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**Luxford Bros. Timberyard, Haughton Road, Oakleigh c1920
*Society Collection***

The Oakleigh Club is featured due to the foundation membership of Claude Luxford and his later presidency and life membership.

**The Oakleigh Club
1971 – 1990**

In the 1960s there were few restaurants in Oakleigh and for some years prior to the opening of the Oakleigh Club sporting officials sought premises with a dining facility in which businessmen might meet. Ultimately, the Club held mixed membership.

A meeting of five men: Peter Newton and Jack Edwards of Oakleigh Cricket Club, Ken Bird and Doug Rankin of Oakleigh Football Club along with solicitor Colin Campbell met at

Campbell's office to progress the project of the Oakleigh Club. It was Campbell that drafted the constitution and eventually procured the much desired licence for the Club.¹

The focus turned to obtaining a site in Oakleigh Recreation Reserve bounded by Warrigal Road, Logie and Drummond Streets and the Cemetery Reserve. The subsequent application in 1962 by Oakleigh cricket and football club officials for licensed premises in the south-west corner of the Reserve alerted the Victorian Health Department which noted their chosen site's proximity to the Cemetery and asked for information on graves potentially affected. There could well have been graves close to the fence line between the Reserves, as the previous buffer, the unused and long-forgotten road between them, had been taken into the sports reserve.

Support to pursue a licensed Club was given by Oakleigh City Council for a two-storey building with long balconies overlooking the playing fields. It required a fair commitment given the lengthy process ahead that required approval to lease Crown Land, a Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works permit, the raising of considerable finance and obtaining of a licence.²

In 1963 an Oakleigh Club was formed. Soon after it was revealed that part of the planned Clubhouse would encroach on graves and would incur long delays while sorted out by relevant Health Department officials regarding possible exhumations and informing families associated with the graves. Seeking a solution it was hoped to obtain the seemingly less problematic northwest corner of the reserve. However, securing land close to Oakleigh Bowling Club on the north of the sports ground had already been scotched as being too close to the nearby primary school.³

In 1965 the southern site had been adjusted so that according to the press: 'No graves, as far as was known, are in the site sought! Council also turned down a proposal to use portion of the cemetery grounds for a car park for what was now described as the Oakleigh sporting club.'⁴

Some time elapsed until a renewed burst of energy followed a public meeting in 1967. A new committee formed with energetic Cr Reg Harris elected at its head.⁵ The Crown land sought was approved for lease from the Lands Department from 1969. To meet Lands Department requirements a guaranteed loan was needed which was provided by local

¹ *Oakleigh Club Gazette*, December (undated) c 1984, 'history article'

² *Standard Times*, 5 June 1963, pp 5,7

³ *Oakleigh Club Gazette*, December (undated) c 1984, 'history article'; *Oakleigh & Caulfield Times*, 10 January 1963, p. 3

⁴ *Oakleigh & Caulfield Times*, 4 August 1965, p. 1

⁵ *Oakleigh & Caulfield Times*, 14 June 1967, p. 1

businessman and Football Club president 1964-66, Walter Fregon.⁶ In 1968 Wal Fregon headed a committee to raise \$45,000 by 10-year debentures for the construction of the Oakleigh Club.⁷ From that committee stemmed many events to raise funds including card nights, theatre nights as well as the sale of debentures.

In 1969, Club president Reg L. Harris made application for a liquor licence and opened applications for membership.⁸ Following a favorable hearing from the Licensing Commission a start was made on a single-story clubhouse, octagonal in shape that was used for social and business activities and occasionally as a conference venue.⁹ The architect was Ivan Anderson and Associates with M. C. Kool Constructions as builder. Sited on leased Crown land on Warrigal Road, the Oakleigh Club adjoined Oakleigh General Cemetery reserve. Its location was not ideal as parking was limited and the Club at times pressured parking within the cemetery reserve.

The Oakleigh Club opened on 26 November 1971 with special guest Alan H. Scanlan MLA officiating. So many turned out for the opening ceremony and smorgasbord dinner that the overflow spilled into a marquee in the 'backyard'. Getting a drink was fraught though as confirmation of a licence had not been received and the Club was obliged to provide them free for several hours until it was known the licence was granted!¹⁰

With a licence secured from the Licensing Commission, a Club manager, Roy Fairhurst, was appointed. Cr Reg Harris held the President's position during the Club's infancy and was supported for the first term by vice president A. C. Lindsey who relinquished his place when transferred interstate by his employer. Yvonne Robinson was inaugural licensee and secretary. Reg Harris was a later licensee as were Jack Dobson and Jack West. Club member Allan Rice did valuable work in the sale of debentures and as Club treasurer.¹¹

Within a year membership stood at 400 with the luxury of a waiting list.¹²

A decade on the Clubhouse was extended at a cost of \$46,000 and officially re-opened on 23 May 1981. Including concertina doors in the renovation allowed space to be isolated and hired for private functions. The work was assisted with a bequest from the estate of member Doug Maxwell, which the Club had prudently invested, after his death in 1974.¹³

⁶ *Oakleigh Club Gazette*, December (undated) c 1984, 'history article'; Marc Fiddian, *Devils at Play*, p. 116

⁷ *Standard Times*, 13 March 1968, p. 3

⁸ *Standard Times*, 11 June 1969, p. 18

⁹ *Standard Times*, 14 April 1971, p. 4

¹⁰ Allan Rice, Hon. Secty Oakleigh Club c 1987.

¹¹ *Oakleigh Club Gazette*, December (undated) c 1984, 'history article'.

¹² *Standard Times*, 5 December 1972, p. 10

¹³ *Oakleigh Club Gazette*, December (undated) c 1984, 'history article'.

Claude Luxford, foundation member of the Oakleigh Club and, in 1984, retiring President, was made Life Member. It was short lived though as the Club, which early in the 1980s had 150 members, had begun to decline.

According to a member the Club had 'had its ups and downs but that all debts were paid'. In 1990 the Oakleigh Club inducted its last president and was soon wound up. At least one other group took over the premises but in the 1990s the then disused building was closed and around 2000 the Oakleigh Club was demolished.

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