

# STICKS and BLUE — stuck like glue!

## Connecting Cobden chats with a couple of Cobden’s characters — the Giblett brothers.

**Parents:** Hughie Stephen (aka Peter) and Marjorie Giblett

**Born:** Blue (Peter) Cobden, 18/5/48, Sticks (Robert) Warrnambool, 20/9/49

**Sibling:** Older sister, Joy

### Family home:

The family moved to Curdies River from Eastern Creek near Port Campbell so their father could work at the lime works. Curdies was a little metropolis with a store, hall/church complete with a pastor and a railway station. It was a great place to grow up - swimming, fishing and exploring . . .

### Early memories:

**Blue:** A kangaroo jumping out from under our house at Curdies River.

**Sticks:** Annoying the Cobden scouts who camped on the river beside the trestle rail bridge. We local lads pelted their camp with stones and the pack led by ‘the big hombre’ took after us. We had good neighbours, in particular very kind Tim and Mavis Couch, and the Savages who had a telly. Interestingly, Ross and Evan Savage and Blue now live within 100 metres of me while Neville Couch also lives in town.

### As young boys:

**Blue:** Shy awkward tall and not the norm.

**Sticks:** Quiet. Joy and Blue tell me I was spoilt rotten by mum. I loved reading and getting immersed in the exploits of Biggles.

### Thoughts on school:

**Blue:** Liked secondary school but was picked on in primary school because I was big and awkward. Learned to turn it around with words - not fists - although I had to fight one little tike who just had to pick on the biggest. I sat on him - that fixed him!

**Sticks:** Looked forward to sports day. Every report said; “Robert has done quite well, however . . .” I think they were trying to say I needed to apply myself a bit more.



*Sticks’ big brother, Blue, tends his ferns.*

### Left school to do what:

**Blue:** Completed year 11 and took up an offer to join the State Bank.

**Sticks:** After matriculation, I had no idea what I wanted to do. The school’s careers booklets suggested journalism but my score wasn’t good enough. I was signed up by South Melbourne Football Club so I knew I was headed for the big smoke. I ended up at Melbourne City Council as a cadet valuer earning \$28 a week.

### Growing up:

**Blue:** Shy, loved sport of all kinds.

**Sticks:** Sports-mad, shy, lacking confidence. Nine stone of legs and arms in a 6’8” body.

### Working careers:

**Blue:** State Bank for 30 years, then eight years at Elphingstone post office/newsagency. With a mate, I also ran Castlemaine Landfill - a great job. Retired at 58.

**Sticks:** Five years each with Melbourne and Warrnambool city councils and 33 years at Heytesbury and Corangamite shires. In 1978, Heytesbury purchased a new-fangled computer system which was going to solve all problems. I found it fascinating. I remember staring at a green screen blinking ‘\*\*\* fatal error \*\*\*’ at 4am one morning in a cold sweat. I thought my first steps into computer programming had blown the system up. But I had found my true calling - IT management developing and supporting local government information systems.

### Funny work experiences:

**Blue:** As a junior, I was sent for striped paint and scales to balance the cash.

**Sticks:** Working on the third floor of Melbourne Town Hall, we had access to the clock tower overlooking what is now Federation Square. We were up there one day when gun-wielding ASIO guys burst in. Apparently some visiting dignitary was due in the square and the security detail had spotted us in the clock tower.

A few Heytesbury Shire staff went fishing at Peterborough and, after a few beers, thought the idea of using road-kill (a whole rabbit) as bait was hilarious. The serious fishermen nearby were not impressed. Colleague Garth McLennan lost his scientific calculator that same night after being attacked by a huge tarantula (aka Sticks Giblett) in the dunes. .

### Sporting careers:

**Blue:** Under 17 football with Timboon - two premierships. Senior football with Timboon and Heytesbury and senior cricket with Timboon, Jancourt East and Cobden.

**Sticks:** All my junior football and cricket at Timboon. Played senior footy at 17 under Robbie Howarth in 1967. Timboon won the flag that year and remained a force for some time. At Port Campbell, South Melbourne footballer John Rantall watched me play - so, in 1969, this very self-conscious, very tall, very skinny kid headed off to spend two years at South playing under 19s and reserves. I never cracked the big time but I played on the MCG. After two years at Preston, an ankle injury forced me out of the game for a while. During that time I travelled back to Timboon at weekends to play golf. Some mates were playing footy with Cobden so I played a practice match to test my ankle.

I played with Cobden in 1972-73 before starting at Warrnambool in 1974. We lost to Mick Mulligan’s Mortlake in 1975 - young Leon Harris was best-on-ground. Coached by Daryl Salmon, Warrnambool won flags in 1976, 1977 and 1978, all against Terang. In 1979 I returned to the Alistair Lord-coached Cobden, a strong team that finished on top but lost to Terang after beating them in the semi-final. I coached Cobden in 1980 to the preliminary final but quickly learnt that coaching was not my caper, relinquishing the role after one year. I played on in 1981 but struggled with injuries and gave it away after 99 games with Warrnambool and 99 with Cobden. I returned to golf.

### Sporting highlights:

**Blue:** Association bowling average in 1966 including two hat tricks and a premiership with Timboon.

**Sticks:** Five consecutive Hampden League grand final appearances for three flags, winning a flag with Timboon as a kid and taking a dollar off Norm Denny every time we played golf!

### Sporting lowlights:

**Sticks:** Losing the 1979 Hampden grand final and the time Norm Denny fluked a win over me at golf.

### Funny sporting stories:

**Sticks:** Off to pennant golf at Terang, five of us crammed in the back of Geoff I work van on bean bags. About half-way we complained about headaches and feeling queasy. After bashing on

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COMMUNITY



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the cabin wall to get Geoff to stop, we dug down through the layers of accumulated stuff to find a large hole directly above a very leaky exhaust pipe.

### Best local sportspeople:

**Blue:** I faced Australian fast bowler Alan Connolly in the nets at Colac. Too quick for me!

**Sticks:** Peter Sheen (Warrnambool) and Peter Finch (Cobden) were the best I played with. Des Noonan (Koroit) wasn’t the best ruckman but he could rake you in a ruck contest like few others. Lee Murnane (Colac) was an amazing pack mark. It wasn’t a good thing to be in a pack when he hit it.



*Blue’s little brother, Sticks, takes it easy.*

### Other interests and hobbies:

**Blue:** Bowls, Probus, politics and astronomy.

**Sticks:** Building garden features from my wife’s ideas and trying to keep my hedge as neat as neighbour Russell Lacy’s.

### Courtship and marriage:

**Blue:** Married Betty Casey in 1975.

**Sticks:** Married Marilyn Thwaites in 1974 at Warrnambool. Doug Worrall arranged for me to go to a Timboon cabaret with this teacher. After getting used to her saying, “Gee, you’re tall” every five seconds, things worked out well.

### Family:

**Blue:** Peter (Maryborough), Susan (Ballarat) both with two children and John (Cobden) with one child.

**Sticks:** James (aka Murdoch) 35, married to Amy with daughter, Stella. Teaching in Warrnambool. David, 33, married to Ebony (Smurthwaite) with Lachlan, and Georgia. Living in Leopold and working as a builder. Megan, 31, married to Brad Harle with Archie and Flynn in Warrnambool.

### Community involvements:

**Blue:** Life member of Apex. Daylesford and Castlemaine Rotary member, and Probus.

**Sticks:** Cobden Apexian for five years and Cobden Golf Club finance director for seven years.

### Particular challenges:

**Blue:** While I am enjoying good health, my wife has lived with diabetes for 55 years.

**Sticks:** An over-active immune system caused my pancreas to pack up at 33. I have been a type 1 diabetic for half my life. I also have rheumatoid arthritis and my eyesight could be better.

### Holidays:

**Blue:** Have cruised for 200 days around the world and travelled Australia, by caravan. We have been around Australia six times - more than 400,000km. Favourite place is Kimberley North West Horizontal Falls - sheer wilderness.

**Sticks:** Travel, preferably where there are no people. Love the natural beauty of Australia, especially Tasmania. Have been to most parts of Australia with our trusty camper trailer. One of my favourite drives is the Upper Buruppa and old Princetown Rd starting at Kennedy’s Creek.

I intend to visit Curdies River at some stage . . . with my brother . . . just to reminisce.

### Admired people:

**Blue:** Gough Whitlam and Nelson Mandela .

### Particularly proud of:

**Blue:** Rising from poverty to live a fruitful life as a self-made man. Raising three kids who all have jobs and are decent citizens.

### AFL footy teams:

**Blue:** The mighty Magpies - humble beginnings, just like our family.

**Sticks:** Brisbane Lions. When the Brisbane Bears and West Coast entered the AFL, son James decided he would barrack for the Bears. I took him to training at Carrara and he was water boy for the night. At Geelong one day, it appeared the Bears’ game plan was to kick the ball out of bounds to minimise the damage so, when the tide turned, it was magic, particularly the humiliation of Collingwood by the Lions in 2002. I also support Sydney and Hawthorn.

### Favourite TV shows/books:

**Blue:** Q & A, Four Corners, Australian Story, Gardening Australia. Commercial television is crap.

**Sticks:** Mad as Hell, AFL 360 and Justified. My favourite book is The Broken Shore by Peter Temple. Also the works of award-winning romantic poet, Norm Denny, deserve a mention.

### Brotherly love:

**Blue:** Both sides of our family enjoy a great relationship. Very lucky but we work at it. Robert and I have always been close. Born 18 months apart and growing up in the Curdies, we only had each other. Very competitive - while Robert was always better than me, I am not prone to give in so great contests were assured. We share all our tools, living only two doors from each other. He thinks he is always right and so do I (after all, we are Giblett). Having nothing as kids helps to build relationships as you learn to compromise and get on with it.

**Sticks:** We get on fine. He visits my garage to borrow my tools, and I visit his when I find them missing. He thinks he can sing and I know I can. He is a rabid Collingwood supporter, and I mean rabid!. When we were young I could throw stones better and run faster. He was older and bigger and won out on the odd occasion he cornered me. When he bowled a cricket ball he looked at the sky at delivery rather than where he wanted to pitch it. Still, he got two hat tricks and I got none. He is a boisterous, extroverted redhead while I have dark skin and hair and am a dedicated introvert.

Years ago, we went to see Cilla Black who asked the audience where they were from. Blue’s on his feet, bellowing, “Peter from Curdies River.” “Turdies River?” Cilla responds, “What sort of place is called Turdies River?” and on it went. Meanwhile, I am looking for a place to hide.

### True Blue:

**Sticks:** Blue moved around in his role as a State Bank manager. He had always been heavily involved in Apex but constant shifts made it hard to accumulate years of service at any particular club. While he was posted at Coleraine, the Timboon club nominated him for a life membership. The night was held at the Coleraine Golf Club. I was most impressed when some of the Timboon boys, one of whom was now Cobden resident Richard McVilly, produced guitars and started singing what I thought was an original tribute song to my big brother. I was thinking how good is this, these boys have done an amazing job with the lyrics and tune as they belted out ‘True Blue’. I must have been the only person there who didn’t know it was John Williamson’s latest hit!

### COBDEN CALENDAR

**Friday 12th December:** From 6.30pm, Cobrico Hall Committee’s Family Christmas Party at Cobrico hall. All welcome. Phone: 5595 1231.

**Friday 19th December:** 5pm-8pm, Christmas-on-Curdie. Big draw, Santa, BBQ, music, stalls, rides, competitions, crazy hair, tattoos . . .

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