

Additional material: Bob's family football memories

You have made me think about a few personal memories of Victoria Park — always sacred ground to my family and happy to share it with the Wurundjeri who got there first.

It is part of Victorian, perhaps Australian history, that the Collingwood Football Club represented the battlers of the inner suburb who took great pride in 'our boys'. These sentiments somehow were transmitted to their sons and daughters as in better economic times they became part of the Collingwood diaspora to the leafy suburbs of Kew, Hawthorn in the east and the newer suburbs in the north of Melbourne like Preston and Heidelberg.

Memories, memories ... Just imagine it is 1892 and the recently- formed Collingwood Football Club is to play its first game at its Victoria Park ground. Mostly poor, certainly underprivileged, men, women and kids are forgetting their daily problems and exulting in 'their boys' playing against the despised Carlton 'aristocrats' on May 7.

In one Cromwell Street household there was an anxious little girl. My 12-year-old grandmother, Rose, dearly wanted to go. Years later in her seventies she told me:

'I actually crazed my mother to take me. All my friends and even the grown-ups were excited about the game. My father and brothers couldn't go. They were working at whatever work they could get. It was a very bad time the 1890s.

'So Mother was my only hope, but she was unwell with a bad cough and becoming very tired. Then she relented and I suppose sacrificed herself to take me. I think we were in the ladies' stand and cheered as loud as we could. Still Carlton won and it wasn't too disappointing. We were there and a part of history.

'It was a very important day but the last one I remember my mother being happy for me. Mother's cough became worse and she died in September. She was only 55.'

My grandmother lived until she was 96 and saw many Collingwood triumphs but that first game was so important to her.

PS: She would have been a little sad that Collingwood played its last AFL game at Victoria Park on August 28, 1999. It was another loss to Brisbane Lions. She would have been pleased her younger daughter and a grandson attended the game — at least maintaining a family tradition.