

# A TRIBUTE TO GORDON PROUDFOOT DFNC COACH 1960-61

Reference: 2022/18



**Gordon Leslie Proudfoot (1930 -2022)**

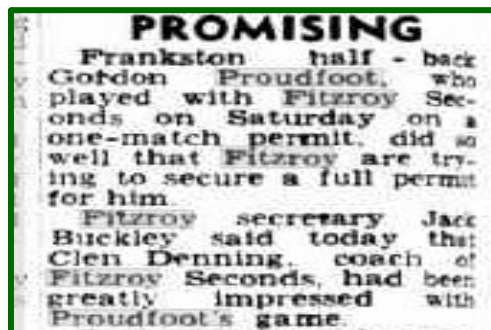
In early June, the club received correspondence from Sandra Forbes informing members that her uncle, Gordon Proudfoot, had sadly passed away on May 27<sup>th</sup> at the age of 91.

As long-time DFNC supporters will know, Gordon was a well-regarded coach of DFNC in 1960-61; and warrants enduring credit for his leadership of the club and ability to develop local footballers of that era.

Gordon (born in 1930) rose to prominence in 1950 with some blistering performances for Frankston FC which led to him being awarded the club's Best & Fairest award. Gordon hit the headlines in 'The Age' in April 1951 when Camberwell (VFA) made a concerted attempt to gain his services...

*"Young Frankston footballer Gordon Proudfoot has pleased Camberwell officials ....he is dashing, robust and kicks with both feet."*

In July 1953, Gordon was granted a VFL permit to play with Fitzroy Reserves against North Melbourne; and he created an impact with his imposing style of football that day...



*"Gordon Proudfoot, who played with Fitzroy Seconds on Saturday on a one-match permit, did so well that Fitzroy are trying to secure a full permit for him. Fitzroy secretary Jack Buckley said today that Clen Denning, coach of Fitzroy Seconds, had been, greatly impressed with Proudfoot's game..." Source: Sporting Globe May 16<sup>th</sup> 1953.*

is 5ft. 10in. tall.  
 Gordon Proudfoot and Bob Arnfield were others to show promise.  
 Proudfoot is a half-back flanker from Frankston, and Arnfield a solidly built follower from Watehem.  
 Regular players showed they are settling down well.  
 All were presents except Joe Hickey, who is farming.

Source: 'The Argus' March 10<sup>th</sup> 1954 page: 24

**Fitzroy v. Carlton**  
**FITZROY.** — B.: Morgan, Bench, Stephen, H.B.: Roberts, Goodyer, Barrett, C.: Wright, Furness, Williams, H.F.: Broderick, Ongarello, Coates, F.: Streader, MacGregor, Ruthven, Poll.: Gale, Johnstone, Rov.: Gervasoni, Res.: Harding, Proudfoot, Emer.: Davies, Ross, In: Stephart, Coates, Out.: Knight (injured), Davies.  
**CARLTON.** — B.: Comben, Perry, Moran, H.B.: Brown, McKalge, Stafford, C.: L. Kerr, Robertson, Hunt, H.F.: Chick, Wenn, James, F.: Howell, N. O'Brien, Spencer, Poll.: Hands, Milroy, Rov.: Mills, Res.: Burke, Walsh, Emer.: Gilchrist, Thomas, Rhodes, Zennert, Munro, In: L. Kerr, McKalge, Robertson, Howell, Out.: Boyle (injured), K. O'Brien (ill), Walsh, Gilchrist.

Gordon Proudfoot was named as 20<sup>th</sup> man for the clash against Carlton in Round: 6 in 1954. Source: 'The Age' May 21<sup>st</sup> 1954 Page: 17



The famous grandstand at the Brunswick Street Oval . Gordon Proudfoot made his VFL debut for Fitzroy, against Carlton, in 1954.

Gordon made his Senior XVIII debut for Fitzroy against Carlton in Round: 6 in 1954 at the Brunswick Street Oval in front of a sizeable crowd of 20,000 fans. He must have felt honoured to be part of a team which boasted such VFL stars as: Bill Stephen, Tony Ongarello, Norm Johnston, Eddie Goodger, Alan Gale, George Coates, Don Furness and Alan Ruthven who was the playing-coach that season.

Alan Ruthven, who was known as 'The Baron', played 222 games Senior with Fitzroy and won the Brownlow Medal in 1950.



High-flying spearhead Tony Ongarello was playing his 32<sup>nd</sup> game with the Fitzroy team on the day that Gordon Proudfoot made his VFL debut. Tony played 131 games and booted 247 goals for Fitzroy FC. Tony is the Grandfather of former Dromana champion defender Christian Ongarello who was member of the 2013 DFNC premiership team.



Alan Ruthven (shown above) was born and raised in Fitzroy and played with the Victoria Brewery before being cleared to the Gorillas (as Fitzroy was then known). He won five Best and Fairest awards for Fitzroy and represented Victoria on 17 occasions.

Gordon would have gleaned many positive ideas regarding the 'art of coaching' from Alan had coached Fitzroy in 57 games (1952-54).

Unfortunately, Gordon's VFL career suffered a major setback when he sustained severe concussion and a fractured cheekbone during the third quarter of the clash against Hawthorn at the Glenferrie Oval in Round: 11. 'The Herald' also reported that Gordon had suffered a broken nose that day.

It was a serious facial injury but Gordon played again with the Gorillas (as Fitzroy was then known) in 1955. His last Senior VFL match was against Carlton in Round: 3. The Blues won the match by 57 points that day.



**Caption: Fitzroy's captain-coach, Alan Ruthven (centre) gives some of his expert knowledge to new recruits, from left, Gordon Proudfoot, Colin Davey and Jim Chapman. Source: 'The Age' March 18<sup>th</sup> 1954 Page: 11.**

Little did Gordon know that the sixteen year old lad, who won a place in the line-up against Geelong in Round: 4, was none other than Kevin Murray. Kevin would, in time, become an iconic figure in Australian sport.



**Kevin Murray ' a boy wonder ' was selected to play for Fitzroy in Round : 4 in 1955. Kevin was to be later named a Legend of the AFL in 2010. Kevin is also a recipient of an MBE.**

Gordon was 24 years of age when he departed Brunswick Street and signed with Camberwell (VFA) in 1956. Camberwell was coached by former Fitzroy star Ken Ross at that time. (Ken won the J.J. Liston Trophy in 1957. Gordon also played with Camberwell that season).



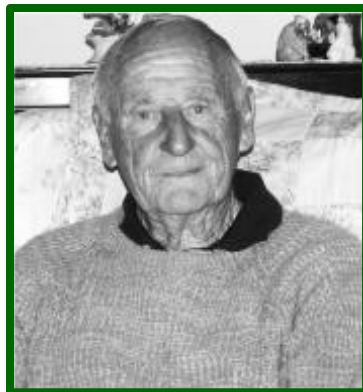
**Ken Ross was the coach of Camberwell when Gordon Proudfoot crossed from the Gorillas (as Fitzroy was once known) to the VFA in 1956. Gordon had met Ken at Fitzroy in 1954. Ken , a brilliant ruck rover, played 129 VFL games. He was a celebrity and drawcard of the VFA. In 1957, Ken won the Liston Trophy; and in 1959 he returned to Fitzroy.**

In 1960, John Seymour (ex-South Melbourne/Oakleigh) who had led Dromana in 1958 and 1959 retired; and the club wasted no time in appointing Gordon as the coach of Dromana for the impending season.

Listed players' during Gordon's two-year stint at Pier Street included : Ken Edwards, the Brindley brothers, Alan Holmes ( see below) Bob Couacoud , the Matthews brothers, Daryl Grogan, Colin McLearn, Merv Kennedy, Bob Moorehead and **\*\*Brian Griffith. (\*\*Note: Brian took over the reins when Gordon stepped aside at the end of the 1961 season...see below).**



**Alan Holmes played with DFNC from 1953 until 1960. He played 67 Senior XVIII games and was selected in the DFNC 'Team of the Decade' (1956-65). Following his time at Pier Street, Alan was cleared to Red Hill where he served the club with distinction. Since 1997, the clash between Dromana and Red Hill has been played for the 'Bluey' Holmes Shield**



**DFNC champion Brian Griffith -who played under Gordon Proudfoot's leadership in 1960-61 and coached the club when Gordon stepped back in 1962. Brian is regarded as a 'living legend' at Pier Street having played his first senior game when just 13 years of age. Brian played over 250 Senior and Reserve Grade games; and was Runner-Up in the club's Best & Fairest award in 1960. He was named in the Team of the Decade (1946-1955), as skipper of the Team of the Decade (1956-1965) and in the Team of the Era (1946-2015).**

Gordon Proudfoot played 28 Senior XVIII games for Dromana and was a highly respected and popular coach. He enjoyed his years at Dromana and valued the camaraderie of the players and members at Pier Street.



In 1996, Gordon penned the following words for DFNC ...

*"I had great pleasure in coaching the team for two years which gave me pride and a great feeling which will always stay with me. My special thanks to Eric Oakes (President) Steve Walker (Secretary), the Committee and the players who gave all when wearing the green and gold jumper. The wonderful memories my late wife, Joannie, and I had with the friends we made while with the club will not be forgotten."*



**Eric Oakes was thanked for his enthusiastic support of Gordon Proudfoot at DFNC.**

Younger readers may not be aware that that William (aka Bill) Proudfoot 1868-1931, the former Collingwood champion, is Gordon's Great Uncle. Bill captained the Magpies in 1888-89 and 1901; and, in all, played 187 games for Collingwood (including being a key player of the victorious premierships teams of 1902 and 1903). Bill is a member of the CFC Hall of Fame; and in 2006 he was inducted into the Victoria Police Sporting Hall of Fame.



**Gordon's Great Uncle-The Champion of Collingwood Bill Proudfoot .  
Photograph source: 'Collingwood Forever' website.**

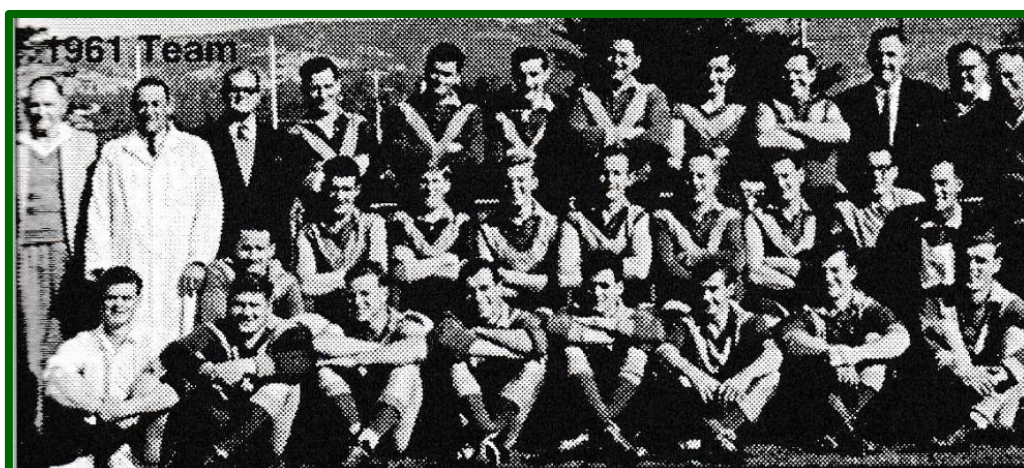
Bill was a dedicated and fearless policeman and in 1918 was awarded the Royale Humane Society Medal for his quick thinking and swift action...

*"He (William Henry Proudfoot) was a well-known local policeman, who later in life would receive a bravery medal for saving several people by stopping a pair of bolting horses in Swanston Street. And he was always ready to put himself in the line of fire..." Source: 'Collingwood Forever.'*

A 'long-lost' extract regarding Bill Proudfoot (below) was found in 'The Herald' in June 1926 and shows Bill in uniform. The article centres on Bill's retirement from the position of Superintendent at the Ballarat Police Station.



Gordon is also related to Alec (Alexander Grenville Stewart) Proudfoot (ex-Cooper's Creek near Erica in Gippsland) who played with Melbourne, St Kilda, Brunswick and Coburg in the period 1926-34.



**Back:** R.Beavis, W.Guy, E.Buchanan, D.Murphy, C.Buchanan, B.Taylor, C.McLear, I.Matthews, D.Grogan, E.Oakes, S.Walker, G.Flowers.

**Mdl:** T.Reilly, M.Kennedy, J.Cornish, R.Grogan, G.Proudfoot, R.Brindley, B.Griffith, J.Ross, R.Bailey

**Front:** I.Mitchiner, B.Brindley, A.Matthews, J.Andrews

## 1961- GORDON PROUDFOOT AND HIS DROMANA TEAM.

Gordon can be seen in the centre of the middle row. This is a significant photograph in club history as ten (10) DFNC Life Members can be seen in the group : Reg Bevis, Wally Guy, Ed Buchannan, Brian Taylor, Jack Cornish, Daryl Grogan, Eric Oakes, Colin McLearn, Brian Griffith and John Ross.

In conclusion, the Proudfoot family has made a substantial contribution to Australian Rules football; and it is indeed an honour that the Gordon's name is part of DFNC history.

**Note:** A Memorial Service for Gordon was held at Tobin Brothers Spirit of Life Chapel, Frankston, on Tuesday 7th June.

Thank you to Sandra Forbes for her kind assistance with the tribute to Gordon.

A tribute to Gordon Proudfoot was originally published in the DFNC Newsletter 'Tiger Talk' (Issue 3/2022). It was written for and on behalf of DFNC Board of Management and members by Roger Spaul in July 2022.

### REFERENCE & RESEARCH INFORMATION

Sources: NLA-metropolitan newspapers -VFA archives AFL statistics DFNC publications – personal records- Sandra Forbes- Collingwood FC records- Demonwiki website.

Article reference: 'Tribute to Gordon Proudfoot' (Reference: 2022/ 18)

Researched and written for DFNC by: Roger Spaul –June 2022

DFNC website administrator: Graham Stelling. DFNC Registrar and Board Member

Email contacts: [historian@dromanatigers.com.au](mailto:historian@dromanatigers.com.au) or [admin@dromanatigers.com.au](mailto:admin@dromanatigers.com.au)