

## HARRY SHEPLEY

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### Engineer worked to build sports



A cartoon of Harry Shepley from the Dandenong Journal.

What's In a Name delves into the fascinating stories and personalities behind some of the city's best-known street names and locations. This week the Journal looks at Shepley Oval in Dandenong.

The sports oval at the top end of Pultney Street officially became the Harry Shepley Oval in March 1953.

Shep, as he was known, died suddenly on 7 August 1952 at age 57.

His death "robbed this district of one of its finest citizens, and leaves the whole community with a sense of deep personal loss", the Journal reported at the time.

Later that month, the Dandenong Cricket Association (DCA) at its annual meeting unanimously adopted president Frank Storan's suggestion that the Dandenong Council should name a new oval in Mr Shepley's honour.

Dandenong Council, with approval of the Sports Council, in November 1952 decided to give the name to the Pultney Road sports ground.

The official naming took place during the afternoon tea interval in the DCA finals on 21 March 1953.

In a tribute following Mr Shepley's death, the Journal said no man had done more for the advancement of sport in the district.

"No man devoted himself so unstintingly and unselfishly to so many worthwhile community-projects – in fact, his very willingness to serve undoubtedly took its toll on his health and hastened the end."

The piece revealed that Mr Shepley's home was on the corner of Clow and Foster streets.

He was born at Balmain in New South Wales and was a ship's engineer.

He saw service with the Royal Australian Navy through World War I and after the war went into the commonwealth shipping line as a second engineer.

Mr Shepley came to Dandenong in 1926 to open a dehydrating factory.

Four years later, Swallow and Ariell took over the project and up until his death Mr Shepley was one of the firm's most valued employees.

He was the first DCA secretary and later became its president and a life member.

He followed the same path at the Dandenong Baseball Association and was also a past president and founder of the Victorian Province Baseball League.

Mr Shepley founded and served as president of the Dandenong Sports Council, too.

"Thanks to his foresight and enthusiasm this shire has more and better sports grounds than it otherwise would have had," the Journal reported.

The Community Youth Movement had his enthusiastic backing, he was a valued member and a past president of the Dandenong District Hospital Committee, he was a member of the Mechanics' Institute Committee, and of the Dandenong Agricultural Society.

He was elected president of the Dandenong Bowling Club just a few weeks before his death. In 1944 he was elected to the Dandenong Rotary Club and in 1951 filled the role of president. He was a past master of the Lodge of Sincerity, and the Dandenong Mark Lodge. “Throughout all these posts and affiliations Harry brought to bear a direct but friendly approach,” the Journal reported. “If he thought you were wrong, he would oppose you firmly but kindly – and his manner and character was such that in all his public life he never made one enemy.”