

# Influential citizens of Wodonga honoured in Willow Park

By Brian Allen (Work placement with ABC Goulburn Murray )

**What's in a name? Learn about the people whose names adorn Willow Park in Wodonga and how they contributed to the city.**

It is known for the skate bowl, soccer ovals, playgrounds and of course the willow trees.

You might have jogged past House Creek in a school cross country, or taken the dog for a stroll on a pleasant afternoon.

You may have spent countless hours in Willow Park, but did you know it used to be dairy farm?

In 1855, the SS Steinwarder departed Hamburg and set sail for Australia with Frederick and Julianna Heckendorf and their children aboard.

In 1869, they moved to Wodonga and it wasn't long before they set up a dairy farm at Willow Park.

One hundred years later, the farm was in the hands of Fredrick's great grandson Les Boyes.

In the 1970s the land was acquired by the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation, which had the goal of developing Albury-Wodonga into a major inland city.

Mr Boyes and his sister, Val Proctor, still live in Wodonga and have a sound knowledge of their family history, and fond memories in Willow Park.

Ms Proctor said her grandfather Harry planted many willow trees.

"Harry was a great one on planting his willow trees or poplar trees, and the willows were planted along the banks of the creek," she said.

"He was known to tell all his friends, 'If you plant a willow tree into the bank of the creek you'll never have erosion.'"

While Willow Park is renowned for being a sport complex today, it is also the place where a number of Wodonga's significant historical figures are recognised.

Pam and Les Stone are among those honoured.

Mr Stone was the first mayor of Wodonga from 1972-74 and was also a school teacher and principal of Wodonga West Primary School.

The Stones' son Shane has had much success in politics and is a former cabinet minister and chief minister of the Northern Territory.

He spoke of his father's contribution to the community.

"The mark of his service was the fact that when Dad died we didn't even own the

house. He had devoted all of his attention and all of his resources to serving the community," he said.

Mrs Stone was also heavily involved in politics and was the first female councillor and first female mayor of the Wodonga council.

She remembers long nights at council meetings.

"They were great big agendas. We'd sit there til three o'clock in the morning some council meetings."

Further along House Creek, next to St Monica's School oval, Father Gerald Moylan's sign can be found.

He was the first parish priest of Sacred Heart parish in Wodonga.

He is credited with having great foresight in purchasing the land for St Monica's.

Current parish priest Father Dennis Crameri said Father Moylan was a good role model and an admired priest.

"Gerry laid great foundations, he gave great examples, and I remember as a younger priest, Gerry was much older; you'd look up to people like him," Father Crameri said.

As you stroll past the Wodonga football ground you'll also find a sign which recognises Jack Eames.

Mr Eames served in the Second World War with another Wodonga local, Bill Tindale.

He also had a glittering football career.

Mr Eames played for Richmond in the Victorian Football League and won the Morris Medal in 1949 at the Wodonga Bulldogs.

However, he said this was overshadowed by tragedy that struck the team that season.

There was a bus crash near Chiltern where a player and two committeemen died.

Mr Eames said seven other players didn't play football with the team again.



The Heckendorf family started a dairy farm on this site in the 1870s. Now it is a park boasting flora, fauna and featuring many recreation and sporting events from cricket to soccer. ( Brian Allen )