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**TALKING
'POINT'**

Hunt in deathly footy story

BY MELANIE WHELAN

WHAT happened after this monument was erected for one of Ballarat's best footballers remains a mystery his fellow Pointies are determined to solve.

They are taking their hunt nationwide for what could be a monumental change in the game, sparked by a deathly incident killing one of the game's stars in Ballarat more than 100 years ago.

Media reports in *The Courier* and *The Echo* show Howden Selleck, "one of the most manly and fair players", was believed to be one of the first Australian Rules footballers to die from an on-field incident in August, 1913. He was aged 23.

The Golden Point star went up in a marking contest and fell awkwardly in a match against South Ballarat, dying two days later in a private hospital with internal injuries, with reports saying "his intestines had been shockingly torn up".

East Point Football Netball Club's memorabilia committee feels the Eastern Oval incident could have been the start to mandatory first-aid on hand in football clubs.



LEGACY: East Point memorabilia committee members Michael Walsh, Peter Storey, and Garry Fenton and hunting to uncover how much Pointie Howden Selleck's death more than 100 years ago changed Australian Rules football. **Picture:** Lachlan Bence.

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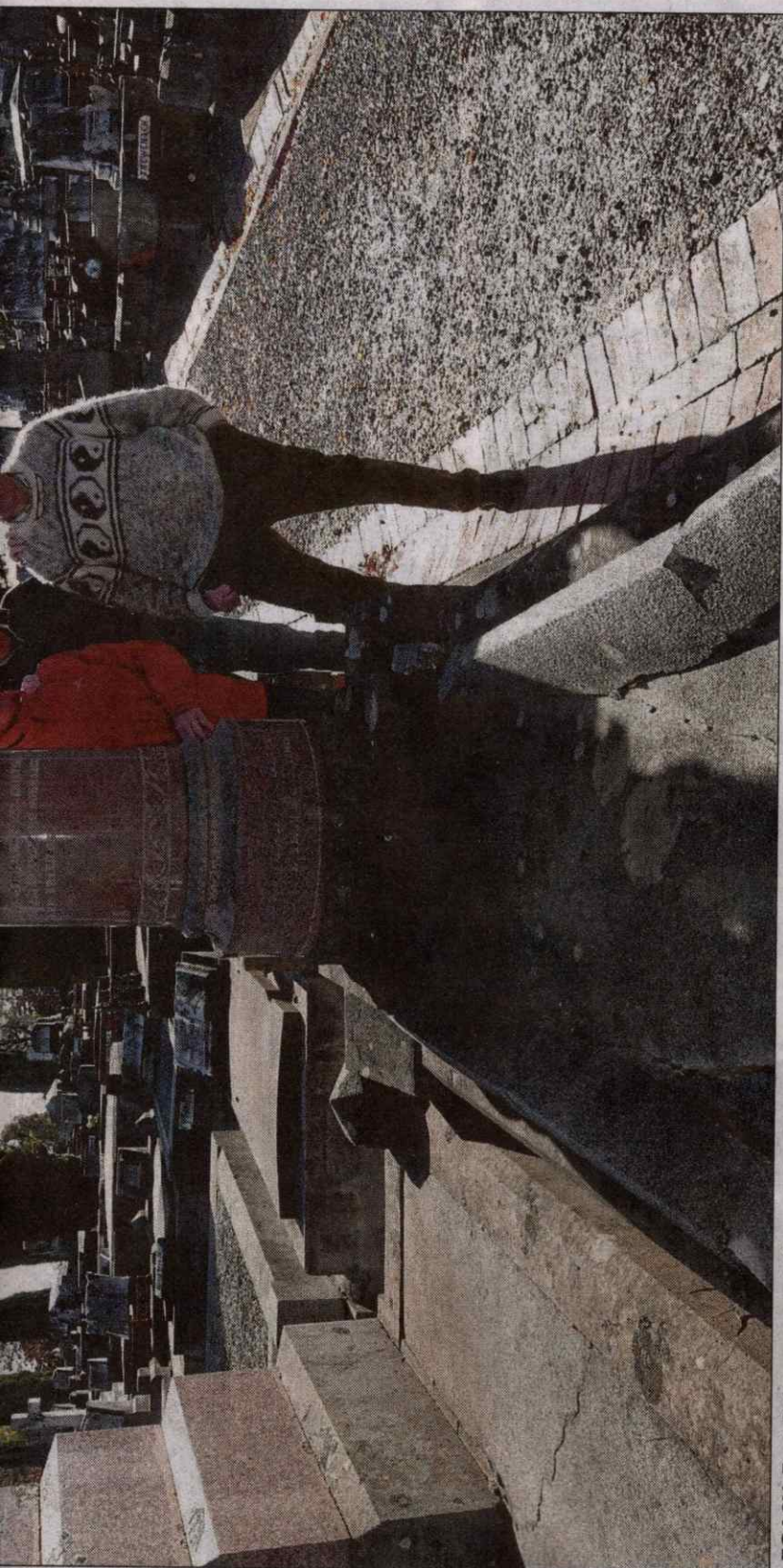
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Committee member Michael Walsh said any oral history in Golden Point ranks has dried up - he was confounded by this, given the gravity, publicity and widespread grief in newspaper reports from the time.

The club's history buffs are appealing for family or fellow historians to help piece together the next chapter in this story. They say they feel a duty to Mr Selleck and the club but also for Ballarat to determine what could be a significant part of football history, changing the game, from this city.

Mr Walsh said the league at the time still played fixtures against then-Victorian



LEGACY: East Point memorabilia committee members Michael Walsh, Peter Storey, and Garry Fenton and hunting to uncover how much Pointie Howden Selleck's death more than 100 years ago changed Australian Rules football. **Picture:** Lachlan Bence.

the crowds and well-meaning helpers who carried Mr Selleck from the field. This man said a first-aid trained person would have stretched Mr Selleck off and suggested first-aid classes were needed for all clubs.

It was not until after the war the memorabilia committee has been able to trace this being put forward in a BFL meeting in 1918. Golden Point's 1919 annual report shows for the first time wages for trainers of 38 pounds, but it was unclear how this amount was distributed.

Mr Walsh said the committee had contacted the AFL for further detail on first-aid

in the wake of Mr Selleck's death. The query is on hold during COVID-19 lockdowns with staff stood down. A national advertising campaign was also underway.

"We've got it confirmed Howden Selleck played. We've got it confirmed Howden Selleck died after a knock on the field," Mr Walsh said. "This was widely mentioned across the state when he died. We want to know what happened next."

A statewide fundraising campaign was made for Mr Selleck's memorial. Mr Selleck, a 1910 Golden Point premiership player, had

a reputation as one of the best footballers in the state. His play was known in Melbourne, Bendigo and Orbest where donations were made. News of Mr Selleck's death spread to Tasmania where *The Mercury* reported he had arrived at the dressing room to find he had no spot in the team that day. Mr Selleck had an ingrown toenail the club had thought would render him unable to play. Another player gave up his spot for Mr Selleck who "seemed disappointed". Mr Selleck kicked two goals before the collision.

Adding to the club's modern intrigue, Mr Selleck

is buried in Ballarat New Cemetery among the city's prominent families of the era, most notably next to the Ronaldson family grave. There is also a plaque for Mr Selleck inside the Anglican Christ Church cathedral in Lydiard Street.

From their research, Mr Walsh said the memorabilia committee had understood Mr Selleck's family had little money. His mother was a widow at the time of his death. The committee felt these were incredible tributes, needing to be told, for a young man whose story had all but vanished from Ballarat's sporting folklore.