

# Western Bulldogs Past Players



## September 2023 Newsletter

### 1960S PAST PLAYERS REUNION



They came from Tasmania, Canberra, Broken Hill, Wagga and all over country Victoria to be at the 20<sup>th</sup> August 1960s reunion in the Past Players room at the West Coast game. Stories of the 1961 Grand Final, the 1962 Reserves Premiership and the Night Premierships were dusted off and fondly recounted and Ray Baxter was presented with his Recognition jumper. Many thanks go to the organisers, namely Owen Madigan, John Schultz, Len Cumming, Ron McGowan, Les Bartlett, Graeme Joslin, Jack Slattery, Graeme Cook, Ian Bryant, Gordon Casey, Ray Walker and Ray Baxter.

*Pictured above from left to right: Murray Zeuschner, Ian Bryant, Bernie Lee, Ray Walker, Kevin Jackman, Ray Baxter, Graeme Ion, Jack Slattery, Kevin Delmenico, Alan Hunter, Gary Merrington, Bernie Lee, Len Cumming, Bill Harrington, George Bisset, Doug Prior, Gary Merrington Front; Norm Mitchell John Dodd, Alan Hunter, Ian Bryant, Rod Coutts, Barrie Beattie, Ray Walker and Ray Baxter*



# PRE-MATCH FUNCTIONS



R16 Graeme Cook, George Bissett, Terry Wilkins, Ron McGowan & Gary Merrington



R16 Ray Walker and George Bissett



R17 Danny Southern and Josh Carter (formerly Josh Hill)



R17 Jason Watts Jon Ballantyne Adrian Campbell Ilija Grgic Danny Southern & Simon Atkins



R17 Jon Ballantyne receives his Recognition Jumper from Ilija Grgic



R17 Josh Carter & Rodney Eade



R17 Rodney Eade interviewed by Kevin Hillier



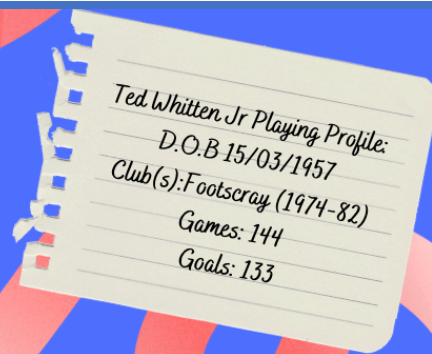
R21 Jeff Geischen with family and Kelvin Templeton



R21 Michael Ford with family and friends

# ***Son of a Gun Made a Name for Himself***

By Ross Brundrett



He was the son of true Bulldog royalty, yet it was a rival VFL club that first came a-calling for Ted Whitten Jr. And it wasn't just some talent scout who knocked on the door, but Graeme John, the senior coach of South Melbourne at the time.

Although surprised by the visit, young Ted conceded the Swans were just showing due diligence. "We lived in Altona North, which was zoned to the Swans," he said. But when a photographer from *The Sun* newspaper dropped by soon after, the promising junior footballer put two and two together.

"Yeah, that was probably when I figured out that my dad had been making a call or two," said Ted. That was enough to draw a response from Western Oval and 16-year-old Ted soon found himself doing a pre-season with the Footscray under 19s, where he was coached by Bill Hughes (who was later to become his father-in-law).

"I'd only ever played under-age footy, having started as an 11-year-old playing under 16s for F&Y Socials – I think I played with them for five years before I got a kick," he quipped.

But once he grew into his body, his game quickly developed, learning how to protect his body, and the footy, against opponents keen to knock over the kid with the famous name.



"One of my first memories as a player at the Bulldogs was playing in a practice match against Hawthorn at Sale and I got hold of the ball and had a look around and the next thing I knew I was flat on my back. Gary Dempsey ran past and said to me 'You're gonna have to get rid of the pill quicker than that!'"

Things moved along quickly at the Bulldogs, and after showing out in the reserves he was selected to play his first senior game at the age of 17, against South Melbourne where he was pitted against Steve Hoffman, destined to later move to the Dogs and become a good mate.

"I think I went alright in that game because the ground was under water and I was used to playing in those conditions as a junior," he said. But the biggest thrill in that first year was playing in the reserves grand final at the MCG, even though 'Scray was outplayed by Fitzroy.



"I played in the centre and had a pretty good game but it was an amazing experience, playing in front of a crowd that grew to about 120,000. I kept thinking that the year before I'd been playing under 16s at 10am in Deer Park with about 15 people watching."

For a while there his dad would watch his junior games, from a distance. "He'd hide behind trees and say nothing but if he ever saw me bludging, he would blow his whistle and I knew it was him without looking."

Ted also benefitted from the guidance of coaches such as John Birt, Bob Rose and Bill Goggin although he believed it was Royce Hart who got the best out of him.

"I enjoyed playing in the centre and he was happy to swing me in there and I think I played my best footy there in 1980 and 81."

Though not particularly fast for his size, Ted had exquisite skills on both sides and good goal sense which saw him win two Big V jumpers, although a calf injury ruled him out of a clash against WA.



Ted Whitten with Gordon Casey, Riley Garcia and Stephen Power

Cruelly, just as his career was reaching its peak it all came crashing down in a curtain raiser to the pre-season Ash Wednesday fundraiser at VFL Park in 1982 when he suffered a severe anterior cruciate ligament injury. The same right knee collapsed again and again. "Three ops but we just couldn't get it right. These days it would have been different. But for me, I never played again. My career was over at the age of 25 and I had always dreamed of getting to the 200 club, like my dad," he said.

Not that Ted was lost to the game. "I was appointed as a skills coach when Mick Malthouse came to the club and I was on the match committee for eight or nine years, but then I had to give it up to help look after my dad," he said. His devotion to his ailing father was there for all to see on that heart-wrenching lap of the MCG shortly before Ted Snrs death in 1995 and since then Ted Jnr has continued to do the Whitten name proud with his work raising funds and awareness for prostate cancer research.

Although the yearly AFL Legends Match has not returned since Covid, Ted is still involved in various fund-raising effort as promotions manager and a director of RULE prostate cancer.

These days he commutes from his sea change home at Anglesea to his office in North Melbourne.

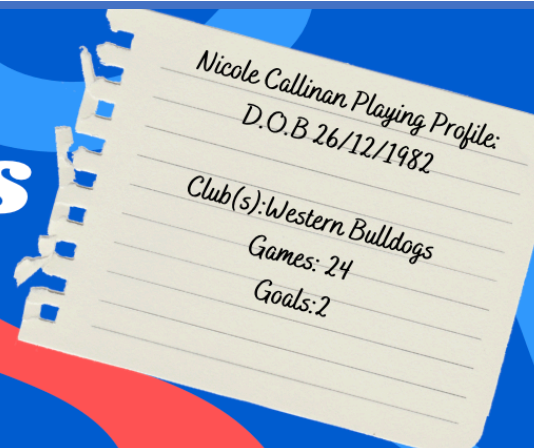
"There's just me and {wife} Pam at home, although the children {Dean, Jarrod and Kate} are all close by," he said. It goes without saying that they are all Bulldog fans.

For the record, Ted has three grandchildren, so who's to say there won't be another Whitten at Whitten Oval in the years to come.



By Neil Cordy

# Favorite Daughter returns to the Kennel



Another important step forward in the Bulldogs' AFLW setup was trumpeted with the return of Nicky Callinan to Whitten Oval. A proud member of the Bulldogs' 2018 premiership team, Nicky has been appointed AFLW development manager and talent pathway coach under senior coach Nathan Burke. The full-time position is a fitting reward for Nicky's footy journey and testament to her dedication and talent.

Incredibly, Nicky only started playing game when she was 23, having previously had a crack at soccer, basketball, netball, gymnastics, calisthenics and Little Athletics.

Her parents Chris and Bernadette (Bernie) kept her away from footy because there were no local girls competitions when she was growing up and they feared she would be injured playing with the boys.

"Now I'm happy to thank my parents for not letting me play," Nicky said.

"It allowed my body to develop to handle the physical challenges of footy."

Nicky is also grateful to Chris and Bernie for her love of the game which she developed alongside them at Victoria Park with mum (Collingwood supporter) and Windy Hill with dad (Essendon).

"I'd read the Record and analyse who would play next week from the reserves," Nicky said.

Those early coaching tendencies were matched by her desire to play the game. Her older brothers Ben and Sean were pivotal in those formative years.



"My brothers would have friends down the street and they would take me with them," Nicky said.

"It was never you're a girl, you're not coming, and they just encouraged me to play. This was the late 1980s and early 1990s. My brothers weren't embarrassed to take me.

I have a younger sister, Emily, who also supported me, which was pretty special. They were so important to me along the way, it's hard to get anywhere without them."

Nicky had been playing for Darebin at the top level for almost a decade when talk of an AFLW competition started to grow legs. She was injured in a trial game for the historic exhibition match

between the Western Bulldogs and Melbourne in 2013 but recovered to play for Victoria against Western Australia the next year.

By the time of the draft for the inaugural AFLW 2017 season, Nicky wasn't sure whether it had come too late for her, but she turned up with her parents for the draft call at the NAB building in the Docklands just the same.

"At the grand old age of 33 my name was read out by the Bulldogs at pick 85," Nicky said.

"I cried and so did mum and dad. It was pretty special. All my friends were having babies and I was about to start playing footy. It was one of the best moments of my life. Growing up I would never have imagined females playing footy at the highest level. It's pretty damn cool."

Nicky's first game for the Bulldogs was equally memorable with the Whitten Oval locked out for the round one game against Fremantle.

"It was the night after the lock-out at Ikon Park between Collingwood and Carlton," Nicky said.

"I'd never played in front of a crowd like that. I'd been at big games before as part of the crowd but when you are out there it's different. You just feel proud."

That pride would grow to even bigger proportions the following year (2018) when the Bulldogs won their first AFLW flag.



"I watched the replay for the first time only last year," Nicky said.

"I was so impressed by the way we played for each other. The one-percenters were huge. We had a great connection and understanding. It was such a proud moment, five years this year. No one can take it away from us. We all shared it, not just the players but the staff."

After four seasons and 24 games at the kennel, Nicky moved onto the next stage of her footy career, coaching. In her role as development coach at St Kilda she coached Nathan Burke's daughter Alice. It was then on to Carlton as a back-line coach and playing/assistant coach for the Blues VFLW team. In March this year Bulldogs Football Director Chris Grant called Nicky in for a meeting.

"We want a premiership player back," Grant said to her.

Now 40, Nicky is affectionately called "Mum" by some of her former teammates she is now coaching. She is also recovering from surgery on a torn quadriceps tendon.

"My main aim is to be the runner for the Bulldogs," Nicky said.

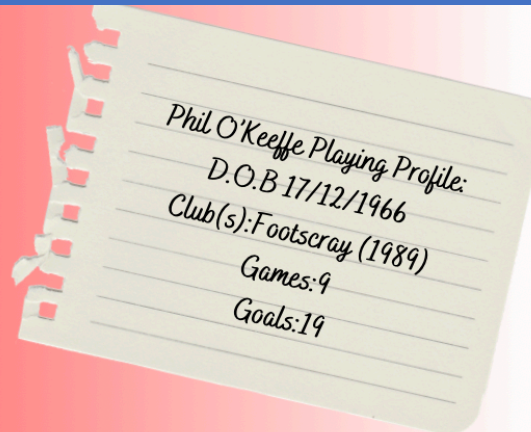
"I'm not ruling out a comeback to playing in the lower grades either."

The footy talent in the Callinan family also extends to the creative arts, her uncle is comedian, actor and screenwriter Damian Callinan, who wrote and starred in the footy movie, *The Merger*.



By Michael Stevens

# ***Phil O'Keeffe - The Accidental Recruit***



After taking part in pre-seasons at Collingwood (1986) and Carlton (1987), Phil O'Keeffe's dream of playing AFL footy may have ended before it kicked off, if not for a car accident.

"I was playing in Ballarat in 1988 and had a car accident and couldn't get to training, so the club said they would find me a club to train locally and that turned out to be the Bulldogs," he explained.

"I was there for three weeks when Mick (senior coach Mick Malthouse) and 'Curly' (reserves coach Rod Austin) pulled me aside and asked what I was actually doing there and why I trained only Monday and Thursday nights and not Tuesdays."



Phil O'Keeffe with sponsors Dave Boxshall, Dave March and Graeme Joslin

"I said I didn't train Tuesdays because that was their hardest night, so they said if I trained Tuesdays, they would play me in the reserves, and that's how my career started."

Despite growing up in Seddon, O'Keeffe says he barracked for St Kilda as a young kid after being brainwashed by his uncle Roy Lane and after doing an apprenticeship as a boiler maker decided he had to get out of the western suburbs and that's how he found himself in Ballarat. The club's president at the time was Barry Augerstein and he credits him with instilling some self-belief.

"I stayed at his pub and he was fantastic," O'Keeffe said. "He was the one who got me believing I could probably go further with my football." The other person whom O'Keeffe credits with having a massive influence on him was his 1989 coach Mick Malthouse.

"I think it was because he cared and probably identified me as a bit of a lost soul at the time," he explained. "He had a massive influence on my life."

The year 1989 of course was one of the most tumultuous in the club's history with the season finishing with the Bulldogs possibly merging with Fitzroy.

However, O'Keeffe's recollection of that period does not reflect any of that turbulence.

"I didn't understand how the club could have folded," he said. "I'd played nine games and was still on a high when we went away on an end-of-season trip to the Gold Coast."

"I was only young and never really knew what was going on. It was players such as Rick Kennedy and Steve Wallis who had their fingers on the pulse."

O'Keeffe played in the opening round of the 1989 season – at the age of 22 years and 105 days -- against Carlton and kicked three goals, including two goals with his first two kicks, but says he didn't accumulate too many possessions.

His main recollection is of his nerves pre-match. "I had Mexican the night before, which probably wasn't the smartest move, and when we ran on to the ground I couldn't feel my legs.

"Then we were doing lane work (pre-match) and the ball was kicked into my face, and that's what woke me up," he added with a laugh.

For all that, O'Keeffe played nine games in his debut season and kicked 19 goals, but his career was short-lived.

"I did a massive pre-season (in 1990) under Terry Wheeler, but injured my back in a practice match against Richmond and the injury never came good," he said.

"I had cortisone injections and tried to play, but the injury plagued me for a long time. I reckon the car accident I had in 1988 might have had something to do with it."

"Anyway, half-way through the season 'Wheels' and Ted Whitten decided to give me the boot."

O'Keeffe's football career continued at Werribee (four years and as a member of the 1993 premiership squad) and Williamstown (three years) and he also coached Parkside in the Footscray District League and was named that club's 'Coach of the Century'.

Ironically, the youngest member of the 2003 Parkside premiership team coached by O'Keeffe was 18-year-old Kon Karavias, who is now chief commercial and strategy officer at the Western Bulldogs.

O'Keeffe credits his wife of 31 years, Lynda, as the person behind his successful 20-year business career in telecommunications.

"Her proviso to going out with me was that I had to get a job and she was the one who initiated my stint at the Footscray Mail for starters," he said. "And then when we got married I worked my butt off."

Nowadays, O'Keeffe keeps himself fit with regular early-morning swims in Williamstown, where he lives, and which started after an inspirational talk with Bulldogs great Barry Round.

He is also heavily involved with the Bulldogs as vice-president of the club's Past Players committee after being asked to join by President Ross Abbey in 2015.

And he probably won't like me saying this because he's not into self-promotion, but if you need a 1300 or 1800 number, he's your man.



Lynton Fitzpatrick with Phil O'Keeffe



## 2023 Membership subscriptions

- Former Player or Official \$50
- Partner \$50

Please forward any changes to your address, mobile or email to Owen Madigan 0408 105 151 or [belplas1@bigpond.com](mailto:belplas1@bigpond.com)

## Polo Shirts

Western Bulldogs Polo shirts are available for \$65 (including GST, postage and handling). Shirts for former senior players will include their player number on the shirt at no extra charge. To order - send the following information to [westernbulldogspastplayers@gmail.com](mailto:westernbulldogspastplayers@gmail.com) or 0418510635



Adam Contessa photographed wearing the 2023 polo

Name  
Postal address  
Mobile  
Shirt size - M L XL XXL XXXL

### How to Pay:

**By EFT to:** Footscray Western Bulldogs Past Players **BSB:** 633 000 **Account:** 199 932 344

Please use your surname as payment identification.

**By credit card:** Contact Treasurer Andrew Howlett on 0418 510 635

## Player Welfare

We strongly recommend past players join the AFLPA Alumni. Benefits include:

- up to \$500 refund on excess payments when in hospital, if you are in a private health fund
- up to \$8000 refund for extra operation charges should you require surgery on body joints, including damaged teeth
- an opportunity to seek funds from the Geoff Pryor Fund or an Injury and Hardship fund in the event of suffering financial hardship.

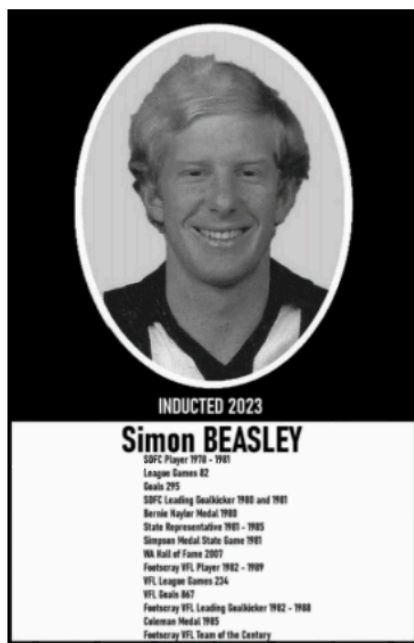
The one-off joining fee is \$50. To join, contact Chris Smith at AFLPA on 0400 019 391 or [csmith@aflplayers.com.au](mailto:csmith@aflplayers.com.au).

## 2023 Committee

President	Ross Abbey	0412 073 092
Vice President	Phil O'Keeffe	0402 007 270
Secretary	Owen Madigan	0408 105 151
Treasurer	Andrew Howlett	0418 510 635
Committee	Les Bartlett	0416 485 652
	Adam Contessa	0416 081 259
	Graeme Joslin	0412 771 235
	Gary McGorlick	0409 804 057
	Len Cumming	0418 374 079
AFLCPP Delegate	Jack Slattery	0425 746 148

## 2023 Events Calendar

Friday 22nd September	12pm	AFLCPP Medallist Lunch at Hyatt on the Park
Sunday 12th November	11am	AGM venue TBC
	12pm	End of Year Lunch following the AGM
Sunday 19th November	10am	AFLCPP Bowls Day at Essendon Bowls Club



Congratulations Simon Beasley on being inducted into the Swan Districts Hall of Fame.

Fellow Bulldog and Swan Districts player Gordon Casey accepted the award on behalf of Simon who was overseas.



## The Two Dogs Podcast

Episode 26: Fletcher Roberts and Shane Biggs

Available at: <https://omny.fm/shows/the-two-dogs-podcast/fletcher-roberts-shane-biggs>

## Website

Our website includes:

- previous editions of the newsletter
- podcasts
- match day information

The address is:

[www.westernbulldogs.com.au/pastplayers](http://www.westernbulldogs.com.au/pastplayers)



# Happy Birthday!

*Celebrating milestones*

## 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday:

**Doug Reynolds**

1954 Premiership Player

D.O.B: 4/9/1933

Height: 178cm

Weight: 71kg

Club(s) played for: Footscray

(1952-1958), Richmond (1958-1959), Sorrento (1960-1961)

Games Played: for Footscray: 80 (46-2-32)

Goals: 17

391<sup>st</sup> player listed



## 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday:

**Stuart Magee**

D.O.B: 13/10/1943

Height: 174cm

Weight: 74kg

Club(s) played for: South Melbourne (1962-1968), Footscray (1968-1975)

Games Played: for Footscray: 132 (56-1-75)

Goals: 77

561<sup>st</sup> player listed



## 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday:

**Ron Birch** *(photo unavailable)*

D.O.B: 16/10/1943

Height: 170cm

Weight: 70kg

Club(s) played for: Footscray (1963)

Games Played: 1 (1-0-0)

Goals: -

512<sup>th</sup> player listed

### 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday:

#### **Stephen Boyle**

D.O.B: 4/09/1953

Height: 178cm

Weight: 71kg

Club(s) played for: Footscray (1972)

Games Played: 6 (4-0-2)

Goals: 10

611<sup>th</sup> player listed



### 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday:

#### **Gary Walpole**

D.O.B: 29/10/1963

Height: 180cm

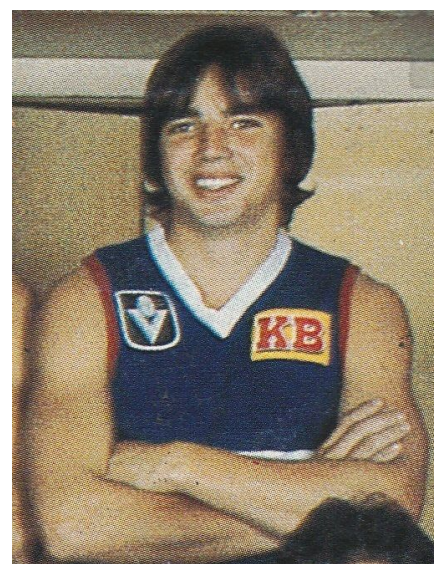
Weight: 73kg

Club(s) played for: Footscray (1982-1983)

Games Played: 12 (3-0-9)

Goals: 5

720<sup>th</sup> player listed



### 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday:

#### **John Taylor**

D.O.B: 21/09/1963

Height: 194cm

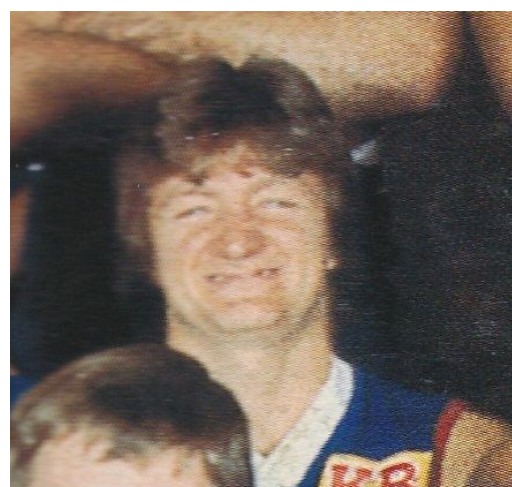
Weight: 92kg

Club(s) played for: Footscray (1983)

Games Played: 2 (0-0-2)

Goals: 2

736<sup>th</sup> player listed





### 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday:

#### **Rod MacPherson**

D.O.B: 21/09/1963

Height: 177cm

Weight: 80kg

Club(s) played for: Footscray (1982-1986),  
Brisbane Bears (1987)

Games Played: for Footscray 43 (20-0-23)

Goals: 24

725<sup>th</sup> player listed



### 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday:

#### **Tim Harrington**

D.O.B: 19/09/1963

Height: 188cm

Weight: 84kg

Club(s) played for: North Melbourne (1984-1986),  
Collingwood (1987), Footscray (1989-1990)

Games Played: for Footscray 18 (7-0-11)

Goals: -

805<sup>th</sup> player listed



### 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday:

#### **John Cuzzupe**

D.O.B: 11/10/1973

Height: 176cm

Weight: 74kg

Club(s) played for: Footscray (1992)

Games Played: 1 (1-0-0)

Goals: -

829<sup>th</sup> player listed



## Vale

### Roy Harper

Roy died on 15<sup>th</sup> August aged 94. He played 40 games and kicked 26 goals for the Bulldogs between 1952-55. He also had a distinguished career with Sandringham winning a Best & Fairest and three times finishing in the top five in the Liston Trophy.



### Gordon Watt

*(Photo unavailable)*

Gordon died on 18<sup>th</sup> August aged 94. He was a club administrator through the 1960s and 1970s. He was always supportive of the players.

### Barry Thornton

Barry died on 24<sup>th</sup> August aged 83. He played 22 games for the Bulldogs between 1958-61 and later coached Braybrook. Barry regularly attended past players functions and enjoyed catching up with his ex-teammates.





## Thank you to our Sponsors!



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Flash Fabrications specialise in customised architectural metal fabrication in the construction industry. It is a family-owned business run by Dave Marsh. It was established in 2004 and is in Hoppers Crossing. (Dave is the son of Ivan Marsh who represented the Bulldogs with distinction in 77 games between 1963-67)



Tosca have a wide range of products including hard and soft sided trolley cases, suitcases, wheels bags, cooler bags, wallets, backpacks, business bags, accessories and much more. It is a family-owned business run by Noel Pearce and his sons. It was established in 1996 and has a factory outlet in East Keilor.