

WALKER FAMILY BRIARS BIOGRAPHY

The D.P. Walker family first appeared at Briars in the 1930's.

Don Walker, a 6'4" second rower and his brother John, a 6'3" second rower both joined and played Kentwell Cup Rugby and Shires cricket for Briars. At the time both lived at Ashfield in the family home. Their 6'0" sister Jean's exploits at Briars are unrecorded.

In 1936 Don married Gwen Buxton and Don and Gwen built a house at 11 Louden Street, Five Dock. Co-incidentally, only a 2 mile walk from Briars Clubrooms at 30A George Street, Burwood.

In 1939 Don and Gwen gave birth to Chris, followed by Peter and David all of whom became Briars whilst the best athlete of all, Bronwyn, preferred Gordon Rugby players and was rarely seen at 30A George Street or Rothwell Rugby Park. All the boys were schooled at Sydney Grammar School as have Chris's son and grandson.

From 1939 – 1945 many Briars were going to, coming from or disappearing at the 39 – 45 Second World War. The Walker house at 11 Louden Street was a regular gathering place for Saturday night functions including, of course, farewells and welcome homes for soldiers, sailors and airmen of Briars. The Whiddons, Vanderfields, Cliffords, Guests, Hills, McLaughlins and many others were regular Louden Street visitors. In this regard, Club stalwarts such as Bob Clark and Ted Stockdale were very well known to Chris and Peter with both regularly at Rothwell for rugby or dumped on Ted Stockdale in the cricket season for occasional minding. Ted taught both how to keep a cricket score book.

During the late 40's and early 50's Chris, aged 8 – 11, was a regular Rothwell attendee having served aged 3 – 7 as Briars ball boy in the correct maroon and gold attire. Chris watched with Don and Gwen both the 1949 and 1952 Kentwell Cup Premiership sides and formed a first hand view of the skills of Brian Williams, Spencer Hipwell, Peter Hotham, Lex Yule and others. Some of these later being invited by Chris to coach Briars.

Don Walker won the Gordon Bevan Shield in 1946 and was Rugby Chairman in 1947. He served as a Briars Director for several years and was elected as a Vice President of the club in 1948. As each of his sons completed high school, and within the first week of graduation, Don took them to 30A George Street and completed a Club nomination form for each always with Ted Stockdale or Bob Clark as seconder.

In 1957, the year **Chris Walker** joined the Briars, the rugby chairman's report noted a unique situation in Briars rugby. It occurred when father Don Walker and son Chris Walker "appeared in club foot ball for Briars on the same day. Anything approaching this has never occurred since in our football history."

Since joining in 1957, Chris played Kentwell Cup for 13 years from 1957 – 1969 as a scrum half and later inside centre. He was chosen for combined sub-district in both positions. He captained the 1964 Invincibles and the 1965 Kentwell Premiers and captain/coached the 1966 Kentwell minor Premiers. Chris was Rugby Chairman from 1961 – 1964 inclusive and a Suburban Rugby Director for several years in the 60's. In 1961 Chris was awarded the Gordon Bevan Shield for rugby and the JH Stone Trophy for administration. Chris returned in 1975 to again play Kentwell Cup at the invitation of Dick Thornett who arrived to coach. Late season injuries enabled him to play in the Whiddon Cup winning Grand Final team. He again returned in 1984 to see if he could play Kentwell 20 years after

the 1964 Invincibles. He played 7 Kentwell games but was a shadow of his former self according to his 1964 – 65 playing companions.

In 1994, Chris started the Briars Foundation and the Walker family are one of the foundation's major donors.



From left to right: Peter Walker, Chris Walker, Don Walker, David Walker.

Peter Walker joined Briars in 1957 and played 6 rugby seasons 1958 – 9 – 60 – 61 – 62 – 63 mainly Burke Cup at no.10, while completing a part time Industrial Chemistry degree at Univ. NSW. On completing this degree ICI, now Dow Chemicals, relocated Peter to Melbourne thus ending his Briars rugby career. Lived and worked in USA and Hong Kong.

David Walker joined in 1961 under Lex Yule as coach and he at no.9 and Kerry Trollope at no.10 were selected from Briars Burke Cup to play combined Sub-district 2nd XV. David eventually left to play at Sydney University, where he was an architecture student, making the first-grade side. He returned to Briars in 1967 – 68 thence moved to Gordon RUFC eventually joining Chris to coach at St. Ives from 1972 – 1974. Eventually located to Bathurst where he played and coached the Bathurst Bulldogs eventually becoming a multi-year Bulldogs President. He also played briefly in Japan with Chris. He lived and worked in Japan for 2 years.

Bronwyn, though not making Kentwell Cup, did eventually marry Ross Prowse, son of Briars Director and Patron, Doug Prowse. Ross played 100 First Grade games with Gordon. Bronwyn died of cancer at age 39 survived by son Simon and daughter Kristyn.

Offspring of Chris, Peter, David and Bronwyn have not elected to play for Briars having witnessed at first hand the Briars impact on their parents.

Chris Walker - February 2018