Bryant, Lionel Ward, Jack Dennehy, Bill Gannon, Joe Woods, Paul Boswell, Fred Cole, the late Norma Smith, Kim Cohen (Bankstown Torch), Doug McLaughlin, Kevin Gallagher, Christine Butters, Christine Benham, Jean Apter, David Lasker, Ian Stromborg, Phyllis Johnstone, Denise Follers, June Ashford, George Lipman, Ted Sankey, Bob Sentance, Tom

Delauney, Joe Calleia, Roy Estophan, Will Truong and Rebecca Tsoa-Lee.

And to president Daryl Melham for his contribution to the final product and his passion for the project and to John Rodwell, chairman of the history book committee, for his guidance and wise counsel and to the other important members of the committee, particularly Terry Semlitzky who provided so much valuable information, Pat Rogan, Merv Elder and Alan Sullivan.

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A special thanks to Jacki Campbell, who travelled much of the distance with me, paving the way for long research hours in the club boardroom and liaising with management and staff – and simply adding a professional touch that was much appreciated.

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Revesby Public School Centenary Committee

The Bankstown Observer

Foundation Members

FOUNDATION MEMBERS CONTAINED IN THE AFFIDAVIT OF BRIEN HIGGS DATED 1 MARCH 1962 LODGED WITH THE METROPOLITAN LICENCING COURT

NAMES CHECKED AGAINST THE COMMONWEALTH ELECTORAL ROLL OF 1961

BADGE NO. AND SURNAME	CHRISTIAN NAME/S	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION	
1	Dickens	John (Jack) William	20 Murphy Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Pensioner
2	McCormack	Raymond Cousin	5 Wollongbar Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Plumber
3	Barron	Herbert James	46 Horsley Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Cordial Carter
4	Johnstone	George Allardice	57 Clifford Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Shipwright
5	Donovan	Michael James	38 Centaur Street REVESBY HEIGHTS NSW 2212	Storekeeper
6	McDougall	Herbert James	89 Ramsay Road PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Bricklayer
7	Smith	Edward Lawrence	47 Wilberforce Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Storeman
8	O'Neill	John Patrick	114a North Terrace Road BANKSTOWN NSW 2200	Solicitor
9	Higgs	Brien Joseph	20 Sherlock Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Electrician
10	Treavors	Hugh Thomas	5 Jamieson Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Fitter
11	Taylor	George Frederick	28 Glenview Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Carpenter
12	Adnum	Wallace Edward	17 Egan Street BANKSTOWN NSW 2200	Hosp. Employee
13	Delauney	Thomas Edward	8 Constance Street REVESBY NSW 2212	War Pensioner
14	Morante	Rex Bernard	12 Glenview Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Sunrayer
15	Eggleton	Frederick Arthur	34 Lawler Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Die Setter
16	Burgess	Alexander Henry	36 Lawler Street PANANIA NSW 2213	"Sales, Driver"
17	Potts	William Benedict	11 Matts Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Die Setter
18	Dalziel	Bruce Goldsbrough	5 Vaughan Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Photo Engraver
19	Cabban	Noel David	48 Rowland Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Insp. Auto Pts.
20	Fazl	William James	8 Hodgkinson Crescent REVESBY NSW 2212	Process Worker
21	Trestain	William George	48 Rowland Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Drop Forger
22	Delauney	Harold William	8 Constance Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Wood Machinist
23	Robertson	Bruce	28 Flood Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Motor Mechanic
24	Slater	Albert	73 Vega Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Ironworker

25	Gould	Thomas William	13 Hodgkinson Crescent PANANIA NSW 2213	Panel Beater
26	Fuller	Robert	1 Frank Street GREENACRE NSW 2198	Elect. Mech.
27	Books	Kenneth Arthur	68 Horsley Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Sales Representative
28	Morris	Keith Desmond	18 Montgomery Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Driver
29	Phillips	William Henry	14 Blackall Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Spinner
30	Ford	Michael James	29 Polo Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Watersider
31	Dan	Louis Francis	40 Rowland Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Silversmith
32	Dooley	Michael Jeffery	13 Wilberforce Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Driver
33	Seaton	James William	19 Flood Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Driver
34	Rigby	Roy Edward	24 Carrington Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Municipal Employee
35	Gordon	Robert Courtney	27 Rhonda Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Engineer
36	Roser	John David	6 Rhonda Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Boilermaker
37	Law	Charles Alexander	96 Victoria Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Tel. Tech.
38	Fahey	John William	24 Flood Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Gardener
39	Bush	Howard Greenwell	58 Weston Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Clerk
40	Tolley	Trevor John	96 Tower Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Mast. Plumber
41	Wardle	Jack	80 Hydrae Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Spray Painter
a*	McGowan	Charles Henry	25 Carson Street PANANIA NSW 2212	Crane Driver
42	Buchanan	Hugh	1 Isabella Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Assemb. Insp
43	Dickens	James Allan	187 Belmore Road RIVERWOOD NSW 2210	Traveller
44	Glazebrook	Robert Edward	4b Montgomery Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Painter
45	Clunes	Harold William	26 Weston Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Carpenter
46	McCarthy	Leslie Bernard	11 Hodgkinson Crescent PANANIA NSW 2213	Carpet Cleaner
47	Dobell	Alan Francis	62 Kennedy Street PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Elect. Mech.
48	Easton	Sydney George	23 Lambeth Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Machinist
49	Buckley	Brian Allen	34 Lang Road PADSTOW NSW 2211	Motor Mechanic
50	Downes	George Ernest	49 Wilberforce Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Elect. Mech.
51	Dunkin	Patrick Noel	15 Sherlock Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Clerk
52	Nelson	Harry Frederick	Lot 57 Jamieson Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Plumber
53	O'Connor	John Raymond	42 Iluka Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Carpenter
54	Baker	Frederick William	23 Glenview Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Factory Worker
55	Rugless	Daniel Vincent	92 Victor Avenue PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Trans. Driver
56	Rugless	Alfred George	90 Victor Avenue PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Coach Painter
57	Doyle	Benjamin Albert	2 Creswell Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Blind Measurer
58	Rugless	Alfred James	90 Victor Avenue PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Trans. Driver
59	Booth	Kenneth Norman	50 Bransgrove Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Hairdresser
60	Legge	John Alfred	7 English Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Carpenter
61	Brunker	Esmond Alan	88 Victor Avenue PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Clerk
62	Harris	George Raymond	Lot 8 Thomas Street PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Fitter & Turner
63	Denlay	Thomas William	35 Uranus Road PADSTOW NSW 2211	Trans Driver
64	Ogilvie	Keith Mansfield	21 Glenview Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Driver
65	English	Albert James	5 Cuthbert Crescent REVESBY NSW 2212	Ironworker
66	Henderson	Norman Edwin	110 River Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Fitter
67	Fairweather	Mervyn Lindsay	31 Tyalgum Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Fitter
68	Pearce	William Wallace	56 Sphinx Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Baker
69	Murdoch	Peter Mackenzie	13 Flood Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Labourer
70	Branch	Walter Richard	9 Hedlund Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Bar Useful

71	Golden	Kevin Phillip	58 Sandakan Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Engine Driver	115	Mauger	Robert Walter	26 Treatt Avenue PADSTOW NSW 2211	Cold Room Hand
72	Dodge	Harold	42 Station Street NEWTOWN NSW 2042	Driver	e*	McFadden	Arthur William	26 Benfield Parade PANANIA NSW 2213	Ironworker
73	Wright	Douglas Claude	65 Watson Road PADSTOW NSW 2210	Machine Sprtd	116	Ryan	Leo Joseph	13 Peffer Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Waterside Worker
74	Bullard	Noel Edward	18 Tyalgum Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Upholsterer	117	Reason	William James	8 English Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Railway Guard
75	Kelly	Robert Joseph	95 Davies Road PADSTOW NSW 2211	M.L.A.	118	Dundon	Colin Thomas	22 Virginus Street PADSTOW NSW 2211	Motor Driver
76	Hullick	Leslie Joseph	38 Cook Crescent EAST HILLS NSW 2213	Clerk	119	McCormack	Rita Kathleen	5 Wollongbar Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Domestic Duties
77	Ryall	Henry John	4 Tyalgum Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Trans Driver	120	Higgs	Joan	20 Sherlock Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Domestic Duties
78	Thompson	Noel Donald	33 Lochinvar Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Barman	121	Baker	Lionel Arthur	20 Murphy Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Rubber Worker
79	Winchester	Robert Henry	73 Victor Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Carrier	122	O'Brien	Michael Douglas	102 Marco Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Painter
80	Patterson	John Patrick	25 Glenview Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Storeman	123	Arndell	Dallas	55 Leichhardt Street GLEBE NSW 2037	Postman
81	Kemp	Ronald James	29 Doris Street PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Painter	124	Dickens	Doris May	20 Murphy Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Domestic Duties
82	Kemp	Leslie Robert	17 Hodgkinson Crescent PANANIA NSW 2213	Painter	125	Barron	Hazel Mary	46 Horsley Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Domestic Duties
83	Kelsey	Douglas Noel	5 Valmay Avenue PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Plumber	126	Johnson	Percy James	23 Paul Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Engine Driver
84	McAdam	James	258 Picnic Point Road PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Carpenter	127	Pakes	Neville Reginald	31 Paul Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Welder
b*	Rigby	William Henry	13 Vega Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Builders Labourer	128	Byng	Ross	22 Brockman Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Seaman
85	Amy	George Henry	12 Flood Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Ganger	129	Johnstone	Esma Agnes	57 Clifford Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Domestic Duties
86	Egan	William Clarence	115 Sphinx Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Indust. Off.	130	Berry	Hugh Lang	9 Claribel Street BANKSTOWN NSW 2200	Clerk
87	Palmer	Phillip James	4 Murphy Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Merchant Seaman	131	Reid	Thomas James	21 Lesley Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Tobacco Worker
88	McKenna	William James	3 Tyalgum Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Council Worker	132	Poole	Ronald Keith	21 Carson Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Driver
89	Snedden	Neville Raymond	34 Gorman Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Storeman	133	Melville	Brian Vincent	31 Kelvin Avenue PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Fireman – NSWGR
90	Laws	Horace Kenneth	Lot 47 Seres Street PADSTOW NSW 2211	Concreter	134	Foster	Robert Ernest	14 Sherlock Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Storeman
91	Morgan	Robert Edward Thomas	141 Kennedy Street PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Clerk	135	Gradwell	Robert	4 Saltash Street YAGOONA NSW 2199	Clerk
92	Pople	Allan	37 Bismire Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Bootmaker	136	Filby	William Russell	27 Singleton Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Navy Fk.L.Dvr.
93	Carroll	Reginald Albert Lancelet	93 Water Street BELFIELD NSW 2191	Bread Vendor	137	Culbert	Roy	6 Revesby Place REVESBY NSW 2212	Storekeeper
94	Cassidy	Owen Sydney	26 Bebe Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Boilermaker	138	Buckley	Charles John	149 River Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Labourer
95	Dickens	Neville John	20 Murphy Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Plumber	139	Slater	Leslie Albert	Lot 4 Neptune Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Ironworker
96	Gummer	Frederick Joseph	75 McGirr Street PADSTOW NSW 2211	Trans. Officer	140	Conlon	Bernard	17 Rhonda Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Traveller
97	Filby	George	214 The River Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Retired	141	English	James Henry	5 Cuthbert Crescent REVESBY NSW 2212	Duster
98	Shewan	John	153 Beaconsfield Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Taxi Prop.	142	Shelley	John Joseph	51 Victoria Road MARRICKVILLE NSW 2207	Cordial Manufacturer
99	Miller	Alexander James	163 River Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Watersider	143	Prentice	Kenneth William	33 Bebe Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Watersider
100	Walsh	James Valentine	8 Spence Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Wharf Labourer	144	Steele	John	27 Benfield Parade PANANIA NSW 2213	Boilermaker
101	Robertson	John Youngson	323 Picnic Point Road PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Watersider	145	De Sailly	John Victor	7 Eddie Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Boilermaker
102	Jarrett	Valentino Emanuel	14 Glenview Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Pensioner	146	Arnold	Ronald Francis	48 Milford Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Boilermaker
103	Hartley	John Callanan	21 Rowell Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Waterside Worker	147	Tanko	Stanley Vincent	6 Skone Street CONDELL PARK NSW 2200	Plumber
104	Brown	Mervyn James	197 River Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Tel. Tech.	148	Casey	Patrick John	81 Queen Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Ambulance Officer
105	Vincent	Stanley John	10 Tower Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Leather Worker	149	Spicer	Herbert Charles	15 Eastern Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Retired
106	Pleace	Douglas William	32 Wilberforce Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Textile Worker	150	Morgan	Fredrick	22 Wollongbar Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Rubber Worker
c*	Fletcher	William Bede	106 Carrington Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Armed Escort	151	Cornford	Thomas William	6 Jamieson Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Cleaner
d*	Alexander	William	11 Iluka Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Ironworker	152	Field	Ronald Albert	8 Iluka Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Bootmaker
107	Wyatt	Clifford Henry	126 Bransgrove Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Waterside Worker	153	Boyd	William Wiles	34 Eastern Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Pensioner
108	Waldron	Henry Raymond	3 Wollongbar Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Shop Assistant	154	Jacups	Howard	120 Gibson Avenue PADSTOW NSW 2211	Crane Driver
109	Ryan	James Edward	2 Wollongbar Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Butcher	155	Moon	Clarence Edward	24 Pivetta Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Watersider
110	Elder	Mervyn Patrick	34 Hendy Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Painter	156	Vial	Roy Frances	171 Griffith Avenue BANKSTOWN NSW 2200	Sheet Metal Worker
111	Clunes	Kathlyn	26 Weston Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Domestic Duties	157	Sparkes	Herbert	76 Horsley Road PANANIA NSW 2213	Labourer
112	Burns	John	22 Kennedy Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Pensioner	158	Sparkes	Bruce Herbert	76 Horsley Road PANANIA NSW 2213	Painter
113	Costa	Dominique Eric	44 Gillies Street LAKEMBA NSW 2196	M.H.R.	159	Stanford	Ronald (Joe) Frederick	6 Clive Street REVESBY NSW 2212	R.A.N.
114	Cook	Peter John	66 Vega Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Railway Guard	160	McDougall	Daphne	89 Ramsay Road PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Domestic Duties

161	Glazebrook	Grace Eleanor	4b Montgomery Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Domestic Duties
162	Maxted	William	103 Thompson Road PANANIA NSW 2213	Watersider
163	O'Leary	Claude Anthony	14 Gorman Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Watersider
164	Jourdain	Ralph Charles	16 Rogers Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Truck Driver
165	Tisdale	Eric George	51 McGirr Street PADSTOW NSW 2213	Crane Driver
166	Salmon	Valentine John	28 Wilberforce Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Linesman
167	Buchanan	Elizabeth Dawson	1 Isabella Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Tablehand
168	White	Albert Henry	122 Bransgrove Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Labourer
169	Rooney	Laurence	82 Weston Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Plasterer
170	Wheatley	John Mitchell	6 Polo Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Clerk
171	Melville	Leonard Richard	31 Kelvin Avenue PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Public Servant
172	King	John	2 Isabella Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Driver
173	Kemp	Raymond	43 Thompson Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Storeman
174	Morris	Raymond Leslie	27 Hodgkinson Crescent PANANIA NSW 2213	Fireman
175	Heffernan	Keith Wingfield	25 Hodgkinson Crescent PANANIA NSW 2213	Railway Guard
176	Cromar	William Park	33 Nicols Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Carpenter
f*	Hedges	Ivor Arthur	34 Nichols Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Waterside Worker
177	Hickey	John David	28 Nichols Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Waterside Worker
178	Long	Sidney Herbert	70 Iberia Street PADSTOW NSW 2211	Tradesmans Assistant
179	Hill	Ronald Arthur	35 Kennedy Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Fitter & Turner
180	Thompson	Ronald John	116 Ramsay Road PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Electrician
181	Martin	Vincent Joseph	4 Hinemoa Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Clerk
182	Pollard	Russell Kirkby	53 Doyle Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Railway Employee
183	McWilliam	Alexander John	75 Kennedy Street PANANIA NSW 2213	School Teacher
184	Conlon	Dorothy May	17 Rhonda Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Domestic Duties
185	Hullick	Caroline Jean	38 Cook Crescent EAST HILLS NSW 2213	Domestic Duties
186	Tyler	Keith Ernest	29 Uranus Road PADSTOW NSW 2211	Com. Printer
187	Gilbert	Rodney Patrick	36 Hazelglen Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Fitters Lab.
188	Browne	Edgar Thomas	127 Marco Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Dental Mech.
189	Andrews	Robert James	18 Glendale Avenue PADSTOW NSW 2211	Plumber
190	Harrison	John Seymour	8 Neptune Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Rubber Worker
191	Pittman	Herbert (Max) John	31 Glenview Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Textile Manager
192	Gage	Ronald George	24 Centaur Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Brickmaker
193	Corbett	Graham Middleton	22 Murphy Street REVESBY NSW 2212	French Polisher
194	Slough	Edward James	Lot 50 Mathews Avenue EAST HILLS NSW 2213	Dealer
195	Cappadonna	Phillip	32 Wollongbar Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Sales Assistant
196	Turner	John Sidney	27 Carson Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Elect. Fitter
197	Arnold	Walter	155 Picnic Point Road PICNIC POINT NSW 2213	Butcher
198	Fitzpatrick	John Edward	17 Horsley Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Driver
199	Wood	Reginald Stanley	20 Weston Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Tel. Tech.
200	Wood	Nellie May	20 Weston Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Domestic Duties
201	McManus	Cyril James	187 Bransgrove Road PANANIA NSW 2213	Machinist
202	Buckley	James Patrick	4 Spence Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Bricklayer
203	Miller	Lawrence Joseph	59 Hannans Road RIVERWOOD NSW 2210	Salesman
204	Wood	Walter John	20 Weston Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Electrician
205	Fieldsend	William	40 Fore Street CANTERBURY NSW 2193	Traveller
206	Lyons	Eugene Frederick	22 Hendy Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Railway Guard

207	Smith	Jack Shirley	19 Benfield Parade PANANIA NSW 2213	Driver
208	Molineaux	Edward	19 Benfield Parade PANANIA NSW 2213	Boilermaker
209	Cork	William Robert	87 Sphinx Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Clerk
210	O'Brien	Murton	3 Sixth Avenue CONDELL PARK NSW 2200	Engineer
211	Howe	John Henry	30 Rowell Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Dry Cleaner
212	Hadley	Maxwell Charles	23 Ashmead Avenue REVESBY NSW 2212	Crane Driver
213	Lambert	Ronald Gordon	10 Matts Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	PMG Cable Jnr
214	Lambert	Allan James	10 Matts Avenue PANANIA NSW 2213	Wool Scourer
215	Smith	Stanley Joseph	106 River Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Wharf Labourer
216	Rouse	Kevin Wallace	206 Henry Lawson Drive EAST HILLS NSW 2213	Labourer
227	Meier	Alfred	29 Hodgkinson Crescent PANANIA NSW 2213	Toll Collector
219	Hills	William Nugent	3 Hedlund Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Engineer Clerk
218	Halse	Robert Henry	27 Mount Lewis Avenue PUNCHBOWL NSW 2196	Foreman
220	Solomons	Ona Elizabeth	14 Murphy Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Domestic Duties
221	Ramsay	Oscar	17 Bond Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Surveyor
222	Ramsay	Paul	17 Bond Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Estate Agent
217	Harries	Llew David	18 Tower Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Dept. Manager
223	McDougall	John	161 River Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Bread Vendor
224	Ladd	Ida Emelie	161 River Road REVESBY NSW 2212	Domestic Duties
228	Gleeson	Ernest Joseph	155a Northam Avenue BANKSTOWN NSW 2200	Clerk
229	Bell	Donald McLeod	24 Claribel Street BANKSTOWN NSW 2200	Business Agent
230	McGrath	Reginald Harold	77 Queen Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Publishing Hand
231	Ellis	Leslie Ronald	7 Ellen Street PANANIA NSW 2213	Publishing Hand
232	Peterkin	Keith William	20 Richardson Avenue PADSTOW NSW 2211	Storeman Driver
226	Barlow	Francis Donald	9 McArthur Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Butcher
225	Melville	Milton Edward	1 McArthur Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Dentist
234	Greve	Jacobus (John) Sebastianus	11 MacArthur Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Meat Inspector
233	Waldron	Thomas William	Lot 4 Centaur Street REVESBY NSW 2212	Dealer

a* Deceased 17/05/1962 – Number not issued

b* Deceased 04/07/1961 – Number not issued

c* Resigned 02/05/1962 – Number not issued.

d* Number Unknown – Not on Roll.

e* Number Unknown

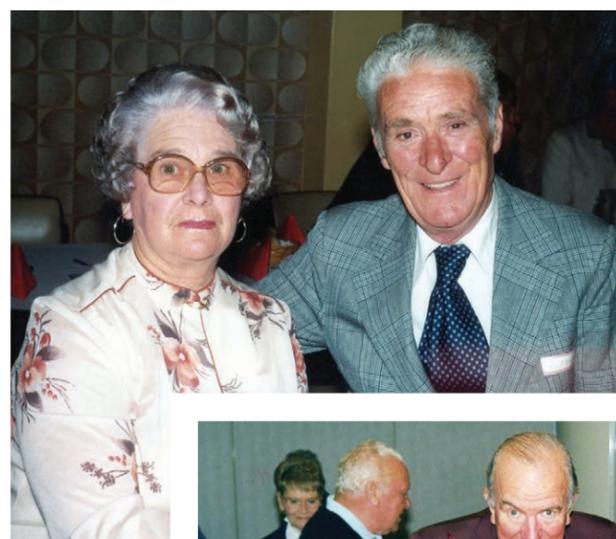
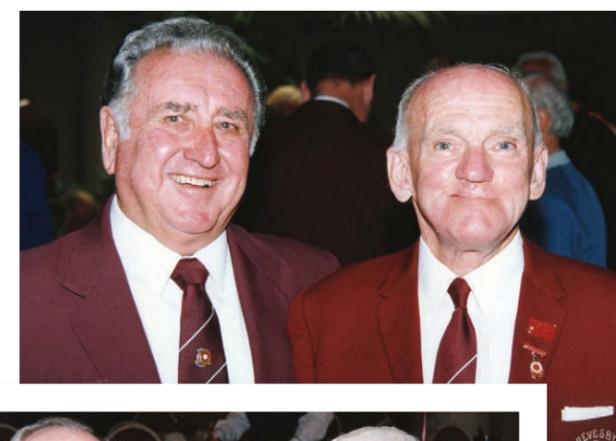
f* Membership terminated by Board 05/06/1962 – Number not issued.

Foundation Members

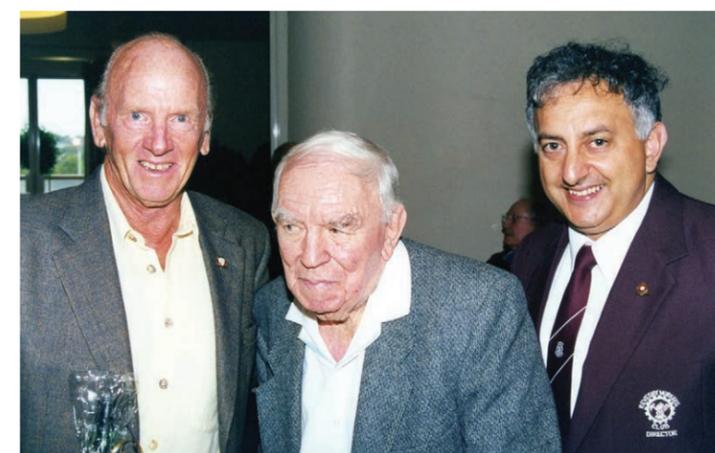
A selection of photos of foundation members and their friends. The ranks have been thinning and a number are no longer with us. This is a snapshot of so many friendly faces who proudly called Revesby Workers' their club.



Clockwise (from top, left): Jack Wheatley; from left, Graham Campbell, Ross Byng (centre, back) and Joe Stanford; Dot and Owen Cassidy; Llew Harries, Pat Rogan and John Gibbons; Pat Rogan, Bill Potts and Herb McDougall; Kath and Harry Clunes.



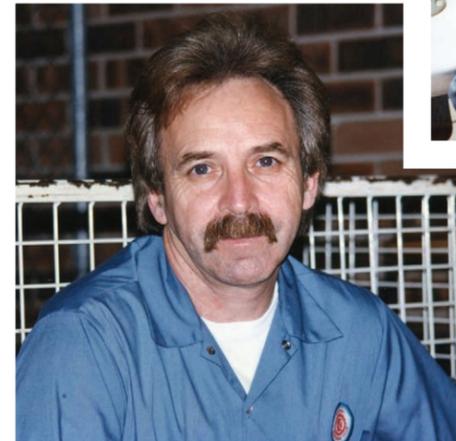
Clockwise (from top, left): Boys at the bar ... from left, Jack Roser, Mick Ford and Joe Stanford (centre of bar, without tie); Howard Bush, Terry Semlitzky, John Howe and Bruce Robertson; Vic Pavlick and "Balmain Bill" William Trestain; William Pearce and Jack Hickey; Merv Elder, Jim Walsh and Daryl Melham; Ray McCormack and Ray Morris; Jack Wheatley and Bill McKenna.



Management and Staff

A selection of management and staff – and some friends – who have graced Revesby Workers' Club – past and present.

Clockwise (from top left): Arthur Rogers, Evie and Eric Callinan, Mary and Ken Comerford; Col Dower in the cocktail bar; Geoff Provest spruiking the meat tray raffles.



Clockwise (from top, left): George Thornton; Lionel Ward; Harry Nelson and staffer Rocco "Rocky" Roffini; Ray Whittle and Damien Smith; Jack Apter and Wayne Steele enjoying Christmas cheer; Ted Little; Brian Higgs, left, in presentation to Reg Lawson; John Hurst.

Revesby Workers' Club

Presidents

NAME	PERIOD OF OFFICE	CEASED OFFICE	REASON
John William (Jack) Dickens*	24/01/1961	11/06/1963	Deceased
Michael James (Jim) Donovan*	06/1963 (Acting)	26/09/1963	Acting
	26/09/1963	18/09/1977	Defeated
Brien Joseph Higgs*	18/09/1977	1/05/1978	Resigned
William (Bill) Gannon	1/05/1978	28/10/1982	Resigned
Noel Edward (Bill) Bullard*	6/12/1982	23/01/1995	Deceased
Norma Jean Smith*	3/02/1995	30/11/2008	Retired
Patrick Allan (Pat) Rogan	30/11/2008	26/09/2010	Retired
Daryl Melham	26/09/2010	present	

Vice Presidents**

NAME	PERIOD OF OFFICE	CEASED OFFICE	REASON
Edward Lawrence (Ted) Smith*	15/09/1967	2/03/1971	Resigned
William Nugent (Bill) Hills*	19/03/1971	18/09/1977	Defeated
William (Bill) Gannon	18/09/1977	1/05/1978	President
Noel Edward (Bill) Bullard*	1/05/1978	6/12/1982	President
Daryl Melham	6/12/1982	26/09/2010	President
John Rodwell	26/09/2010	present	

** The position of Vice President was created by amending Article 14 at an Extraordinary General Meeting on 28/06/1967

Directors

The first Directors Meeting was held on 24/01/1961

NAME	APPOINTED UNDER ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION	ELECTED	CEASED OFFICE	REASON	DECEASED
John William (Jack) Dickens*	21/12/1960^	25/09/1961	11/06/1963	Deceased	11/06/1963
Raymond Cousin (Ray) McCormack*	21/12/1960^	25/09/1961	Mar-63	Expelled	30/09/1998
Herbert James (Herb) Barron*	21/12/1960^	25/09/1961	Apr-63	Resigned	5/07/1964
George Allardice Johnstone*	21/12/1960^	25/09/1961	26/10/1974	Retired	26/11/1986
Michael James (Jim) Donovan*	21/12/1960^	25/09/1961	18/09/1977	Defeated	16/07/1991
Herbert James (Herb) McDougall*	21/12/1960^	25/09/1961	18/09/1977	Defeated	1/03/2007
Edward Lawrence (Ted) Smith*	21/12/1960^	25/09/1961	2/03/1971	Resigned	18/07/1977
William Nugent (Bill) Hills*	22/03/1963#	26/09/1963	18/09/1977	Defeated	18/03/1985
John Victor (Vic) De Saily*	26/04/1963#	26/09/1963	29/05/1967	Expelled (EGM)	13/10/1997
Robert Sydney Gordon Sentance	19/07/1963	26/09/1963	1/03/1964	Resigned	
	6/04/1966#	1/06/1966	Resigned		
Harry Nelson*	1/03/1964#	25/03/1964	6/04/1966	Resigned	15/05/2006
Kenneth Arthur (Ken) Books*		1/06/1966	2/03/1971	Resigned	11/07/1989
Kenneth William (Ken) Prentice*	3/06/1967#	4/09/1967	18/09/1977	Defeated	12/07/1989
William Robert (Bill) Scott	04/03/1971#	19/09/1971	18/09/1977	Defeated	
John George (Jack) Pitty*	04/03/1971#	19/09/1971	18/09/1977	Defeated	25/02/1978
Brien Joseph Higgs*		20/10/1974	19/09/1976	Retired	
		18/09/1977	30/04/1978	Resigned	15/09/1996
Graham Campbell		19/09/1976	18/09/1977	Defeated	
William Alfred (Bill) Gannon		18/09/1977	28/10/1982	Resigned	
Howard Greenwell Bush*		18/09/1977	28/10/1982	Resigned	5/03/2010
John Stephen (Jack) Dennehy		18/09/1977	27/11/1982	Resigned	
Noel Edward (Bill) Bullard*		18/09/1977	23/01/1995	Deceased	23/01/1995
Victor John(Vic)Clift*		18/09/1977	28/09/1980	Retired	28/10/1989
Victor (Vic) Pavlick*		18/09/1977	21/09/1977	Retired	4/02/2011
Patrick Joseph (Pat)Ring		19/06/1978	26/09/1982	Defeated	
Daryl Melham		28/09/1980	present		
John Edward Gibbons*		26/09/1982	30/09/2007	Resigned	15/11/2008
Ronald (Ron) Polley		6/12/1982	26/09/1993	Retired	
Norma Jean Smith*		6/12/1982	30/11/2008	Retired	22/07/2011
Keith Heaslip*		28/03/1983	20/08/1993	Resigned	26/04/2006
Terence (Terry) Semlitzky		26/09/1993	present		
Dennis Hayward		26/09/1993	present		
Patrick Allan (Pat) Rogan		27/03/1995	26/09/2010	Retired	
Alan (Dick) Moroney		21/09/1997	24/09/2006	Retired	
Ian Stromborg		24/09/2006	present		
John Rodwell		19/11/2007	present		
Christine Benham		30/11/2008	present		
Christine Butters		29/09/2010	present		

*DECEASED

^ Appointed under Articles of Association Clause 14 21 /12/1960

Appointed under Articles of Association Clause 17 (a)

Life members

NAME	ELECTED		*DECEASED
Michael James (Jim) Donovan*	12/06/1968	EGM	16/07/1991
Edward Lawrence (Ted) Smith*	12/06/1968	EGM	18/07/1977
George Allardice Johnstone*	12/06/1968	EGM	26/11/1986
Herbert James (Herb) McDougall*	12/06/1968	EGM	1/03/2007
William Nugent (Bill) Hills*	21/12/1970	EGM	18/03/2005
Robert Joseph (Joe) Kelly*	24/09/1978	AGM	7/12/1995
Merv MacFarlane*	23/03/1981	EGM	20/02/2000
John Ingelby (Jack) Webster*	25/09/1983	AGM	29/09/1996
Noel Edward (Bill) Bullard*	28/09/1986	AGM	23/01/1995
Victor (Vic) Pavlick*	28/09/1986	AGM	4/02/2011
Brien Joseph Higgs*	27/09/1987	AGM	15/09/1996
Phyllis Johnstone	27/09/1992	AGM	
Daryl Melham	27/09/1992	AGM	
Ronald (Ron) Polley	26/09/1993	AGM	
John Edward Gibbons*	26/09/1993	AGM	15/01/2008
Keith Heaslip*	25/09/1993	AGM	26/04/2006
Norma Jean Smith*	25/09/1993	AGM	22/07/2011
Howard Greenwell Bush*	24/09/1995	AGM	5/03/2010
Terence (Terry) Semlitzky	28/09/2003	AGM	
Dennis Hayward	28/09/2003	AGM	
Patricia (Pat) Pride	25/09/2005	AGM	
Patrick Allan (Pat) Rogan	25/11/2007	AGM	
Alan (Dick) Moroney	25/11/2007	AGM	
Alan John Ashton	18/09/2011	AGM	

Secretary/Secretary Manager/Chief Executive Officer

NAME	POSITION	APPOINTED	CEASED OFFICE
Brien Joseph Higgs	Secretary	24/01/1961	
	Secretary-Manager	2/01/1962	
	Secretary	5/11/1971	3/06/1974
Charles Cooper Taylor	Secretary-Manager	6/06/1974	11/05/1976
Robert William Boddan	Acting Secretary-Manager	11/05/1976	
	Secretary-Manager	16/06/1976	20/03/1978
Noel Edward Bullard	Secretary	20/03/1978	1/05/1978
Brien Joseph Higgs	Secretary-Manager	1/05/1978	7/05/1991
Edward Camilleri	Chief Executive Officer	20/03/1991	present

Patrons

NAME	ELECTED		*DECEASED
Robert Joseph (Joe) Kelly M.P. (M.L.A.)*	21/12/1970	EGM	
re- elected	20/10/1974	AGM	7/12/1995
Vincent Joseph (Vince) Martin M.P. (M.H.R)*	20/10/1974	AGM	10/03/2001
Patrick Allan (Pat) Rogan M.P. (M.L.A.)	20/10/1974	AGM	
resigned	21/02/1995		
re-elected	26/09/2010	AGM	
Ald Raymond Cousin (Ray) McCormack (Mayor)*	27/09/1981	AGM	30/09/1998
Alan John Ashton M.P. (M.L.A.)	30/09/2001	AGM	
Norma Jean Smith*	30/11/2008	AGM	22/11/2011

Honorary Members

NAME	DATE APPROVED
Edward Gough Whitlam A.C., Q.C.	17/07/1996
Neville Kenneth Wran A.C., C.N.Z.M., Q.C.	17/07/1996
Jill Wran	17/07/1996
Robert James Lee (Bob) Hawke A.C., G.C.L.	17/07/1996
Paul John Keating	15/10/2000
Robert John (Bob) Carr	15/05/2002
Bryan Brown A.M.	15/10/2002
Colin Frederick Jacobsen A.M. (Col Joye)	14/11/2002
Kevin George Jacobsen O.A.M.	14/11/2002
Andrew James Tierney	30/06/2003
Michael John Tierney	30/11/2003
Julia Eileen Gillard	2/07/2009
Morris Iemma	26/11/2009
Father Maurice Thompson	5/11/2011

The full transcript of Licensing magistrate J L Fitzmaurice's conditional liquor licence judgment in favour of East Hills Workers' Club Limited:

The manner of dealing with such applications – and the significance as to the future, in this case, of the Revesby Workers' Club, as it became known – is such that it is worthwhile and valuable to understand the views of the magistrate. And for that reason, the full transcript of his decision is laid out below. In granting the application, the Licensing Magistrate, J L Fitzmaurice advised:

“In support of his first ground of objection ‘that the club is not conducted in good faith as a club’, Mr Broun drew attention to the purchase of land from Monaro Investments Pty Ltd; to the debentures of £2,500 from each of the directors of that company, the two Mr Ramsays; to the heavy financial commitments about to be undertaken by the club, and to the generosity of Mr Fitzpatrick in guaranteeing its loan from the bank. In the absence of further evidence in respect of these matters, in my opinion it would not be proper to draw any conclusion adverse to the club from these facts. They may show that the club is fortunate in its financial arrangements and is perhaps optimistic in its belief, in its ability to meet its commitments but do not establish a lack of bona fides. It was submitted also that the club was not bona fide by reason of the large number of members who had been nominated and seconded by directors, indicating a canvas and therefore a lack of genuineness in the applicants for membership; by reason of the large number of applicants who did not attend for interview and whose applications were subsequently rejected; by reason of an apparent discrepancy in the nomination of one Hedges and by reason of the faulty recollection of the Secretary as to persons nominated or seconded by himself. I am unable to hold that the club is not bona fide by reason of those matters. Whilst the nominations by directors are relatively high in number this is not a state of affairs unusual in newly formed clubs; the requirement that applicants be interviewed is unusual in the case of club membership and

would not doubt be responsible for a lot of rejections; the position regarding Hedges, isolated amongst some 250 nominations, would not justify a finding of lack of bona fides and the lack of recollection by the Secretary as to the persons nominated by him does not warrant any sinister interpretation. The membership of the club and its bona fides were challenged on the ground that the notice board required by Article 4(d) was kept in the lounge room of the president's private residence. Having regard to the fact that this is a conditional application, that the residence was in fact the registered office of the company, and it was used from time to time for interviews, for directors' meetings and for enquiries and payments by members, I hold that the posting of nominations on this board was sufficient compliance with Article 4(d). With regard to the further point raised by Sergeant Fryer that Articles 4(d) and (e) are contradictory I hold that they supplement each other and nominations in the form required by Article 4(e) are properly lodged.

I hold that the first ground of rejection has not been sustained.

The second ground of objection related to the unsuitability of the premises and in support of Mr Broun urged that the approval of the local council should first have been obtained as that body may insist on additional requirements. It is true that council's approval of plans is necessary but whether this court is approached first or council is approached first does not affect the suitability of the plans. I am satisfied the plans provide for a building with a properly constructed bar room and other accommodation appropriate for the purposes of the club.

The third ground of objection as to the genuine and substantial need for the club is the objection taken also by the Metropolitan Licensing Inspector. Mr Broun and Sergeant Fryer both submitted that because members were now getting their sporting and social activities in the

vicinity of Revesby but at varying distances up to six miles in the case of golfing members, there was no genuine need for a club. It was suggested there was nothing regular about the club's activities and that the membership consisted only of different groups of members interested in certain activities, golf, darts, fishing, etc. However, the evidence shows that although without a clubhouse, the club has conducted many and varied functions, that the only club in Revesby apart from this club is the bowling club and that the members of this club would be unlikely to join other clubs in the surrounding suburbs because of the relatively high initial costs of membership. I hold that this ground of objection is not sustained.

The fourth and final ground of objection was that the Court has no jurisdiction to hear the application and in support thereof Mr Broun referred to the position in which the copy of the notice of application was posted on the land. He submitted this did not comply with

regulation 3(2) made applicable to this application by Regulation 4(2) of the club regulations. The evidence established that the notice was posted on the board in the centre of the club's block of land some 40 ft from one boundary and 50 ft from another. It also established that the land was unfenced, that there was a track across the land used by the public and that the notice was posted near this track on a board 4 ft high. In all the circumstances I hold the notice was so posted as to comply with the requirements of the above regulations.

I am satisfied that the club satisfies the requirements of Sections 134 and 135 of the Act, that the objections taken have not been sustained and I GRANT THE APPLICATION the certificate when issued to cover the whole of the area outlined as site on the plan accompanying the application.

Dated: 2 May 1962

Revesby Workers' Club – Sub Clubs

THE SPORT AND LEISURE CLUBS WITHIN THE REVESBY WORKERS' CLUB STRUCTURE ARE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE CLUB'S TRADITIONS. THE SUB CLUBS HAVE SUPPLIED MUCH OF THE INFORMATION HERE, SOME MORE THAN OTHERS. IT WAS DECIDED THAT THE ORIGINAL CLUBS – THOSE THAT HAD THEIR BEGINNINGS WHEN THE CLUB OPENED ITS DOORS, AS THE EAST HILLS WORKERS' CLUB, IN 1962 – SHOULD BE WELL REPRESENTED. THE CLUBS ARE WELL CATERED FOR AND REPRESENT ONE OF THE LARGEST SUB CLUB GROUPS IN THE LICENSED CLUB INDUSTRY.

Athletics – Senior

The Revesby Workers' Women's Athletic Club was formed in August 1968 with a foundation committee comprising Dorothy Waite as president; June Warden, secretary/treasurer and Ken Warden as coach. Other officials included Val and Ern Bushell.

The club started with 30 registered members. In 1971, Judy Bushell became the club's first winner of a major event when she won the NSW long jump.

By the 1981-82 season, in keeping with the decision to merge the NSW women's and men's athletics associations, the Workers' women's club joined with a men's club which had formed in the 1980-81 season under the new banner of Revesby Workers' Amateur Athletic Club. The first committee of the combined clubs was: president, Terry Conroy; secretary, Anne Garment; treasurer, Barry Garment; coach, Dick Philpott.

However it was mainly the women athletes who achieved great success, at the metropolitan, state and national levels, throughout the 1980s. In 1987 three athletes were selected in a national under 20s team to tour the USA, Samantha Yeatman, Sophie Scamps and Nicole Boegman. Nicole eventually represented Australia in nearly 20 international competitions in long jump, including winning a Commonwealth Games Gold medal in 1994. Although she regularly trained and competed overseas, she remained a member of Revesby Workers' Athletics for many years. Another outstanding athlete of the club was Melinda Gainsford (now Gainsford-Taylor), a World Indoor Championship Gold medallist in 1995 in the 200 metres and multiple Australian record holder.

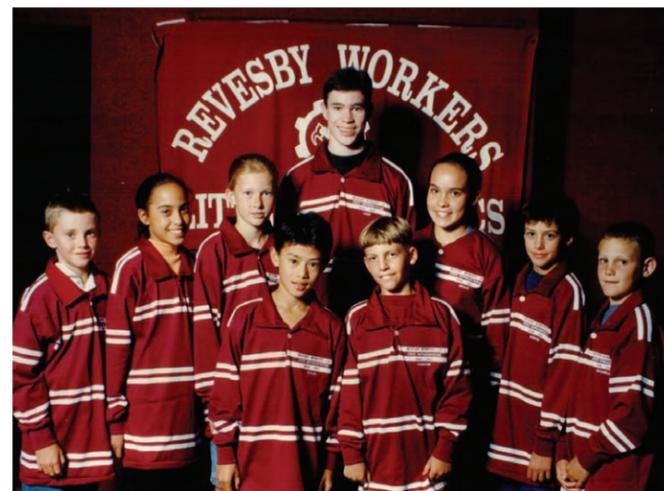
The quality of young athletes continued under some excellent coaches, and veterans such as Fred Turner and Denise Palmer continued to excel at their events.

Despite the dedication and efforts of officials such as Dick Philpott and later Bob Lesley, however, membership numbers steadily declined throughout the 90s, and the club closed in 2000.

The gap left in senior athletics was to be eventually filled by the affiliation of the Workers' Club with Illawong and Districts Senior Athletics Club.

This club was formed in 1986 by a group associated with the Illawong Little Athletics Centre. The club was therefore well established and was very successful in terms of participation numbers and competition success when its executive sought affiliation with Revesby Workers' Club in 2006.

Continuing its competitive success, the Senior Athletics Club in 2007/8 was the Athletics NSW Summer Premiers, for the fourth time in five years, and Athletics NSW Metropolitan Club of the Year, for the second time in three years. Although the premiership just eluded it in the following years, it continued to garner awards as a club, and its being chosen to host various high level



competitions recognized its expertise. In recent years it has held, annually, over 50 events, covering road, cross country and track and field meets. Since 1998 the club has organised a community Fun Run at Menai on Australia Day. This popular event is now named the Revesby Workers' Menai Charity Fun Run, with proceeds going to the Bill Bullard Charity.

While the club's success has been largely due to the high level of participation, it has produced some outstanding athletes. For example, in 2010 Jake Hammond and Ella Nelson were selected to represent the club and Australia at the IAAF World Junior Championships in Canada. Jarrod Geddes was selected for the 2011 IAAF World Youth Championships in France, and recently Ella Nelson (again) and Robert Lister were selected for the World Junior Championships in Barcelona in July 2012. The club's success in individual achievements is due to the services of some outstanding, long-term athletics officials and dedicated coaches such as Max Wilkinson and Mike Dooley.

Athletics – Junior

Revesby Workers' Little Athletics started as East Hills Little Athletics in 1980. The impetus for the centre came from members of the East Hills Rugby League Club and it was to operate at Smith Park, East Hills. During the early to mid-1980s there were about 100 athletes each season, but numbers picked up from around 1986, so that by 1988-89 200 had registered.

Clearly there was a demand for athletics but the facilities at Amour Park Revesby were never adequate. Support was needed not just for adequate facilities but also for the backing of an organisation such as the Revesby Workers' Club. Affiliation came in October 1989 – the Revesby Workers' Little Athletics Centre came into formal existence, adopting the maroon and white colours of the club and its sporting bodies.

The 1990s were marked by continuing growth in athlete numbers and the search for new ground. A lot of the success in the early '90s was due to the energy of a relatively young president, Robin Ball who, with her committee, had to cope with the growing numbers on the inadequate Amour Park site.

While athletics prospered, the pursuit of proper athletic facilities absorbed a great amount of time for officials, especially that of Kevin Channells, both before

and during his presidency (1995-98) and for another three years on the centre committee. A grant was received from the New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation, to be matched, by Revesby Workers' Club, towards improved facilities. Kevin and others looked at many grounds in the south Bankstown area, and finally the centre came to an arrangement with the University of Western Sydney to develop its oval at its Milperra campus.

Negotiating all this took many years and it was only in the 2001-02 season that weekly competition was moved to the new ground. The university had assisted by undertaking ground works to create a suitable size circular track. The centre contributed its available grants, and its own funds, for lighting, track levelling and the long jump area. The centre, largely with volunteer labour, later built a canteen area and the throwing cages.

Great excitement was generated by the new facilities, with the prospect of being able to offer more to the athletes, including a wider range of events. In 2001-02 there were 399 registrations, a number that declined to the low 300s in the following years, and then to around 250-plus, a trend experienced at other centres.

The full range of events sanctioned by Little Athletics New South Wales was introduced, including race walking, triple jump, javelin and hurdles on the circular track. Recording of performances was improved with more computerisation, the impressive website developed and put to good use, fundraising increased, better equipment gradually acquired and the professional annual reports, the envy of many organizations.

The centre has enjoyed many benefits from the support of Revesby Workers' Club, including an annual grant, the capital commitment, professional advice, use of the club's facilities, etc. It has also been fortunate to have had not only a succession of capable and hard working presidents and secretaries but many parents who have served, usually for a number of years, on the executive committee.

The Athletes

The main activity of Little Athletics has been its regular Friday evening competition, conducted from September to March. Fun activities include a centre sprint handicap event and regular theme nights. In addition to the season awards in each age group, there are several multi-age trophies, such as the Joan Carroll Memorial Award for the outstanding athlete.

From late January to March the athletes compete in the local zone and then regional carnivals, to qualify, if successful, for the State Championships. Probably the most outstanding athlete in the last ten years was Maddie Pirie, who regularly won the State 100 metres and 200 metres events. In 2009 she also won these events at the Pacific School Games (National Championships) in the under 13 age-group. Maddie continued a long line of talented female sprinters, including the Woods sisters, Joy and Grace, in the '90s and the Pattey sisters, Alicia and Stephanie, a little later.

Officeholders

The centre has been fortunate in having a continuous line of dedicated and capable officials, especially in its presidents and secretaries. After John Rodwell, Robin Ball and Kevin Channells, the presidency has been ably held by Gerry Dupre, Frank Scott and Sean Mooney. The inaugural secretary Marie-France Nayna was followed by the very hardworking Sue Channells and Susan Whatley, and from 2005 Christine Butters, also a director of Revesby Workers' Club since 2010. The number of life members indicates the commitment of many parents beyond the years of participation of their own children. A stand-out, however, never had a son or daughter at the centre. Michael Irwin came to the centre in the early '90s with his grandchildren. A dedicated distance runner himself, Michael held many committee positions, coached and judged (race walking in particular) and ran the canteen, in a "career" of over twenty years.

That Revesby Workers' Little Athletics is still around and thriving is a great tribute to all who have contributed and continue to contribute. John Rodwell who was prominent in garnering affiliation with the Revesby Workers' Club is the liaison director.

Australian Native Orchid Club

The Revesby Workers' Australian Native Orchid Club was formed in April 2008 with Pat Rogan, the former president of the Revesby Workers' Club, as liaison director. The club, sponsored by the Revesby Workers' Club, was affiliated with the Orchid Society of NSW. Membership initially comprised sixteen founding members with Don

Roberts elected president. The number of members has since grown to forty-two.

The location of the club was chosen because of the close proximity of the Revesby Workers' Club to rail and expressway transport which made it more accessible from a large part of the Sydney metropolitan area and surrounds.

The objectives of the club were: to encourage the growing, and study, of Australian native orchids and their hybrids; encourage the general public as to the intrinsic value of Australian native orchids; expand the membership of the club; hold regular meetings; stage benchings, displays and exhibitions and to grant appropriate prizes and certificates in connection therewith; invest and deal with the funds and property of the club in such a manner as from time to time thought fit; and to affiliate with other organisations with similar aims

Monthly meetings were a chance to listen to guest speakers and to gather information on the culture of native orchids that either grew on rocks, trees or in the ground. There was also advice from experienced growers.

In 2012, with Don Roberts as president, the club held two shows of native orchid flowering plants at the Revesby Workers' Club. The September Spring Show featured Australian native Dendrobium, Sarcochilus and Terrestrial orchids while the October Spring Show included Dendrobiums, Sarcochilus, Terrestrial and Cymbidium orchids. The shows attracted considerable interest from visitors, not only the Sydney metropolitan area and surrounds, but from New South Wales country areas and interstate. In 2012, the liaison director was John Rodwell.

Baseball

As baseball is a minority sport, it has been no surprise that very little information has been found in relation to the history of the Revesby Workers' Baseball Club. We thank Christine Benham, our liaison officer, for the impressive "detective" work to source some of the following material from the 1985 publication "The Big Club".

With Keith Heaslip as president and Les Jensen as coach, the Revesby Workers' Baseball Club was formed in 1972 when a few interested members of the Revesby Workers' Cricket Club entered a team in the St George Baseball Association.

The club has won five Senior St George Baseball Association Winter Premierships – 1973 (4th Grade), 1988 (6th Grade), 1989 (5th Grade), 1993 (5th Grade) and are the current 2011 Premiers (6th Grade). Also, one Cronulla Sutherland Minor Baseball League Summer Premiership – 2004–05 (4th Grade) and one premiership in the Cumberland Baseball Competition – 1984 (E Reserve Grade) – this team consisting largely of players from the cricket club (this shows the inter-club relationship which exists within Revesby Workers' Club).

Some of the members of the original team were Peter Houghton, Ernie Sherwood, Norm and Bob Perry, John O'Callaghan, Dave Cairncross and Chris Leman.

In 1981, the first junior team was formed consisting of players from seven to thirteen years of age. The formation of this team was largely due to the assistance of Bruce Matthews, Cliff O'Neill and Bryan Cody.

Life members are Peter Houghton and Bruce Matthews – Bruce coaching both the junior and the senior teams at that time. Other tireless workers for Revesby Workers' Baseball Club over the years have been Alan Houghton (past president), John "Ben" Hall, who audited the books for many years, Bill Hills, for his continued support in the early days, Des and Mary Hayward, and Don and Dell Clarke, Gary Largeant, Jim Keats and David Rooke who could always be relied upon to produce the spectacular support which clubs like this need.

A very enthusiastic executive assures a very bright and secure future for the baseball club. Christine Benham (liaison director), Scott Branfield (president), Will Gerrey (vice-president and coach), Norm Perry (trainer) and Darrin Street (coach) have been striving to foster and expand the game.

The Revesby Workers' Baseball Club fielded two teams in the St George Baseball Association Winter Competition in 2012 and a record number of new players joined the club.

Basketball

The Challengers Basketball Club was formed in January 1964 by Phil Hudson and a group of fellow ex-students from Kingsgrove North High School. Founding members of the inaugural Challengers club were Garry Farthing, Graeme Farthing, Gary Hudson, Phil Hudson, Lyle Ward and Chris Whitworth.

The club developed over the years and had as many as thirteen teams in the late 1960s, early '70s. Challengers' teams played predominantly in the Bankstown Basketball Association at Beverly Hills, Kogarah, Revesby and, eventually, at Condell Park. The men's team went on to play representative basketball until around 1972 when the sport's rules were changed to limit representative teams to Association-based teams. The Challengers continued to play in the Association's club competition at various levels until the mid-1990s – a span of around thirty years.

The Padstow North Panthers Basketball Club was founded in 1992-93 by Peter Banks, a teacher at Padstow North Primary School, along with parents of junior players within the Bankstown Basketball Association. The Panthers were a highly regarded junior club and have won numerous competitions over the years.

There had been a few attempts to get the RWC basketball intra club established at Revesby Workers' Club in the late 1990s and Phil Hudson met with Daryl Melham in 2001 to consider available options. After struggling along without much success in the early 2000s the opportunity to merge the now dormant Challengers' club and the younger and vibrant Padstow North Panthers club into the RWC Panthers Basketball Club presented itself in 2007. A submission, made to Revesby Workers' Club by Phil Hudson via Daryl Melham, and with subsequent Board approval, was successful and a new club was born.

At the time of writing this report, the club had fourteen teams, comprising two unisex teams, two men's, one women's and nine junior teams, and all of the teams playing in club competition at Bankstown Stadium, Condell Park.



The Panthers currently have veteran players engaged in Master's competition through to beginners in under-10s competition. Both currently and through its history with the Challengers Club, the club had players of national and Olympic calibre grace our uniforms.

Club administrators in 2012 were: Rhonda Butt (president), Phil Hudson (vice-president), Steve Green (treasurer), Margaret Farrowell (secretary).

Billiards and snooker

Formed in 1966, the Billiards and Snooker Club is one of the most active within the Revesby Workers' Club umbrella.

The foundation committee comprised Les Thompson (president/captain), Jim McAdam (treasurer) and committee, Neville Sheldon, Sid Taylor and Jack Apter. The club's first match was against Blacktown Workers'.

In the old club there were only two snooker tables and a blackboard on the wall for members to reserve a table. There were many conflicts to gain access to the coveted beige, especially on Sunday afternoons.

Over the many years, Revesby's reputation grew to a point where some of the greats of world billiards and snooker included Revesby in their itinerary, such as champion players as Eddie Charlton, Allan McDonald and Dennis Wheelwright (who were Workers' Club members) and Horace Lindrum, Warren Simpson, Norman Squires, Paddy Morgan and Ian Anderson.

As the new club grew, so did the number of snooker tables to six, the prime one owned by Walter Lindrum, bought from Tooheys Brewery and restored in its pride of place, today still in the snooker room.

A competition much appreciated by the older members was the Veterans' Cup, played by members sixty years and over. This was believed to be unique to Revesby Workers' Club. Ted Roach, one of the most strident trade union activists in Australia's political history, and prominent within Revesby in the 1970s and early '80s, won the Veterans' Cup in 1984. Arthur Raper, father of rugby league's immortal, Johnny Raper, acted as referee in these competitions.

There have been many interclub competitions, Blacktown and Rose Bay the most prominent, the latter affiliation forged by two prisoners-of-war servicemen who met in Changi, Lindsay Fairweather and Tim Williams.

Jack Apter was the original organiser, along with Jake Legge and Doug Kelsey, and the club still runs a Monday tournament for members and visitors on the six tables in the sports bar.

The most notable of exhibitions held in the club have been those of Alec "Hurricane" Higgins, Horace Lindrum and Eddie Charlton.

Life members of the snooker club are: J Legge, J Apter, E Roach, G Ahern, G Wilson, L Baldwin, D Kelsey, J Gibbson, N Joyce, F Taylor, J Taylor, J Wheatley, H Laferla. Jack Apter celebrated forty years with the club.

Bowls – Men's Lawn

The Revesby Workers' Bowling Club had its official beginning in 1967 although members had been playing socially it seems from, if not at the time the club was opened in 1962, at least from 1965. The 1965-66 annual report mentions that "The second of our newly-formed sporting activities ... 50 players are playing regularly on greens at Panania Bowling Club and Croydon Park Bowling Club."

By the second year, the "outdoor bowls club", as it was referred to (to differentiate from indoor bowls which was very popular at the time), carried seventy members and reported a steady stream of invitations to play in competitions.

The formal beginning of the club is accepted as the 1967 meeting, at which the following office bearers were elected: George Johnstone (president), Jack McWilliam (senior vice-president), Fred Lennis (junior vice-president), Ron Powrie (secretary), Keith Slingsby (treasurer), Vic Toby (bowling secretary), Alex Miller (publicity officer), Bill and Noel Benham (auditors).

Other clubs in the area at the time were Panania, Padstow, Revesby and Picnic Point, each offering green space for the new boy on the block, as well as some much-accepted advice.

In 1968, the highlight of the year was the club's first President's Day, held at the Panania Bowling Club. The club applied to the Royal New South Wales Bowling Association for provisional affiliation which was granted in August 1969.

The 1969-70 annual report noted that the club entered three teams in the Canterbury-Bankstown Friendship Shield, an event that ran for fourteen weeks. The club also entered the Southern Rivers tournament and Bankstown's

75th Anniversary Carnival. There is also mention in club notes that the club entered a state pennant grade "6s", winning their section in the following year.

Social bowls was not forgotten, particularly after the women's bowling club was founded in 1979. The men encouraged its formation and social days, bus trips to various parts of the suburbs and country clubs, were enjoyable excursions – not the least the sing-a-long on the way home.

In 1985, after years of a somewhat gypsy existence, the Workers' Club bowlers finally found a home when the parent club amalgamated with Panania Bowling and Recreation Club, paying out its debts to save it from extinction – and thus providing a selection of three greens for Workers' Club bowlers and a clubhouse and land area for other sports.

The amalgamation with Panania also provided a home base for Revesby Workers' Club bowlers for the first time since they were formed. The club was strengthened even further in the mid-2000s when this time Revesby Workers' Club amalgamated with Revesby Bowling Club which had been struggling for some time.

For four years, the two clubs – Revesby Workers' Bowling Club and the Revesby Bowling Club – maintained separate club operations. However, in September 2011, the two clubs merged into one considerably stronger club and became known as the Revesby Workers' Bowling Club.

The club went from having three pennant teams to six and it gave Workers' another two-and-a-half greens, taking their number when combined with the Panania site, to five-and-a-half greens.



By mid-2012, the Revesby Workers' Bowling Club had 180 fulltime members and fifteen multi-members. The executive committee at this time was: Ray Hopkins (president), Dave Raper (senior vice-president), Darryl Oehlan and Denis Galant (vice-presidents), Doug Hawkins (secretary), Steve Jackson (treasurer).

Bowls – Women's Lawn

The Revesby Workers' Women's Bowls Club was formed on 10 August 1979 following a meeting instigated by men's bowls president Warren Berry, who also acted as chairman. The meeting in effect was to determine if sufficient women would be interested in a bowling club.

Thirty-three women gave their emphatic answer – twenty wished to become full members; the others became associate members. The meeting appointed a steering committee, comprising Enid Croft, Betty Clift and Joan Bryant.

Upon meeting with the New South Wales Women's Bowling Association, the club had their inaugural meeting at which twenty-one women became foundation members and the following were elected to office positions: Enid Croft (president), Betty Clift (secretary), Dorothy McCarthy (treasurer), Gwen Walker and Joan Bryant (vice-presidents), Doreen Walker (publicity officer), Esme Maher (bowls organiser), Therese Rooney and Rita Masterson (selectors).

Only four of the twenty-one foundation members had played bowls previously and were ushered into bowls lessons on Saturday mornings at Panania Bowling Club.



The first games of bowls involving the club were played on 3 October – at Panania on a Wednesday morning.

The club's first win was at a Panania club carnival and club championships were commenced in the 1980–81 year. The ladies also accompanied the men's club on bus trips to clubs at Picton, Bowral, Bargo, Mittagong, Windang, Jamberoo, Forestville and Riverstone. They were, according to Enid Croft "happy and pleasant trips".

During 1984, the men's and women's clubs transferred playing to the Revesby Bowling Club under the direction of Warren Beatty and Clare Anderson, the respective presidents.

When the Revesby Workers' Club paid out the debts of the Panania Bowling and Recreation Club and amalgamated with that club in 1986, the women's bowling clubs of both clubs joined together, increasing membership under the one roof to eighty-eight bowlers.

Despite teething problems, the majority of members accepted the amalgamation and a new start was made under president Betty Dick. The greens were regarded as among the best in the district and the men and women worked well together under the new set up.

With a new president, Corrine Wright, the club won the Rose Bowl for the first time in 1988. The event is conducted between six clubs each year with the proceeds from the day going to Bankstown Hospital. The club also added two pennant flags in the same year.

With the merging of the Revesby Workers' Club and the Revesby Bowling Club in 2008, the women's club remained at the Panania site as its home base. With an ageing membership at Revesby Bowling Club, few members made their way across to the Workers' women's bowling club.

The club's president at the time, Patricia Thompson (2002–09) reported that the women's club's membership increased significantly when the Panania RSL women's bowling club folded in 2006. After retirement as the Revesby president, Patricia was elected NSW Women's President of the Georges River District Lawn Bowls Association.

In 2012, the Revesby Workers' Women's Bowling Club had seventy-two members and numbers on competition days was between thirty and forty members. The club's executive in 2012 consisted of Barbara Park (president), Rhonda Miles and Dora Westacott (vice-presidents), Lyn Gallant (secretary), Betty Firkins (treasurer).

Bowls – Mixed Indoor

Often known as Indoor Sports, but more commonly as Indoor Darts and Bowls, the Mixed Indoor Bowls Club commenced in February 1968 with its first committee comprising Ray and Ada Kemp, Mary Thomas, Stan Shirley Fielding, Vince and Bonnie Buckley, Ada Cornford and Betty Warner.

Darts and bowls remained as one until January 1974, when they parted company and went their separate ways within the Revesby Workers' Club sub-club banner. Part of the reason was that the darts club wanted more competition.

In the early 1970s, indoor bowls affiliated with Revesby Heights Ex-services Club to join the New South Wales and Australian Indoor Bowls association.

Mixed indoors continued on through the 1990s and 2000s and in 2012 had 28 members. While the ladies indoor club play on a Wednesday, the mixed indoor bowlers play on a Tuesday night. Less than a handful of the women bowlers play in both club competitions.

One of the great stalwarts of the mixed indoor club was Molly Griffith, who retired as secretary in 2010, because of ill health. Molly was badge number 40!

The mixed indoor club play for a number of trophies – the individual ladies and men's singles; the ladies pairs and men's pairs; mixed pairs and the president's trophy.

The committee in 2012 was Paul Reichart (president), John Gibbs (vice-president), Jean Reichart (secretary, treasurer and publicity officer), and Dora Westacott (assistant secretary).

Bowls – Ladies' Indoor

Ladies Indoor Bowls was another sport played socially at the time the Workers' Club was first opened in 1962 but didn't begin formally until sometime later.

In 1968, the club formed officially with a sizable fifty-six members and an elected committee consisting of V Amour (president), L McWilliam (vice-president), D Boyce (secretary/treasurer) and on committee, B Buckley, A Prentice, D Cornford, F Fuller, M Lonergan.

By the mid-'80s, some eighty-two members played consistently each Wednesday and on some days, as many as 100 attended. At the time, the ladies played annually for five trophies – President's, Jim Donovan, Eileen Taylor Memorial, Ruby Heyhoe Memorial and the Sports Council Trophies.

Numbers fell away during the 1990s and in the 2000s, down to sixteen members in 2009 when Joyce Rowe added the presidency to her role as secretary. By the end of 2011, membership had risen to twenty-four, with 92-year-old Corrine Hoss, the club's oldest player.

Games were played in the club's auditorium where members played for the president's trophy and the achiever's trophy.

The committee in 2012 consisted of Joyce Rowe (president and secretary), and Phyllis Merrell (treasurer).

Cricket

Revesby Workers' Cricket Club (RWCC) was formed in 1961 at the suggestion of Herb Barron, who identified the need for East Hills Workers' Club to have a number of affiliated clubs if it were to qualify for a liquor licence.

Lindsay Fairweather convened the formation meeting of East Hills Workers' Cricket Club at the Padstow Progress Hall. President was Bill Hills, secretary Don Clarke, treasurer Del Clarke. Tom Delauney was captain and Del Clarke, scorer (a position she held for many years).

The cricket club operated as a social club for a few years prior to entering a team in the Bankstown District Cricket Association's (BDCA) C Grade competition in the 1962–63 season. It is from this time that the Revesby Workers' Cricket Club formally recognises its history.

First success to the RWCC came in A Grade in the 1965–66 season, under the captaincy of Keith Heaslip, who had previously played for Panania East Hills RSL and brought the basis of a team along with him when he joined the RWCC. Keith, Ray Mercer, Graham Campbell, Neville Cavill, Chris Leman, George Laws and Les Jensen, later joined by Keith Smith and Russell Tipper, were part of a winning combination that took out the A Grade Premiership four years in succession.

So far (up to and including the 2010–11 season) Revesby Workers' Cricket Club has won thirty-seven senior titles, including eight in A Grade and six in A Reserve, and twenty-one junior titles. The club has won the prestigious Wal Richardson Memorial Trophy as Senior Club Champions in the BDCA competitions four times –1987–88, 1989–90, 2008–09 and 2009–10. The prestigious Jack O'Donnell Memorial Trophy (established in 1980–81), awarded to junior club champions, was won by Revesby Workers' Cricket Club for the first time in 2010–11.

Life membership has been bestowed on the following for their outstanding commitment to the club – Bill Hills, Don Clarke, Adele Clarke, Trevor Ramm, Graham Campbell, Des Hayward, George Cole, Keith Heaslip, Jack Wright, Jim Gibson, Grahame Bell, Col Heaslip, Ian Good, Trevor Heaslip, Glen Wright, Paul Chaseling, Bob Abrook, Richard Monk, Anthony Murphy, Ray Benham, Christine Benham.

There have been many dedicated players over the years – those with ten year's service too many to mention! Thirty-year players are Colin Heaslip, Trevor Heaslip, Craig Adamson and Paul Kelly. Three of these players continue to play competitive Saturday afternoon cricket and we will soon have our first forty-year player. Twenty-year players on the Honour Board are G Parkins, G Wright, J Gibson, P Chaseling, G Gibson, G Bell, S Dewey, I Good, C Cantrill and A Murphy.

Many of the RWCC cricketers have been selected to represent the Bankstown Association in the Inter-District competitions over the years, and some have gone on to play grade cricket and also at state level, in both juniors and seniors. Notable players have been Rodney Bower (NSW and Bankstown 1st Grade), Graham Pitty (Penrith and Bankstown 1st Grade), and more recently Chris Small, (currently Bankstown 1st grade and NSW Futures League – the official men's 2nd tier, mainly Under 23s, used as the breeding ground for up and coming players). Chris also represented NSW in the U17 and U19 sides. Another star has been Ashleigh Gardner who, at the age of thirteen, represented NSW in the all conquering women's indigenous Imparja Cup team in 2011, and is currently in the NSW U15 female side.



RWCC was the first club to operate a Milo Have A Go/ Have A Game Centre (now re-named by Cricket Australia as Milo in2Cricket) and initiated the Bankstown Masters' Cup – a winter Over 35s Super 8s competition, celebrating its tenth season in 2012.

The club also won a competition run by the Roads and Traffic Authority which saw a team from the club take on the NSW side in a 20Twenty match at the SCG.

Christine Benham is the current liaison director, following several years of dedication by Terry Semlitzky and, previously, Norma Smith. Trevor Heaslip is president, Christine Benham, secretary and Ray Benham, treasurer.

Darts

It is clear from the first annual general meeting of the East Hills Workers' Club on 25 September 1962 that darts was one of the original sports of the club. Secretary-manager Brien Higgs reported at that meeting that, "Our darts team have fared well during our evenings at Picnic Point Bowling Club and against Revesby Pacific Darts team", confirming the establishment of darts at the Workers' Club's very beginning.

The darts club was originally combined with indoor bowls and from 1968 to 1974 operated under the banner of "Indoor Sports".

Ray Kemp ran the social darts games held in the original club until Kevin Bedford took his place. Competition games were played on Monday nights against clubs and hotels, while social nights were on Thursdays, which is still the case today. Sundays also catered for darts and bowls.

Revesby competed in competition for the Bulli Shield against fellow workers' clubs, among them Cardiff, Cessnock, Wangi, Mooney Mooney, Toronto, Helensburg and Sydney Trade Union with Revesby winning the shield in 1973.

When the new Workers' Club opened in 1973, the darts team became stronger and participated in state tournaments as individuals and in teams. In 1974, they broke away from the bowlers and adopted their own identity as the Revesby Workers' Darts Club.

Herb McDougall remained liaison director until 1977 when a new committee was elected to the board of directors and Vic Pavlick was appointed, a position held until his retirement twenty years later. New director

Dick Moroney held the position for nine years, followed briefly by Ian Stromborg. The current liaison director/ publicity officer/secretary is long-term committee person, Terry Semlitzky who had served as office bearer since the inception of the darts club in 1974.

With the formation of the darts club in 1974, the original committee consisted of: J Hall (president), L Clissold (vice-president), D Clarke (secretary), A Clarke (treasurer), S Dalmartello/S Trevane (social secretary), H Buckpitt (publicity), T Morgan (captain), T Semlitzky/ L Clissold (vice-captains), N and K Beehag (delegates), and H McDougall (liaison director).

In the 1980s, the club ran an annual 24-hour Dart Marathon, raising money for Revesby Workers' various charities. They received welcome publicity from *The Daily Telegraph* and Ron Casey on 2KY. Current director, Ian Stromborg, then mayor of Bankstown, opened the first tournament, along with Cronulla Sharks first grade players Gavin Miller and Jonathon Docking. The marathon ran for five years.

Revesby was also one of the fist clubs to promote junior darts, conducted initially in the old club. They also hosted state junior championships, the competitors and their chaperones dossing down in their sleeping bags in Henry Lawson House. Some of those still play darts for Workers'.

Darts have been promoted in the Workers' Club at international, national, state and zone levels and the club still conducts weekly social and competition championships. The club also ran its own weekly competition in the 1980s, fielding three divisions and boasting eighteen teams each week.



Games are also played at The Sport and Recreation Club and Revesby Bowling Club, following amalgamations with those clubs.

Life members of the Darts Club, as at 2011, were: T Semlitzky, T Morgan, S Morgan, S Punch, S Potter, F Ingegneri, L Clissold, T Matire, L Woods, S Brooke, S Semlitzky, I Brooke, L Dodson, M Hawes, T Brooke.

Dominoes Club

The club first started in 1984 and the first official Domino Club Championship conducted in 1985. Prior to this time, tournaments were played on Saturdays in the sports bar by the now defunct Sunshine Club. Fred Cole was the first president, followed by Jim Finn.

The club today plays on Sunday mornings and has a regular competition leading to a club championship. Tournaments are played against Merrylands RSL and a super league, with ten clubs involved, is planned for the near future.

Life members as at 2011 were B Pont, J Finn and F Cole.

Euchre

Conjecture surrounds the starting year of euchre within the Workers' Club. While some suggestions have it that the then-popular card game was played at the very beginning in 1962 under the guidance of director Herb McDougall, Herb's son Brian queries the claim, recalling that his father, who he believed introduced the game to club members, did not start playing at the club until it had been open for a few years.

Whatever the case, McDougall's passion was undeniable. He and fellow director, Harry Nelson, joined the Board in 1964, and initially organised games for members and visitors on Sunday mornings.

However, some members began "forgetting" to go home for the traditional roast dinner and the games were switched to Tuesday nights.

The original prizes were usually household goods, towels, linen, travel rugs, and other such items with the perennial favourite, the club meat tray, becoming very popular and eagerly sought by diligent players.

From humble beginnings, Euchre was still being played in the sports bar on Tuesday nights. Herb

McDougall was still running the tournaments until his death in 2007.

Fellowship Of Australian Writers

The Bankstown chapter of the Fellowship formally affiliated with Revesby Workers' Club in 2009. The members had been meeting at the club monthly for some time when the then club president, Pat Rogan, suggested they affiliate. The Fellowship was established in 1928 to foster and promote Australian writing, to study Australian literature and to provide support for authors and dramatists. The group's monthly meeting is essentially a workshop on the current writing projects of its members. The president, Carney Vaughan, has published several books in recent years, including the action thriller, *The Cooktown Grave*.

Fishing

The Fisho's began in 1962 with members that originated from the Revesby Hotel and initially became the East Hills Workers' Fishing Club. The club will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary along with the parent body in 2012.

The first president was director Ted Smith and his early committee was: Bruce Robertson, Danny Rugless, Howard Bush, Alec Law, Jerry Jarratt, Keith McDonald and Lionel Ward, who remains an active member of the club and continued to fish and make sinkers for the Fisho members.

The fishing club presentation days on the Georges River became legendary and the punch they produced was lethal – former director and life member, Howard Bush always made sure there was no under-catering. There was always plenty of entertainment, food and refreshments for the families, friends and visitors from other clubs.

In the early days, the Fishos departed the club in the wee small hours to board a trawler at Palm Beach. Newcastle was another venue, as was Wollongong and Kiama. An inter-Workers' fishing tournament was held between Newcastle, Cessnock, Muswellbrook and Dora Creek clubs. There were also trout fishing weekends to country venues, with more rabbits and mushrooms brought home, than trout.



Fly-away trips were an annual event in the 1970s with Woolgoolga, the main destination. The highlight of one of these trips was when Fisho's life member Jim Buckley and local Jim McGarrigle landed a 48-kilo (105lb) black cod.

Life members of the fishing club are E Smith, B Robertson, J Jarrett, L Marks, J Lloyd, T Semlitzky, L Ward, P Crook, J Buckley, J Howe, A Ross, K Williams.

Treasurer Howard Bush was a tireless worker and organiser along with Lionel Ward and Terry Semlitzky who was reef captain for over thirty years. A hired charter boat continued to go out on the second Sunday of the month to cater for the dedicated Fishos.

With the amalgamation of Revesby Bowling Club, that club's small boats fishing club was an addition to the Workers' club.

Football (Soccer)

The genesis of the Revesby Workers' Soccer Club takes in a life before the Workers' Club (known initially as the East Hills Workers' Club) was born. The club, which had its beginning in the late 1950s, was known as the Panania Wanderers until 1962. According to Merle Peters in her book *The Big Club*, an approach had been made to East Hills Workers' Club to accept the Wanderers under its banner – playing still under their chosen colours, maroon shirt with two diagonal stripes and white shorts and socks. (Maroon and white are of course, Revesby Workers' Club official colours, although the soccer club uniform has changed in the application of the colours).

Seven Wanderer teams, from under 8 to under 13, joined the Workers' and in 1963 the first recorded Bankstown Trophy win by a Workers' Club team was by

the under 8 team, consisting of P Lynch, S Yuille, B Cole, B Ralph, J Simpson, T Lynch, Q Taylor, F Weeks, F Rodighiero and R Bullard, in the President's Cup.

Milperra Reserve was their home ground, their training often conducted by the light of an arc light "pushed" out from an old shed. The ground had a determined slope from one end to the other which necessitated the council eventually grading the ground sometime around 1970 as well as building dressing sheds.

Office-bearers on the first management committee were Darcy Brooks (president), John (Ben) Hall (vice-president), Jim Seaton (secretary), Den Yuille (social secretary), Jack Turner (treasurer) and the ever-necessary canteen ladies, included Mesdames Hamilton, Fletcher, Beves, Hall, Yapman and others.

The club had one strict – and admirable – policy: never to turn an enthusiastic boy away.

Successes came quickly – the club's All Age Division 1 team in 1967 and following successful application to join the New South Wales Federation of Soccer Clubs, Workers' competed in the Federation's Inter-suburban Third Division in 1968; won first and second grade in 1969; and eventually became the premiers of Division 2 State League in 1977.

Success followed under coaches Ian Lloyd, John Hughes, Joe Martin, Brian (Peter) Smith. In 1976 Greg Byles was appointed player/coach and brought with him a change of style in the playing of soccer by Revesby Workers' Soccer teams. That season they went into first grade semi-finals and defeated Ku-ring-gai and drawing nil-all with Queens Park in the finals. Queens Park won the replay the following week.

In 1977 the National League competition commenced and Revesby Club was invited into the Second Division and proved themselves worthy by defeating Melita in the semis and Ku-ring-gai in the final.

In 1978, Revesby received sponsorship from CTC Travel, the first club in the NSW Federation to wear sponsorship on their shirts, doing so against Croatia in the First Division Ampol Cup. They were in the big league, playing against Polonia and Bankstown (in a promotion play-off for State League, 1st Division, in 1979), St George, Marconi, Apia Leichhardt, Sydney City and Blacktown City, who all fielded their National League players in those competitions when they were available.

Revesby Workers' Soccer also played a couple of social games against, firstly, the crew of a Russian ship *Fedor*

Shalyapin and later the crew of *Taras Shavenko* just prior to the government ban on Russian ships into Australian ports. Due to a lack of trade because of the ban, CTC Travel was forced to withdraw its sponsorship.

In the mid-1980s, the soccer club comprised 320 players and was the largest affiliate club under the Revesby Workers' banner.

In 2012, the club continued to win more than its fair share of premierships, continuing the tradition that began even before the Workers' Club, as East Hills in 1962, opened its doors.

Garden Club

The garden club of the Revesby Workers' Club had its first meeting on Saturday, 4 March 1989. A month earlier club president Bill Bullard had gathered a group of interested club members to determine if there was sufficient interest.

The members who attended the meeting were Bill Maher, Bob Downey, Joy Fiveash, Phyllis Johnstone, Phoebe Bowden, Bill Pemberton, Olive McLean, Robyn Elmer and Phyl Kinsey.

It was agreed that club members should meet on the first Saturday of each month except January. [It was later decided to meet on the first and third Saturday's of each month, the first for business and the third Saturday for guest speakers]. Joy Fiveash was elected president, Bob Downey, vice-president, Phyllis Johnstone, treasurer and Bob Downey, social secretary.

The Workers' Club donated \$250 to kick them off. The membership fee was set at \$3 and, at the suggestion of Bob



Downey, a library was started and plans were set in place to open a bank account. At the same time, Isobel Dale was elected secretary.

With affiliation with the Garden Club of Australia, membership increased gradually and it was clear the garden club had a future at Revesby. Christmas functions, tours and visits to other gardens and clubs became an accepted part of club business – not to mention tending the club's own memorial garden and raising money for charities, a continuing annual objective.

By 1998, the club met to change its constitution from ninety members to 100, such had been the keen interest. In the same year, \$2000 was donated by the club to Camp Quality.

In 2000, Phyllis Johnstone took over as president. It was a club on the go with tours arranged to Goulburn Rose Show, Windsor Luncheon Cruise, Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Kennerton Green. Donations to charities for the year reached \$2300.

The club moved from their regular meeting place, Henry Lawson House to the Banksia/Boronia room in the main club because of lack of air conditioning. It coincided with an increase in the charity focus of the club, in which they collected: books for Australian troops overseas, knitting needles for disabled people learning to knit and postage stamps for the Freedom From Hunger campaign. They also supported a separate appeal for the NSW Rural Fire Service.

Golf – Ladies

The ladies golf club was formed in 1966, just four years after the Revesby Workers' Club doors were opened. The formation was largely through the efforts of Ruth Salmon and according to Phyllis Fisher, who has been treasurer since 1982 and an active player and member since its inception, the first game was held on 7 May 1966.

Nineteen players hit off at Greenwood Golf Course at Hammondville where club members played monthly for the first 12 months, and every three weeks until 30 November 1968 at which time they began using other courses. The first meeting of the club was held on 6 July 1966.

Many of the original members were wives of members of the men's golf club and Phyllis recalled a "golfer's corner" in the old club – and the ladies, who had yet to start a club, sat at a table nearby.

According to Phyllis, “One Friday night one of them suggested – ‘why don’t we play?’” And so they began – just four – Nell Hunt, Ruth Salmon, May Church and Jenny Little.

Merle Peters, in her book *The Big Club*, wrote of those first tentative steps. “Despite the fact that, at the start, few of the hopeful golfers barely knew which end of a golf stick to hold and brought in fine cricket scores, enthusiasm, concentration and practice made (almost) perfect ...”

Over the years, club membership varied between thirty and fifty players, though by 2011 it had whittled down to 15. From 1975 to 1993, the club played an annual competition against Revesby Heights Ex-Services Ladies Golf Club, playing for the B & J Higgs Trophy from 1977.

Apart from Phyllis Fisher, long-standing office bearers have been Nell Hill, handicapper, and Marj Pakes, secretary.

Golf – Mens

It is accepted within Revesby Workers’ Club lore that golf, along with fishing, were the first two sporting clubs within the Workers’ Club umbrella. On 21 September 1962 the first meeting was held on the premises of the East Hills Workers’ Club (as it was known initially) to officially form the East Hills Workers’ Golf Club.

The club had been functioning as a social golf club for quite some time and was of considerable assistance to the pioneering directors of the Workers’ Club in their attempt to gain a liquor licence. Influential in court proceedings was the need to prove the legitimacy of sporting clubs who needed the Workers’ Club to function; golf was one of, if not the main sport being played by prospective club members at the time.

The committee elected on that first night were: M J (Jim) Donovan (president), M P (Merv) Elder (secretary/treasurer), R C (Reg) Wright (handicapper), and J (Jack) Pitty and P (Pat) Dunkin (assistant handicappers).

Other members who were present on that night were Jack Roser, Bill Fazl, Bert Slater, Val Salmon, Bill Hills, Eric Tisdale, Jack Dennehy, Brien Higgs, George Johnstone.

A levy of two shillings per week was collected from all members and a joining fee of one pound was set.

Reg Wright, the most experienced golfer, was the architect of the club’s constitution and set in place guidelines to function as a legitimate golf club. The East Hills golfers had been playing with the *Daily Mirror*

social golf club on many occasions, at the invitation of Bill Church, a member of that social club; he was later to become a member of East Hills Workers’ Club.

Church also went on to become what golf club members believe was the first ever champion of any of the Workers’ Club’s social clubs when he won the golf club championship in early 1963.

Membership stood at around thirty when the club started and quickly rose to about eighty – all in the first twelve months.

Some of the courses played on in those early days no longer exist. These included Kirkham Lane, Oran Park, Bangaroo, Greenwood, Campbelltown (old course) and Greenlands.

Once the club was firmly established, the club committee arranged their first social function in the form of a presentation night to honour club winners and also to have our women share the fun with us. This first social was held on Sunday, 6 October 1963. Male members bought and cooked all the food, arranged the tables and settings, served the food – and drink – throughout the night. None would have got jobs as waiters at any restaurant, but the ladies were very happy.

It was the forerunner to many more presentation nights to come. Some of the wives even bought that “second dress” for the occasion. Interestingly, the amount allocated for major trophies on that night was £3 for winning and £1/10/- for runners-up.

For many years thereafter, the glittering golf presentation nights were the biggest and brightest social nights celebrated in the club. Some 250 attended these functions in which there was a band and such artists, at times, as Jimmy Hannan and Sandy Scott.



The golf club was the first within the Workers’ Club to have a “Flyaway” – a flight to Forster in 1968. The board of directors thought it so important they struck a special flyaway badge for the occasion. The flight took only a few hours and the stewardesses who catered to members’ needs on that trip walked for many kilometres, it was assessed, serving thirsty members. Other Flyaways followed with trips to Broken Hill and Canberra.

The first sponsored trophy played for was The Suttons Motors Trophy donated by the company’s manager Jack Pitty, one of our founding members who played for many years.

As the years rolled on the club was strengthened by the influx of experienced players such as Col Barnsley, Keith Hely, Bill Thompson and Jack Turner. Revesby was now good enough to play against other clubs such as Blacktown Workers’, Cronulla Workers’, Mt Pritchard, Sutherland Trade Union Club, West Wallsend, Warragamba Workers’ and arch rivals, Canberra Workers’.

One committee member who made a big difference was Charlie Bryant who became the club’s first social secretary – he knew a thing or two about how to organise a BBQ! Membership had climbed to well over a hundred and it became more difficult to arrange playing times at the various courses. However, survive they did.

The club functions as well as ever today (2012) and with a few minor changes, is still running to the same guidelines as were laid down by the “amateurs” all those years ago. The golf committee in 2012 consisted of president, Wayne Donovan (president), John McDonald (vice-president), Phil Kilazoglou (secretary), Ken Harris (treasurer), Noel Connolly (social secretary), Troy Young (club captain).

Hockey – Womens

Women’s hockey became a part of the Revesby Workers’ sub-club fraternity in 1979. A team from the Canterbury association, under the name, simply, “Canterbury”, approached the club for sponsorship.

The club agreed and, under the guidance of foundation president, Lorelle Byers, two hockey teams played in that same year under the banner of the Workers’ Club, one in the Sydney Division and the other in the Canterbury competition. Eight of the girls in 1979 played representative hockey for Canterbury in the state championships.

By 1982, the hockey club had grown in strength; four teams fielded in the Parramatta competition and one in Canterbury. It was in this year that the Granville Magpies joined Revesby Workers’.

Great excitement was achieved in 1983 when local high schools and local clubs fielded twenty-four schoolgirl teams in what was believed to be the first-ever such carnival in the Bankstown zone.

So successful was the carnival that Revesby Workers’ fielded a junior hockey team in 1984 for the first time – they missed winning a grand final in their first year by just one point!

In 2012, the club consisted of an open women’s team who play in the Sydney Women’s Hockey League and two World Masters Games teams. Revesby, as a club, liked to put emphasis on both the sporting and social aspects of hockey, playing hard both on and off the pitch.

Life members as of 2012 were Bob Parker, Sharon Mallit, Lorelle Byers, Dianne Hawking, Marina Laverty, Brenda Hannan, and Lauren Taylor.

Executives were Lauren Taylor (president), Dianne Hawking (vice-president), April Cooper (secretary), Lauren Taylor (treasurer), Amelia Hesketh (publicity officer), Karin Wimmer (Macarthur rep).

Ladies Group

Revesby Ladies’ Group was founded on 9 March 1983 by Allison Miller, who saw the need for an organisation to cater for women in the community who were housebound and had virtually no social interaction with other women. After advertising in a local newspaper, just five women met in a downstairs room of the Revesby Workers’ Club. The membership swelled to 48 three years ago and currently the club has around 43 members.

Meetings were first held in the Workers’ Club, and then later in Henry Lawson House. When that building was demolished the meetings moved to the Banksia Room in March 2003, and then in April 2004 to the Macarthur Room which is part of the original post office, where they are still held.

Owing to insurance concerns, the group sought affiliation with the Workers’ Club in April 2002, and this was granted in June of that year. The group requested its first grant from the Workers’ Club in September 2003, and \$500 was granted one month later.

The first coordinator was Yvonne Yeomans, who was elected to the position in March 1984 and held it for fourteen years. Pat Watson, who joined the group in 1984 and is still a member, then served as coordinator from 1998. On her resignation in March 2009 Cathy Don briefly held the position before Marj Heyhoe was elected to the position for twelve months. Bev Spring, the current coordinator, was elected in March 2010.

An important aspect of the group was to provide friendship and entertainment for the members.

Guest speakers are invited twice monthly, coach tours are arranged once a month, and on other days the ladies entertain themselves.

Treasurers over the years have been Jean Ward, Pat Watson, Joan Minors, Beryl Simmons, Margaret Barton, Marj Heyhoe and currently Norma Maxwell. Merrill Winspear is our welfare officer, and Judy Marr assists in a number of other activities.

Another important function of the group has been fundraising for charity. The responsibility for this effort is shared by Phyllis Aldridge and Brenda Grant. In 2011, the Ladies Group donated almost \$5000 to the Revesby Workers' Bill Bullard Charity Committee.

In 2008 the group celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary with a luncheon at the Workers' Club.

On Australia day last year, the group was nominated for a Bankstown Council Community Service Award. The ceremony was held at Garrison Point and the group was represented by Bev Spring, Phyllis Aldridge and Brenda Grant. While not winning the award, we felt very honoured to be nominated and appreciated the recognition of our work.

As of 2011, the group had five life members: Yvonne Yeoman, Jean Ward, Eileen Way (deceased), Pat Watson and Marion Lander (deceased).

Netball

The story of the Revesby Workers' Netball Club began in 1960 when, as Panania Wanderers, the club entered four teams, wearing maroon and white colours, in the Parramatta/Granville Women's Basketball Association. In 1961, Panania Wanderers and four other clubs formed the Bankstown and District Women's Basketball Association.

In 1964, Wanderers were approached by the East Hills Workers' Club, as it was then known, to play under

its name and sponsorship. The subsidy meant that every player would receive a trophy in appreciation of their sportsmanship and participation. It also enabled the club to make it easier for families who may otherwise not have been able to afford to play.

In 1966, the original Panania Wanderers became Revesby Workers' Basketball Club and when in 1976 the sport of women's basketball changed its name to netball, the Revesby Workers' Netball Club came into being. The original foundation members were J Hancock, E Newell, J Warham, S Watson, J Laurie, P Beaton, M Cummerford, D Yuille, J Seaton and M Costello.

Revesby Workers' Netball Club has a most impressive record. The club commenced with four teams and twenty members and by the mid-1980s boasted thirty-two teams – about 300 members – the largest club in the netball association. Teams from the club enjoyed considerable success and among the outstanding players was Venessa Edmunds, not only the first Revesby Workers' Netball Club player to represent Australia but the first to be chosen from the Bankstown area.

In 2011, the club had twenty teams with over 200 players, umpires, coaches and managers. And over the years the club has produced many talented players, umpires and coaches at all levels of the game and have won numerous premierships and awards.

A number of worthy members have been honoured with life membership for their dedicated service. They are: Chris Byng (dec.), Pam Constable, Adele Clarke (dec.), John Cook (dec.), Kath Cook (dec.), Janet Dawes, Margaret Dawson, Phyllis Johnstone, Lynette Kovalik, Dulcie Langan, Doreen Polley (dec.), Pat Pride, Michele Robinson, Doreen Sirett, Norma Smith OAM (dec.), Joyce Warham.



Physie and Dance

Revesby Workers' Physie and Dance Club opened in 1996 with head teacher Rhondda Young. Lessons were held in Henry Lawson House and over the years, the club has had several national winners and place getters.

With the club stronger than ever, 2012 was an exciting year for the club when it joined the newly formed Australian Physie and Dance Association.

The executive in 2012 was: Rhondda Young (president), Diane Wilson (secretary), Michele Best (treasurer).

Scrabble

Scrabble began as a club at Revesby Workers' in 1991, hosting its games in the Workers' Club's annex – in the Macarthur room.

Gordon Meggs joined the club in 1992 and has been there ever since. Games have been played at the Workers' Club every year since except for five years in which they were played at Padstow, before returning to Revesby.

Members play in an annual club tournament while the more serious players in the group also played in state-wide tournaments, travelling as far as Wagga Wagga and Lismore.

In 2012, the club had seven members, down from a high of fourteen, but maintained its commitments as part of the sub-club structure of Workers.

Softball

Softball began at Revesby Workers' in 1979 with Chris Daley (president), Vicki Kershaw (treasurer), Marion Perrem (secretary), and Elizabeth Hanley (minute secretary).

Since fielding their first team in 1979, the club has grown in strength and in 1984 fielded eight teams in the winter competition, ranging from T-ball players to seniors.

In these years, the club developed some strong representative players and provided six umpires at regional and state championships.

In 1984, for the first time, the club fielded junior boys and men's teams – the men winning B grade and the junior boys, runners up. In the same year, the senior ladies won three major titles.

The parent club was very supportive of the club, as it had with all other sub-clubs and the softball club repaid Workers', not only in its successes but in the sportsman-like manner in which its members played the game.

Terry Semlitzky became liaison director for softball in 1993 and asked, "Where were the maroon and white uniforms for the junior softball?" He was told that another club in the area looked after the juniors, supplying both the uniforms and the gear. Semlitzky was not satisfied and said, "Get the coaches and the kids and I'll get the uniforms and kit."

The club received a one-off subsidy from the Community Development Scheme and in 1998 Revesby fielded its first T-Ball side in the Georges River Softball Association. This grew to three teams in T-Ball and Mod ball but, sadly, they have since disappeared, leaving the ladies' teams to carry on the tradition.

Spearfishing Club

The Revesby Workers' Underwater Fishing Club developed into one of the best known on the Australia East Coast. The club formed on 13 June 1972 and was ready for its first "dive" two months later on Sunday, 13 August in Toowoona Bay.

The first committee consisted of W Hills (presidents); G Martin (secretary/treasurer) and publicity officer N Cowley. Liaison director was Bill Scott.

It was not long before the club was making its mark. In 1975 a Japanese national team visited the Revesby Club and in 1976 Mel Brown became Pacific Coast champion.

In 1978/79, Craig Smith Jnr became the club's first national champion and as the honours flowed, Bruno Nufer, who went on to win national veterans' titles, won the first of three national underwater fin swimming championships, though his 1980 victory had club members and the Western Australian coastal rescue teams worried when he went "missing" off the WA coast for nine hours. The club also won the Southern Zone Championship in 1982.

The club also boasted an impressive record of photographic awards through Jim Burr who won a series of awards for underwater photography and was a winner three out of four years in a national competition held at Monash University in Melbourne in the National Award Gold Medal. In 1984, the membership had reached 90, including 24 juniors.

The club continued its successes through the 1990s and 2000s, under the banner of the Revesby Workers' Spearfishing club, and was a strong, well maintained club in 2012.

Swimming

There was a strong community view that a swimming pool was necessary following the late 1950s population growth in the area. In January 1960, Ken Baird called on some fathers who jointly organised a meeting on a vacant building site at Revesby Heights and from this meeting the Revesby Heights Amateur Swimming Club (ASC) was born. In the early stages of the club's history members taught youngsters to swim in the shark proof pool at Lambeth Street Reserve on the Georges River. This activity continued until the Lambeth Pool was closed during 1962 as a result of river pollution.

It would be four years, and after much agitation, before the Bankstown City Council approved the construction of pools at Amour Park and Greenacre in 1966 and 1967. The Revesby Heights Amateur Swimming Club had changed its name, eliminating "Heights" from its title, and while the more central name gained a few more members, the club continued to struggle.

During the early 1990s it was recognised by club officials that a higher profile and greater support were necessary if the club was to advance beyond its existing level. Geoff and Sue Eaton negotiated on behalf of the club with the Board of Revesby Workers' Club with a view to establishing the swimming club under its umbrella. This

was achieved on 21 December 1993 when the club voted to adopt the name, Revesby Workers' Swim Club.

The pool complex remained an unheated facility for many years. Consequently, the club operated essentially as a summer club until the mid-1990s when heating was applied to the 25-metre outdoor pool. Enclosure of this pool followed several years later and club lobbying for heating of the 50-metre pool was achieved after meetings with the Council, Revesby Workers' Club and local political figures. Heating was finally achieved in 2002.

The club has produced many good swimmers over the years with the most prominent being Graham Windeatt, an Olympic silver medallist at Munich in 1972. In later years, Sean Eaton, Amanda Carney, Brendan Stone, Katrina and Natalie Lozan, Matt Freeman, Sean, Trent and Samantha Abbott, Kerryn Houghton, Ashleigh Steed and Michelle Short all achieved state/national honours or national qualifying standard. Tenealle Houghton, Sean Russo and Michael Auprince have many Australian multi-disability records between them and have represented in international competition.

Many people have served the club well in an administrative capacity. In the early days, Basil Dickman, Bill Windeatt, Shirley and Laurie Flynn, Betty Berry, Doug Hyland and John Vandermay left an important mark on the club. In later years, Chris Lozan served as secretary of the district and Peter Lozan, a former club president, also served as district president and has the honour of being president of Swimming NSW. Anthony Formica, Gail and Martin Cauchi, Trina Donkin and Bronwyn Hatzis, to name but a few, have contributed greatly in recent years. Fay Hall, a life member, was awarded the Australian Sports Medal in 2001 for her contribution to swimming.

Other life members were Betty Berry, David Billingham, Peter Lozan and Ron Sherman.

The executive committee as of April 2012 was: Peter Hargreaves (president), Phillip Wilkie (vice-president), Bronwyn Hatzis (secretary), Martin Cauchi (treasurer), Gail Cauchi (race secretary).

Tennis – Social

Another of the early sub club affiliates at Revesby Workers' was tennis, formed on 9 July 1967 at a meeting at Wainu Courts, Padstow. Membership totalled twenty-



four at the beginning and the home base was changed to Nanden Courts at Revesby. By the 1980s the club was permanently based at Milperra Sporting Complex where the club used four courts each Friday for a membership that had grown to more than fifty.

The club's first president was Tom Morgan. Jean Tipple was secretary and Barbara Bridgeman, treasurer. Members paid a 50 cent joining fee, plus a 50 cent playing fee for men and 20 cents for women. It was pointed out this was not an early form of discrimination; it was simply a case of fair-mindedness – the ladies brought the inevitable "plate" and thus deserved a cheaper rate!

The tennis club was heavily into charitable functions, raising money for the parent club through an annual jumble sale, which became as imbedded in the Revesby Workers' year as the annual general meetings.

Conducted and organised by the members of the tennis social club, it raised considerable money each year for the parent club's chosen charity.

In 2012, the club had around fifteen members who played every Friday night at the Ken Rosewall Tennis Centre at Hurstville with the main objective to enjoy a social evening – and not to take things too seriously. A willing and active membership has ensured survival of the club from its beginning more than forty years ago.

Junior Tennis Club

A junior tennis club commenced within the Workers' Club umbrella on 7 November 1983. By 1985, there were 125 girls and boys between the ages of eight and eighteen

representing the club in the Canterbury-Bankstown Tennis Association's Saturday morning competition.

The club was subsidised by the Revesby Workers' Club Ltd and teams were then entered in the junior competition run by the Canterbury-Bankstown Tennis Association Inc.

In 2000 many parents whose children were playing tennis in the above competition were members of the Revesby Workers' Club tennis Club. The committee in that year included: Paul Glynn (president), Jean Wiseman (vice-president and life member), Gary Foss (general secretary), Colin Warwick (competition secretary), Faye Leveson (treasurer), John Cottrill (tennis coach), as well as five or six members on the general committee.

The sponsorship monies from Revesby Workers' Club was expended on trophies, prizes and the once a year picnic day. The Committee decided around the year 2002 to change the way these funds were allocated. It was decided to subsidise the players instead of funding the big picnic day. The then-coach, the late John Cottrill, offered subsidised coaching costs at Smith Park Tennis Centre for the children in 2001. Colin Warwick joined in the coaching to help John who was experiencing severe health issues at the time.

By the year 2004, the original members of the committee had seen their own children grow up and become adult tennis players. A new committee was formed in 2004 and its members included Adele English (president), Julia Farrugia (vice-president), Julie Wright (general secretary), Steve Sidney (competition secretary), Vicki Gollan (treasurer), Stuart Rook (assistant treasurer), Robert Hill (publicity) and general committee members – Steve Wright, Robert Lucre, Sue Lucre and Wendy and Bree Morse.

As players move out of the junior ranks, committee members change. Adele English and Steve Sidney have continued on the present committee, for continuity, being joined by others along the way. The committee continued to sponsor eight teams in the Saturday morning competition.

The subsidy grew in 2008 and the club was able to support 12 teams of junior players in 2012. With the help of Revesby Workers' Club, there have been many players over the years who have furthered their tennis career, playing nationally and even in one or two cases, internationally. Some of these players included Adam Warwick, (who was a professional coach on Lindeman Island and went on the circuit playing satellite tours), Alex Golan, James Sidney, Josh Sampson, Haydn Rook,

Michael Payne, Fiona and Jackie Pullar, Kim Wiseman, Goran Bosevski, Anthony Swinfield, Bree Morse, Fiona McCullough, Amanda Warwick, Kirsten Lucre, Olivia Rogers, the Sallustio sisters, Velona Perez, Kate Richards and Rowan Morse, to name a few.

The coach in 2012 was Steve Sidney, who became the coach-manager at the Panania Tennis Centre. He also had Colin Warwick as part of his coaching staff.

The current Revesby Workers' Club Elite Player Award, an extra-monetary sponsorship, has been in

place for four years. It was a fantastic financial aid to help elite players further their careers and was available to be applied for each year, via the Canterbury-Bankstown Tennis Association website.

The Revesby Workers' Junior Tennis club continued with its key mission of providing tennis to the children of Revesby Workers' Club members at a cost effective and enjoyable basis. The future looks bright with many new, younger players coming through the ranks.

Liaison officer in 2012 was Dennis Hayward.

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