



Mr R J F BURNS



Mr Burns is distinguished by being the first Civilian Member to be elected to the Club Committee - in 1992, the Club's Centenary year.

Mr Burns was a Trustee of the Club from 2003 to 2005

Robert John Fred Burns was born on 10 July 1937 at East Brisbane. His parents were John (Jack) Fred Burns, who was born in Charters Towers, and Molly Eugenie Sarah Burns (née Brazier) who was born in Croydon, London. Jack Burns was an accountant who was employed for many years as the paymaster at the Queensland Meat Industry Board at the Cannon Hill abattoirs. Molly Burns was a prominent ladies fashion model who worked in Brisbane and interstate. Robert had one sister, Janice Everson Burns (later Clarke) born in 1944. The family lived at Agnew Street, Norman Park.

He attended Norman Park State School from 1941 to 1949 and Brisbane State High in 1950 and 1951. Robert was unsettled at high school and his father arranged for him to work at the Brisbane Meatworks.

Influenced by his father, in 1952-53 Robert enrolled part-time in accountancy at the State Commercial High School College. He worked at the Queensland Meat Export Company and then from 1955 to 1968 with the English, Scottish and Australian Bank Ltd (ES&A) – including time as the

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branch accountant at the King George Square Branch. He also served on the bank's relieving staff – including 3 months at Coolangatta (he claims surfing!).

He maintained a life-long interest in education – becoming an Accounting Associate of the University of Queensland (AAUQ) in 1966; Senior Associate of the Australian Society of Accountants; and graduating as a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Queensland in 1968. He completed his Chartered Accountancy qualification in 1973; and was made a Fellow of that Institute in 1977. Since 1997 he has been a Life Member of the Institute of Credit Management. He joined the Insolvency Practitioners Association in 1973, and was Queensland Chairman from 1986-90.

In 1956 Robert served in the Royal Australian Air Force as an Aircraftsman during the then National Service Scheme. He was posted to RAAF Amberley, and has maintained a connection with those times through his involvement in the RAAF Association, and his Presidency of its National Serviceman's Branch (Qld).

In 1968 he left the bank to join the Chartered Accounting firm of Brown, Patrick & Co. The senior partner of the firm was Brigadier Murray Brown MC, ED – Club President in 1985. This firm had strong audit, tax and insolvency practices – and Robert worked in the latter. In 1973 he became a partner and the firm name became Brown, Johnson, Burns & Co in 1976. In 1988 the name changed again to Brown, Burns & Co; and in 1995 Robert retired from practice on the sale of the firm to Ferrier Hodgson & Co.

In 1963, Robert married Darcia Gibson in her home town of Toowoomba. The marriage produced three daughters – Shelley (who also became a Chartered Accountant and a Club Member), Bronwyn and Fiona. From 1979 the family lived in Longman Terrace, Chelmer, and in 1994 moved to Petrie Terrace. Sadly, Darcia died in October 2000.

Robert's sporting passion was swimming. He was a long-time member of Kirra Surf Life Saving Club and was its Club Captain. His surf swimming was rewarded with a number of titles at the Point Danger Branch of SLSQ; and he was twice in the winning open Surf Teams Race and in the Rescue and Resuscitation Race in the Queensland championships. He also took 3rd place in the Australian Open Surf Race. He coached junior swimming for many years – at schools and later at their large home pool at Celia Street, Ashgrove through the 1960's and early 1970's.

Robert was introduced to the Club through his accountancy partner Brigadier Murray Brown and his nomination was seconded by Captain Peter Henderson, on 2 August 1976. After an unsuccessful nomination the year prior, Robert was elected as the Club's first civilian member of the Committee at the 1992 Annual General Meeting. He served for 8 years and retired in 2000 – having served on the Audit, Social and House, and Membership Committees. At his first Committee social function he famously wore a formal evening Dress Campbell Kilt "... to distinguish himself from all the others in their military mess kit!"

His love of all things Scottish (including his namesake) led Robert to organise and host themed events for the Club. These were Whisky Tastings sponsored by distilleries and agents – the first in 1996 and the last in 2006; and from 1996 to 2011, some fourteen annual Whisky Dinners. These dinners showed both how whisky could be incorporated into cooking, and the selection of different whiskies to accompany each course. Menus and whisky selections were derived from Robert's travels and the offerings of particular Scottish restaurants.

Sources included:

- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents
- Interview with Mr Burns December 2017
- Various web pages