



## LIFE MEMBER

### Thomas Johnston ("T.J.") Buchan

27 October 1874–29 May 1962



T.J. Buchan

T.J. Buchan was born in Richmond, Melbourne, but came to Geelong as a small child when his father, also named Thomas Johnston Buchan, was appointed by the Education Department to teach singing in government primary schools in Geelong. Mr Buchan (Snr) conducted State School Concerts to raise funds for Geelong Hospital from at least 1882 to 1895.

T.J. Buchan played 41 games for Geelong 1899–1902 and kicked 20 goals.<sup>1</sup> Col Hutchinson describes him as 'an adaptable small defender who was a useful goal-sneak when switched to the forward line.' He was a member of the GFC match committee in 1913 and was made a life member of GFC in 1915.

In 1891, T.J. was apprenticed to Geelong architect Angus Laird. In those days, he thought nothing of riding a bike to Colac for a works

inspection. When he married Florence McCormack in 1908, he was made a partner in the firm as a wedding present.

After the death of Angus Laird in 1936, T.J. was joined in the business by Angus' son Ewen Laird and his own son, John Buchan. The firm became 'Buchan, Laird and Buchan'. The firm designed or extended most of Geelong's woolstores and woollen mills, then went on to design or re-design other major buildings in Geelong including Geelong Fire Station, Geelong Hospital, Geelong Grammar Music School, Geelong Government Offices, Geelong Art Gallery, Eastern Beach pavilion and the restorations of Barwon Grange and Armytage House. The firm later designed many major buildings in Melbourne and TAFE buildings in country Victoria as well as apartments, houses and motels on the Gold Coast.<sup>2</sup>

T.J. continued to enjoy sport after his football career ended. He played pennant tennis, pennant lawn bowls and golf and was President of Geelong Golf Club. He was a member of the Newtown and Chilwell council from 1934 to 1951 (the offices of which he had designed in 1916)<sup>3</sup> and was Mayor of Newtown and Chilwell from 1946 to 1948. He was Chairman of the Geelong Ambulance Service, foundation member and first Honorary Secretary of Geelong Rotary Club, Chairman of Geelong Gas Company, Director of Fidelity Trustee Company, and a life member of Geelong Club and Corio Club.

T.J. joined the committee of the Geelong Past Players and Officials Association in 1945. He was Vice-President from 1953, when he designed the Past Players' Stand at Kardinia Park, until 1958. He was elected President in 1959 after the death of Stan Thomas. On 23 March 1954 he became the first elected life-member of the Association. The award was presented to him in the Past Players' Stand before the match on Saturday 24 April 1954 by Les Laver. T.J.'s letter of resignation as President

(aged 86) was 'received with regret' at the meeting on 1 March 1961 and it was decided to send a letter of thanks to him for his kindly help given during his term of office and his unpaid architectural assistance when building the stand.<sup>4</sup>

T.J. Buchan had two children—a son John and a daughter Lorée. John Buchan continued the architectural business, married Virginia Anderson, an interior designer from New York and later

became Sir John Buchan. Lorée married Geelong Harbour Master, Captain Dal Hancox. T.J.'s daughter-in-law, Lady Virginia Buchan, says he had a booming voice when in the office but had a good sense of humour.

T.J. was the oldest practising architect in Australia when he died aged 87.<sup>5</sup> He was still living in Geelong and working as a consultant to Buchan, Laird and Buchan.



Three generations at 'White Lodge' in Virginia St, Newtown where TJ lived for more than 40 years

#### Sources

- 1 Information from Col Hutchinson, AFL statistician and historian
- 2 Buchan, Laird and Buchan Pty Ltd, *Ninety Years of Architecture in Victoria: A History 1890-1980*
- 3 Museum Victoria, [www.museumvictoria.com.au](http://www.museumvictoria.com.au), accessed 6.2.2013
- 4 Minutes, 1 March 1961
- 5 'Australia's oldest practising architect dies in Geelong', *Geelong Advertiser*, 1962; Page, M. 1990, *An Architectural Apex*. Buchan Laird International Pty Ltd.