

Henry Charles Burnet (club founder)



Career: 1878 to 1880

Debut: v South Adelaide (Adelaide) 18th May 1878

Premierships: 1878, 1879, 1880.

NFC Life Member

Chairman, 1881, and 1884 - 1887

Harry was born in Carrington Street on 14 September, 1856. His mother, Elizabeth, had come to Australia on the ship *Diadem*, in 1840. His father, Charles, was a pioneer who had a pastoral lease at Mount Brown near Pt Augusta. In fact, his mother was the first white woman to set foot on the site where Port Augusta is now located. Mr. Burnet subsequently, and almost up to his death in 1872, carried on sheep-farming at Lower Light. Harry had two sisters, and a brother, Captain W. J. Burnet, R.N.B., who was the first native-born South Australian to obtain an extra masters certificate. One sister, Miss Jessie Marion Burnet, was matron of the South Australian Refuge at Norwood. His other sister was called Rosina Robertson Burnet, who later married Albert Edward Campbell.

Harry was educated at Whinham's School (North Adelaide Grammar), and in Edinburgh. In 1870 he competed in Athletics for the North Adelaide Junior Club, coming second in the 100 yards champion race; second in the 120 yards hurdle, and second in the 150 yards flat race. In 1876, he bought an auctioneers licence a week before his 20th birthday.

In 1877 Harry Burnet was playing football for Adelaide and represented South Australian Natives in a match against the Victorian Residents on 11 May and the SAFA against a Combined Team (Gawler, Kapunda, and Willunga) at the Adelaide ground on 31 August. A fast attacking backman, he was known as a smart dodger and an excellent kick.

The following year, the Norwood Football Club was inaugurated in a meeting held at Norfolk Arms Hotel in Rundle Street, Adelaide on 28 February. H.C. Burnet was a co-founder of the club with A.J. Diamond and J.R. Osborn. In a playing career between 1878-1880, Burnet had the remarkable distinction of winning 3 premierships in 12 games. In 1881, and from 1884 – 1887, Burnet was Chairman of the Norwood Football Club.

In 1921 Harry Burnet wrote to the editor of the "Mail" and the following extracts were published under the heading of "The Origins of Norwood".

"It happened in this manner. Joe Osborn was captain of the Woodville Club and one afternoon the three of us, Joe, Arthur Diamond and myself were walking across the ground where the University Oval now is, on the way to the Adelaide football grounds, close to the practice ground of the Norwood Cricket Club.

Osborn stated that the Woodville club was on the point of disbanding. That was enough! We immediately decided to found a Norwood Football Club, if possible.

On arrival at the cricket ground we separated and booked the names of those present who were willing to join the proposed club.

The response was so good that a meeting was convened for the Norfolk Arms Hotel, Rundle Street, Adelaide on Thursday, 28th February, 1878.

The meeting, presided over by Mr. W O Whitridge of cricket fame, was called for the purpose of considering the necessity of establishing a new football club.

It was unanimously decided to form the Norwood Football Club and the first officers were elected including E T Smith Esq M.P. as Patron and W H Bunday Esq M. P. as President. The elected committee was:- C H Warren, T Letchford, J R Osborn (Captain), A McMichael (Vice-Captain), A J Diamond (Secretary/Treasurer), and H C Burnet.

The members numbered 100 and the subscription was 10/- per year.

At the meeting the colours chosen for the club were the colours of the recently disbanded Woodville team.

Subsequently an adjourned meeting was held and the Norwood Club was successfully launched. At this meeting the question of the club's colours became the subject of serious debate and on the motion of Lou Suhard, a great footballer and one-time player of the Melbourne Club, the Woodville colours were discarded in favour of the red and blue costume.

Norwood played their first association match on the Adelaide Oval on Saturday, May 18, 1878, when they met and defeated South Adelaide by one goal to nil. George Giffen kicked the goal with only his right-foot boot on. He had discarded his left boot, as it had been hurting his foot. The attendance at this match numbered about 1,000. The press in its report of the game remarked:- "Instead of football pure and simple the game was reduced at times to a mere rough-and-tumble contest. It was suggested that Mr. A. Abrahams (secretary of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) should be asked to attend the next match between South and Norwood, who seem to be anything but friendly rivals, in the hope that his presence might have a softening influence upon the players to make them behave more like rational beings".

Note the contrast:- In May 1878, Adelaide Oval; Norwood versus South; about 1,000 present. Norwood: 1 goal South: nil (behinds did not count in those days). Band in attendance. Gate probably under £25.

October the 1st 1921. Adelaide Oval: Norwood versus South. 33,000 present. Norwood: 5 goals 12 behinds; South: 4 goals 13 behinds. Band in attendance. Gate £1,471.

A span of 43 years between the first and last meetings of those two famous clubs, the Redlegs getting home in each game by a narrow margin.

I thoroughly enjoyed both games, in 1878 as one of the Norwood players in the match and in 1921, as a Norwood member and supporter.

HARRY BURNET

NORWOOD

(The Mail, Saturday 8 October, 1921. Page 3)

Burnet had an incredibly diverse range of interests – whether on the sporting field or off it. played for the Norwood Cricket Club at least between 1879-1885, alongside George Giffen, Arthur Diamond, Topsy Waldron, Edward Woods and AJ Diamond. In 1882, he was secretary of the Norwood Rowing Club. In 1890 he was umpiring baseball and in 1891, he was playing for the Norwood Baseball Club alongside Norwood Footballers Charles and Edward Woods, and Henry Plunkett and Norwood's first Chairman, W.O. Whitridge. In 1893 he was an athletics judge and he played for the Norwood Chess Club. In 1896, he was on the Committee of the Norwood Cycling Club. In 1898, Burnet was appointed Chairman of Junior Football in new East Torrens Electorate.

In 1881, he was a Lawyer's Clerk. In 1891 and 1892, he was a Vice-Arch Druid at the Duke of Leinster Lodge, which met at the Maid and Magpie Hotel. He ran for the East Norwood Ward in council elections in 1892, but was unsuccessful. In 1897, he was the secretary of the Taylor Gold Recovery Company, when the company was awarded a gold medal and certificate of merit at the Melbourne Mining Machinery Exhibition. By 1908, he was a land broker.

Burnet lived at 8 Percival Street, Norwood, in the late 1800s. He was married to Florence Caroline Richardson (1854-1943) in 1891, and he died on 16 August, 1922. At the time, he was the City Valuer for the Federal Taxation Department. He is buried alongside his wife at the West Terrace Cemetery. They had no children.

Chris Brown, August 2022

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