

# **‘A COSTLY STUMBLE’**

## **THE 1935 SEMI FINAL**

Reference: 2021/15



**Wally Guy.**

**Dromana's intrepid champion of the 1930's**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As previously mentioned on this website, following the desolate decade of the 1920's, Dromana gathered forces and slowly but steadily established itself as a well organized and competitive club during the 1930's .

The pennant in 1931 ( see Ref: 2021/ 2 ) was a 'shot in the arm' for the town, and the enthusiasm and elation of that victory lingered for some time. The old adage 'success breeds success' proved very true at Pier Street; and Dromana was a club 'on the march and heading places' in the 1930's.

Although it would be a stretch of the imagination, to describe that era as a 'Golden Decade', they were nevertheless bright years; and despite the economic storm, that battered the nation, football at Dromana flourished and proved to be a popular 'distraction' in grim times.

### **THE GREAT DEPRESSION**

It is virtually impossible to write a story about Australian Rules football and other major sports in those years without acknowledging the profound effect the Great Depression had upon all community life. During 2020-21 communities have experienced the harsh impact of the Coronavirus outbreak; and it was the first time since World War:II that the football season has been cancelled.

The extreme hardships experienced by many families during the COVID-19 outbreak have given people an idea of how arduous life was during the depression.

In the 1930's, the majority of all families were effected by unemployment. Twenty three percent of the population was jobless in 1930, this increased to twenty-eight percent in 1931; and the following year the national rate had nudged its way to thirty percent.



**The Great Depression- Hard times for families and all football clubs.**

According to the 1933 census, about fifty percent of unemployed men had been waiting for two years to find work That's a long time, in anyone's language, for the chance to 'earn a crust.'

By 1934 and 1935 things had marginally improved but in small communities, such as Dromana, many families struggled to make ends meet. In relation to football, it is to the eternal credit of the club's leaders how they maintained the Dromana Football Club during that austere period.

## **LOYALTY & SACRIFICE**

Football clubs that lack poor administrators usually have a low success rate and sometimes a limited life span. However at Pier Street in the 1930's, George McLearn (President), Jack Clydesdale (Secretary) , George Osborne ( Treasurer) and Lou Carrigg never wavered in ensuring that the club overcame the hurdles caused by the economic collapse and wide deprivation across all communities.



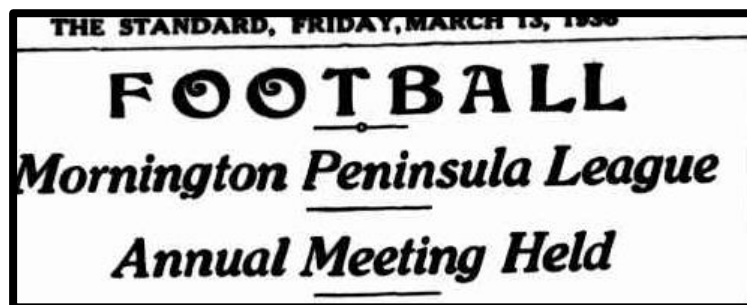
**George Osborne- One of a loyal band in ensuring the survival of the club in hard times.**

For George McLear, and his ilk, it was simply a case of 'when the going got tough, the tough got going'; and local history shows that DFC was in 'safe hands' in the 1930's. Much of the club's success, in that era, was based about good governance, and the noble spirit of its administrators.

While Dromana FC had a sprinkling of genuine stars on the playing field, it was the heroes of the committee who ensured the club's subsistence.

It will be a sad day if and when the legacy of such loyal and selfless volunteers is forgotten.

## THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA LEAGUE AGM -1935



The AGM of the Mornington Peninsula League was held at Kirkpatrick's Hotel, in Mornington, in March 1935 . The Office Bearers, as elected at that meeting that evening, were as follows:

- President: M. Peters
- Vice Presidents: D. Haywood, G. Whitlock, **G. Osborne** ( Dromana)
- Secretary: Mr Jewell
- Treasurer Mr Sharpe
- Honorary Solicitors: Messrs Watt and Leggatt
- N Honorary Auditors: F.J. Cruickshank and H.A Halford
- Tribunal Members: Messrs Leggatt, Taylor, Firth and Haebich
- Dromana's AGM delegates: **George Osborne** and **Lou Carrigg**.

Balnarring, Crib Point, Moorooduc and Pearcedale were represented at the AGM but the press report does not refer to any members of the Flinders FC being present. It seems, that Flinders was in recess during that period; and it may explain the arrival of the three very talented Mannix brothers to Dromana that season (see below). An interesting feature of the pre-season period in 1935 was the movement (i.e. transfers) of players from other clubs. Perhaps the lack of work opportunities, in some areas, may have been a contributing factor to the large number of clearances in 1935.

One of the major topics discussed at the AGM was the proposal for zoning. During the meeting, the issue of the 'low ebb' of local football and the need to improve that situation was raised by delegate Mr Gamble ( There is no proof

but perhaps the well known personality in local football, Frank Gamble, from the Navy Depot FC). It was a substantial comment regarding the standard of Mornington Peninsula football in that era....

*“ There had been no more than two players from the Peninsula to enter league (VFL) football in ten years...We had to put club interests to one side and do our best to advance the game “..*

- It was decided to hear every delegate's view on the matter, and this occupied considerable time. Mr. Gamble said everyone present must admit that football was at a low ebb, and if they intended to improve it, something must be done now. There had been no more than two players from the Peninsula to enter league football in ten years. We had to put club interests to one side and do our best to advance the game. The re-

## THE LEAGUE STRUCTURE IN 1935

The Mornington Peninsula League (as the competition had been named in 1934) was again structured into two associations or grades as shown below:

- **A Grade:** Sorrento, Frankston, Naval Depot, Seaford. Hastings and Mornington
- **B Grade:** Dromana, Rosebud, \*\*Frankston Tyabb, Somerville, \*\*Hastings Rosebud, Balnarring. Pearcedale and \*\*Sorrento. The \*\* denotes that those clubs had teams competing in both grades that season.

FOOTBALL	
Season Opens Tomorrow on the Peninsula	
TOMORROW'S GAMES.	
A GRADE.	B GRADE.
Sorrento v. Frankston (Umpire, Duke).	Frankston v. Red Hill.
Hastings v. Mornington (Umpire, Rowe).	Rosebud v. Hastings.
Naval Depot v. Seaford (Umpire, Chapman).	Pearcedale v. Dromana.
	Balnarring v. Somerville.
	Tyabb v. Sorrento.

Prior to the first game that season, Hastings FC informed the league that it would not be fielding a team in the 'B' grade competition; and, as a consequence, that reduced the number of teams in that division to nine.

The season opened on May 4<sup>th</sup> 1935; and, as can be seen from the extract below, Dromana travelled to Pearcedale for club's first game.

## THE PLAYING LIST AT DROMANA IN 1935

B. Aust, R. Griffith, A. Cairns, D. Littlejohn, H. McLearn, A. Griffith, S. McLearn, J. Cairns W. Patterson, H. Arnol, L. Darley, W. Guy, J. Patterson, M. Mannix, L. R. Birch, Mannix, J. Skillen, J. Mannix, S. Darley, W. Evans. The Mannix brothers were cleared from Flinders to Dromana in April 1935 and they would prove to be strong acquisitions to the list. It is also known Dromana also had received a clearance for L. Godfrey from Cressy FC.

Ianan, W. J. Kerr, H. Cairns, Max Goldie, F. X. Kerr, T. Crow, J. Sheeran, C. J. Broughton, Ian Lucas, T. Cavanagh, J. H. Mannix, V. J. Callanan (Flinders to Balnarring), J. A. Mannix, L. Mannix, S. M. Darley, D. A. Cairns, Max Mannix (Flinders to Dromana), A. J. Murray (Moorooduc to Balnarring), B. Sawyer (Moorooduc to Balnarring)

## BERT AUST LEADS DROMANA IN 1935

From what can be gathered from the newspaper reports, Bert Aust ( shown below) was the captain of Dromana that season. Bert, who was born at Maldon in 1903, arrived at Dromana in 1918. He played 238 games for DFC; and was a member of the 1931 and 1940 premiership teams.

Bert was dynamo at Pier Street; and he is credited with being one of club's lynch pins in maintaining the club in the 1930's. A comprehensive article regarding Bert's career at Dromana FC has been previously published on this website.



## THE HOME AND AWAY SERIES

In summary, Dromana was competitive throughout the season and not without a chance to claim its second flag in 1935. In the opening round of the season, Dromana defeated Pearcedale by 8 points; and in an exciting finish 'hung on' to defeat Rosebud by one point.

In another tough affair, Sorrento provided stiff resistance but Dromana scraped home by 9 points. After six rounds, Dromana sat in third position on the 'B' Grade Ladder with five wins while Red Hill and Tyabb were occupying the top two positions.



<b>B Grade</b>			
	<b>P.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>L.</b>
<b>Dromana</b> . . . . .	16	13	3
<b>Red Hill</b> . . . . .	15	12	1
<b>Somerville</b> . . . . .	16	12	4
<b>Tyabb</b> . . . . .	16	11	4
<b>Rosebud</b> . . . . .	16	6	10
<b>Sorrento</b> . . . . .	16	6	10
<b>Balnarring</b> . . . . .	17	5	11
<b>Pearcedale</b> . . . . .	16	5	11
<b>Frankston</b> . . . . .	17	4	15

An eight goal triumph over Frankston indicated that Dromana was certainly in contention to go deep into the final series. In August, Dromana cemented a place in the finals after receiving four points when Hastings was forced to abandon the game in the first term. (The earlier qualms about Hastings being unable to field two teams had proven quite accurate). From that point on, the Hastings team struggled and things were 'awkward' as another match, against Somerville, came to an abrupt halt.

With only a few rounds remaining in the season, the Hastings officials finally made the decision to 'pull the plug' on the club's 'B' Grade team for 1935. At the end of Round 16, the ladder showed that Dromana was on top; and Hastings had been withdrawn from the competition.

Rosebud with just six wins, sat in fifth position; and the Final Four for 1935 was well and truly settled. Unfortunately, Dromana it lost momentum and stumbled in the 'home straight' with a disappointing loss to Red hill by 13 points. DFC finished the season 14 wins but that loss had dented the team's confidence.

**The finalists in B grade that season were:**

Red Hill 15 (wins/60 points), Dromana (14 wins/56 points), Tyabb (12 wins -one tie/ 50 points) and Somerville sat on the fourth rung of the ladder with 48 points from its twelve victories in the 'Home and Away' series.

**B GRADE FINAL FOUR**

The four semi-finalists in B Grade are Red Hill, Dromana, Tyabb and Somerville. Points scored by these clubs were:—

Red Hill 60, Dromana 56, Tyabb 50, Somerville 48.

## THE 1935 FINAL SERIES

**NOTE:** In the First Semi- Final, which was played at Mornington, Somerville 12.16 (88) defeated Tyabb 10.9 (69). That result meant that Tyabb 'dropped out of the race'; and Somerville progressed to the Preliminary Final (to play the loser of the Second Semi-Final between Red Hill and Dromana).

### THE SECOND SEMI-FINAL (AS PUBLISHED IN THE 'FRANKSTON AND SOMERVILLE STANDARD')

The following match review of the Second Semi-Final was published in the 'Frankston and Somerville Standard'. As mentioned previously, the 'Standard' provided a comprehensive coverage of football on the Peninsula; and the editor's coordination with various club scribes was noteworthy. The writer of the match review was probably a 'football lover' with the nom-de-plume 'Flick Pass.'



#### **RED HILL'S DECISIVE VICTORY IN B GRADE SEMI-FINAL**

#### **DROMANA MAKES DISAPPOINTING STAND FAILS IN ATTACK AND DEFENCE**

*Dromana made a disappointing stand against Red Hill in the Second Semi-Final of the 'B' Grade competition at Frankston on Saturday. Red Hill was superior in practically every department. After the heavy rain of Friday many of those who attended the match expected to see the field a quagmire, but the oval was in almost perfect condition by the time the match commenced.*

*Gate receipts were £28 compared with £9/8/ at the Second Semi-Final of the 'B' Grade competition last year. Owing to the one-sidedness of the play, the match was lacking in thrills and, except for some nice dashes along the wings, Dromana made a poor showing.*

*Red Hill led at the first change by 8-3 to 3 points, and at the interval had forged still farther ahead, leading by 8-6 to 35. . In the third term Dromana's position became hopeless, Red Hill scoring 4-2, to which Dromana's reply was 1-3.*

*Red Hill had a lead of 8 goals at the final change. The only spirited stand by Dromana was made in the last quarter, but even then Red*

Hill had a little the better of the play. Dromana scored 3-3, and Red Hill retaliated with 4-4.

### **THE TEAMS**

**Red Hill**-F. Volk (capt.), H. Glover, P. Berryman, H. Millington, E. Driscoll, J. Holmes, P. Branchi, G. Blomfield, G. Fox, W. Gourlay, J. Glover, A. Glendinning, P. Cleive, E., Pritchard, R. Edwards, J. Graham, A. Murray, P. Kelly, L. Wiseman. .

**Dromana** - B. Aust (capt.), R. Griffith, A. Cairns, D. Littlejohn, -I. McLear, A. Griffith, S.' McLear, J. Cдиниisl, 'W. Patterson, H. Arnol, L. larley, W. Guy, J. Pattersoi?, 'M. Mannix, L. Mannix, :J. 'Skillen,' J. Mannix, S. Darley, W. Evans (19th man).

**Field umpire:** Boyce.

### **THE PLAY**

Red Hill opened smartly with a point. Graham made a good relief when Dromana attacked, but Guy took charge and returned smartly to L. Darley, who opened Dromana's account with a single. J. Mannix chose the lesser of two evils when Red Hill made a vigorous attack and booted the ball through to score a point for the opposition.

Dromana repulsed several attacks, but counter drives were weak. H: McLear and Guy were prominent in a forward movement by Dromana from which W. Patterson scored a single. Play became crowded and uninteresting. The fast ground seemed to be causing both teams some trouble, players repeatedly being outwitted by the bounce of the ball.

Red Hill had the better of the play, but the forwards were kicking wide. Arnol repulsed a drive by Red Hill, and frees to Littlejohn and Aust took the ball forward for a single.

Wiseman and Branchi played brightly in a rally by Red Hill. Glover secured and Millington, from a free, sent to Volk, who scored the first sixer. Kelly received a nasty knock when Red Hill again-attacked; and, from a free, booted another goal. Graham who was an outstanding player for Red :Hill, was harassing Dromana by breaking most of the attacks at the half-forward line.

In another vigorous drive by Red Hill Branchi sent forward to Cleine, who raised both flags. A beautiful mark by Berryman checked a drive by Dromana, and Glover, Volk and Kelly transferred the play to the other end to score a single. Kelly added another point before the first change.



### **Quarter time scores: Red Hill 3-3, Dromana 0-3.**

*Aust, J. Patterson. and Cornish were prominent for Dromana when the second quarter opened, and S. McLear snapped a point. Cornish and Aust became associated in another attack, and a free to S. McLear brought up both flags. J. Patterson, Littlejohn and W. Patterson figured in another drive that added a point.*

*Dromana had been playing with more vigour, but it was but a flash in the pan. Red Hill rallied, and H. Glover sent to Volk, who, after some cool play, scored full points with a shot from a difficult angle.*

*Volk again: secured and passed to Kelly, who forwarded to Driscoll almost between the posts, and an easy goal was added. The game was marred by an excessive amount of shot-passing by players of both teams.*

*H. McLear and Cornish were playing sound football for Dromana. Red Hill was particularly strong in defence. Volk played brightly and sent to Gourlay who notched a sixer. Aust and Glendinning were conspicuous in a drive by Dromana.*

*After a scramble in front of goal Guy secured and, after some clever play, booted a goal. Red Hill soon got going again. Millington and Branchi rushed the ball forward, and Kelly snapped a single. Then Driscoll, from a free, sent to Branchi, who scored a sixer.*

*After a period of dispirited play, Red Hill again worked the ball forward. A shot by Branchi struck the goalpost. Short passing lost Dromana a golden opportunity to score a goal, and Red Hill carried the ball to the other end to score a point. A dashing attack by Aust and J.Patterson failed; but W. Patterson ,returned, and a free to S. McLear brought a point. Red Hill promptly replied with a like score when Glendinning, Murray and Branchi co-operated in one of the most attractive pieces of play of the match.*

### **Half time scores: Red' Hill 8-6, Dromana 3-5.**

*As in the second quarter, Dromana began well. After some fumbling play Dromana raised a flag. Then R. Griffith sent forward to W. Patterson, who found an unguarded goal and scored full points. Red Hill soon rallied, and commanded the play for the greater part of the quarter. Kelly and Volk each notched a sixer. A behind and two goals were added before Dromana again broke through for a single.*

### **Three quarter time scores: Red Hill 12-8; Dromana 4-8.**

*Dromana played with a little more vigor in the last quarter, but had no prospect of overhauling Red Hill. Guy, H. McLearn and L. Darley all played well for Dromana. Graham, H. Glover, Blomfield and: Berryman were the most conspicuous for Red Hill.*

**Final Scores: Red; Hill: 16-12, Dromana 7-11.**

**Best players Red Hill:** Graham Berryman, Blomfield Glover, Volk, Glendenning and Murray

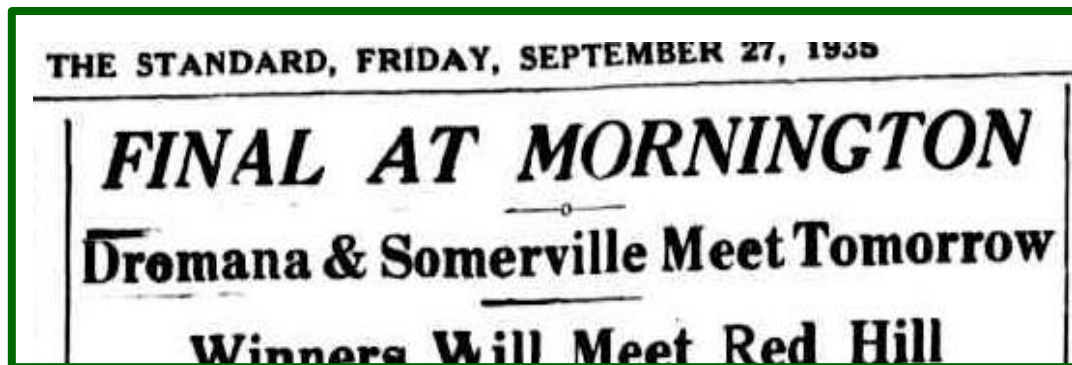
**Best players for Dromana:** S and H. McLearn Cornish, Aust, R. Griffith, Guy; J. Patterson and L. Darley.

**Goal-kickers for Red Hill:** Volk 4 Branchi 3, Kelly 2, Cleine 2, Driscoll, Gourlay, Murray, Millington, Graham

**Goal-kickers for Dromana:** S. McLearn 3, Guy 2, W. Patterson, Aust.

## THE 1932 PRELIMINARY FINAL.

As a consequence of that resounding defeat, at the hands of Red Hill, Dromana then had to face the next trial against Somerville, in the Preliminary Final, which was played at Mornington on September 28<sup>th</sup> 1935.



The score line was: Somerville 17.17 (119) defeated Dromana 13.16 (94). Dromana's goal-kickers were: S. Mc Lear (4), J. Cornish (3), W. Patterson (3), J. Mannix (1), J. Patterson (1) and J. Skillen (1).

According to 'The Argus' newspaper, Dromana's best players were: B. Aust, R. Griffith S. McLearn, J. Cornish, W. Evans and J. Skillen.

## FOOTNOTES ON THE 1935 SEASON

1. With that defeat, Dromana's season came to an unexpected and deflating end. Although the club had shown glimpses of combined talent throughout 1935, the fact that the team dropped from the finals race in 'straight sets' must have been exasperating for the players and supporters. In such cases, there is little else to do, after the final siren, but to wonder about what could have been.
2. The following week Somerville overcame the favourites to win the premiership. It had been a Herculean effort by Somerville FC to

overcome the odds and rise from fourth position on the 'B' Grade Ladder to capture the flag. It was a meritorious achievement and a well-deserved victory. Winning finals matches is about being primed at the precise moment and Somerville's timing was perfect that year.



3. Red Hill would have been bitterly disappointed with the loss but there was some small recompense when Red Hill's champion Fred Volk won the Whitlock Medal for the Best and Fairest player in 'B' grade that season. Fred polled 30 votes; and other players to poll well were E. Wong ( Rosebud -21 votes ) and Bert Aust, of Dromana, finished third in the count with 16 votes.
4. The Best and Fairest player award at Dromana was shared by Wally Guy and young James Patterson. More research and verification is required but it is highly probable that James went on to play 23 VFL games with North Melbourne ( in two stints between 1942-47). It is very difficult to establish if James was related to Dromana's champion spearhead, Bill Patterson. However, considering Wally Guy's background at North Melbourne, there was a possible connection in James signing on with NMFC.
5. It known that James Patterson joined the Navy; and was stationed at the Navy Depot ( Cerberus) when he played his first game for North Melbourne against Footscray at Arden Street in Round:14 in 1943.
6. Bill Patterson won the goals kicking award at Dromana with 66 goals that season. Bill kicked 66 goals and carved his named into the club archives by winning the award on six occasions during the 1930's at DFC.
7. An emerging star in local football young Oscar Petersen broke a record in 1935 when he booted 124 goals for Tyabb. It was stunning performance; and one that had every one talking.  
Oscar was a rare young talent and it seemed that that he was destined for higher things in football but tragically died in a motor bike accident in 1938.  
When the news broke there was a vast outpouring of grief and Oscar's demise cast a black pall across the towns of the Southern Peninsula.

8. Jack MacMillan, who had starred for Hastings throughout 1935, was recruited to Footscray in 1936. Jack, who kicked nine goals in the 'A' Grade Semi-Final against Sorrento in 1935, made his debut, for Footscray against North Melbourne at Arden Street in Round 7, in 1936. On that day Jack booted seven goals in a stunning 'first up' performance. In his four games, Jack kicked 17 goals. He was 'on fire' up forward for Footscray, in the match against Richmond in July, until bad luck struck and he fractured his arm. It was a shame as Jack had proven his undoubted ability at the highest level despite his limited opportunities.
  
9. Jack's McMillan's life story is most interesting; and this was outlined on a website related to the Dunrobin Football Club...

*"...a member of the Footscray Seconds first premiership side in 1936. He came to the club ( Dunrobin ) from Hastings in that year and played four senior games before breaking his wrist.*

*A full forward, he held the goal kicking record at Hastings for 13 years before it was broken by John Coleman in 1947 with 136 goals... He was coach of the Victorian Schoolboys football team in 1955 and 1962 and was manager of the side in 1968"*



***The 'Dromana Connection' with John McMillan***

***John McMillan (right ) is seen above shaking hands with the legendary John Coleman. John, who was recruited from Hastings play for Essendon, kicked 12 goals for in his VFL debut. Younger readers may be unaware that John was the publican at the Dromana Hotel when he died on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 1973. The township and people far and wide were shocked and deeply saddened when the news broke.***

## REFERENCE & RESEARCH INFORMATION

Sources: MPNFL archives –NLA - Personal files.

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