



# LIFE MEMBER

## Wally Matthews

24 May 1926—



Victorian Railways

Wally Matthews grew up in Moriac and his first job was with the Victorian Railways at Moriac Railway Station. He played local football at Modewarre and Freshwater Creek. He also played cricket for Torquay and was the first playing coach of the Torquay Tigers. Wally trained for a time with GFC but could not get senior games—in 1951–52 Geelong had some of the best players in the League.

Wally met his future wife, Molly, on the tennis courts at Torquay where they both played. They were married in 1947 and had two sons, Desmond and Anthony. Anthony says his father always looked after people; when Wally's brother Vic died young, Wally helped to raise his six children.

Wally worked at Mitts Drycleaners in Geelong



Life Member badge

(run by the son of Mr Mitton who was well-known for his cartoons of footballers) and gained his boiler attendant's certificate. The family moved to Croydon where Wally managed the dry-cleaning business owned by Mr Mitton. The family lived at the premises which had underground tanks. They lost most of their photos and memorabilia when heavy rain caused a flood that lifted an underground tank out of the ground and water spread through the flat.

Wally managed a dry-cleaning business at Elsternwick which they eventually bought. Molly helped Wal in the business and they lived in a flat on the premises for many years. In the 1960s they owned a racehorse, Farmer's Hope, which had six wins including one at Sandown.<sup>1</sup>

Wal's eldest son Desmond died of cancer in 1985. Wally and his wife moved back to the Geelong area and bought a house near Drysdale, which was then a small bayside town. Wally spent a lot of time working on his large, very beautiful garden. He played golf and bowls.

Wally had always been a keen Geelong supporter and joined the Past Players and Officials Association when he returned to Geelong in 1985. As a committee member from 1992 onwards, he always came to meetings and helped out with

whatever needed to be done. However, his main role at the Past Players and Officials Association was as steward in the stand.

Peter Menzies explains that committee members who worked in the rooms before the game and at half-time were so busy they didn't get to the stand until play had started. Wally's role was to keep the front row of seats free for them when they arrived. Peter says:

Wally was like Australia Post—he was always there. He wasn't a big man, but he kept those seats for us and monitored who came into the seats in the stand. If Wally said you couldn't sit there, you didn't sit there!<sup>2</sup>

Wally Matthews was made a life member of the Past Players and Officials Club and remained a member of the committee until the end of 2007.



Freshwater Creek FC premiers 1950, Wally Matthews front row, second from left



With his niece Pam c. 2009

### Sources

- 1 Molly Matthews, interviewed by Susan Kruss, 16 April 2013
- 2 Peter Menzies, talking to Molly Matthews and Susan Kruss, 16 April 2013