

OUR ROOTS #5

by Gary Bartholomeusz



Charlie Punch never played senior Aussie Rules football but is synonymous in the sport throughout the Great Southern region of Western Australia. He was secretary / treasurer / registrar of the Katanning Football Association from 1954 until 1959, then with Central Great Southern Football League (1960 to 1980) and Great Southern Football Council (1973 to 1981) - a span of 28 years and is a life member of the latter two. Youngest son **Keith** said his Dad's entire workload in each of his administrator roles was hand written. "He never used a typewriter" Keith claimed!

Charlie's junior playing career at Subiaco lasted a very short span but, by the time he had reached adulthood, amassed enough knowledge and experience in administrative skills which later served him well throughout his working career. He became actively involved in Katanning junior football during 1952, while supporting his two oldest sons **Colin** and **Mervyn** before they progressed into seniors two years later. The Punch family moved to Katanning in 1948, after seven years living in Albany, and resided at 14 Beach Street - until Charlie's death at home in 1988 aged 73.



He was born in Kalgoorlie and educated at Rosalie Primary School (Shenton Park) and Perth Modern High School, Subiaco. At the age of 15 while in Subiaco, Charlie secured a job with the West Australian Government Railways and was transferred to Bridgetown where he met Woodanilling girl **Mieron Joyce Douglas** (known as 'Jo') who was holidaying in the town. They married at Wagin in 1937 before spending the next four years living in North Perth, ahead of their shift to Albany.

Keith was born after the other four family members settled in Katanning. He never played football but helped with the scoreboard, boundary umpiring and field umpiring the colts grade. The other three Punch males went opposite ways with their allegiance to football in the town. Charlie followed Rovers (KFA) and Australs (CGSFL) whilst Colin and Mervyn played for Imperials and Towns respectively during the Katanning Football Association era.

Charlie was secretary of the St. John Ambulance WA Volunteers from 1946 until his departure from life. He was also a member of the Western Australian Railways Institute team which competed in the 1952 St. John Ambulance first-aid competition and, after winning the title, represented the State at its National Championship in Sydney. Charlie was also appointed to the Serving Brothers of the Order of St. John and Jo received the equivalent, as a Sister, too. In addition, he was awarded a British Empire Medal in 1979 for 30 years of meritorious civil service worthy of recognition to the Katanning community.

Charlie worked on Perth trams as a cleaner, fireman, train driver and union secretary over his fulltime railway career. The Locomotive section was his workplace in Katanning and, at its height, Keith estimates the workshops had around 70 train drivers, 50 fireman, 40 guards, 20 cleaners and a scattering of shunters, coal loaders, fitters, turners and station staff. The workshops (which closed in 1994) was situated at the spot surrounded by Cornwall, Bokarup, Dore and Drove streets and was a big feature of the town in its heyday.

Lawn bowling was another interest for Charlie and he even served a stint as president of the Katanning Bowling Club. When Charlie retired from the West Australian Government Railways on his 65th birthday, he finished his football career as well to have more time with the family. Jo died in 2007, age 90.

The name Charlie Punch is etched into Great Southern and Katanning history. The Charlie Punch Medal for the fairest and best league player in the now-defunct Central Great Southern Football League was awarded from 1979 to 1990 and continues to be the Great Southern Football League's equivalent award in its reserves grade since inauguration. #

**When initials are used and you know the christian name, please notify me on 0428 514 605 or gjbartholomeusz@westnet.com.au*

Albany Football Association 1897 - 1941

Recess 1914 - 1918 and 1942 - 1944 due to War



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Southern Districts Football League 1945 - 1990

Great Southern Football League 1991 - current