

EASTERN SUBURBAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE

1932 – 1962

The formation of the Eastern Suburban Football League was instigated in January 1932 at a meeting held at the Hawthorn Football Club.

Representatives from the following clubs were in attendance: Balwyn, Box Hill, Canterbury, Deepdene and Hartwell. Further meetings were held over the following months with other interested clubs and as a result the League was formed, foundation clubs being: Balwyn, Box Hill, Canterbury, Tooronga, Glen Iris, Caulfield City and South Camberwell all fielding one Senior grade team.

Mr.H.E.Jenkins, a resident of Camberwell was appointed Honorary Secretary at that first meeting which was also attended by a representative of the Hawthorn Football Club who although not officially sponsoring the new league offered generous support.

Many of the clubs who joined the E.S.F.L. had previously played in the Eastern Suburbs Junior Football Association which ran from 1893 to 1924, generally as an under 21 competition. Some of the clubs also played in the senior grades of the Box Hill Reporter District Football League 1903 to 1927, the Ringwood District Football Association 1927 to 1941 and the Scoresby District Football Association 1925 to 1930. With Caulfield City the exception all the other clubs were well established and had spent a number of years in the third tier V.F.L. and V.F.A. Sub-District Leagues. They were of the opinion that the fixturing of these two bodies was heavily weighted in favour of those teams in the north of Melbourne, where most of the Sub-District clubs were based.

The enormity of the 'Worldwide Great Depression' which ran from 1929 through to the late 1930's was being experienced by everybody and it was felt that the burden of travel expenses was becoming too great for clubs, players and supporters to bare so the formation of a more localised competition was required.

During the 1931 Sub-District season both Canterbury and Box Hill had played East Brunswick on their home grounds. On both occasions wild melees took place off the ground eventually involving the players. The Police were often called to games and on a number of occasions many East Brunswick supporters were arrested, charged with affray and fined. One was actually found to be unlawfully in possession of a firearm and was fined accordingly. It was obvious that a self contained competition restricted to the eastern suburbs would avoid these types of situations as well as curtail expenses.

Caulfield City had competed in the Amateurs and the Caulfield-Oakleigh League playing at the Princes Park Reserve adding 'City' to its name to separate itself from the Caulfield Federal Association club whose reputation was very poor on and off the ground.

South Camberwell had played in a number of leagues and was reluctantly accepted as their style of play was known to be very rough. They won the first Premiership defeating Canterbury by four points at the Camberwell (V.F.A.) ground in what was described as a highly entertaining and colourful 'hit-out'.

Hartwell, Deepdene, Glen Waverley and East Hawthorn entered in 1933. Surrey Hills, Kew District, East Malvern District, Box Hill East and Ormond joined for the 1934 season increasing the number of sides to sixteen. Auburn, another former Sub-District club and Caulfield East (formerly Caulfield Juniors) entered in 1935, whilst Glen Waverley dropped out making the number of clubs seventeen. Auburn had met with some success in the Sub-District competitions so it was not surprising that they won three flags in a row, 1935, 36 and 37.

With a seventeen team fixture proving a little lop-sided two divisions A and B grade were brought in for the 1936 season. Box Hill East were replaced by Glenferrie District. The two sections continued in 1937 with eighteen clubs. East Kew, Blackburn and Vermont joined whilst South Camberwell who had played in four Grand Finals in five years transferred to the Amateurs. There was a relegation and promotion system in place but it does appear as though, in collaboration with the league, clubs graded themselves by agreement and I strongly suspect that B Grade was an Under 21 division with an allowance perhaps for a handful of players over that age. Quite possibly also a playing coach over 25 years.

A number of changes occurred in 1938. Mitcham and Doncaster entered the B grade whilst Hartwell and Kew District could not field teams. Caulfield East, who had changed its name from Caulfield Juniors allowing it to transfer from the C.O.D.F.L. changed their name again to Caulfield Park and returned to their original league causing much consternation between them and the leagues. Midway into 1939 the committee and clubs agreed to cancel its affiliation, as did the C.O.D.F.L., with the Victorian Football Union which at the time was governed jointly by the V.F.L. and the V.F.A. The E.S.F.L. felt that they and its member clubs had for many years been given a raw deal by the V.F.U. as the clubs had lost many players to higher grades and the League was being decimated. What was frustrating was that there was really nothing that could be done under the rules at the time, and that they were being ignored and fobbed off. They were clever enough to only fail to renew its membership by not paying the allotted fee and not actually resign from the V.F.U. It was not until part way through the 1940 season that the V.F.U. realised that the E.S.F.L. had not renewed its membership. Again being clever they actually paid the membership fee which allowed umpires to be appointed to matches, however they did not recognise and sometimes totally ignored any instructions given especially in regard to clearances of players. All this caused quite a stir in Jolimont and all sorts of threats were made about suspending the League and its players and so on. They simply sat back, did and said nothing and continued on their merry way which was short lived as it turned out as the competition was forced into recess at the end of 1941 due to WW2.

The E.S.F.L. resumed in 1945 rejoining the V.F.U. with a two section competition, A Grade East & West with senior teams only. The two section set up was mostly brought about by petrol rationing as the league covered quite a broad area and fuel supplies tended to be hit and miss.

A Section East:

Box Hill, Ringwood, East Burwood, Doncaster, Canterbury, Blackburn, Mitcham, Surrey Hills.

A Section West:

Glen Iris, Auburn, East Hawthorn, Burnley, Deepdene, Tooronga, North Kew.

The premier club in each section played off in a 'Championship Match'. This system continued until 1950 and when fuel supplies returned to normal a two division, first and second plus two under grades were brought in for 1951.

These four grades continued until 1960 although along the way some clubs could only field one team, sometimes in division one, sometimes in division two and the few clubs that had two teams played their reserves in division two. There were occasions also when the under 18 side of a particular club was actually their reserve team. During this period the E.S.F.L. and the clubs attempted to commence more under age levels to bolster its competition but all efforts seemed in vain.

By 1961 the E.S.F.L. was struggling to survive. A Number of clubs had transferred to other competitions and when the Croydon-Ferntree Gully F.L. changed its name to the Eastern Districts F.L. and aggressively chased clubs in its area the leagues days were numbered.

The C.O.D.F.L. during the same period faced similar problems with the loss of a number of clubs but had been able to establish and maintain a very strong and growing junior base. Discussions had taken place, mostly unofficially for a number of years between the two Leagues as to the possibility of merging the two competitions. The E.S.F.L. were quite happy for the C.O.D.F.L. clubs to join its competition. The administrators of the E.S.F.L., under pressure from its clubs agreed to a merger as many of them had advised the League that they were going to join the C.O.D.F.L. anyway to secure their own future.

The Clubs that played the last season in 1962:

A Grade or Division One:

Burnley, Canterbury, North Kew, Burwood, Auburn, Balwyn, Glen Iris, Hawthorn Amateurs, Tooronga.

B Grade or Division Two plus Reserves:

Bennettswood, Caulfield Amateurs, Canterbury, Deepdene, Balwyn, Burwood, Glen Iris, Tooronga.

Clubs that competed from 1932 to 1962 were:

The Ruwolts Football Club played for one season, 1940 in B Grade. An Engineering firm in Richmond they had played the previous year in the Saturday Morning Industrial League. Great Eastern played the 1947 season and disappeared. The S.E.C, also from the S.M.I.L. played in the B grade in 1941 and 1946.

Hawthorn Boys Club had one year in A grade, 1949 then one in B grade 1950.

The Surrey Hills Football Club played at Surrey Park and following a stint in the Amateurs from 1927 to 1933 joined the E.S.F.L. in 1934 remaining until 1955 before transferring to the C.F.T.G.F.L. in 1956. The club eventually amalgamated with East Camberwell in 1994, had one season in the S.F.L. and now play as Surrey Park in the E.F.L.

Kew District and East Kew Football Clubs, 1934 to 1940 were reserve or under age teams that were part of the Kew Football Club, a very successful Sub-District club which went into recession in 1941 and did not appear again and was quite separate from the Kew Amateurs. Both clubs played at Victoria Park, Kew.

The Glen Waverley Football Club had one season in the F.F.A. then moved to the E.S.F.L. for 1933 and 1934. They fielded a junior team in the C.O.D.F.L. for 1938 then had both senior and junior teams from 1939 to 1960. In 1961 they received a last minute invite into the V.F.A. which they accepted and dropped the 'Glen' playing as the Waverley Football Club at Central Reserve continuing until 1987 when they folded due to financial difficulties.

Hartwell Football Club played at the Hartwell Sports Ground from 1933 to 1937 then moved to the E.S.P.C.F.A. where they played for many years as Hartwell Presbyterians. South Camberwell played at Dawson Reserve from 1932 to 1936 before joining the Amateurs then in 1947 became South Camberwell United in the E.S.P.C.F.A.

A club called Glenferrie District played in B grade from 1936 to 1941 as an under 18 side connected with the Hawthorn Football Club. Deepdene Football Club played at the Deepdene Reserve from 1933 to 1962 and not wishing to join the new league or transfer to the E.D.F.L. disbanded.

In 1932 the Ormond Amateur Football Club was formed and entered a team in the Amateurs. Mr.E.E.Gunn, a local councillor arranged for a reserve to be established alongside the rail line close to Ormond station to be used for local sport. By 1934 the club had enough players to enter a 'second' team in the E.S.F.L. remaining until 1939 when army enlistments forced their withdrawal.

One of the best performed clubs, East Hawthorn who played at St.James Park joined in 1933 following a very close vote by the member clubs whether or not to allow their entry. Their original name was East hawthorn Old Collegians F.C. A new club by name it appeared that a number of players had been recruited from the Richmond area which for whatever reason was not popular with many of the clubs. In reality most of the original players were from the many private schools in the vicinity. By 1954 they had won six Premeirships and were runners-up on four other occasions. With the backing of the Hawthorn V.F.L. club they transferred to the V.F.L. sponsored Metropolitan Football League where they won nine more Flags between 1955 and 1969 before being expelled. From 1970 to 1972 they played in the E.D.F.L. and were again expelled after winning the First division flag. After one year in recess they rejoined the M.F.L. for 1974 which was that competitions last year. The S.E.S.F.L. offered them a lifeline in 1975 under very

strict conditions which they accepted. However during the 1987 finals series in Division two their behaviour on and off the ground was considered very poor and no invitation was offered for the 1988 season and the club folded.

East Malvern District Football Club joined in 1934 with Waverley Oval, East Malvern as its home ground. In 1938 the 'District' was dropped and following WW2 in 1945 transferred to the C.O.D.F.L.

Box Hill East played 1934 and 1935 and disappeared. After WW2 Ringwood joined in 1945 staying until 1954 when they moved back to the C.F.T.G.F.L.

Caulfield Amateurs entered one under age team in 1962, their senior team being in the C.O.D.F.L.

The Victoria Road Reserve was home to Hawthorn Amateurs. The club evolved from the Hawthorn Boys Club and in 1954 entered the Amateurs. Their stay was short as they were expelled in 1957. Entry to the E.S.F.L. was accepted then joining the S.E.S.F.L. in 1963. Bennettswood Football Club was formed in 1959 at the Burwood Road Reserve staying until 1962 then joining the S.E.S.F.L.

For the Glenhuntly and Glen-Orme clubs refer to Federal League notes.

Burwood United transferred from the E.S.P.C.F.A. in 1959, changed to Burwood for 1961 and 1962 then joined the S.E.S.F.L. in 1963. Burwood United reformed and returned to the Churches. Both clubs played at the Burwood Reserve with Burwood using the upper Oval.

When the Dandenong D.F.L. folded after the 1954 season Noble Park, premiers that year played for one season in the E.S.F.L. before transferring to the C.O.D.F.L. A mass walkout of players following the premiership saw a new club Parkfield emerge who also entered the E.S.F.L. second division staying from 1954 to 1957 then changing its name to Harrisfield eventually merging with Noble Park.

East Ringwood played one year only, 1950.

The Nunawading Football Club was originally called Tunstall F.C. from 1927 to 1943. Nunawading joined in 1933 staying until 1961 before joining the E.D.F.L. in 1962. Home games were played at the Nunawading Recreation Reserve.

Ashburton Football Club joined in 1946 staying until 1960 then transferring to the C.O.D.F.L. in 1961. Home games were played at Ashburton Park.

Blackburn joined in 1936 continuing until 1960 then joined the E.D.F.L. Morton Park was their home ground.

Caulfield City played from 1932 to 1941, then joined the C.O.D.F.L. from 1946 to 1959. (refer Federal League notes).

North Kew joined in 1945 alternating between A and B Grades. Stradbroke Park was their original home then sharing later with Kew Amateurs at Victoria Park, Kew. In 1963 they joined the S.E.S.F.L.

After a number of years in the V.F.A. Sub-Districts and Metropolitan Juniors, Richmond City and Burnley joined the League in 1940. Recommencing in 1945 many players from the strong but almost now defunct Abbotsford club joined the now merged Richmond/Burnley clubs. They then played right through to 1962 before joining the S.E.S.F.L. Originally playing at the City Reserve in Richmond they moved to the Carter Oval/ Burnley Oval after the War.

Before entering the V.F.A. in 1951 Box Hill played in the League from 1932 to 1950. In 1937 they moved to the new Box Hill City oval. Their home ground prior to the move was at the adjacent Whitehorse Reserve.

Playing at the Porter Street Reserve Templestowe played in 1946 then went to the D.V.F.L. 1947 to 1954. Returning in 1955 they stayed until 1961 before rejoining the D.V.F.L. in 1962. Transferring from the Federal League in 1939 East Burwood played up to 1960 before joining the E.D.F.L.

Doncaster joined in 1938 participating until 1961 before joining the E.D.F.L. Schramms Reserve has been their home base for many years.

Balwyn was a foundation member of the E.S.F.L. Like most clubs they went into recession during WW2. Reforming in 1946 they entered the Amateur competition staying there until rejoining the Eastern in 1956. They then joined the S.E.S.F.L. in 1963. Balwyn Park has always been their home.

Canterbury at the Canterbury Sports Ground, Glen Iris at the Eric Raven Reserve and Tooronga at the Johnson Oval were all foundation members of the League and played from 1932 to 1962. During the period that these clubs played in the Sub-District competitions all three ovals were fenced in to allow admittance fees to be collected. The three clubs joined the S.E.S.F.L. in 1963.

Following lengthy discussions the Auburn Football club was accepted in 1935. Playing at Rathmines Road Reserve and also Victoria Road Reserve they had been a very successful club in the Sub-District competitions for ten years. It appears as though they disbanded in 1962 as they did not transfer to the S.E.S.F.L. although they did apply and were accepted they do not appear in any other competition that year. A failed bid to merge with the Deepdene club probably spelled the end.

One of the oldest suburban clubs, Mitcham transferred from the R.D.F.A. in 1938 and remained until 1955 when they transferred to the C.F.T.G.F.L. Walker Oval has been the clubs home ground for many years.

Vermont transferred from the Federal League in 1937 having spent only one year in that competition. Prior to this the club played in the R.D.F.A. for a number of years using the Vermont

Reserve since the early 1920s. In 1956 they transferred to the C.F.T.G.F.L. Anybody who follows suburban football will be aware of their successes in the last 30 years.

Clubs that transferred to the new South-East Suburban Football League in 1963 were:

A Grade: Ashburton, Balwyn, Burwood, Canterbury, Glen Iris, North Kew, Tooronga and Burnley.

Reserve Open: Bennettswood and Hawthorn Amateurs

GRAND FINAL RESULTS:**A GRADE:**

1932 South Camberwell 9.14.68 d. Canterbury 9.10.64
 1933 Balwyn 10.13.73 d. South Camberwell 9.14.68
 1934 Balwyn 9.9.63 d. South Camberwell 7.2.44
 1935 Auburn 18.18.114 d. Caulfield City 14.6.90
 1936 Auburn 15.13.103 d. South Camberwell 10.10.70
 1937 Auburn 13.9.87 d. Box Hill 7.18.60
 1938 East Hawthorn 12.8.80 d. Caulfield City 8.13.61
 1939 Box Hill 17.20.122 d. East Hawthorn 12.12.84
 1940 Caulfield City 11.21.87 d. Auburn 7.4.46
 1941 East Hawthorn 10.13.73 d. Burnley 10.9.69
 1945 Box Hill 11.20.86 d. Ringwood 11.10.76 (East)
 1945 Glen Iris 13.16.94 d. Burnley 11.15.81 (West)
 1945 Glen Iris 11.13.79 d. Box Hill 11.11.77
 1946 Box Hill 13.11.89 d. Mitcham 11.10.76 (East)
 1946 East Hawthorn 13.15.93 d. Glen Iris 8.10.58 (West)
 1946 East Hawthorn 18.15.123 d. Box Hill 12.10.82
 1947 Mitcham 15.14.104 d. Box Hill 15.13.103 (East)
 1947 Auburn 16.16.112 d. East Hawthorn 8.8.56 (West)
 1948 Ringwood 14.17.101 d. Box Hill 12.13.85 (East)
 1948 Auburn 12.24.96 d. Tooronga 12.9.81 (West)
 1949 Ringwood 16.18.114 d. Box Hill 7.12.54 (East)
 1949 Auburn 20.20.140 d. East Hawthorn 15.14.104 (West)
 1949 Auburn 16.16.112 d. Ringwood 5.6.36

FIRST DIVISION:

1950 Auburn 10.15.75 d. Tooronga 10.12.72
 1951 Ringwood 11.12.78 d. Mitcham 7.15.57
 1952 Mitcham 12.17.89 d. East Hawthorn 8.14.62
 1953 East Hawthorn 8.6.54 d. Tooronga 6.11.47
 1954 East Hawthorn 15.8.98 d. Ringwood 11.10.76
 1955 Vermont 14.11.95 d. Auburn 10.17.77
 1956 Canterbury 11.12.78 d. Doncaster 9.12.66
 1957 North Kew 14.18.102 d. Canterbury 12.16.88
 1958 Burnley 11.20.86 d. Tooronga 7.12.54
 1959 Burnley 14.22.106 d. Auburn 9.10.64
 1960 East Burwood 9.10.64 d. Burnley 5.6.36
 1961 Burnley 15.13.103 d. Burwood 9.11.65
 1962 Burnley 9.18.72 d. Canterbury 5.11.41

B GRADE:

1936 Hartwell 22.17.149 d. Box Hill 15.6.96
 1937 Surrey Hills 12.12.84 d. Blackburn 9.11.65
 1938 East Kew 17.24.126 d. Mitcham 14.8.92
 1939 Doncaster 14.14.98 d. Mitcham 14.10.94
 1940 Burnley 12.13.85 d. Blackburn 8.9.57
 1941 Blackburn 14.16.100 d. Caulfield District 11.12.78

SECOND EIGHTEENS:

1946 Glen Iris 11.14.80 d. Ringwood 10.15.75
 1947 Ringwood 10.14.74 d. Glen Iris 10.10.70
 1948 Canterbury 12.19.91 d. Box Hill 8.16.64

B GRADE SECOND DIVISION & SECOND EIGHTEENS:

1949 Canterbury 16.11.107 d. East Burwood 11.15.81

SECOND DIVISION:

1950 Blackburn 15.9.99 d. Surrey Hills 13.13.91
 1951 Glen Iris 10.11.71 d. Glen-Orme 9.9.63
 1952 Blackburn 18.16.124 d. Ashburton 17.9.111
 1953 Ashburton 7.11.53 d. Doncaster 4.10.34
 1954 East Burwood 9.10.64 d. Doncaster 4.10.34
 1955 Nunawading 12.12.84 d. Parkfield 9.9.63
 1956 Glen Iris 12.15.87 d. Ashburton 12.12.84
 1957 Burnley 15.18.108 d. Ashburton 12.4.76
 1958 Vermont 9.8.62 d. East Burwood 7.16.58
 1959 Hawthorn Amateurs 13.13.91 d. Burwood United 8.7.55
 1960 North Kew 9.3.57 d. Balwyn 6.10.46
 1961 Doncaster 14.9.93 d. Canterbury 10.13.73
 1962 Bennettswood 17.25.127 d. Caulfield Amateurs 11.7.73

C GRADE (SECOND EIGHTEENS):

1950 Deepdene 14.19.103 d. Hawthorn Boys Club 12.7.79
 1951 Canterbury 13.14.92 d. Deepdene 10.16.76
 1952 Canterbury 17.20.122 d. Tooronga 7.9.51
 1953 Tooronga 4.1.25 d. Ringwood 2.11.23
 1954 Ashburton 12.8.80 d. Mitcham 11.10.76
 1955 Vermont 18.8.116 d. Ashburton 4.8.32
 1956 Canterbury 17.18.120 d. Vermont 12.10.82
 1957 Canterbury 18.17.125 d. Ashburton 9.5.59
 1958 Canterbury 15.20.110 d. Deepdene 7.7.49

1959 Blackburn 10.7.67 d. Ashburton 7.12.54

1960 Doncaster 4.3.27 d. Ashburton 1.7.13

BEST & FAIREST:

A GRADE:

- 1932 F.Hunting, South Camberwell
- 1933 A.Laurie, South Camberwell
- 1934 E. Needham, Caulfield City
- 1935 S.Cromb, East Hawthorn, F.Linden, Box Hill East
- 1936 E.Needham, Caulfield City
- 1937 H. Jenkin, Box Hill
- 1938 J.Kline, Caulfield City
- 1939 E. Cummins, East Malvern
- 1940 E.Searl. East Kew
- 1941 J.Logan, Surrey Hills,
- 1945 E.Mayo, Glen Iris
- 1946 R. Wake, D'caster (East), R. Wright, N'th Kew (West)
- 1947 I. McKay, Blackburn (East)
- 1948 I. McKay, B'burn (East), S. Moule, Tooronga (West)
- 1949 W. Holly, D'caster (East), A. Copsey, C'field City (West)

FIRST DIVISION:

- 1950 L. Maguire, Canterbury
- 1951
- 1952 G. Kramer, Surrey Hills
- 1953
- 1954 H. Olarens Shaw, Auburn
- 1955
- 1956
- 1957
- 1958 R. Simmons, Tooronga
- 1959
- 1960 G. Duff, Ashburton
- 1961 V. Hill, Burnley
- 1962

B GRADE:

- 1936 O. Pritchard, East Caulfield
- 1937 E. Brooks, East Caulfield
- 1938 C. Austen, East Kew, J.Zander, Vermont
- 1939 J.Zander, Vermont
- 1940 R. McLellan, Blackburn
- 1941 J.McAllester, S.E.C.
- 1945

SECOND EIGHTEENS:

- 1946 T. McGuire, Nunawading
- 1947 G. Burns, Ringwood
- 1948 J. Cross, Ringwood

B GRADE SECOND DIVISION & SECOND EIGHTEENS:

1949 A. Boyle, Vermont

SECOND DIVISION:

1950 R. McCracken, Glenhuntly

1951

1952 C.Tainton, East Burwood

1953 C.Tainton, East Burwood

1954 C.Tainton, East Burwood

1955

1956 I. Johnston, Ashburton

1957

1958 R.Pearce, Burwood

1959

1960 B.W. Metcalfe, Bennettswood

1961 B. Metcalfe, Burwood

1962 B. Metcalfe, Burwood

C GRADE (SECOND EIGHTEENS):

1950 H. McFarlain, Hawthorn Boys Club

1951

1952 T.Trimble, Deepdene

1953

1954 R. Woods, Vermont

1955

1956 R. Hicks, Canterbury

1957

1958 J.Kent, Doncaster

1960 K.Read, Doncaster