

W.H. Tew Pavilion & #1 Oval establishment

In the late 1970's considerable discussion took place throughout the City of Knox, originated by the old Country Roads Board, towards efforts to straighten out the existing kink in Burwood Highway as it passed through Ferntree Gully, particularly the stretch between Glenfern Road and Lysterfield Road. This placed in peril the future of the Ferntree Gully Recreation Reserve (then only the old oval) and in particular the home of the FTGCC & FTGFC.

With Wal Tew as a considerable community influence, the two clubs established a process of investigating options for the retention of the old oval or establishing a new base. Two important events occurred that resulted in a feasibility study being conducted on establishing a new oval and pavilion on the site of the old Ferntree Gully Shire Tip, which was based on land further along Lysterfield Road and adjacent to the existing sports ground. These events were the closure of the aforementioned Tip site and its relocation to Cathies Lane and the potential closure and relocation of the Council Works Depot which was then based on the Lysterfield Road/Burwood Highway corner. Offers had already been made by leading Supermarket chains to establish a major supermarket on the site and with the Council's Works Department expanding as the City of Knox's maintenance requirements grew this became an easy decision.

The two Clubs under the guidance of a representatives; Barry Stuart, Ian Ewart, Bob Campbell and Peter Hamilton working alongside community representatives Wal Tew and Bob DeCoite, met with the Council Engineer – Bruce McCartney and established a working party to investigate the construction and development of a new Oval and Pavilion should the CRB plan to straighten the Highway eventuate. The opportunity to relocate the Works Depot and sell the land in one move was too attractive for the Council to ignore and thus the plans to straighten the highway never eventuated.

The bonus for the two clubs was that the working group was encouraged to continue its program and the funding and construction program to establish the new oval and new pavilion commenced. Pavilion plans were established and agreements struck by the Reserve Committee which would see the two Clubs sell its rights to the old pavilion (which we owned outright), to the City of Knox, receive significant local and state government grants and borrow the remaining funds through a cooperative share arrangement to finance the construction and establishment of the new Pavilion. In return the Council agreed to cover the old tip site and create a new playing venue.

The construction and establishment cost of the new building were estimated to be approx \$250,000 and with the proceeds of sale of the old Pavilion realising \$95,000 this left a considerable gap for the two clubs to secure. The Reserve Committee met with local Building Society head and ex Knox Councillor, Noel Clarke and they steered the establishment of a Cooperative which sought to guarantee the necessary loan required to construct the pavilion through a Share Registry. The signatories to the Share Registry effectively committed a Dollar for every 10 Dollars borrowed by the Coop, such that if the two Clubs defaulted on their loan repayments, they would guarantee the full 10 Dollars for each share purchased.

The loan repayments were managed by the Reserve Committee for the next decade or so with both clubs raising the repayment amounts and low rate loan interest on an annual basis, on top of their normal operating costs. This extra burden (approx \$6000 p.a. per club) at different times throughout the 1980's and early 1990's meant that both clubs overcame difficulty in meeting their financial commitments, but eventually the loan repayments were met and the project to develop the magnificent 'W.H. Tew Pavilion', that the clubs now have as their home base was finished.

While Knox Council remains the Title owner of the Reserve and Pavilion, in effect the clubs contribution saw its combined share equate to the value of the bricks, mortar and chattels that make up the Social Floor of the building. Throughout the past three decades we have benefited from the magnificent efforts, commitment and financial support of our membership and the Social Rooms are now the envy of many sporting clubs in the area.

In February 1982 a request was made to Knox Council to rename the Pavilion the 'W.H. Tew Pavilion' in honour of the role Wal had in creating the opportunity to construct the pavilion and the new oval and at this time plaques were unveiled (mounted at the Social Room entry) honouring the members of the initial Reserve Construction Committee.

After his passing in July, 2007, the Club's applied to have the reserve renamed after Wal Tew, which after an initial suggestion was rejected by Placenames Victoria, was accepted and in October 2010 the Ferntree Gully Recreation Reserve, home of the Ferntree Gully Cricket & Football Clubs was renamed Wally Tew Reserve.

A debt of gratitude to him, the members of the steering committee and the many others involved in the process, or committing to share purchases and those who helped raise the repayment funds, season after season in the 1980's and early 1990's, will be owed by members of the Ferntree Gully Cricket and Football Clubs for many years to come.