



LIFE MEMBER

Edward Joseph ("Ted") Riches

10 March 1907–4 September 1994



Ted Riches was born in Traralgon, one of seven children. Along with his brother Jack, Ted cut wood for a living. He was cutting poles for the SEC at Bendigo and bringing them to Geelong when he was invited to play with the Geelong reserves.

Ted was the ruckman in 1930 reserves championship team. He was very tall and strong. He played in one game with the firsts against Hawthorn in 1930 but his football career was mostly with the reserves. The *Geelong Advertiser* described a reserves game at Corio Oval in 1931 against Fitzroy:

The ground was partly under water ... Mud was splashing a foot high as the players dashed around ... For the condition of the oval play was



Ted Riches, ruckman in 1930 reserves premiership team

surprisingly fast, and both sides were marking creditably ... Laver and Riches made many opportunities ... Riches opened the play, Laver forwarded, and Sellwood worked out to position and goaled.¹

Geelong won the game and Riches was one of the best on ground.

After leaving Geelong, Ted played in the ruck for Sandhurst (Bendigo) from 1933 to 1940. He enlisted and served overseas, returning to Australia in 1943 (see Chapter 10).

After the war, Ted joined the Western District Axemen's Club. He and Bert Middleton won the 36-inch standing two-man chopping contest at the Royal Sydney Easter Show in 1948.² Ted won the 42-inch underhand woodchop at Royal Melbourne Show in September 1949 and third prize in the open standing block handicap at the Royal Melbourne Show in 1950. He won first prize in the vertical chop handicap at the Royal Show in South Australia in 1951. He was the recognised Victorian standing block champion at the time and defeated South Australian E.W. Pollard in 35 seconds from a 13 second handicap. He won three championships at Bendigo including the Northern District open underhand woodchop with four blows in 41 seconds to cut a 40-inch log. An article described him as 'one of Victoria's best choppers' and continued:

Following his victory yesterday Riches now becomes the backmarker for woodchopping in Victoria. He was on an equal footing with Victorian champion Jack O'Toole.³

He also won first prize at the Warrnambool Show and competed in the world championship woodchop at Blackwood on 26 December 1966. As well as woodchop competitions, Ted Riches used an unusual broad axe to square keels for fishing boats for Higgs Brothers at Western Beach. Ted was married after the war. He and his wife



Ted and Joyce Riches

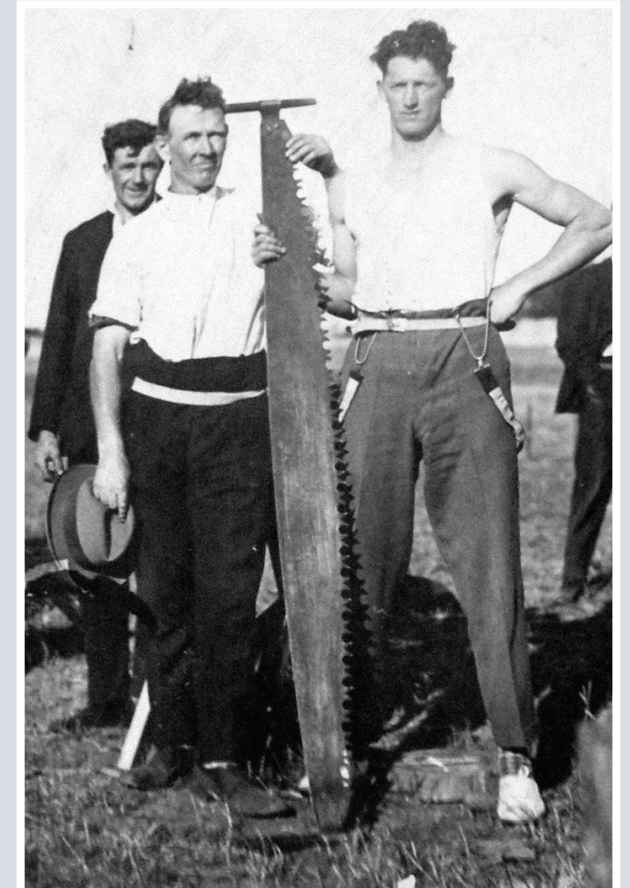
Sylvia Joyce (known as Joyce) had two girls who died at birth or soon after. In 1947 they had Bruce, who explains:

Joyce rang Ted after the birth and said 'It was terrible.' He asked, 'Have we lost another?' 'No,' she said. 'He is 12 pounds.' It was Ted's fastest drive ever back to Bendigo!⁴

In Geelong, Ted worked at Ford for a time, then in his own business removing trees. He would sometimes employ Russ Renfrey's trucks to take away stumps or to transport logs. One of Ted's jobs was removing three huge pine trees from the eastern side of Geelong Art Gallery in Johnstone Park when the building was extended.⁵

Ted attended the past players' reunion in 1935 and played in the 1950 past players' match aged 43. Bruce said his father's mates amongst the past players were Lindsay White, Bernie Smith, Roy Foster and Ron Richards.⁶

Ted was doorman in the Past Players clubrooms. He was a big man and if he said you couldn't come in, you wouldn't argue. Bruce says his father didn't see the second half of a game for years. The doorman, the barman and others would watch the television in the clubrooms, having a few drinks (or more) and enjoying each other's company. In those days going to the football was an occasion and the past players dressed in suits. Ted Riches was elected a life member of the Past Players and Officials Club at the annual meeting on 16 March 1978. His life member's badge was presented at the North Melbourne luncheon.



Woodchop medal, Royal Melbourne Show, 1949

Sources

- 1 *Geelong Advertiser*, 31 Aug. 1931, pp. 6-7
- 2 Photo in possession of Sally Hunt
- 3 Unidentified article, in possession of Sally Hunt
- 4 Bruce Riches, interviewed by Susan Kruss, 18 March 2013
- 5 Unidentified article, in possession of Sally Hunt
- 6 Bruce Riches, interviewed by Susan Kruss, 18 March 2013