STRATHALBYN F.C.  Interviewed 16/8/17 by Jan Bache.

Before I transcribe the interview a little history of the Strathalbyn F.C. which I have taken excerts from

a book entitled Strathalbyn from 1879-1979.

“On the 26th.June 1879 the following notice appeared in the ‘Southern Argus’

A meeting of those interested in forming a football club in Strathalbyn will be held at the Commercial Hotel tomorrow evening. We hope that there will be a good attendance and that a club will be formed.The club prospered and in the period 1879-1902, before the formation of a “League” in the Hills or in South, Strathalbyn

played 158 matches winning 100, losing 39 and drawing 17. The most games played in a season before 1902 was in 1890 when twelve games were played. Often with limitations of travel and communications then prevailing, no more than a handful of matches were played in a year. The years 1889-1890 were highly successful years and on both occasions the club claimed that Strathalbyn were “Premiers of The South”A gentleman called Mr.Sewell

came to the rescue and offered his paddocks at ‘Dunreath’ for the year. Mr.Sewell’s generosity continued throughout the season and on one occasion he provided a pint of “Oakbank” for each of the players at half time.

This time, however he had gone too far and one of the players wrote to the ‘Argus” saying that he did not want his name included with the drinkers and pointed to his team-mates that “all true athletes know full well that abstinence from liquor is the primary principle to be adopted in training’. Oakbank or not, Strathalbyn performed magnificently on Sewell’s paddocks defeating Goolwa,Milang,Mt.Barker, Meadows and Murray Bridge. At the end of the year Strathalbyn were undisputed “Premiers of The South”. In 1901 a band of spectators were now attending matches to offer their encouragement. **“*It can safely be said that the games has caught on with the women folk. Although football is not and never will be a ladies game, they are permitted to enjoy the excitement which prevails when a game is within a point or two of either team becoming the victors, and the barrack of the ladies as carried more than one almost defeated team to victory”***

Looking back one of the real obstacles to organised football before 1900 was the problem of travel. The trip to Murray Bridge for instance meant a 6.00.a.m. start by horse drawn van from Strath to Callington where the train was caught to the Bridge. The trip to Willunga was sometimes worse. On one occasion in 1892 the Strath players departed in the van on the afternoon before the match but the horses were knocked up by the time they got to Meadows. Mr.A.O’Loughlin came to the rescue by supplying a new team and driving the players to Willunga himself, via Kangarilla and McLaren Vale.

In 1903 season matches were now arranged weeks in advance and club officials were keen to see Strath do well against the other Hills Association Teams: Mt.Barker, Onkaparinga, Woodside,Meadows and Hahndorf. In fact the players were warned at the beginning of the season that ‘practice and training will have to be strictly followed up as the management desires, in the interest of the game in this town, to make a big effort to come out at the top of the list. The new era began in the old colours of Red and white striped Guernseys and stockings.During a match v Mt.Barker an incident occurred and the umpires changed their decision. Following a Strathalbyn protest, an Association meeting was called but the League, not unexpectedly, stood by its umpires. The Strathalbyn Club viewed this decision as being so insulting that it felt ‘honour bound’ to withdraw from the Association. With 5 wins from 8 matches in the new league, the Strathalbyn club departed from the Association as from August 15, 1903, and did not rejoin until the beginning of the 1906 season. Ironically, in the interim, it returned to the old days of ‘arranged matches’

There is so many stories that can be told but we go to 1963 when Strathalbyn F.C. joined the Great Southern Football League, this was by no means a cut and dried affair. It is ironic to note that Strathalbyn’s application for affiliation was accepted with the proviso that ground facilties would be improved. The question of adequate clubrooms was already a nagging issue well before the Great Southern officials underlined it, so it was not surprising that a Strathalbyn delegation soon toured southern ovals in search of a solution. For opposition teams it meant changing in the vastness of the showgrounds Hall where players often quipped that if it is raining you could continue the match inside – in the dry. For the Strathalbyn F.C. it meant the lack of a home to develop as its own Put simply, there was little, apart from a love of football, to keep players contented in the red and white jumper. This need to offer both players and supporters, a wider involvement in the Football Club was not fully met until 1979, the Centenary Year. During the years Strathalby have been given great service by many fine players with six: Perry Jones, Allan “Red” Sorrell, Rob Westley Allan Dunn, Trevor Heinrich and Fred Megaw In 1979 the season began well for the Roosters. Brenton Smith and brother Kym were inspiring the younger Strathalbyn players and the Red and White seemed set to sweep all before them. The ‘A’ grade grand final saw the dream came true. Strathalbyn won its Cententary Premiership with style, class and distinction that Brenton Smith had urged of players for months. Kym Smith capped off a great season by winning the Mail Medal with 30 votes from Brother Brenton on 24. Kym also took out the Escort Plate on a Countback from Lamb of Encounter Bay. As the champagne began to flow, the astute SFC President

Ken Haines was quick to praise Coach Brenton Smith as being ‘the greatest thing that has ever happened to the Club’. And today Brenton is still a remarkable asset to the Strathalbyn F.C.

Today I ventured to Strathalbyn to interview Perry Jones (Sth Argus) who commenced playing for Strath at the age of 12 years,and played from 1960-1986, approx games 160 ‘A’ and 256 ‘B’ grades. Perry played in the GSFA Assocation side in 1963 and during his career played in 1968 & 1972 ‘A’ grade premierships, also in 1964 and 1965 ‘B’ grade premierships. Perry played full forward or ruck and was very lucky as injuries were not a problem. Perry served on committees for 6 years and still does general reporting of Strath matches for publication in the

Southern Argus. Perry has to be the “Superman –kryptonite” of the South, he has never owned a car or attained a driver’s licence, but gets to all matches to report on games. During 1978/79 a few builders along with volunteers were the people who built the clubrooms. Committee members were the guarantors for loan to build clubrooms. Perry respected: Peter Gilb***ert/***Captain/Coach, Peter George, Barry Beckman, Megaw Bros. and

Robert Westley. And in his opinion Brenton Smith was the best player in the League.

Still many more stories to be told and recorded.