

In the time-honoured Fonterra parade at Cobden's Spring Festival, we celebrated local sporting champions whose exploits could be described as 'legendary'. The ten legends have all represented Victoria or Australia, and they have achieved senior status. Here, we publish summaries of their impressive report cards . . .

## FRANK WHITESIDE

*(Legendairy axeman)*

In 1966, Frank toured Great Britain and Zimbabwe to compete at the big agricultural shows. In 1974, he competed in Johannesburg (South Africa) and, in 1976, he chopped in Spain on two occasions. Started woodchopping at in 1959-60 at age 22 (he's 78 now) when Arthur Mathieson identified his talent. Competed at all State Royal shows except Perth. A highlight of his British tour in 1966 was meeting the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and Princess Margaret. A life member of the Western Victorian Axemen's Association, Frank says the best two axemen he saw were Jack O'Toole and Jim Alexander.



Frank Whiteside

## JAN OVENS

*(Legendairy indoor bowler)*

First played for Victoria in 1975 – at age 24. Went on to represent Victoria for 20 years, and played for Australia in 2009 against New Zealand, winning the gold medal in ladies' triples. Has won four national titles and 13 state titles including seven pairs' titles with Pam Wines. Jan started her indoor bowls career at Cobrico when she was 13. She has won 19 club singles championships and nine Heytesbury ladies' singles – her first being at age 17. Forty years indoor bowling with the Cobrico club and some wonderful successes at state and national level.

## GRAHAM HUNTER

*(Legendairy cricketer)*

Super batsman with Cobrico (16 years) and Cobden (12 years). Had the great honour of captaining a Victorian Country XI against England at the Reid Oval, Warrnambool, in 1974 – one of two Cobden players in that team, a remarkable feat. Graham was a flamboyant left-hander who batted no 3 in the match against the Englishmen. He also toured New Zealand twice with country teams, captaining the side once, and he captained a team against a Rasmans international XI. In 1957 at Cobrico, he made 1200 runs, the same year he played in a Town v Country colts match at Fitzroy. During his career, he scored two double centuries and played in 17 country weeks – at Ballarat, Bendigo and Melbourne.

## COLIN GAUT

*(Legendairy cricketer)*

The second Cobden player in the Victorian Country team that played the Englishmen in 1974. Col opened the batting against Geoff Arnold, Mike Hendrick and Peter Lever before taking on the wiles of Fred Titmus and Derek Underwood. He top-scored with 50 runs. Also played against a Victorian XI at Warrion when he made 48. He played six games with Fitzroy 3rds before returning home – he preferred to visit Melbourne

## COBDEN CALENDAR

- Friday 28th October:** 8pm, Dance at Cobrico Hall. \$8 entry.
- Monday 7th November:** 7.30pm, Progressing Cobden public meeting at new Visitor Information Centre (former Cobden Roadhouse Motel restaurant). All welcome.
- Thursday 10th November:** 5pm-8pm, Late Night Shopping.
- Monday 14th November:** 7pm-8pm, Cobden Story Update – for everybody, Heytesbury Room.
- Monday 21st November:** 7.30pm, CopRice Cobden Spring Festival Review, President's Room.
- Saturday 26th November:** 9.30am onwards, Saint Mary's fete.
- Friday 2nd December:** From 6pm, Free Family Christmas Night at Cobrico Hall. Call David for info, 0405 438 406. All welcome.

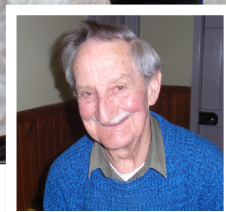
~ Connecting Cobden ~ A Progressing Cobden Twenty20 Vision Project.  
 Websites: [cobden.org.au](http://cobden.org.au), [cobdenbusinessnetwork.org.au](http://cobdenbusinessnetwork.org.au),  
[cobdenspringfestival.com.au](http://cobdenspringfestival.com.au). Facebook: Cobden Community.  
 Registered email: [community@cobden.org.au](mailto:community@cobden.org.au).

# OUR LIVING SPORTING LEGENDS



take a bow . . .

What a legendairy line-up: Jan Ovens (left), Clyde Sefton, Colin Gaut, John Rantall, Alistair Lord, Thorold Merrett, Ellen Darcy. Inset: Graham Hunter (apology).



for country weeks which he did successfully for 17 years. He also enjoyed scoring many runs for Hampden in Hudson Shield matches. Statistically, 253 matches, 9227 runs for Cobden, 18 centuries and fifty half-centuries with a top-score of 179 and a grand total of 12 ducks.

## ELLEN DARCY

*(Legendairy netballer)*

Played for Victoria from 1963 to 1966 and in 1968, captaining the team in 1966 and 1968. An Australian team member from 1963 until 1969, touring New Zealand in 1966. Ellen captained Australia in 1969, after being vice-captain in 1967 and 1968. She could have snuck in another tour of New Zealand as Australian captain in 1969 but decided to come to Cobden to marry 'Toby' Darcy. Little known is Ellen played in the first international indoor game at Festival Hall – Victoria versus Rotorua so she brags that she had a tough fight at Festival Hall! At the 2015 World Series in Sydney, she was presented with Diamond No 43 as the 43rd Diamond to play for Australia.

## THOROLD MERRETT

*(Legendairy footballer)*

Joined Collingwood in 1950 as a 16 year-old. Played 180 games as a winger/rover, a premiership player twice (1953 and 1958) and a Copeland Trophy best and fairest winner twice. A member of the Magpies' hall of fame and team of the century, he represented Victoria seven times. Initially, he barracked for Richmond but the famous Jack Dyer was not impressed by his small stature. A few years later though, commentator Dyer said of Thorold's incredible foot skills: ". . . he could stab-kick a footy right up a chook's arse from 50 yards". He retired at 26 in 1960 after breaking his leg for the second time. Also a junior State table tennis champion and a Melbourne country week cricketer who could have taken that career further.

## JOHN 'MOPSY' RANTALL

*(Legendairy footballer)*

336 games, mainly as a half-back flanker with South Melbourne (260), North Melbourne (70) and Fitzroy. A member of both the Kangaroo and Swan teams of the century, John won a premiership with North Melbourne in 1975. Represented Victoria five times, the first time in his first season of VFL footy. He debuted with the Swans in 1963 before moving over to North in 1973 (under the infamous ten year rule). Back to South in 1976 for four years before six games with Fitzroy which took him to the VFL games record. Installed in the Australian football hall of fame in 1996. Best and fairest at North in 1974. Won the Judd Cup with Cobden under 18s and played a full season with Cobden seniors before settling into South Melbourne's team.

## CLYDE SEFTON

*(Legendairy cyclist)*

Won a silver medal in the road race at the Munich Olympics in 1972. Won gold at the Commonwealth Games at Christchurch in 1974. Represented Australia at the 1976 Olympics in Montreal and he also won the Australian national road title in 1981. Finished second in the Sun Tour in 1978, a race he eventually won in 1981. Raced successfully as an amateur and a professional in Europe. In 1983, Clyde finished second in the national road race, took out three stage wins in the Sun Tour and had a hard fought win in the Melbourne to Warrnambool. Clyde's determination to succeed was obvious early in life - he won the Melbourne to Colac off scratch as a 16 year-old. Training consisted of cycling before work, often up Mt Leura at lunchtime and another 60 kms after work.

## ALISTAIR LORD

*(Legendairy footballer)*

Played 122 games for Geelong which included the 1963 premiership and the 1962 Brownlow Medal by a whopping nine votes. Played with twin brother Stewart who also began his football at Cobden. Represented Victoria eight times. In his Brownlow year, he won Geelong's best and fairest, the Carji Greeves Medal. Although he played in the true centre position, he kicked 79 goals in his career. In his Brownlow year, Alistair averaged 30 disposals a game nearly all of which were kicks – not give-and-go handballs. He was Cobden's under 18 best and fairest winner in 1957. After the 1958 season, had offers from 11 of the 12 VFL clubs. After coaching South Warrnambool to a premiership in 1969, he coached Cobden from 1975-79.

## DEBBIE RIX

*(Legendairy golfer)*

Victorian junior champion and state junior representative five times from age 16, Debbie represented Australia in an under 21 team that toured New Zealand in 1981, and she was selected in the senior Victorian team on eleven occasions. Debbie won the Victorian amateur championship twice – 1988, 1994 – and was runner-up in 1998. She won the South Australian amateur championship in 1984. She is about to represent Victoria seniors in the Australian championships. She has been club champion at Commonwealth, Geelong and, of course, Cobden golf clubs, and has played premiership-winning pennant golf for Commonwealth, Barwon Heads and, of course, Cobden. Debbie's current handicap is +1.



Debbie Rix

## NOT FORGETTING . . .

While it was wonderful to acknowledge the feats of our living sporting legends, we were also able to remember others who are no longer with us – champions like David Rhodes (20 May 1948 – 15 February 2013) who played 73 games in six seasons with Fitzroy in the Victorian Football League. He represented Victoria at the 1972 Perth Carnival.

Like axeman Frank Whiteside, the late Jim Alexander and Arthur Mathieson also toured foreign countries on tours, demonstrating and competing against other world-class woodchoppers. South western Victoria was blessed to have such talent in the ranks of axemen.

Although he did not actually represent Victoria, it was also suggested that legendairy footrunner Paddy Till deserved a mention in the rarified air around the aforementioned sportspeople. In 1922, the late Paddy won the Stawell Gift off 10.5 yards in 11.7 seconds, a magnificent effort in the early days of Australia's premier footrace.