

MEN OF LEAGUE

Issue 58 - March 2015



LOYALTY IS NOT DEAD

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Here we are again, celebrating the start of yet another NRL season.

The Bunnies have their work cut out for them if they're to have a chance at taking home the premiership again in 2015. There are plenty of great match-ups lined up throughout the season, including a grand final rematch against the Bulldogs in Round 5, which I am looking forward to.

Of course, while those tough battles on the field are what we look forward to each week, it is also the camaraderie and community spirit of our game – the players, the legends, the kids at their local football ground, the mums and dads shouting support from the sidelines or the fans who flock to every game – that truly make the game special. It is this fortitude and heart, at every level of our game that Men of League works to bolster - day in and day out.

I am pleased that Men of League remains a beacon in rugby league, and among all sporting codes. As an organisation, we work with the highest levels of integrity to deliver

welfare and support to those among us who are doing it tough.

Regardless of the challenges our code faces, for the Men of League our focus remains on welfare and the delivery of relevant and meaningful activities that make a difference to the lives of men, women and children in the community.

When things get tough, Men of League are there to help. When people are in need, Men of League are right there to lend a hand. Our organisation was built on strong foundations of mateship, honour and a shared belief that together we can make a meaningful difference - and that is where our focus remains.

More than a decade on from our humble beginnings, Men of League continues to grow, celebrating all that makes our wonderful game great. From the board and the entire team at Men of League, I want to thank you for your ongoing support.

Here is to what's set to be another nail biting season of rugby league.

Ron Coote

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

With the Telstra Premiership competition now underway, the Men of League team are in full swing, both watching the game we love and carrying out a range of events and welfare initiatives.

2014 was a great year for Men of League, with our team strengthened and our efforts yielding wonderful results in the community. We have lots planned for this year that will see us achieve wonderful things in the form of events, connecting and supporting players retiring from our game as well as fundraising and the delivery of meaningful welfare support.

As we go to print we get ready to welcome Frank Barrett into the Men of League fold, in the role of

Queensland state manager, replacing the great Steve Calder in our Brisbane office. Commencing the role in March, Frank brings a wealth of understanding about our game and its people to the Foundation. His networks and passion for rugby league are sure to be invaluable in helping take us to a new level in the rugby league community and also the sporting world generally. On behalf of the entire board, we welcome Frank to the team.

Frank's appointment is the latest in a string of wonderful achievements for the Foundation, which will help ensure we continue to grow and contemporise to be the finest sporting charity in Australia, or even the world.

We have recently also taken the time to review our membership structure, which will now be set as an annual \$20 subscription. By moving to an annual subscription it will help sustain our programs. We thank the community for their ongoing support, without which we simply would not be able to achieve all we do.

Corene Strauss



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AN AFTERNOON WITH STEVE CALDER

It was an occasion to celebrate the contribution to rugby league of one of its great servants and most popular men, Steve Calder.



Steve and his mates from Narromine. (from left) Hayden Bennett, Glen Hutchison, Rod Pillon, Byron Hutchison, Ron Powell, Bill Reilly, Ros Tapp and Gary Walsh.

The sell-out audience of 370 and genuine warmth and admiration in the room at Broncos Leagues Club said it all about the respect and affection in rugby league for Steve Calder, the outgoing Queensland state manager of Men of League.

There were former teammates and Brisbane first grade opponents, including compere Darryl Brohman and Trevor Gillmeister, ex-Norths Devils mates.

There were players he coached including international Tony Currie and the champion of coaches Wayne Bennett who Calder served under during the Broncos' early years.

Friends and past teammates travelled from his hometown of Narromine, as well as Dubbo, Illawarra and Sydney where Steve Calder had, in some way and at some time, left an indelible mark for his dedication, honesty and humility.

His first coach when he was a teenage first grader at Narromine, Les 'Chicka' Pearce, was the first guest speaker.

Currie was coached by Calder when he was relegated to Brisbane's reserve grade in 1992 after a distinguished career, his last season before retiring. The coach told Currie: "Most players, when they decide to retire, do not put in on the field for the rest of the year. Promise me you will not do that on my watch."

By season's end, due to a positive attitude instilled in him by Calder, Currie came off the bench to play a role in the Broncos securing their inaugural first grade title and was able to retire in glory.

Front row legend Petero Civoniceva spoke about when Steve coached him in Broncos under-20s and became a role model, mentor and friend for life. He learned discipline and respect that he, and others, still carry with them today.

Long-time friend Tim Ferguson spoke of Calder's quality as a coach when he came on board with JPS 'Jeeps' Rugby. "Steve taught us the importance of cultural change, behavioural standards and professionalism," he said.

"He used to say that any club can have a 'good times and drinking culture' but the only culture he knew that players enjoyed was a winning one. He brought nothing but professionalism to our coaching ranks and it is still there today as the boys he coached now instil his values into the younger boys coming through the ranks."

The words "great mate" and "true gentlemen" were used constantly throughout the day around a room at Broncos Leagues Club that was filled with admiration from the likes of Men of League patron John Fahey and CEO Corene Strauss, Bennett, Currie, Gillmeister, Brohman, Allan Langer, Shane, Ben and Chris Walker and their father Garry, Ben Ikin, Petero Civoniceva, Steve Renouf and Chris Johns to name but a few.



MC Darryl Brohman with Steve Calder



Anthony O'Brien created this painting of Steve from his playing days



The crowd were entertained by Megan Longhurst



Steve and his son Nathan (on Steve's left) with Nathan's mates



(from left) Lou Uhl, Steve Calder and Tegan Jennings from our Queensland office



Steve surrounded by his supportive family

LOYALTY STILL ALIVE IN NRL

**Is loyalty dead in the cut-throat salary cap driven era of rugby league?
Not necessarily. We have more one-club stalwarts than ever before.**

BY NEIL CADIGAN

So loyalty in the NRL is dead, yeah? Full-time professionalism and increased wages which sees rugby league's top-liners earning over \$500,000 a season, with million dollar men not far away, has destroyed the traditional allegiance that the game was built on?

I hear it all the time, and certainly it is a slur on the game when we have an abundance of contracts being broken midstream – by players or clubs who inadequately manage their salary caps. The old “if the player is not happy, it's best to let him go” dictum being trooped out regularly.

And there is no doubt whatsoever that clubs that are successful and want to keep talented players they have developed are penalised by salary cap restrictions, with just \$200,000 as an allowance on top of the base \$5.5 million each club can spend on its top 25 players (the cap expands to \$6.4 million with all allowances, including \$600,000 for ‘marquee player’ sponsorship payments).

However, the “loyalty is gone” cliché is an aberration. It's one of those convenient generalisations that has far less substance than most people realise, and less than what judgmental players of generations past often state.

Stats provided by the game's foremost statistician, David Middleton, show that we have more one-club players of a decade of more service than at any time in the past 25 years.

As we go into the 2015 NRL season, there are 18 players sprinkled through the 16 clubs who have been with their club for a decade or more and played for no other in the competition. That's three times as many as in 1980 (six players) when there were 12 clubs and almost four times more than in 1985 (five players), when there were 14 clubs.

And the trend is growing, not diminishing.

And this is not just a numbers game, it's seen in the players that demand the most money and that's where my argument began before David substantiated my belief with his numbers.

Look at the marquee players in the NRL, the icons of their era, and see how many have shown loyalty to their clubs when in most cases when they could have been tempted by bigger money to leave.

Our national captain Cameron Smith has only played for Melbourne Storm; this will be his 14th season since he made his first grade debut in 2002.

His teammates include one-club-men Billy Slater (13 seasons) and Cooper Cronk (12). Sure, Slater and Smith's contracts (with Greg Inglis's) were a focus of the 2010 Storm salary cap breach which gave them an unfair advantage, but there's no need to delve too much into that.

Smith's rival skipper in State of Origin, Paul Gallen, has only played for Cronulla – for 15 seasons which makes him leading one-team-servant in the league.

West's Tigers appearance record holder and most celebrated player Robbie Farah has worn no other club colours (13 seasons a Tiger). Manly boast Brett Stewart (13 seasons) and Steve Matai (11) and only lost Glenn Stewart (11 seasons) this year under cap duress.

The longest-serving players at our only two remaining 1908 foundation clubs, the Rabbitohs and Roosters, were playing last season: Roosters fullback Anthony Minichiello (302 games) and grand final winning captain John Sutton (229).

Of the 15 ‘mature’ clubs in the NRL (the eight-season old Titans are not included), eight of the appearance record holders are either currently playing (Smith and Sutton) or retired or departed to England in the past five years (Darren Lockyer, Broncos; Matt Bowen, Cowboys; Danny Buderus, Knights; Nathan Hindmarsh, Eels; Ben Hornby, St George Illawarra; Minichiello, Roosters).

The greatest scorer in Australian Test matches and State of Origin, Johnathan Thurston, is not a one club man but is in his 11th season with the Cowboys after withstanding the temptation of a massive offer to join Penrith in 2014.



Paul Gallen ... a Shark for life. Photo: DAILY TELEGRAPH

Look at Brisbane. Lockyer retired as their greatest player in 2011, and Corey Parker is going into his 16th season), Sam Thaiday his 14th and Justin Hodges his 12th, although he had four seasons with Sydney Roosters.

It was highly speculated that Australian and Queensland skipper Smith would return to his hometown Brisbane and play for the Broncos in 2015, for “family reasons”, but he signed a four-year deal that begins in 2015.

When giving his reasons he articulated that loyalty and stability was dear to him, although no one is naïve enough to suggest the dollars didn’t add up. However that has been a universal consideration in the game since it became full-time professional in 1996 and even before.

“If I had to make a decision on leaving my great mates, then it would have been easy – I would have stayed. But I had a very important decision to make for my family, they are the No.1 priority in this whole negotiation,” Smith said at the time.

“I’m now very pleased to finish at this club and be a one-club player. I remember when I joined the club as a 17-year-old, I hadn’t played a first-grade game but I said to my parents I would love to be a one-club player.”

In March 2013 Thurston knocked back a far greater offer from the Panthers to stay in Townsville, although could not be a loser considering the riches offered by both clubs. The desire by him and his partner to raise a new-born child in North Queensland was the clincher, but he said: “I’ve got lifetime friends and best mates here and unfinished business [a premiership]. The last few weeks have been tough to come to this decision but it’s the right decision for me.”

So in a nutshell we have, in 2015:

The Australian captain, the NSW captain, the 2014 premiership-winning captain, a three-time Dally M winner and representative football’s greatest points-scorer are all ten-year or longer club servants.

The latest Immortal, Andrew Johns, only played for the Knights (retired in 2007) and the all-time first grade appearance Lockyer (retired 2011), are both part of this supposed ‘mercenary period’.

What has happened is that under the salary cap system club have to prioritise who they keep and who they have to let go. They must have top-of-the-list marquee players and they will fight hard to keep them. That drains often 40 per cent or more of their spend, so the trend then is to bank on up-and-comers doing the business either by their own development or by astute (and often early) recruitment.

The players in the mid-category – paid good money when an up-and-comer but who mightn't come up to expectations, or the handy first grader who won't win a coach a competition – are the ones shifted around. And loyalty there certainly is diminished.

That happens by them being squeezed out of the first grade line-up and given “the opportunity to look around” edict or a player or his manager deciding the grass might be greener somewhere else and asking for a release.

Either way it is part of shuffling chairs and dollars to meet the cap, with the often too-convenient and sometimes lazy practice by clubs to “back end” contracts (paying players an inflated amount in the last year of a contract to reach the agreed per-season average over the duration of the contract) that causes a log-jam and cap alerts.

That's the part of the game that the fans are entitled to abhor. That's where loyalty comes at a price that player or club aren't prepared to tolerate.

When it comes to coaches? It's a completely different matter. Pressure to perform as a coach has never been greater, nor has been their dispensability.

No less than 18 coaches in the past eight years have been dumped while still on contract! I'll delve into that next issue.



One club servant, Cameron Smith. Photo: DAILY TELEGRAPH

ONE-CLUB, 10-YEAR PLAYERS

1980 (6)

Greg Pierce (Cronulla – 12), Terry Randall (Manly – 11), Tim Sheens (Penrith – 11), Chris Anderson (Canterbury – 10), Graham Eadie (Manly – 10), Max Krilich (Manly – 10).

1985 (5)

Robert Stone (St George – 11), Kevin Hastings (Easts – 10), Steve Mortimer (Canterbury – 10), Ray Price (Parramatta – 10), Brad Waugh (Penrith – 10).

1990 (9)

Peter Sterling (Parramatta – 13), Steve Sharp (Parramatta – 12), Peter Wynn (Parramatta – 12), Michael Beattie (St George – 11), David Hatch (Cronulla – 11), Brett Kenny (Parramatta – 11), Wayne Pearce (Balmain – 11), Royce Simmons (Penrith – 11), Trevor Cogger (Wests – 10).

1995 (6)

Andrew Ettingshausen (Cronulla – 13), John Cartwright (Penrith – 11), Greg Florimo (Norths – 10), Brendan Hall (Easts – 10), Paul Sironen (Balmain – 10), Adrian Toole (Norths – 10).

2000 (9)

Andrew Ettingshausen (Cronulla – 18), Laurie Daley (Canberra – 14), Steve Carter (Penrith – 13), Michael Hancock (Brisbane – 13), Mitch Healey (Cronulla – 12), Jason Croker (Canberra – 10), Carl Macnamara (Penrith – 10), Steve Reardon (Canterbury – 10), Luke Ricketson (Sydney Roosters – 10).

2005 (10)

Jason Croker (Canberra – 15), Luke Ricketson (Sydney Roosters – 15), Andrew Johns (Newcastle – 13), Paul Bowman (North Queensland – 11), Stacey Jones (Warriors – 11), Darren Lockyer (Brisbane – 11), Shane Webcke (Brisbane – 11), Hazem El Masri (Canterbury – 10), Matthew Gidley (Newcastle – 10), Awen Guttenbeil (Warriors – 10).

2010 (14)

Darren Lockyer (Brisbane – 16), Nathan Cayless (Parramatta – 14), Nathan Hindmarsh (Parramatta – 13), Luke Burt (Parramatta – 12), Steve Simpson (Newcastle – 12), Matt Cooper (St George Illawarra – 11), Ben Hornby (St George Illawarra – 11), Anthony Minichiello (Sydney Roosters – 11), Alan Tongue (Canberra – 11), Matthew Bowen (North Queensland – 10), Paul Gallen (Cronulla – 10), Mark Gasnier (St George Illawarra – 10), Kurt Gidley (Newcastle – 10), Corey Parker (Brisbane – 10).

2015 (18)

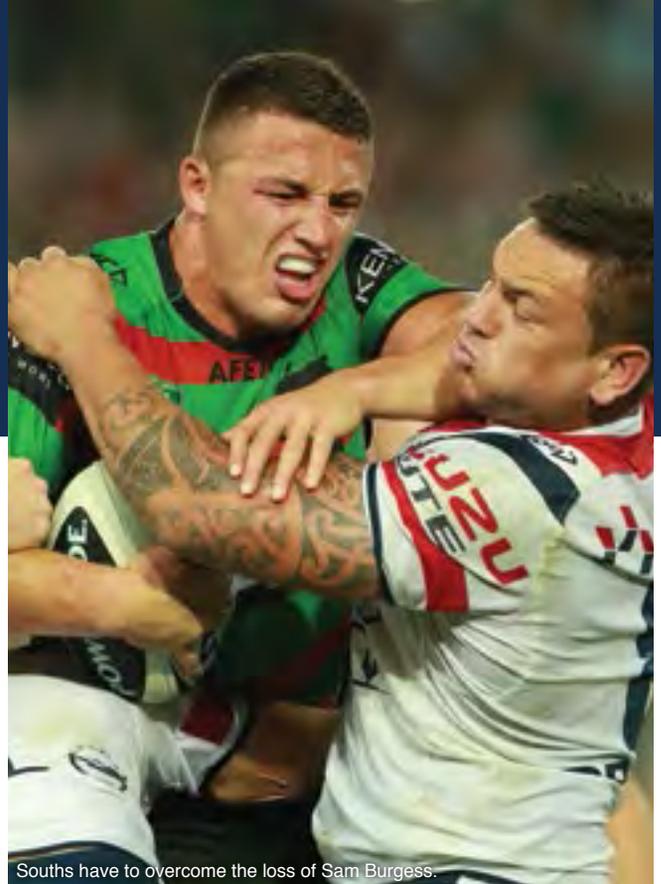
Paul Gallen (Cronulla – 15), Kurt Gidley (Newcastle – 15), Corey Parker (Brisbane – 15), Cameron Smith (Melbourne – 14), Ben Creagh (St George Illawarra – 13), Robbie Farah (Wests Tigers – 13), Billy Slater (Melbourne – 13), Brett Stewart (Manly – 13), Sam Thaiday (Brisbane – 13), Cooper Cronk (Melbourne – 12), Matthew Scott (North Queensland – 12), John Sutton (South Sydney – 12), Manu Vatuvei (Warriors – 12), Simon Mannering (Warriors – 11), Steve Matai (Manly – 11), Jarrod Mullen (Newcastle – 11), Chris Lawrence (Wests Tigers – 10), Sam Rapira (Warriors – 10).

Source: David Middleton, League Information Services



RAY'S WRAP

The voice of the game and league's greatest TV broadcaster Ray Warren



Souths have to overcome the loss of Sam Burgess.

SEASON OF INTRIGUE ABOUT TO UNFOLD

This shapes as the season of intrigue: the premiers without their warhorse Sam Burgess; Manly facing the prospect of losing two of their big names in Foran and Cherry-Evans; the Roosters without Sonny Bill; Melbourne's big three – Smith, Slater and Cronk - are getting no younger and now there is no Hoffman and the Eels are without Jarryd Hayne and the Dragons have lost Brett Morris.

These are just some of the clubs with big name losses who have been there or thereabouts in recent years.

Then there are those who have seemingly built up. Brisbane have added young Milford, Boyd and Blair and will no doubt be stronger without mentioning the return of Wayne Bennett. Penrith could not have had a worse season with injuries yet they got within one victory of the big one in 2014, so if they are to go upwards and you would think they will be the sky's the limit.

On the injury front, Wests Tigers had a similar year but even with all their stars available I doubt they have the depth like Penrith have. Then there is Canterbury. On paper they seem stronger and they made it to the grand final last year. Brett Morris will be good for them and their young forwards should only get better.

Cronulla have bought well, particularly in Michael Ennis and Ben Barba, the latter is still to reproduce his stellar form from when he won everything except the Davis Cup, so they should get better.

The Cowboys have many admirers and why not with Thurston, Scott, and Taumalolo ... what else do you need. Of course the men from Bondi will again challenge at the end of the season. Don't forget they now have Blake Ferguson as well.

One can go on about the fortunes of clubs but at the end of the day only eight can make the finals.

Seriously it's hard to see how the top eight from last year will alter that much, if at all. For teams that didn't

make it, the road ahead will be very hard even if that club has improved its roster.

I live in hope that the rule change will quicken up the play of the ball and rid us of the game-killing art of wrestling. I am in total favour of referees calling 'held' earlier if it's going to speed things up. So what if we miss a few offloads as a result, who cares.

I still think we should be reducing the interchange as a further deterrent against the wrestle and as a means of returning stamina to the game.

I hope you enjoy the new season, I think it will be a cracker.

As this edition goes to print I am racing the clock to get back for round one. I have been in hospital to have a prostate operation and ran into some complications. My thanks go to the Men of League who checked on my health and sent me the biggest hamper of fruit you have ever seen, thankfully not from China!

Hopefully I will make it for the kick-off. If not I will just have to join all those of you who, for whatever reason, rely on the good old TV.

To all of you not well or unable to get about as you would like, I will bet you can't wait for the start and neither can I.

In other words, right now I know how you feel.

THE MISSING KANGAROO FINALLY UNVEILED

Rugby league historian David Middleton has come across a century old error that robbed an Australian international his rightful place in our list of Test players. His quest is to ensure the injustice is set right. **BY DAVID MIDDLETON**

After 106 years it is time to correct an injustice that has cost a South Sydney champion his place as an Australian rugby league international.

Centre Arthur Conlin, who captained the Rabbitohs to their first two premierships titles in 1908 and 1909, has been denied his due recognition as a Test player, all because of a clerical error and confusion over his name.

Until relatively modern times it was newspaper convention to name a person by initial and surname so when A. Conlin was listed in Australia's centres for two Tests against New Zealand in 1909 most casual observers believed it was the same A. Conlon who had toured Great Britain with the first Kangaroos of 1908-09. Newspapers were notorious for minor errors in names – often the result of transcribing lists written in the handwriting of a club official.

Some publications, such as sporting newspaper the Referee, attempted to set the record straight. In June, 1909, "Hunslet" wrote that: "A. Conlin, at centre three-quarter, was safe, and justified his inclusion. He is not, as some think, the old player Albert Conlon, of the Glebe. He is younger, taller, and a South Sydneyite."

Ironically, Conlin's opportunity to break into the Australian backline came as a result of Conlon's unavailability. The South Sydney centre led the Rabbitohs to victory in the first premiership final of the NSWRL in 1908, taking over from original skipper Arthur Hennessy, who had left for England aboard the RMS Macedonia with the first Kangaroos.

Albert Conlon returned with his touring mates early in the 1909 season but after one appearance back in the maroon jersey of Glebe, he was forced to stand down indefinitely after a family crisis. Meanwhile, Arthur Conlin was in dashing form for Souths who were unbeaten through the early rounds of the season. The 26-year-old captained the Rest of New South Wales against the Kangaroos and was later chosen to represent New South Wales and Metropolitan against a touring New Zealand side.

He was then promoted to Australia's line-up for the first Test against the Kiwis, making his debut at the Agricultural Ground in Sydney. Overlooked for the second Test in Brisbane, Conlin returned for the third, played at Wentworth Park where he distinguished himself with a try in a 25-5 victory, which handed Australia a 2-1 series win and earned the team permanent possession of the "Black and White Cup".



THE SOUTH SYDNEY PREMIERS OF 1909 WITH ARTHUR CONLIN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SECOND ROW.

Back row: Tommy Anderson, Tom Golden, Edward Fry (selector). Third row: Tom Peters (honorary secretary), C H Jones (official), Jim Davis, A Ross, Max Coxon, Pat Carroll, J J McGrath (official), John Rosewell, C White (vice president), George Ball (honorary treasurer). Second row: Frank Storie, Harry Butler, Arthur Hennessy, Arthur Conlin (captain), Dick Green (vice-captain), Howard Hallett, Bill Cann. Front row: J Howell (trainer), William 'Webby' Neill, Arthur Butler, Jack Leveson, Billy Redwood (trainer).

Conlin remained at the helm of the Rabbitohs and guided Souths to a second premiership after the sensational Balmain “no-show” in that year’s final. Balmain boycotted the decider in protest at the scheduling of the game as a curtain-raiser to the fourth clash between the Kangaroos and Wallabies. Tigers’ officials believed they had reached a mutual agreement with Souths to abandon the final but the Rabbitohs saw it differently, turned up to play and were awarded the premiership by forfeit. Balmain blood boiled over the incident for decades.

Meanwhile, Conlin stuck with Souths until 1911 before a change of residence forced him to swap the cardinal and myrtle for the black and white of Western Suburbs. He played a season with the Magpies before slipping quietly into retirement.

Conlin’s omission from the game’s record was first observed in 1928 when his Test appearances were mistakenly included in the record of Albert Conlon in the NSWRL’s official Annual and Souvenir. It appears that no correction was ever made. A decade later the Courier Mail in Brisbane reported on a get-together between old Kangaroo teammates Bill Heidke and Albert Conlon at an interstate match at the ‘Gabba: “Beside Bill Heidke sat Albert Conlon, who played for Australia against New Zealand in 1909.”

Every subsequent publication, official annual (including those written by this author), annual report and history has fallen for the same error. Conlin, who died in 1947, should be listed among the 799 players who have represented Australia in Tests, World Cup matches and internationals but until now he has been denied his place. A recommendation has been made to the Australian Rugby League to retrospectively allocate a player number to Conlin and to finally restore his place in the list of Australian internationals. It is proposed that Conlin be awarded number 799 with an asterisk to indicate its non-sequential allocation.

Recognition of Conlin’s Test record will also bring to 67 the number of Australian internationals for South Sydney since 1908.

The other player involved in this long-running mix-up, Albert Conlon, was a central figure in the establishment of the Glebe Rugby League club in 1908. Born in 1880, Conlon had played first grade rugby union for Glebe since 1901 and captained their premiership winning side in 1907. Months later he threw his support behind the new rugby league movement and was among the most prominent players in the new code in 1908. He was one of five Glebe players chosen to tour with the first Kangaroos but when he sailed with the team in August, he left Australia with a heavy heart. His older brother John, a



Albert Conlon who had mistakenly been awarded Arthur Conlin’s two Test appearances in then history books.

prominent boxer and NSW rugby representative, had taken his own life a month earlier, setting in train a series of tragic circumstances that befell Conlon and his family.

Only weeks after he returned from the tour, where he had played five-eighth in the second Test at Newcastle, there occurred “a lamentable accident to his children”, forcing him out of the game.

He made only one appearance for Glebe in 1909 and missed a large number of representative games, including the series against New Zealand, another against the Maoris and he took no part in the historic series of games between the Wallabies and Kangaroos.

Before the start of the 1910 season, Conlon suffered further tragedy when his four-year-old son, Richard, died while Conlon and his wife, Catherine, were attending his mother’s funeral. A horse kicked the toddler outside the family home at Fairfield and all efforts to revive the young boy were unsuccessful. The family had been advised to move out of the inner city on account of “the delicate state of [Conlon’s] wife’s health”. Catherine Conlon died later the same year.

Albert was finished with football by this time and after remarrying in 1913, he later relocated to Brisbane and took up the management of a city hotel. He maintained strong ties to the game and became a local selector. He died in Brisbane in 1956.

SO MUCH TALENT PARCELLED INTO ONE IPSWICH FAMILY

The Parcell family of Ipswich holds a unique place in Queensland league history, producing three generations of Queensland representatives... and a recent Broncos recruit who just might make it four. BY STEVE RICKETTS

It is hard to imagine the Ipswich Rugby League scene without the name Parcell featuring somewhere.

First there was Percy, a rugged forward who played seven matches for Queensland between 1922 and 1930. Incredibly only two of those matches were against New South Wales.

The others came against Victoria; Far North Coast (NSW) as well Auckland, South Auckland and South Island's West Coast on Queensland's historic tour of New Zealand in 1925.

Then there was Percy's son Gary who made his Queensland debut in 1956 and went on to play 14 matches for the Maroons, 12 against NSW, as well as eight Tests for Australia.

Gary also toured Britain and France with the 1959-60 Kangaroos and was back in the northern hemisphere late in 1960 for the World Cup.

The next generation provided Gary's son Steve who toured France with the 1989 Queensland Residents side which won all four matches against regional selections.

Percy and Gary were chosen for Queensland from the Brothers club in Ipswich, while Steve, a hooker, was chosen from the Ipswich Jets, who played in the Brisbane competition in 1989.

Now there is Steve's son Matt who has been signed by the Brisbane Broncos from the Jets. He is a lightning fast runner from dummy half with a good football brain. No surprise there, given his bloodlines.

Matt's younger brother, Sam is another fine footballer but his Ipswich Jets' career has been dogged by serious knee injuries.

A civil engineering student, Matt, 22, won the Allan Langer Medal last year as the Jets' best and fairest player. He attracted interest from the Gold Coast



Following in father's, and grandfather's, footsteps – Broncos recruit Matt Parcell.

Titans and Canterbury Bulldogs but opted for the Broncos, given he could continue to play for affiliate club Ipswich if not chosen for NRL duty.

Gary still lives on the farm at Harrisville, south of Ipswich, just as he did in the 1950s, and gets to the football whenever possible.

He was one of the special guests at the naming of the Queensland State of Origin squad for the first match of the 2013 series, with Maroons coach Mal Meninga keen to honour players from the pre-Origin era.

Gary thought his state career would be cut short after his first matches in Maroon in 1956.

A member of the 1954 Queensland touring side to Sydney, Parcell did not play in either interstate match in the NSW capital, and then had to wait until 1956, and a match against the touring Kiwis, to get his first Maroons cap.

“The Kiwis beat us 40-26, and [The Courier-Mail’s] Jack Reardon reckons it was one of the worst displays given by a Queensland team,” Gary recalls.

“Then I got dropped after my first game against New South Wales the following month. I remember it was Keith Barnes’ debut for the Blues and his long, accurate kicking for touch and goal was a big factor in their win.”

The state selectors kept Parcell’s name in their little black books and he played one-off games in ‘57 and ‘58 before playing two games in 1959 when Queensland won the interstate series 3-1, the last time the Maroons would win an interstate series before Origin football was introduced 21 years later.

Despite that wonderful achievement, Queensland gained only seven spots in the 26-man Kangaroo squad for the 1959-60 tour of Britain and France.

“We couldn’t do anything because New South Wales had domination of the selection panel, and that’s half the battle, isn’t it?” Gary said.

Parcell was as tough as they come in an era when only the strongest survived. But he was also mobile for a big man and proved a headache for the best defensive sides.

One of Gary’s finest displays came in the first Test of the 1959 tour of England at Swinton, his Test debut, when he tore into the British pack in Australia’s memorable 24-12 win in front of a parochial crowd of 35,141.

It was the work of the likes of Parcell, Brian Hambly and Billy Wilson which laid the platform for the Kangaroos’ speedy backline, with young centre Reg Gasnier scoring three tries.

In 1960 Australia fielded what was referred to as an all-Ipswich front row for the first Test against France at the SCG.

It certainly was the case that all three men - props Parcell and Dud Beattie and hooker Noel Kelly came from Ipswich - but at the time Kelly was playing at Ayr in North Queensland.

The only New South Welshman in the Australian pack was lock John Raper from St George, with Elton Rasmussen (Toowoomba) and Jim Paterson (Townsville) in the second row.

France, whose lead-up form had been underwhelming, held Australia to an 8-all draw in a tryless match, and major changes were made for the return Test in Brisbane.



Gary Parcell.

“Elton Rasmussen was the only Queenslander to hold his place in the pack,” Parcell said. “They (the selectors) didn’t miss us. We won the second Test easily, so the changes appeared vindicated. But the French won the third Test 7-5, with Elton still the only Queenslander in the pack.”

Parcell’s final Test appearance came in the series opener against Great Britain at the SCG in 1962, with the tourists winning 31-12. At 29 he retired from representative football at the end of that season

Gary has many yarns from the old Bulimba Cup competition between Ipswich, Toowoomba and Brisbane.

“This day we (Ipswich) were to play Brisbane and we had a Toowoomba referee but he got hurt (in a car accident) coming down the Toowoomba Range, which meant (colourful Brisbane referee) Henry Albert had to do the game,” he recalls.

“I said to (Ipswich teammate) Dud Beattie, ‘There will be some penalties here’. We won 16-15, but the penalties were 15 to 4 against us.

“When I was walking off the field Albert said: ‘Parcell, what are you whingeing about, you won didn’t you? I said: ‘All I’m worried about is me having to have called a one-eyed so-and-so like you ‘sir’ for 80 minutes’

“He said he’d report me to the judiciary committee, and I told him if he did that they would fine him for penalising us like he did.”

MEN OF LEAGUE EVENTS CALENDAR

MARCH

13	Southern Division - Shane Webcke Lunch	Leyburn Hotel
17	Northern Rivers - Greyhounds	Lismore
22	North West NSW - Bowls Day	Gunnedah Services & Bowling Club
27	Bundaberg - Kick Off Club	Salter Oval
28	Queensland - Race Day	Gold Coast Turf Club

APRIL

9	Sunshine Coast - Kick Off Club	Mooloolaba Surf Club
10	Illawarra - Golf Day	Wollongong Golf Club
12	Tweed District - Social Function	Billinudgel Hotel
12	Brisbane - Bowls Day	Red Hill Community Sports Club
15	Brisbane - Kick Off Club	Broncos Leagues Club
17	South Coast Bowls Day	Tomakin Bowling Club
24	Bundaberg - Kick Off Club	Salter Oval

MAY

1	Riverina - Wagga Gold Cup Breakfast	William Farrer Hotel
1	Tweed District - Golf Day	Coolangatta Tweed Heads Golf Course
8	Brisbane - Golf Day	Keperra Golf Club
15	North West - Luncheon	Venue tbc
22	Bundaberg - Golf Day	North Bundaberg Golf Club
22	Sunshine Coast - State of Origin Luncheon	Mooloolaba Surf Club
29	Bundaberg - Kick Off Club	Salter Oval
30	Tweed District - Day at the Dogs	Border Park, Tweed Heads

JUNE

11	Sunshine Coast - Kick Off Club	Mooloolaba Surf Club
15	Queensland - Golf Day	Brisbane Golf Club
17	Brisbane - Kick Off Club	Broncos Leagues Club
19	Illawarra - Kick Off Club	Bomaderry Hotel
26	Bundaberg - Kick Off Club	Salter Oval

JULY

23	Central Coast - Race Day	Gosford Race Club
25	Central Coast - Golf Day	Shelley Beach Golf Club
25	Western Region NSW - Gala Bowls Day	Venue tbc
31	Bundaberg - Kick Off Club	Salter Oval
31	Illawarra - Bowls Day	Warilla Bowling Club

AUGUST

13	Sunshine Coast - Kick Off Club	Mooloolaba Surf Club
16	Tweed District - Social Function	TBA, Murwillumbah
19	Brisbane - Kick Off Club	Broncos Leagues Club
21	Southern Division - Gatton Lunch and Golf Day	Gatton
28	Bundaberg - Kick Off Club	Salter Oval
28	Illawarra - Kick Off Club	Ryan's Hotel

SEPTEMBER

17	Queensland - Queensland Luncheon	Brisbane Convention Centre
25	Bundaberg - Kick Off Club	Salter Oval
25	Illawarra - Luncheon	West's Club

OCTOBER

8	Sunshine Coast - Kick Off Club	Mooloolaba Surf Club
11	Tweed District - Bowls Day	Coolangatta Bowls Day
18	Northern Rivers - Golf Day	Ballina Golf Club
21	Brisbane - Kick Off Club	Broncos Leagues Club
23	Bundaberg - Kick Off Club	Salter Oval
24	National - Cox Plate Race Day	Rosehill Gardens
30	Western Region - Gala Golf Day	Venue tbc
30	Illawarra - Kick Off Club	Shellharbour Workers Club

NOVEMBER

27	Bundaberg - Kick Off Club	Salter Oval
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DECEMBER

1	Illawarra - Kick Off Club	Collies Club
10	Sunshine Coast - Christmas Luncheon	Mooloolaba Surf Club
13	Tweed District - Christmas Luncheon	Chinderah Hotel
16	Brisbane - Kick Off Club	Broncos Leagues Club

NEW LEADER OF THE GREAT RABBITOH REVIVAL

John Lee has taken over the administration reins at South Sydney as CEO. His family and rugby league background, and professional career, make him a perfect fit even though few in the game are aware of his history.

BY BARRY ROSS

When South Sydney appointed John Lee as Shane Richardson's successor as CEO, many people in rugby league had never heard of his name. Don't be mistaken, he is rich in league tradition, knowledge and experience which makes him an outstanding appointment at the foundation club that has reached its greatest level in over four decades.

Growing up in the Cronulla area, John began playing league while a student of De La Salle, Caringbah. In those days he developed a close and lasting friendship with Jonathan Docking who went on to play 164 first grade matches in eight seasons with the Sharks, as well as two State of Origin games for NSW. The two were team-mates in the De La Salle club and won a couple of premierships.

After leaving high school at the end of 1981, Lee graduated with a Bachelor of Education from Wollongong University and worked as Jack Gibson's head trainer with Cronulla in 1986 and 1987. He did the same job for Western Suburbs in 1988 under Laurie Freier and then returned to Cronulla, where he became club conditioner in 1989 and 1990 for coach Allan Fitzgibbon.

In those days Lee was teaching at Parramatta Marist Brothers and when the travelling became too much he moved west and was appointed as a Parramatta junior representative coach in 1991. The next year John was in charge of the Eels SG Ball team, which went on to win their grand final. He was sports master at the school and coached several sides over the years.

In 1995 Lee was offered a position in the office of the NSW Treasurer, Michael Egan. He resigned from teaching to take the position and this was the beginning of a hugely successful period working in government and business.

After his position in the Treasurer's department, he worked in public relations for the Rosehill racecourse.

His ability and work ethos was recognised when he was given the responsible position of director-general for the NSW Department of Transport, followed by the same role with the NSW Department of Commerce. When Nathan Rees became Premier in October 2008, he employed Lee as his director-general of the Premier's department and cabinet. More recently, he has been the CEO of Casinos and Resorts, Australasia.

In 1890, John's great-grandfather, Daniel Lee, was the mayor of Botany and a staunch supporter of the South Sydney Rugby Union Club from its beginning in the 1890s. When Souths switched to league in 1908, Daniel continued his support for the club and was probably present at Birchgrove Oval on 20 April 1908 when the Rabbitohs defeated North Sydney 11-7 in their first competition fixture.

It was only natural that Daniel's son and John's grandfather, Herbert who fought with the AIF in World War I, became a Souths fan. He passed on his love of the red and green to John's father, Jack, who grew up in Mascot. Despite moving to Cronulla after marrying, Jack and his three sons and daughter, although also supporting the locals, were all Souths fans.

As a seven-year-old boy in September 1971, John remembers watching Souths beat St George in the grand final with his father two brothers and sister, Michael, Paul and Julianne, on a black and white television set. Older brother Michael Lee became the federal Minister for Health in the Hawke and Keating governments.

Like many others from all over Australia, John admired the way that Souths built up to the 2014 premiership.

"There are three major ingredients to Souths success," he explained. "The club has a strong history and tradition, there is a clear and practical vision of where the club wants to go and it celebrates the milestones along the way."



John Lee at the media conference to announce his appointment. Photo courtesy DAILY TELEGRAPH.

“The Rabbitohs member and fan groups are passionate about the club’s rich tradition and for many years there has been a desire to be a continual top four club. After they won the Auckland Nines, coach Michael Maguire and his squad celebrated the win but within hours, they were focussed on the next challenge - the Charity Shield.”

Lee says that some clubs are development organisations while others are recruitment entities. Souths, he states, are both.

“Our juniors are extremely important to us, they are our life blood,” he said. “However we are always on the lookout, worldwide if need be, for players or staff who can improve us, both on and off the field.

“My attitude to rugby league and indeed life, was greatly influenced by the years I spent with Jack Gibson and Ron Massey.

“Both these men certainly knew all the ingredients needed to make a successful football club and at the

same time, they educated players to be respected role models.”

Although he did not officially begin his new role until 9 February, Lee began working weeks before. He met with coach Maguire and also picked the brain of former CEO Shane Richardson. He likes what he has already seen at Redfern and, while he won’t predict another premiership in 2015, he is emphatic that the club has the players and the coaching staff, along with the administration and board members to overcome all challenges.

“We will be well prepared for all of our matches and appreciate that staying number one takes even more work to stay there.”

A member of the Men of League, the Souths CEO is a keen supporter of our work. He was recently appointed by Ron Coote and John Fahey, to the position of chairman of nominations for the national board. This will help the board identify potential new board members through the renewal process.



MEN OF LEAGUE HERITAGE ROUND

17-20
JULY 2015

Round 19 of the NRL 2015 Telstra Premiership will see Men of League and the NRL partner to recognise past players and the history of our wonderful game.

Join us in celebrating Men of League Heritage Round as we showcase how great this game is, on and off the field.

YOU CAN SUPPORT US BY:

PURCHASING A PAIR OF MEN OF LEAGUE SOCKS

Rally your club, call on your team mates and wear a pair of Men of League socks during July. The socks come in two colours, home and away, with a percentage of every pair sold going directly to Men of League!

JOINING US AT OUR ANNUAL GALA DINNER EVENT

This year our night of nights has moved and will be held on Thursday 16 July, to kick off Men of League Heritage Round, and we are planning a spectacular dinner to celebrate. Pencil the date in the diary now. We hope to see you there and share in this special evening with you.

To keep up to date with all the latest news and updates about Men of League Heritage Round visit www.menofleague.com or like us on Facebook.



SUPPORTERS THANKED AT VIP EVENT

BY AARON HENRY



Ron Coote with our 2014 Gala Dinner sponsor Kin Wong, One Solutions



Ron Coote (r) with supporters Bill and Fay Gilmour



Foundation welfare committee's Kerry Gallen and Chrisco's Michele Deacon



Bob Aldons, representing Jeep Dealers of QLD who donated a Jeep for the Queensland luncheon raffle, with John Raper

Rarely does the Men of League Foundation get a chance to really thank its valued supporters. This year the Foundation decided to host its inaugural VIP Thank You Event, a special gathering where those who have played a significant role in the ongoing success of the Foundation could come together – and the team at Men of League could formally recognise their essential support.

Corene Strauss, Chief Executive Officer, Men of League Foundation said, “Our organisation is so much stronger due to the significant support of our partners - and for that we are truly grateful”.

The VIP Thank You Event, held at NSW Parliament House in the Stranger’s Dining Room at the end of February saw Men of League unveil its first ever Men of League Supporter’s Team, acknowledging the outstanding support of; the Australian Rugby League Commission, John Singleton, Fox Sports, Harvey Norman Commercial, Michael Zann, Jaycar, Parkview, Cumulus Wines, Nick Moraitis, Wests Ashfield, ANZ Stadium, Canterbury League Club, Chrisco, Bill Gilmour, Jeep Dealers of Queensland, ICAP, One Solutions, Craig Brown and Simon Camilleri.

The evening also paid tribute to the clubs who provided ClubGRANTS funding alongside the myriad of other wonderful individuals, businesses and organisations whose contribution to the Men of League in 2014 helped in its efforts to support men, women and children in the rugby league community doing it tough.

“Quite simply, Men of League would not be in a position to continue to provide welfare across the country without those who support us,” continued Corene. “We are genuinely overwhelmed by the generosity shown by so many and are thrilled to have had the chance to thank them in this way.

“Our partners and supporters embody that spirit of mateship which makes rugby league special. I look forward to another amazing year for Men of League and our supporters,” finished Corene.

If you, or someone you know, would like to support the Men of League Foundation, please contact the National Office on 02 8765 2232 as there are a range of sponsorship opportunities coming up.



PROMOTING GOOD HEALTH



US EXPERT TO HEAD CONCUSSION RESEARCH

Professor Sam Gandy is a world renowned expert into the effects of concussion and any link to degenerative brain disease. He arrives soon in Australia to lead important research into the subject, a study that will include rugby league players past and present. BY TRACIE EDMONDSON



Professor Sam Gandy

Retired rugby league players suffering from the debilitating effects of Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) are set to be part of a world-class five-year research program to ultimately improve the acute management of concussion.

Professor Sam Gandy, a world leading clinical expert in CTE from New York University, will be relocating his family and moving to Australia to coordinate the proposed multi-million dollar national research and treatment initiatives into CTE.

CTE is a progressive degenerative disease of the brain found in athletes (and others) with a history of repetitive brain trauma, including symptomatic concussions as well as asymptomatic subconcussive hits to the head.

The research program is expected to include juniors, current adult players and Men of League members as well as athletes from other sports across Australia and New Zealand.

Prof. Gandy and several other experts are soon to release a consensus document on the short-term and long-term consequences of youth sports-related concussions and

repetitive subconcussive exposure including potential cognitive impairment and risk of later life dementia.

Men of League magazine spoke with Prof. Gandy about the proposed new research program for Australia and New Zealand and his hopes to involve at least 50 rugby league players of all ages.

Where will you be based? We are setting up the organisation of the program now. We are planning to have central sites in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney with satellite units in every major athletic centre across ANZAC (Australia and New Zealand).

How long will it take? How many athletes current and retired will you interview? The first phase will probably take about five years. This will involve surveying current and retired athletes ANZAC-wide, trying to capture current and former players with no head injury as well as those with a wide range of head injury and concussion histories. They will be pre-screened with a telephone interview and some will be asked to come in for more detailed analysis. Some will also be asked to undergo brain imaging.

Our first US athlete study was just funded and calls for 50 athletes over the first two years. I hope that I can aim for a similar launch in ANZAC.

Which sports will be involved in the research - the major football codes and boxing? Boxing is classically the sport where brain damage has been the most hotly debated. Boxers are at increased risk for several forms of what we call "traumatic encephalopathies". "Dementia pugilistica" was first described in boxers, hence the name. Now a broader name, chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), applies to the disease in boxers, footballers, military personnel exposed to blast injury on the battlefield.

CTE is related to Alzheimer's disease, which is also associated with a history of head injury. I would like to

survey all sports. There is some chance that jostling the brain around in the skull may be bad for you even in the absence of impact.

When and how did you first become aware that concussion was an issue in football? The first retired NFL player whose case brought CTE to international prominence was Mike Webster, formerly of the Pittsburgh Steelers. He died in 2005 after a prolonged period of psychiatric and neurologic symptoms. CTE often presents with mood swings, depression, anxiety, and the memory changes come later.

What are the similarities with NFL? The baseline prejudice is that head injuries are more common and more serious in the NFL, but no one has really compared CTE risk using the identical study personnel and study instruments in both football and rugby. We hope to resolve the issue of the dementia risk in both sports. The real driving force behind this research is that all the studies of CTE so far have been autopsy studies. We don't yet know whether the risk is 1 in 10,000; 1 in a million; or 1 in 10 million. We also suspect that there are genetic factors that make some people more susceptible to CTE.

The first one that comes to mind is called APOE4 and is known to be linked to Alzheimer's and to poor outcome from head trauma.

Sam Gandy, MD, PhD, is a Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry (Dual Primaries); Mount Sinai Chair in Alzheimer's Disease Research; Director, Center for Cognitive Health and NFL Neurological Care; Associate Director, Mount Sinai Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. In 1989, Gandy and his team discovered the first drugs that could lower formation of amyloid. Gandy has written more than 150 original papers, chapters and reviews on this topic. He has received continuous National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding for his research on amyloid metabolism since 1986.

HISTORY OF GERRINGONG

Many in rugby league know that Michael Cronin came from the picturesque New South Wales south coast town of Gerringong, first representing Australia from there in 1973.

Cronin is still very much involved with the local club and coaches the first grade side, which includes his sons Peter and Pat. None of the Gerringong players are paid and nor is Michael.

The Gerringong club has a 128-year history after being formed in 1887. A book to celebrate the rich tradition of one of the leading clubs in the South Coast Rugby League will be launched on Saturday 18 April at Michael Cronin Oval before the first grade team's opening home game of the season.

All former and current players and supporters are invited to attend, while enquiries about purchasing a book can be made to secretary, Jan Brett at 4234 2100 or 0413 265152.

POLITICS AND SACRIFICE

Many rugby league figures, some well-known but far more little known, have sacrificed plenty, including their lives, in war since World War I. To celebrate the centenary of the Gallipoli battle, a special exhibition stands at NSW Parliament House. BY DAVID ELLIOTT MP



The Men of League, thanks to a generous donation by one of our members, is proud to contribute to the memory of those who have gone before us in acknowledging the sacrifices that have made our state, and our nation, the wonderful places we know today.

Rugby league was built on sacrifice and a fair go, the early pioneers of the game in James Joseph Giltinan giving up everything for the promotion, and betterment, of the players who sacrificed their place in the establishment game and making a political statement to do what they felt right.

While the rugby league family fondly remembers the sacrifice of J.J. Giltinan in his efforts to promote our great game, his sacrifice pales into insignificance, compared with that of the first full time secretary of the New South Wales Rugby League, Mr Edward (Ted) Larkin.

Larkin, a police officer by trade, felt compelled to enter the political world, motivated by the difficulties he saw in the new game's administration, the 1908-09 Kangaroo tour to Great Britain having almost bankrupted the NSWRL.

Larkin left the NSW Police Force and, in June 1909, was appointed secretary of the NSWRL. Larkin's impact was immediate, bringing together the new rugby league community and bringing on board the Marist Brothers organisation, which quickly adopted rugby league as its winter sport.

Larkin's efforts saw the game experience exponential growth and quickly subsume rugby union as the premier winter sporting attraction in Sydney. However, with Sydney's sporting landscape at his feet, Larkin sacrificed a job for life with the NSWRL, entering Parliament as the Labor Member for Willoughby in December 1913, defying all expectations in a conservative heartland.

Larkin, though, was quickly called away from his post in Macquarie Street with the outbreak of the World War I in Europe. Larkin's sacrifice to his nation was immense, and many of his closest friends and colleagues attempted to persuade him to stay home, with his wife, two young sons and public service all calling him.

Larkin, though, would entertain none of their requests, steadfast in his opinion that it was the duty of those who could contribute the most to do the heaviest of the lifting. Indeed, such were Larkin's natural leadership abilities, he was promoted to sergeant a week after enlisting in the forces.

Larkin was offered a commission, but declined, believing himself unqualified for such a lofty appointment. His self-sacrifice, though, continued to amaze his military comrades, refusing the chance to return to Australia after having lost 30 kilograms in Egypt after the onset of influenza, determined to do his duty.

Larkin was among the first ANZACs to storm the shores of Gallipoli on 25 April, 1915, his life ending on the bloody shores of ANZAC Cove. To this day, Larkin is commemorated by the NSW Parliament with a memorial plaque in the south western corner of the Legislative Assembly, which remains a typically understated tribute to a man whose very essence was dedicated to self-sacrifice.

Although his name is synonymous in rugby league circles, I hope the upcoming centenary of ANZAC allows the broader public to understand, commemorate and honour the legacy of men as honourable and strong of character as Ted Larkin.

To this end, until 30 April 2015, the NSW Parliament will join the nation in marking the centenary with the exhibition, Politics & Sacrifice: NSW Parliament and the ANZACs. The exhibition is located around the Fountain Court, Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney. Entry is free and doors are open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. The exhibition will be available for viewing on the Anzac Day public holiday.



Edwin Larkin, on the donkey at Gallipoli, with Lieutenant-Colonel George Braund and Lieutenant-Colonel John Brady Nash

Through a display of photographs, books, newspaper articles, propaganda and records from the parliamentary and other collections, the exhibition will explore political aspects of the war; from the conscription referendum campaigns to the treatment of dissenters and so-called 'enemy subjects' living in NSW. The exhibition will also tell the stories of the members and staff who served as soldiers, officers and medical personnel in campaigns at Gallipoli and the western front.

In my role as a member of parliament, I had the honour of accompanying six high school students on a two-week tour of key ANZAC historical sites in November last year, an experience which will remain with me throughout my life.

It is for the next generation that we remember the sacrifice of those who have gone before us, including the remarkable Ted Larkin, so that we may honour their legacy and preserve the wonderful society we live in today.

LEAGUE TRIVIA

- 1 Which current player has the best goalkicking success compared to any established kicker in the game's history?
- 2 Who holds the record for the most first grade games in the game's history?
- 3 Who has played more State of Origin games - Brad Fittler, Cameron Smith or Mal Meninga?
- 4 Which current Origin player has played the most matches consecutively (in fact he has never missed a match since first being selected)?
- 5 Who was the previous NSW skipper, before Paul Gallen in 2014, to lead NSW to a State of Origin series?
- 6 Name the only two players with a surname starting with Z who have played over 100 first grade ARL/ NRL games?
- 7 Who were the first Gold Coast Titans captains in 2007 (joint captains)?
- 8 Who was the Australian captain during the 1982 tour of England-France - the team became known as 'The Invincibles'?
- 9 Who is the only club CEO to have been in charge of two different clubs to win grand finals?
- 10 Who were NSW's coach and captain when they won their first State of Origin series in 1985?
- 11 Sam Burgess in 2014 became the first Englishman to win the Clive Churchill Medal as the best on the field in a grand final, but the fourth front-rower. Who were the previous three?
- 12 In what year did the playing numbers change in Australia, so that lock went from 8 to 13?
- 13 Who was the last player to win premierships for more than one club in the NRL?

ANSWERS: 1. Adam Reynolds (Souths) 2. Darren Lockyer, 355 games for Broncos 3. Cameron Smith (33) ahead of Meninga (32) and Fittler (31) 4. Johnathan Thurston - 30 straight since game 1, 2005 5. Danny Buderus in 2005 6. Lou Zivanovic (Parramatta) and Will Zillman (Canberra and Gold Coast) 7. Luke Bailey and Scott Prince 8. Max Krilich 9. Shane Richardson - Parramatta 2003, South Sydney 2014 10. Terry Fearnley and Steve Mortimer 11. Paul Dunn 1988, Willie Mason 2004, Brent Kite 2008 12. 1989 13. Lote Tuqiri (Souths 2014, Brisbane 2000). Note Greg Inglis won grand finals in 2009 (Melbourne) and 2014 (Souths) but the Storm were stripped of the 2009 title because of salary cap breaches.



BY YOUR SIDE

DINNER-TIME CRITIQUE IS NOT A BADGERING

Husband and wife refereeing duo, Gavin and Kasey Badger, are their own best critics and footy is allowed at the dinner table ... as Kasey aims to become the first female NRL referee. BY TRACIE EDMONDSON

When it comes to refereeing decisions in the NRL (and most sports) everyone has an opinion, but for one of the game's leading whistleblowers Gavin Badger, the only opinion that counts is that of his wife and fellow referee Kasey.

Kasey, who became the first female to referee in the National Youth Competition (under-20s) in 2012, is one of two part-time female members in the NRL's emerging referees squad that trains alongside Gavin and the rest of the full-time NRL referees.

Now in her second year in the squad and with a dozen NYC games under her belt after starting her career as a referee in 2004, she is as determined as ever to realise her dream of refereeing in the NRL.

“We are both massive fans of the game so we talk about rugby league all the time”

Kasey, who also works part-time as a referee education officer for the NRL, says the fact that she and Gavin work together in the same industry does not stop them talking football at home.

“We are both massive fans of the game so we talk about rugby league all the time,” she said.

“Sometimes it's about work stuff, sometimes the game in general ... a lot of rugby league talk but from different angles.”

Kasey said dinner time conversation also includes critiquing each other's refereeing performances.

“What is really good about our relationship is that we respect each other's opinion so we always ask each other how we went in a game; and talk about any controversial calls,” she said.

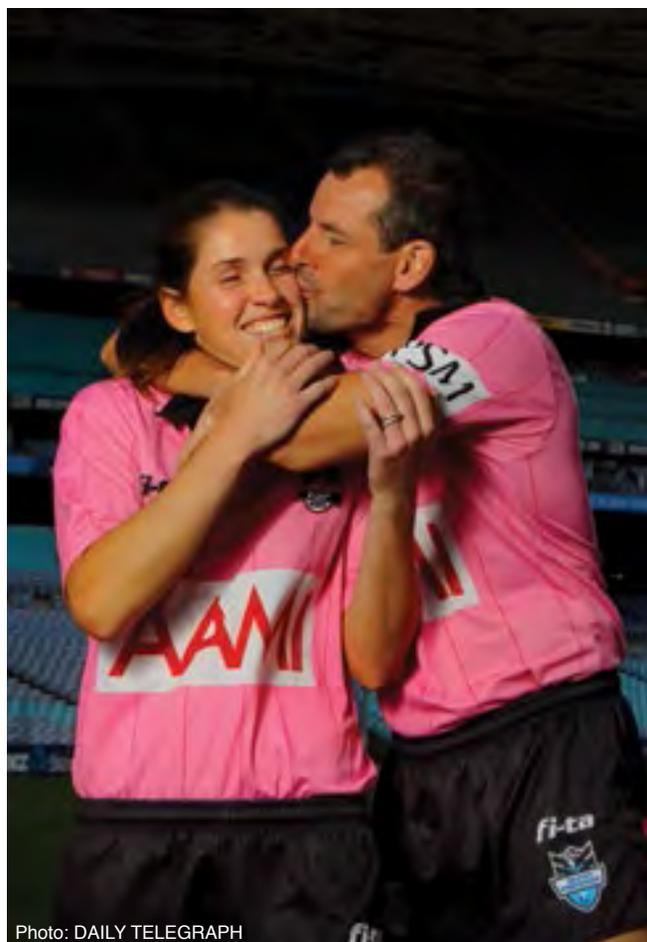


Photo: DAILY TELEGRAPH

“We are very honest with each other and say if we think the other got the call wrong. There is healthy debate.”

Kasey said what she loves most about refereeing is the physical and mental challenge.

“It's unlike any other sport where you can't shut off; it's ever changing and you have to be able to adapt,” she said.

“Probably what I like least is the culture of criticism, more from the keyboard warriors. Generally it's water

off a duck's back and we try to embrace what people are saying, but the level it gets to in social media is disappointing.

"Out on the streets we have never had a negative experience.

"It's interesting to see how other sports deal with these issues – what some sports are willing to accept and not accept.

"The level of support the NRL give the referees' unit is outstanding."

Kasey and Gavin met in 2007 at a referees' function. At the time, Kasey was in the NSW junior representative referees' squad refereeing Harold Matthews and SG Ball; Gavin had done about 20 NRL games.

They married in October 2010 ... out of footy season of course and it was a short honeymoon because they

had to get back for pre-season training.

Before starting her refereeing career, Kasey did an exercise science degree and an education diploma and worked as a development officer for the NRL.

Kasey said Gavin dropped out of school after Year 11, did an apprenticeship as a book binder and his last job (before making a career as a referee) was making bodyboards and surfboards.

Kasey, who has refereed with Gavin once in a match in Thailand, said she had not experienced any barriers as a woman in her bid to officiate in the NRL.

"I have had the same opportunities and the same resources available to me ... it's a level playing field," she said.

"Occasionally the players are nicer to me at the elite level (than to Gavin). They apologise to me if they swear."

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Graeme Hughes *Rugby legend for Inaka Sport/20M, former Rugby League Great & NSW Director*



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Professional Rugby League Player for the Newcastle Knights



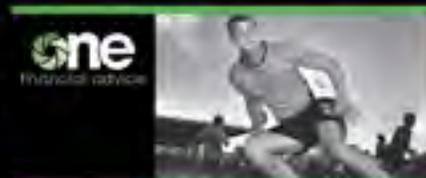
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3x World Boxing Champion



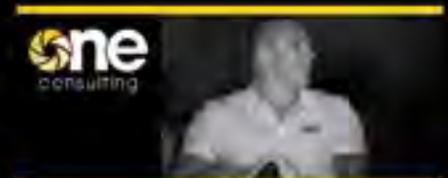
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Professional Rugby League Player for the Sydney Roosters

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Former Queensland teammates Bob Banks, Gary Wellington and John McDonald.

THE TEST BOLTER FROM THE BUSH

Half a century ago Gary Wellington was a bolter from North Queensland in the Australian team. Two years later serious injury saw him become a retired player at age 25 when his best years should have been ahead of him.

BY GREG SHANNON

As the 2015 season rapidly approaches, it marks 50 years since the 1965 Australian tour of New Zealand when Gary Wellington became a shock selection in the Australian Test side – well a shock for those outside of North Queensland at least.

Wellington was well known throughout North Queensland through his on-field feats as a hard running centre, and one of the local Northern based players to scale the heights of the game without going “south” to join a Brisbane or Sydney club.

The retired electrician looks back with satisfaction on his career that was suddenly cut short by an eye injury but includes representing North Queensland against many international and southern touring sides, eight appearances for Queensland and two seasons in the Australian squad, all by the time he was 23.

Born into Queensland’s sugar cane industry that has such a strong association with rugby league, Wellington made his first grade debut for local Burdekin club St Francis before appearing for the Burdekin in the Foley Shield competition before he’d turned 17. International forward Noel Kelly was captain-coach

of the Burdekin squad in 1960 when Gary and a host of young footballers lived the dream of wearing their town’s colours in the intertown competition.

He served an electrical apprenticeship, with an understanding boss by the name of Kenny O’Shea being very supportive of his league commitments. “Kenny was Kel O’Shea’s cousin so he understood the demands of the game and didn’t mind me playing, which wasn’t always the case in those days with the risk of injury,” Gary said.

Wellington was almost lost to the north when he was offered a trial with Brisbane Wests in 1963. “International Ken Day played in Townsville (in 1962) and had organised a trial for me with his club Wests at the start of the 1963 season. I went down and had a run but they signed Arch Brown, a real speedster, but I wasn’t really worried. I did the trial because Kenny was such a good bloke and had offered me the opportunity”.

Returning to his hometown his career continued to blossom with selection in the ’63 North Queensland side to play in the ‘Courier Mail Championship’ and

against the touring Frenchman where he had a blinder only to see another North Queensland player draw most of the attention, Innisfail winger Lionel Williamson who scored three tries.

That same year was the 50th anniversary of rugby league in North Queensland and as part of the celebrations a North Queensland team played an "Australian XIII" at the Townsville Sports Reserve as well as champion Sydney club St George who toured the north. Wellington featured strongly in both these games and drew praise from his opponents.

In 1965 his representative career skyrocketed with selection for Queensland in all four interstate games against NSW. The second game in Sydney proved to be a decisive moment.

"At half-time the scores were fairly close and one of the Queensland selectors, the legendary Duncan Thompson, came into our dressing room and told me to just keep doing what I was doing. I just went back out there and played as hard as I could." Gary's centre partner was a Toowoomba centre John McDonald and their NSW centre opponents Reg Gasnier and Graham Langland's.

He performed well enough to be named in the 20-man Australian squad to tour New Zealand after this interstate game, which was a highlight in Wellington's career. "The tour was a real experience, I had never been further than Sydney and I was disappointed that "Cracker" [McDonald] didn't make the squad, but of course he went on to play for Australia many times and coached Queensland.

"Being from the bush I probably stood out because most of the squad were from Sydney clubs. We were from very different backgrounds but became mates and I remember in particular Nick Yakich from Manly, Les Johns from Canterbury and a NSW country player called Terry Pannowitz. Of course I already knew the other two Queensland members of the tour, Johnny Gleeson and Noel Cavanagh." Wellington played four matches on tour and his Australian number is 397.

The following year he transferred for work to Ingham, 250km north of Ayr, and continued to play for North Queensland and Queensland and was selected as a reserve in the second Test against Great Britain in the 1966 series, played in Brisbane.

Another highlight for 1966 was playing in the first North Queensland team to beat a touring Great Britain side at the Townville Sports Reserve. The strength of the northern game can be seen by the fact that among Wellington's teammates were current or future internationals in Jim Paterson, Brian Fitzsimmons and Williamson.



John McDonald passes to Gary Wellington during Queensland training.

"Being from the bush I probably stood out because most of the squad were from Sydney clubs.

He was hopeful of a place on the 1967 Kangaroo tour but tragedy struck when he suffered an eye injury during a Queensland v The Rest state trial match early in the season. "That really ended my career, I had a young family and at 25 the fear of doing more damage to my sight by continuing to play forced my decision to give the game away".

He continued in rugby league though as a coach in Ingham before moving back to the Burdekin where he coached local side Colts and in 1975 coached the Burdekin Foley Shield side.

Gary reflects on the era fondly. "I remember lining up for Queensland against NSW and we all had full-time jobs and had to get time off to train and travel. Fulltime professionalism was a long way off. We often lined up against former Queenslanders too like Mick Veivers, Lloyd Weier and Artie Beetson so I think State of Origin was a brilliant thing for the game."

He still watches the game and likes the fact that North Queensland has a side in the NRL but also has a soft spot for the Brisbane Broncos.

Fifty years on from the 1965 Australian tour to NZ he will be cheering loudly come kick off for season 2015.

MEN OF LEAGUE CENTRAL

Men of League staff members Ben Ross, Stuart Raper and Michael Buettner have covered many kilometres at many venues and endured many setbacks. Their colleague Andrew Gifford gives us an insight into his workmates.

BY ANDREW GIFFORD, FINANCIAL CONTROLLER, MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION

As an armchair critic and passionate supporter of rugby league for the past 40 years, I now have the opportunity to work for the Men of League Foundation and put something back into the game I love.

I knew very little about the Men of League prior to working for them but soon realised that I'm working with a dedicated, loyal, professional and caring team who put everything on the line to help out the men, women and children of rugby league.

We have a team of 10 at Men of League across the states of origin. Our head coach and CEO, Corene Strauss, points us all in the right direction and leads us around the park. Sandra Hopwood looks after the operations, Jason Turik runs all of the NSW events, Claire White counts the member numbers and I count the money.

Tegan Jennings and Louise Uhl run the show up north and there is a great friendship and camaraderie between the office and between the states.

The final three team members of the current Men of League line-up are the ex-players. They all sit together in the same open office which I have affectionately coined "Men of League Central". Within the confines of these four walls sit three great guys in Ben Ross, Stuart Raper and Michael Buettner who have dedicated most of their life to this great game in various capacities, during and after their professional rugby league careers.

I asked them all what they love about the game, and here are their responses.

Ben Ross: "It's about the battle. Week in, week out it is the toughest sport both physically and mentally. It teaches you to work as a team but allows you to use your own natural brilliance."

Stuart Raper: "I loved to play and coach for the competitiveness, mateship, friendship and enjoyment. I love the thrill of winning and the determination for next week after a loss. I was born into the game and have

been constantly involved in one way or another. I love watching the old games and modern games for the pure enjoyment of it. Reminiscing about games played, coached or watched is one of my favourite things to do.

Michael Buettner: "It's such a great game to be involved with so many friendships made over the years and the physicality of the contest."

The common themes are the toughness of the sport and the contest but the overriding themes for mine are that of teamwork, camaraderie and friendship. It's the friendship factor that I believe have kept these three guys involved in the game and is also a major factor in drawing them to the Men of League, as they all want to keep giving to the game.

Ben Ross is the Men of League welfare and education manager and he has a deep-seeded and true passion for the welfare of the people involved with this game. I work closely with Ben with regard to welfare grants and I admire the focus, drive and compassion that he displays day in day out to make the lives of people involved in the game, who in most instances he doesn't know, better.

Ben achieved the ultimate prize of a grand final victory as a player, but on the downside was on the wrong end of some major injuries. He has said to me: "This is why I'm involved in welfare as I know personally what people are going through mentally and physically." I also asked Ben why he was drawn to the Men of League. He replied: "Just like the NRL, we are working as a team. You can be involved in any way, a volunteer, committee member, welfare officer, or member, but we work together to achieve one major goal: to enhance the lives of our rugby league community."

Ben has only been out of the game for one full season after retiring at the end of 2013 and he is currently an NRL ambassador.

Stuart Raper is the NSW state manager. In his role he liaises with all of the NSW committees and provides input on their local events and other committee issues.



Men of League Central (from left) Michael Buettner, Stuart Raper and Ben Ross.

Stu has both a great personality and skill set that endears him to this role. He has a great logistical background in the game, coaching at the highest level both in the UK and NRL.

He knows how to manage people, move a team around the park and then has what it takes logistically to take the team interstate or overseas to play a game. He has also been in the hot seat of coaching with the refs and can also draw upon his successful media career with Fox Sports and ABC.

I asked Stu what drew him to the Men of League. His reply: "Being able to reconnect with many of the ex-players in our game plus attending enjoyable functions and events knowing that the money raised will be going to help someone in the rugby league community."

Michael Buettner, the newest member of the team, is the NRL alumni manager and focusses on the careers and wellbeing of newly retired players. Since he retired from playing in 2004, 'Buetts' has had an instrumental

role in in the Toyota Cup competition as the inaugural Toyota Cup manager, was a judiciary panellist and is currently an NRL match review committee member.

These widespread experiences across the game, along with pursuing his own business interests, have given 'Buetts' great grounding to enhance and strengthen his role of helping the newly retired players of the game.

Michael explained his drawing to Men of League with: "The giving nature of what the Men of League does – there are so many worthy causes but the Men of League supports every man, woman and child from the rugby league community that falls on hard times."

What I have particularly liked about the Men of League experience is the banter that I have with these three guys. The different perspective I get from them being ex-players and coaches and their experiences in the game gives this armchair critic an invaluable knowledge and insight as to how the game operates at an elite level.

PLAYER STATS

Games played: 475 (NRL and UK Super League)
 Games coached: 264
 Tries scored: 115
 Goals kicked: 77
 Field Goals: 0
 Positions played: prop, lock, five-eighth, centre
 Grand finals played: 2
 Grand finals won: 1
 State of Origins: 7
 Games played for Australia: 1
 Tries scored for Australia: 2
 Grand finals won as coach: 3 (under-21s, reserve grade, UK Challenge Cup)
 Number of games suspended: 25
 Number of minutes in sin bin: 40
 Send offs: 1
 Number of wooden spoons as player or coach: 0
 Countries played or coach in: Australia, New Zealand, UK, France, Papua New Guinea.
 Clubs represented: 12 (Castleford, Cronulla, North Sydney, Northern Eagles, Oldham, Parramatta, Penrith, St George, South Sydney, Wests Magpies, Wests Tigers, Wigan)
 Seasons as players or coach: 49
 Seasons dedicated to league as players, coach and post professional career including Men of League: 67

INJURIES

Broken neck.....1
 Dislocated shoulder3
 Dislocated knee1
 Dislocated elbow1
 Cartilage replacement in knee.....1
 Dislocated collarbone1
 Broken collarbone.....1
 Shoulder reconstruction.....1
 Knee reconstruction (ACL)3
 Medial ligaments.....1
 Broken nose9
 Broken cheekbone.....2
 Facial Cuts..... (280 stitches) 35
 Broken toe1
 Torn Hamstring2
 Broken finger8
 Broken hand2
 Torn ankle ligament and tendon1
 Broken ribs2
 Teeth replaced.....10
 Fractured eye socket.....1
 Eye reconstruction (torn pupil).....1
 Burst eardrum.....2

During this banter I have got to know about their backgrounds and what drives them which I have described, but what fascinated me most was their combined statistics (see left).

When I re-read these stats it truly shows that these guys have unreservedly put their heart and soul into the game of rugby league. They have literally all spilled blood for the game and yet, with 67 years of combined service, they are still going strong.

Although I've only known these guys a year, I see them display a passion and love for this game, a passion toward everything about the game and a passion toward the friends that they have made in the game; a passion that I'm sure has been with them for all off their careers.

These are but a few stories to share from a game that has been around for over 100 years though it does highlight the fabric of people that make the Men of League a unique foundation.

And that makes rugby league the greatest game of all.



Ben Ross and daughter Allegra



Michael Buettner



Stuart Raper

ALUMNI GATHERING MOMENTUM



Some familiar Kiwi faces in the gathering in Auckland.

In an attempt to reconnect former NRL players to the game, a couple of retired players' functions have been held over recent months.

The first was on 7 December at the Gold Coast's Tugun Surf Club. With the sun shining and a view that was second to none, many of the local Men of League committee members from Tweed Heads and the Gold Coast had an opportunity to rub shoulders with some of the game's former NRL stars.

Those who appeared on the day included former Titans head coach and Panthers legend John Cartwright, Wests Tigers premierships winner from 2005 Anthony Laffranchi and Melbourne Storm premierships winner Matt Geyer.

Also there were Peter Gill, Kevin Champion, Matt Seers, Luke O'Dwyer, Andrew Ryan, Nigel Vagana, Luke Covell and Luke Bailey.

With over 50 guests enjoying the view, the great food and a couple of ales, the stories were flowing and laughter could be heard all the way down to the Tweed. Big thanks go to the former NRL players and local committee members for their attendance and to the Tugun Surf Club for their hospitality.

Another retired players function was held in Auckland on Friday 30 January, on the eve of the Auckland Nines, for retired players based in New Zealand.

With the success of the Nines tournament in 2014 and with such a large influence of Kiwi, Maori and Polynesian players in the NRL, it was felt the opportunity was right to engage as many past players as possible to attend the function at The Long Room on Ponsonby Road.

Many of New Zealand's finest were present, including Francis Meli, Nigel Vagana, Clayton Friend, Brent Stuart, Anthony Seu Seu, Tony Tuimavave, Tony Iro, Matt Rua and Phillip Leuluai sharing stories about their time in the NRL and their current career paths. There are plans for several similar functions in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney throughout the season so any former NRL players who would like to be added to the alumni database please contact Michael Buettner on michael@menofleague.com.

We are also happy to announce that the Men of League will, for the first time, be playing an exhibition game at the NRL Masters tournament on the Gold Coast. The event which started with less than 10 teams nine years ago has now grown to more than 80 teams from all over the country.

The NRL Masters has been very supportive of the Men of League in the past with Friday 6 March being dedicated as a Men of League Day.

While the Men of League All Stars team is yet to be finalised, some of the former stars who have indicated their willingness to lace the boots on for "one last time" include former Australian international Petero Civoniceva and ex-Panthers and Sharks' Origin prop Ben Ross, so it appears the All Stars team will be covered when it comes to front-rowers.

It will be a great opportunity for some of the former NRL stars to display their skills (a little slower than they would like) and to promote the benefits of the Men of League to those competing at the Masters.

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LEGENDS AMONG QUE

Two Queensland rugby league legends from the 1950s - Kel O'Shea and Mick Crocker - passed away within weeks of each other. Men of League pay tribute to the champion second-rowers.

KEL O'SHEA

BY STEVE RICKETTS

Legendary Queensland coach Duncan Thompson raved about the potential of 19-year-old Ayr Colts star Kel O'Shea when he was selected for his interstate debut in 1953.

"I have seldom seen such a young player so well equipped for top class football," Thompson told The Courier-Mail's Jack Reardon.

Reardon described O'Shea as the best prospect in Queensland since Duncan Hall.

"He is deceptively fast, a long strider and a good handler," wrote Reardon.

O'Shea did not let either man down, going on to play 10 times for Queensland, three times for New South Wales and 20 Tests for Australia.

But O'Shea called time on his representative career at the end of the 1958 home series against Great Britain, wanting instead to devote himself to club football with Wests in Sydney, especially, as he and his wife, Margaret were starting a family.

Born and bred at Ayr in the Burdekin region of North Queensland, O'Shea was schooled at Mount Carmel College, Charters Towers, one of Queensland's great league nurseries.

He was promoted to the Queensland team after the Maroons went down 26-15 in the first match of the 1953 interstate series at the SCG.

Queensland won both matches played in Brisbane and O'Shea 'arrived' in game four at the Exhibition Ground.

"Last night's win signalled the advent of another Queensland and Australia star in Kel O'Shea," wrote Reardon. "He tackled, rucked, struggled and ran for 80 minutes, and was still full of running at the end of the game."



Kel O'Shea (centre of back row) in his beloved Queensland jersey.

Such was the majesty of his performance, O'Shea seemed assured of a place in the Australian team to tour New Zealand but the selectors opted for the more experienced Ferris Ashton from Sydney.

O'Shea had to wait until the following season to wear the green and gold, against Dicky Williams' touring Great Britain side.

A crowd of 65,885 for the first Test in Sydney produced a record gate of over £16,000 and the 37-12 win was, at the time, Australia's highest score against Great Britain, with Noel Pidding's personal tally of 19 points an Anglo-Australian record.

Australia led 10-5 at half-time after tries to towering second-rowers, O'Shea and Norm Provan.

O'Shea and Provan played nine Tests together, although not always as second row partners.

On the 1956-57 Kangaroo tour the British press tagged the tall duo 'Sticks' (Provan) and 'Twigs' (O'Shea).

At the end of the '54 season O'Shea won the Pat Farrelly Blazer for the best performance from a North Queensland born player in Ayr's 18-12 win over Cairns in the Foley Shield final.

QUEENSLAND'S GREATEST

In 1955 O'Shea did his national service in Brisbane, and played for Souths, representing Queensland once that season, but injuries and Army service cruelled his chances of Test selection against the touring Frenchmen.

In 1956 O'Shea became part of Sydney Wests 'Millionaires' recruitment program, signing for £500 pounds and match payments for his first year, a huge amount in those days.

He spent eight years at Wests, playing in two (1961 and '63) of their four grand final losses to the mighty St George Dragons.

O'Shea returned to Test duty against the Kiwis in 1956, playing in all three matches in Australia's clean sweep. He toured Britain and France with the Kangaroos at the end of that season, earning praise as one of Australia's best players on the French leg of the tour where the tourists became the first from the southern hemisphere to go through undefeated.

The third Test of the 1958 home series against Britain was O'Shea's last, and at 26 he stepped away from rep football. He was named in the NRL Team of the '50s when it was announced in 2007, alongside Provan.

Who knows how many more Tests O'Shea would have played if he had continued to be available.

O'Shea's best chance for a premiership came in his final season in Sydney - 1963.

Three times that season the Magpies beat St George, who were aiming for their eighth title in a row. Wests won 8-5 and 12-5 in the premiership rounds, and then 10-8 in the semi-final.

But in an absolute mud bath at the SCG, Saints prevailed 8-3 in the grand final, with Dragons winger Johnny King scoring a try when many believed he had been fairly 'held' before scoring his try, but referee, Darcy Lawler thought otherwise.

O'Shea announced his retirement after that match but put the boots on again to captain-coach Maitland in the Newcastle competition in 1965.

Back in Queensland he ran the Redland Bay Hotel from 1977 to 1990 and it became something of a Sunday tradition for Brisbane people to head 'down to the Bay' for one of the pub's famous seafood platters.



O'Shea (3rd from left, middle row) in a North Queensland side.

In his declining years, Kel was visited regularly by fellow Men of League members, among them Brisbane committee president Ron Atkins who first became mates with Kel in his national service time in Brisbane.

A number of O'Shea's old club and representative teammates attended his funeral, including Harry Wells and Ken McCaffery, along with ex-players from more recent eras such as Sydney Wests legend Tom Raudonikis.

Kel, who was 81, is survived by his English-born wife, Margaret, son, Greg, daughters, Kerrie and Julie; five grandchildren and eight great grandchildren.

HAROLD 'MICK' CROCKER

BY GARY BALKIN

Harry 'Mick' Crocker, the Australian rugby league champion forward of the 1950s, was born of Isabel and Henry Crocker in riverside inner-suburban Brisbane in 1927, leading into the depression years.

He was a real outdoor Aussie kid of that era, running the streets and sailing the river looking for fun, and in his older years he kept on running the streets every morning, getting fit, fitter, fitter.

Mick had severe injuries or illnesses at ages six, 15 and 19, which laid him up in hospital for months at a time, but it all made him more determined to be the fittest he could.

The last 12 months of 2014 were difficult times for Mick as old injuries flared and he twice spent time at St Vincent's Hospital, Kangaroo Point. Each time he recovered from deep coma.

Mick was a humorist and a home-spun philosopher. His great mate Fred Harris had shared a premiership together with Mick for Brisbane Souths in the early 1950s. When Fred passed away a month ago, Glenn had to go to Mick's bedside to tell him. Mick could not speak coherently at that stage. He simply saluted. That said it all.

Like Mick, his mates were salt-of-the-earth men, all humble and modest, hard-working, enjoyed a good laugh, all of the same temperament and character.

At 18, Mick had joined Souths, but the following year he was in hospital again for months. Then at 20, he was in the first grade side. He played 17 Tests for Australia, 19 games for Queensland, and three for New South Wales. At his funeral, four blazers or jerseys were hanging on a wall, and the fourth one, the blue one, was the NSW one. There were bets that it had not seen the light of day from his wardrobe since he arrived back in Brisbane in 1956. In fact, the writer seems to recall Mick denying he ever donned the blue jersey.

Mick was also very proud of a special match where he played against NSW – he was chosen by the USA team to play for the American All Stars on their tour here. It was 1955. In 1950, Mick's maiden Test was against Great Britain in the famous second Test. He played wonderfully and the win paved the way for the series decider which led to Australia winning their first Ashes series in 30 years.

Mick had kept running on the streets in the mornings, and he was named "the fittest footballer in Australia". It was through the years of pain, determination, endurance, sore legs and feet, which led him to his on-field aggression, great cover defence, running incursions, but ... off the field, Mick was just the good guy next door.

In 1954, Mick was offered the then biggest recorded fee in Australian rugby league to play for Parramatta. He would have stayed with Souths in Brisbane, but his parents' house had been destroyed by fire and Mick wanted to replace it. So Sydney-bound went Harry Crocker (for two seasons) continued page 36

Mick played his last year of rugby league in Winton. He worked with the Main Roads Department for 32 years as a contracted truck driver. Sadly, his beloved wife June passed away in 2004.



In 1966 Mick turned to golf with the then popular Melbourne Hotel social golf club. In 1973 he joined Victoria Park Golf Club, and he enjoyed constant golf at Vic Park for many years.

The writer often took Mick to the football, usually along with the great Duncan Hall, his roommate on the Kangaroo and interstate tours. Mick's ill-health continued to spoil his go-forward attitude, but he suffered it all out to the end.

He had dieldrin poisoning for years and when he tried a mate's cure it affected his bone strength. To top it all off, he fell out of a tree while pruning, breaking a shoulder and eight ribs.

In his last weeks Mick was moved into a nursing home in Maleny, the town where daughter Michele now lives. His big heart gave out three days prior to his 87th birthday.

Harry 'Mick' Crocker, the much-adored grandfather of six, leaves Michele and family, and son Glenn and family.

HELPING OUT A MATE

AARON HENRY



Men of League Southern Division's Andrew O'Brien with Doug Anderson and Wally Fullerton Smith

We all remember the timeless moments in our great game like Mark Coyne's 'Origin Miracle' try in Game 1 of the 1994 Origin series and Scott Sattler's legendary run-down tackle on Rooster's winger, Todd Byrne, in the 2003 grand final.

Like an iceberg, these iconic moments are the 10% that we see above the waterline. 90% of what happens in our game, in our clubs and in our rugby league community happens 'below the waterline'.

The 'below the waterline' stuff is the support from family members who drive juniors to training every week, the line markers, volunteers turning sausages on the BBQ, the local club selling tickets for a raffle down at the pub, the mum's who wash jerseys after every weekend and the referees who show up every weekend all winter. These people make our game run. Every week, all winter, every year.

People like Doug Anderson from Toowoomba Junior Rugby League.

Doug has been a volunteer at Toowoomba JRL for 20 years, acted as the Publicity Officer for 15 years and has been the Ground Announcer for Southern Suburbs Juniors and Seniors for 12 years. Doug was awarded Life Membership to Toowoomba JRL in 2013.

That's why our Welfare Manager, Ben Ross, had no hesitation in going to see Doug when he needed a bit of help through our welfare program.

Doug has had some health problems for a while. He suffered a heart attack in 2005 and had another one in 2013. He lives with chronic sciatic back pain and arthritis in his right knee. Doug has some mobility issues so needs a walking stick or frame to assist him move.

Doug is committed to improving his well-being by working with his doctors on his exercise and food program. So as part of Men of League's welfare program, we're helping Doug with a specialist bed and mattress, a Mega Lift Chair to assist with his mobility and some associated health and medical bills.

We hope that we can play a small part in improving Doug's rehabilitation, as he's played a large part in our game.

If you or a mate you know needs help the Men of League welfare program may be able to help. For more information, you can contact our Welfare Manager, Ben Ross on 02 8765 2235 or email: ben@menofleague.com

REMEMBERING T

The Foundation wishes to recognise the recent passing of the following people who left a positive legacy within the rugby league community. For more tributes or expanded versions, go to www.menofleague.com



FRANK FARRINGTON

Frank Farrington, who died in December aged 88, gave more than 50 years' service to rugby league and also had 15 professional fights as a light-heavyweight boxer.

He played 39 first grade games for Newtown, won a reserve grade premiership and had captain-coach stints with Cowra, Narrandera and Mackay. Teammates during Frank's first grade career included Test men John Raper, Tony Brown, Gordon Clifford and Dick Poole.

Soon after retiring, Frank became a committee member of the Newtown club and became club secretary in 1968, a position he held for 20 years between 1968 and 1991. In 1982 was co-manager of the Kangaroos' tour to England and France, a squad known as The Invincibles as the first Australian team to go through a Kangaroo tour undefeated.

He was a life member of the NSWRL and the Newtown and was awarded an Australian Sports Medal in 2000.



GREG FRYER

A clever, ball playing forward who was a member of Balmain's 1969 premiership winning team, Greg passed away at his home in Ballina, aged 65.

The esteem with which he was held throughout Australian rugby league was illustrated by the attendance at the commemoration of his life at Ballina in January. Melbourne Storm coach Craig Bellamy was just one of many who flew north for the service.

Greg was a member of the Balmain team that won the 1967 President's Cup and the same year moved into grade where he was a member of Balmain's premiership-winning reserve grade team. He played first grade at age 19 and went on to play 84 first grade games for the Tigers.

He was selected in the 15-man squad for the 1969 grand final victory over South Sydney but did not take the field, however had played strongly in the 15-14 victory over Manly in the final after replacing the injured Peter Provan. Provan, the captain, was fit for the grand final.

In 1975 Greg moved to Oberon as captain-coach for two seasons, winning the premiership in his first year, and coached Tony Trudgett, Neville Elwin and Craig Bellamy in this period. He captain coached Macquarie United for three seasons before moving to Ballina. He won premierships in 1982 and 1989, while in 1987 and 1990 he coached Northern Rivers to NSW Country Championship wins.

A hard worker for the Ballina Seagulls Leagues Club for more than 30 years, Greg was a director and secretary manager of the club.

JOHN FISH

Group 10 were saddened with the passing of former Bathurst St Patrick's stalwart who died on Boxing Day after a reasonably short fight he just could not win and his very well attended funeral took place on 31 December 2014. He was 74 years of age.

A number of former players and club supporters of John's time were in attendance. John is survived by his loving wife of 50 years, Mary, and his two daughters, Mary Trish and Judy, their husbands Phillip Johns and Brett Russell, and four grandchildren.

He was a tireless worker for the St Pats Club over many years, as was his father Jack, a long serving executive who was awarded the club's first life membership. John, who played on the wing in the St Pats' first Group 10 premiership in 1968, was the youngest person to receive life membership at the time. John was also the president when they won their second premiership in 1973.

John was also involved with the Bathurst Rugby League Club executive and was a life member of this club. He also found time to be involved with the Catholic Church in Bathurst for over 20 years.

THOSE NOW GONE

LEO 'TICH' MORRIS

Leo, better known as Tich, passed away on 21 December 2014, after suffering a stroke on Father's Day in September.

Tich, a handy second-rower, played with Ourimbah on the Central Coast during their glory days in the 1950s and 60s. He was very instrumental in the formation of the Ourimbah junior club.

IKE QUINN

Ike Quinn's life was formally celebrated at Eastern Suburbs Crematorium on 13 January by family, friends and former workmates and it was a fitting tribute to a man who not only served his country with 19 years in the Navy but also continued to give during his life with his beloved Chelsea football club.

Ike served as club president for more than 30 years and was heavily involved as a social secretary and organiser with the club after his playing days were over. He was a life member of Chelsea and South Sydney Juniors. He also fitted in a boxing career as a super featherweight/lightweight.

A large number of Chelsea Old Mates were on hand including Bill Harvey, Sam, Paul and Frank Votano, Ian and Karen Phillips, Tommy and Diane Ford, Neville Woods, Peter Hopcroft, Fred Hailwood, Terry Hoskins, Henry Morris, Stan Hardy and Scott Towers-Hammond.



KEITH 'TATERS' SMITH

Keith 'Taters' Smith, 69, passed away at Tweed District Hospital in January after losing his battle with cancer.

Rugby league identities and long-time Tweed residents packed Sacred Heart Church at Murwillumbah to bid farewell to their mate who played with distinction for three clubs in Tweed-Byron Group 18.

In one of his first jobs, Keith would deliver Smiths Crisps from Murwillumbah to Southport so his brother-in-law Kenny Dunn nicknamed him 'Taters.'

Keith started his career with Cudgen Green Hornets and later transferred to Seagulls, where his late father Jim was president. At the end of the season Keith was

transferred in the Commonwealth Bank to Woy Woy where one of his mates was John Monie.

Next season he returned to the Tweed and played with South Murwillumbah. He was a tireless worker and went on to be a long-time player, secretary and coach for Souths and became junior and senior vice-president for Group 18 under late presidents Jack Meakin and Tom Hogan.

Keith played with Group 18, Northern Rivers Anthony Shield for consecutive years and he captained the representative side in 1968. In 1971 he, along with brothers Robin and Neville, won the Group 18 premiership crown.

Brother Neville recalled they played Burleigh Heads one Sunday and while they waited for the toss Keith said to referee Garney Harper 'not you again....I suppose you're going to give us a caning in the penalties as usual.' Mr Harper sent Keith off for abuse...before the toss.

TREVOR TRELEAVEN

The family and many friends of Trevor Treleaven paid tribute to the devoted husband, father, and grandfather and all-round sportsman. The chapel was filled to capacity and the stories were abundant after the service.

Trevor and his wife Mary were married for 53 years and their three sons Stephen, Gary and Glenn completed a devoted family. Trevor made many friends from Beverley Park Golf Club where he was a vice-president and he was a life member of St George Referees Association after playing with Arncliffe Scots.

Following Trevor's retirement, the family moved down to the South Coast of NSW and Trevor joined the Warilla Sports Club where he became vice-president. He will be remembered for his gentle nature and great sense of humour and his devotion to his family and friends.

EDWARD 'TED' WHITTAKER

Edward passed away peacefully on 6 January 2015, aged 75 years. He, his wife Peggy (deceased), sons Gary and Brett, daughter Janine and their three grandchildren are a well-known and respected family in the Manly Warringah district.

Ted played his junior rugby league days with the North Narrabeen Surf Life Saving Club (now the Narrabeen Sharks) and the Newport However, surf lifesaving was in his blood and he was a life member of the North Narrabeen Surf Life Saving Club and Surf Life Saving Sydney Northern Beaches. He was a prominent surf boat team rower for many years and upon retiring from rowing remained active as a starter of the surf boat races.

KEITH WOODHEAD

Dr Keith Woodhead served with distinction as Queensland State of Origin and Australian medical officer at different stages of his career. Dr Woodhead was also medical officer on the history-making Queensland Residents tour of France in 1989.

But he will be best remembered for his role as 'doctor-on-call' for the Norths' Devils club in Brisbane from the late 1970s until well into the 1990s.

He was the first doctor in the BRL to attend all training sessions as well as matches.

Dr Woodhead was an accomplished runner, competing in marathons in different parts of the world. He died on January 29, aged 66, after a long battle with motor neurone disease.

NORMA FLANNERY

Norma Flannery was the widow of former Test winger, Denis Flannery and the daughter of former Test forward, Dan Dempsey.

For many years Norma and Denis ran the Ulster Hotel in Ipswich, a popular watering hole for rugby league identities, and teams returning to Brisbane after matches at North Ipswich Reserve.

Denis, a winger in the Queensland Team of the Century, died in 2012 aged 83.

Norma passed away on January 13, aged 87.

MARCELL CONESCU

Marcell Conescu was the father of former Queensland and Australian hooker Greg Conescu and although he never played rugby league, he immersed himself in the game and closely followed his son's fortunes.

Born in Romania, Marcel swam the Danube River as an 18-year-old to escape the harsh communist regime.

He arrived in Newcastle, New South Wales in 1949 as a displaced person, and in 1955 became a naturalised Australian citizen.

In 1967 Marcell and his wife, Maureen bought a house at Nundah, just a stone's throw from Bishop Park, the home of Norths' Devils. Brothers Greg and Steve played for the club and Marcell remained a loyal member for the rest of his life, with one his proudest moments the Devils' 1980 grand final win over favorites, Souths, with Greg at hooker. Marcell died at age 84.

JACK MCNAMARA

New Zealand born McNamara was one of Britain's finest sports writers, and a friend of many league writers in Australia.

Barry Dick from The Courier-Mail, and his former work colleagues, Jack Craig, Lawrie Kavanagh, David Falkenmire and Steve Ricketts recently gathered at Brisbane's Breakfast Creek Hotel to toast Jack's memory.

Jack had several 'beers off the wood' at 'the Creek', during his many visits to Australia to cover Great Britain tours.

When he retired from the Manchester Evening News in 1990, he was the longest serving scribe in Britain covering one sport, having written about rugby league for 36 years. He was 87 when he died in December.

RAY 'SNOWY' THORPE

Riverina league followers are still coming to terms with the sudden passing of Ray 'Snowy' Thorpe in late 2014. A father of five children, Snowy died of a suspected heart attack just short of his 49th birthday.

Snowy was a legend in Group 20 taking out a record number of awards and numerous appearances at representative level, including Riverina. He had a remarkable career with TLU Sharks and was still playing for them in 2007 at 42. He also had a couple of years at Temora in Group 9.

HUGH KELLY

Hugh Kelly played four matches for Queensland in 1956-57 and went on to become a Maroons State of Origin and Australian Test selector.

Kelly was also a highly respected administrator with the Wests club in Brisbane.

He won Foley Shield titles with Cairns in 1953 and '55 and in 1955 also played for North Queensland against the formidable French touring side.

Kelly started his senior career as a five-eighth before moving to the forwards. He was also an accomplished goalkicker.

LENDING A HELPING HAND



Back, from left: John Peard, Ivan Jones, Bob McMillan, Diane Jones, John Marsh, Alan Webb. Front: Warren Thompson, Ivan's grandson Ryan and Henry Morris.

IVAN BATTLES ON

The Mighty little battler Ivan Jones, former South Sydney halfback from the 1960s, continues to defy the odds in his battle with illness.

Ivan was recently visited by long-time friends from Souths - Henry Morris, president of Men of League Sydney Metro, Bob McMillan and John Marsh. Men of League welfare officers John Peard, Warren Thompson, and Alan Webb also called in to see Ivan.

We were informed by his wife Diane, and daughter Katrina that Ivan really enjoys the visits from his old mates. We were fortunate to have a photo taken with Ivan in his backyard.

SAD END FOR STORM PRODUCTS

The Melbourne committee has worked closely with the Foundation and rugby league community to offer personal and financial support for the families of two young players who came through the VRL/Melbourne Storm system but sadly had taken their own lives.

Ray Ertl, a talented hooker, tragically died in November. Having represented the Storm at SG Ball level, Ray captained his local club the North West Wolves and was

an integral member of the Victorian state representative and Australian Combined Affiliated States teams.

In late January another former Victorian player, Hayden Butler who came through the Storm system before playing with Burleigh Bears and had moved to the Mackay Cutters, also took his life.

Committee secretary Greg Brentnall, in his capacity as general manager of pathways for the Melbourne Storm, had a lot to do with Ray and Hayden as they came through the various grades and rep teams.

The committee is also continuing to offer support to the Boggit family who were featured in the last issue.



Ken Condon and Greg Pountney with Dan Tanner. Photo courtesy of The Gympie Times.

GYMPIE LEGEND VISITED

Gympie league legend Dan Tanner was paid a visit by Gympie membership officer Ken Condon and secretary Greg Pountney. The former Australian selector, a resident in Winston House Aged Care Facility, was presented with a Christmas cake.

Men of League representatives also did some household tasks at Dan's house.



From left: Henry Morris, John Peard, Warren Thompson and Alan Webb with Paul Judd.

RABBITOHS RALLY

Former Rabbitohs player Paul Judd was delighted to be visited by Sydney Metro welfare officers Warren Thompson and Alan Webb, together with John Peard and Sydney Metro president Henry Morris at Prince of Wales Hospital Randwick.

The 50-year-old, a Souths junior, played grade with the Rabbitohs in the late 1980s. After a few stories and jokes were exchanged Paul was given a Men of League polo shirt and cap.

He has had many former South Sydney players calling in to see how he is going and expressed his thanks to the Men of League Foundation for the visit.

Paul had a melanoma which spread to the lung, brain and his spine. He has spent several weeks in Prince of Wales Hospital and undergone numerous operations and unfortunately owing to his condition is now confined to a wheelchair.

Later Alan, Warren, John and Ben Ross visited Paul at his home in Botany with former Rabbitohs and Bulldogs hooker Joe Thomas. Paul was very pleased to be home where modifications had been made to improve his quality of life.



(from left): Brady Manktelow, Mark Hohn, Darby and dad Craig Manktelow. The boys are proudly wearing their signed jerseys.

A COWBOYS SURPRISE

Sue Manktelow, secretary of the Pittsworth junior club, died due to a brain haemorrhage in the middle of last season. She left behind her husband Craig and sons Brady, 16, and Darby, 12.

Andrew O'Brien, Southern Division president, found out that Jonathan Thurston is Brady's favourite player and that James Segeyaro is Darby's, so with the help of Petero Civoniceva, Michael Luck and Tim Nugent, the boys received video messages and signed jerseys from their favourite players just before Christmas.

Men of League were also able to assist by sending the family a Chrisco hamper, the boys also received Coles Myer vouchers to help bring some cheer to their first Christmas without their mum.



HENRY MORRIS

The Foundation's wishes go to the immensely popular Men of League Sydney Metro president Henry Morris who has had heart surgery. Men of League's welfare manager, Ben Ross, along with welfare officers Alan Webb, John 'Bomber' Peard and Warren Thompson were pleased to find Henry in good

spirits and already talking about the next fundraising function when they visited recently.

'Bomber', as always, had everyone continuously laughing with his hilarious routines.

Henry is always ready to help anyone needing a helping hand and has assisted countless people. He is highly regarded and respected in the rugby league family. We look forward to him being back on deck however only after he has a well-earned rest.

Henry has been a rugby league man all his life from his playing days in the South Sydney juniors with the Botany United and La Perouse. He was later president of Souths juniors for many years. Henry had his surgery at Prince of Wales Hospital Randwick and was then transferred to Eastern Suburbs Private Hospital for Rehabilitation. Both hospitals informed us that they had to put extra staff on just to answer the enquiries on Henry's progress.



Back: Warren Thompson, Alan Webb and Cyril Peel. Front: Henry Morris and John Peard.

CYRIL LOVED A CHAT

Cyril Peel is recovering from heart surgery and had a minor setback with an infection, however is now well on the road to recovery. Cyril was a South Sydney junior from the Botany United Club and played grade with Eastern Suburbs. Cyril he loves a chat and Peardy commented that if Cyril was a horse he would put a tongue tie on him. Cyril and Peardy kept those in the ward entertained but unfortunately the majority of the yarns cannot be repeated.



Ken Vessey, Fred Jackson and Ian Dodds, ensured Kerry Kime (seated) enjoyed his visit to the Heroes and Legends Museum.

KERRY ENJOYS HISTORIC JOURNEY

Northern Sydney welfare officers Fred Jackson and Ken Vessey, along with Ian Dodds (Men of League member), met up with Kerry Kime plus his good friend Tony Lewis when they visited the museum at Rugby League Central.

Kerry was born and grew up in Raymond Terrace where he played junior league and he talked about watching many great games in Newcastle, when the 'Steel Town' was a rugby league stronghold. In 1971 he and his wife Colleen moved down to Winmalee where they have lived since, raising a family of four children, 10 grandchildren and a great grandson.

Kerry quickly became a well-known identity in Winmalee as the local butcher for 23 years and a taxi driver for another six. He told us one of his best mates in Springwood was the late Laurie Nichols (Balmain's No. 1 supporter) and he related many funny stories about Laurie and him. In recent years, Kerry has overcome major health issues through his courage and determination to regain his health and enjoy life with his Colleen, family and many friends.

He was overjoyed when his team, the South Sydney, won the 2014 grand final. Kerry regularly attends Men of League functions, especially those organised by Sydney Metro, and he enjoys meeting many ex South Sydney grade players and the wonderful events themselves.



Ken Vessey (left) and Warren Thompson visiting Hobie Watts and his mother Jodi.

WATT A BRAVE BOY

Northern Sydney welfare officers Norm Pounder and Ken Vessey have undertaken many welfare visits over the years on behalf of the Men of League Foundation, but none previously to anyone as young as Hobie Watts.

They were touched to meet Harbord United junior, 11-year-old Hobie, and his mum Jodi at the Mona Vale Children's Hospital. Hobie and his three brothers Lochie, 13, Reef, 8, and Bodhi, 5, play for the Devils which has been a nursery for many young players who have graduated onto playing senior grade rugby league.

Hobie has been suffering from mysterious stomach pains since March 2014 and is waiting on the long public waiting list to be admitted to hospital to undergo tests, which a specialist gastroenterologist is confident will lead to correcting his illness.

Norm and Ken were very impressed with the courage and spirit displayed by Hobie and he enjoyed receiving and playing with the NRL Power Play game cards and since the visit he has returned home and is feeling a little better.

Jodi naturally has a very busy time caring and looking after Hobie plus her other three young sons and the Foundation is considering possible assistance avenues to help out.



Greg Kay at the Rugby League Museum

JET POWERED VISIT

To be involved with Men of League as a welfare officer is often very rewarding, however can be tough at times.

A delightfully intelligent young man, Greg Kay, is going through extremely difficult times with his health. Does he complain? Is he positive? Is he courageous?

A definite no to the first question and affirmative to the other two. Greg teaches children who are on the autism spectrum. A parent of one of the students asked if Men of League could meet with Greg, who is highly regarded for his dedication to the children.

He has been a massive Newtown Jets fan all his life. Alan Webb and I arranged a visit to the Rugby League Museum to meet Terry Williams, historian and author of "Out of the Blue - The History of Newtown".

It is doubtful if there is a more loyal fan of the Jets than these two men. Terry entertained us with his incredible knowledge of all things rugby league and the stories and stats flowed during the tour of the wonderful museum. Greg remarked he had an awesome day and was keen to tell his father all about it.

We will keep in touch with Greg and perhaps next time have our other welfare team mate Peardy with us and enjoy another awesome day with Greg.



John Peard, Robert Culkin and Warren Thompson

A REFEREEING RELIC OUR OLDEST MEMBER

Robert Culkin is a rugby league treasure. He is the oldest member of Men of League at 98 and also the oldest member of the NSWRL referees association.

Originally from Wellington in NSW, he moved to Sydney to trial with South Sydney in 1944.

He was persuaded by a few friends to take up refereeing and later that season was graded as a referee. He refereed his first game at the Sydney Cricket Ground in the inaugural schoolboys carnival.

Robert remains a member of Canterbury Bankstown Referees Association.

In 2013 he was appointed ambassador to the NSWRLRA and last year presented the NRL grand final referees with their jerseys.

He has been married to Esme for 72 years and they have two daughters and three sons, and many grandchildren.

When Robert was visited by Warren Thompson, Alan Webb and John Peard at Concord Repatriation Hospital, Peardy asked him who was the best referee of his time and he selected Aub Oxford, followed by Jack O'Brien.

MEN OF LEAGUE ON THE ROAD

The Men of league Foundation is constantly buoyed by the generosity of its supporters, without whom the we would not be able to achieve as much as we do. Vehicles are essential for the team, allowing us to travel to events, out to various committee areas and also to carry out valuable welfare services. Larger vehicles also allow Men of League to transport community members, whether to functions or to essential services like doctors and rehabilitation appointments.

Thanks to the support of Bill Gilmour (of Gilmour Tennis) we now have a brand new minivan on the road, that's already being put to good use. Men of League would also like to recognise Souths Juniors who, via the ClubGRANTS program, funded the wheelchair lift in the back of this van that ensures we are able to transport those with special mobility requirements.

A shout out also goes to our valued partners at Jaycar, who have funded the Men of League Holden Commodore.



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STARS TO LIGHT UP PROSERPINE

BY MICHAEL HILLIER



Maroons skipper Cameron Smith becomes a rodeo rider in Proserpine.

Queensland Rugby League (QRL) will again rally behind regional communities this year with the XXXX Maroons to host their annual fan day in the northern rugby league heartland of Proserpine on June 30.

The coup for the Whitsunday region was ratified by the QRL board last month.

“We have selected Proserpine to continue our theme of supporting Queenslanders who are doing it a little tough,” QRL chairman Peter Betros explained.

“Unfortunately the area has experienced a downturn in a number of industries, including sugar and mining.

“We hope this exercise will lift the spirits of people and provide a financial boost for the local rugby league and other community organisations.”

Betros said the XXXX Maroons had engaged with thousands of fans in recent years following memorable visits to Longreach, Bundaberg, Roma and Emerald.

“As I’ve reinforced to our Origin players, you go back to these places six months after the Maroons have been there and you can still see the posters up on the walls and the positive effect they leave on the community,” he said.

The full fan day schedule will be released following further consultation between QRL head office, Northern Division and the Proserpine Whitsunday Brahmans club.

Activities are likely to include a street parade, official luncheon and Junior Maroons clinic at Proserpine’s Les Stagg Oval.

Numerous top level rugby league players have called Les Stagg Oval home over the years, including former Queensland representatives Eddie Muller and Paul Bowman, along with current Brisbane Bronco Travis Waddell and the late Sam Faust who played 24 matches for North Queensland Cowboys, sadly passed away in 2011 at the age of 26 after losing his fight with leukaemia.

The town’s main business precinct will be awash with maroon when Queensland’s premier sporting team arrives on that final day of the month in June.

QRL Northern Division chairman Leigh Anderson said it would be a wonderful occasion for the Whitsunday region.

“Being school holidays, this day will provide a unique opportunity for league fans to travel in to Proserpine from Airlie Beach and Bowen and other surrounding areas,” Anderson said.

“The people of North Queensland are extremely passionate about their rugby league.

“They just love it ... and it’s not hard to see why after so much success in the north last year with the Pride winning the Intrust Super Cup and NRL state championship.

“We were equally proud of the Pride’s Cyril Connell Cup victory and the Townsville Stingers’ achievements in winning the Mal Meninga Cup and national under-18 final against a strong Sydney Roosters team.”

Anderson is excited about the year ahead and believes the sight of hundreds of youngsters playing footy alongside their Origin heroes on Les Stagg Oval will offer one of the highlights. Proserpine Whitsunday Brahmans have about 250 registered junior players.

The senior Brahmans compete in the Mackay and District Rugby League and are building nicely ahead of the 2015 season after reaching last year’s preliminary final.

One of their key signings is local product Grant Cooke, who played Intrust Super Cup for the Souths Logan Magpies last year.

LEAGUE'S OLDEST SURVIVOR BLESSED BY THE POPE

BY NEIL CADIGAN

Joe Wade, who turns 100 this October, is believed to be the oldest living ARL first grade player alive. That alone makes him a rugby league treasure but the tough forward who played seven first grade games for Newtown in 1940 may also hold a unique link to one of the game's great controversies.

Rugged tough Test prop and inner-city policeman Frank Farrell was embroiled in controversy in 1945 when accused of biting off part of the ear of St George front-rower Bill McRitchie's ear in a scrum during a match at Henson Park.

Farrell always denied he bit McRitchie and it took seven months for the NSW Rugby League, which then administered the competition, to complete its investigation and rule Farrell was not-guilty. If they had decided otherwise, Farrell would have been sacked from his job as a policeman and not gone onto forge a legendary career as a tough inner city cop in Sydney.

Wade had left Newtown before 1945 to play in Lithgow where he represented Western Division and had a successful career as a captain-coach. But he remained good friends with Farrell and other former Newtown teammates and has told his sons Farrell was definitely innocent and he knew the player who did bite McRitchie's ear.

"He would never tell us who it was though," says eldest son Bill. "I don't know if he ever will but he says it wasn't Bumper."

Joe Wade is a man to believe too. Not too many Australians can say they have been blessed and kissed by the Pope, but he was as a 12-year-old in 1928 by Pope Pius XI during a visit to Australia.

He grew up on a farm 26km from Oberon in NSW and, when he came home from school, his daily job as it approached dusk was to climb a cherry tree with a small gun and scare the parrots away from the trees.

"He was sitting there with the gun between his toes, no shoes on, and he was half awake and woken by the parrots," relayed Bill. "Off went the gun and he blew his big toe off.



"They took him to Bathurst Hospital, and it was while the Pope was touring Australia. He visited the hospital at that time blessed my dad and kissed him. Not too many people have been kissed by the Pope."

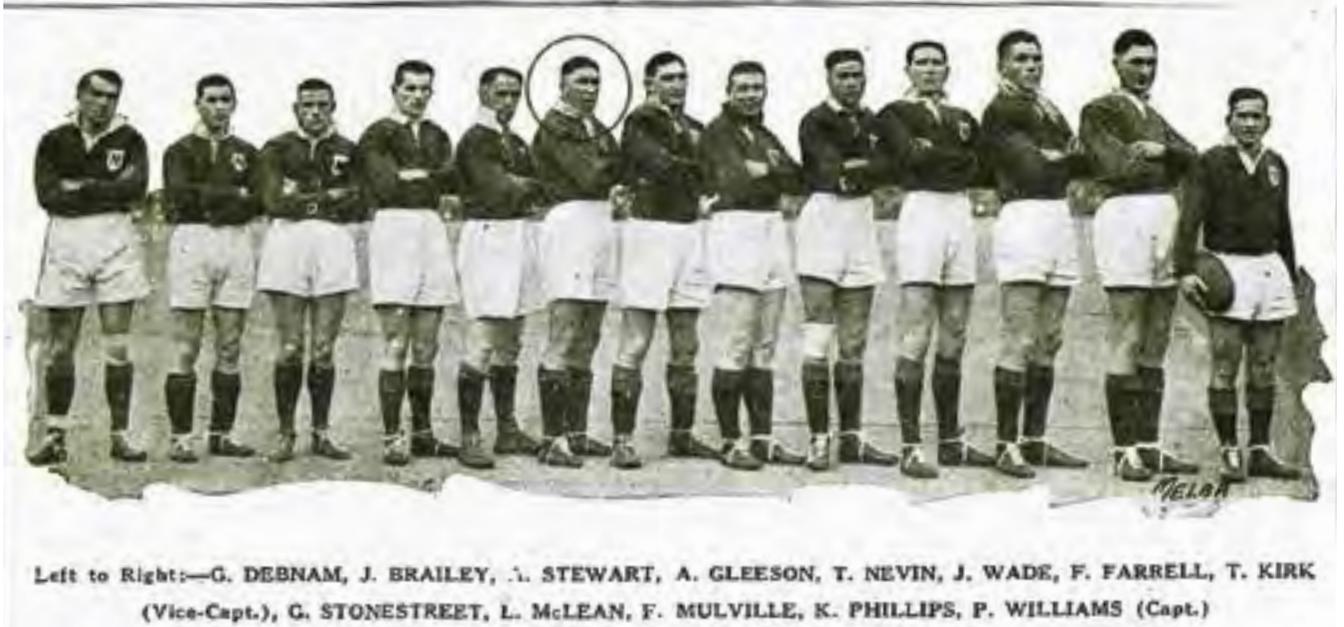
Soon after Joe left school after missing end of year exams while in hospital. He worked on the farm for years before moving to Sydney seeking work, and took a job on the wharves at Darling Harbour and played for Pymont Sugal Mills and then in the Newtown junior league and was called up to the Bluebags' senior grades as a tough, very fit and strong, back-rower.

Bill thinks his father spent three seasons with Newtown. He then moved to Lithgow to captain-coach Centrals, then to Wests before finishing his playing career as player-coach with State Mine in Lithgow, which soon after became Lithgow Workers.

He coached Workers' reserve grade in the 1950s where one of his players was a young Barry Rushworth, who was to represent Australia as a centre on the 1963 Kangaroo tour, and then joined Parramatta. They remained friends for many years.

Joe and his wife Peggy had five sons, Bill, Tom, Jeff, Brian (who died at 18 months old) and Wayne. Bill is the oldest, and he played league up to when the family was

NEWTOWN FIRST GRADE 1940



living near Toronto in Lake Macquarie, having moved there after the State Mine closed down near Lithgow.

Bill played league until he nearly lost an arm in a car accident, Tom played for Macquarie United a steel plate slid off while working as a rigger and took his leg off and Jeff also played for Macquarie before leaving to join the navy.

Bill describes his father as a “very soft man and a hard-working man” but extremely strong. “He had muscle on muscle, through just hard yakka, there were

no gyms then,” he says. “Everyone used to comment how strong he was when he was at the State Mine. He could hold a sack of potatoes on one shoulder and another under the other arm and we have a photo of him lifting up a T-model Ford while we changed the tyre on it.”

Joe is in the Tanderra Nursing Home in Lithgow and will have his century-birthday on October 5. The game’s leading historian David Middleton says he believes Joe is the oldest surviving first grade rugby league player from the Sydney competition.

CHRISCO’S GENEROSITY

Since 2012, Chrisco have been more than generous in offering their support to the Foundation. Last year was no exception, with over 100 hampers given to Men of League to hand out to families and individuals who are less fortunate over Christmas.

The overwhelming response from the recipients was of gratitude and appreciation, which couldn’t have been achieved without Michele Deacon, Head of Customer Service, and the team at Chrisco.

For those who have previously attended our NSW Cox Plate Race Days, they have kindly donated toys, arcade tables and electronic devices for our auction. Chrisco’s ongoing support reaches out to all levels of those in need in the rugby league community, and we are truly grateful of the strong relationship we have built over the past three years.

Chrisco

KNIGHT RECALLS CONTROVERSIAL DAYS

BY BARRY ROSS

Stephen Knight recalls it like it was yesterday - the greatest try never scored, in Australia's 1972 World Cup final against Great Britain at Lyon.

Knight, now a fit 66, was Australia's centre when fullback and captain Graeme Langlands miraculously caught a high kick from halfback Denis Ward from 45 metres out before touching down for what television replays showed was a fair try.

Australia were leading 5-0 and if the try had have been awarded, the Australians might have gone into half-time with a 10-0 advantage. Instead the game finished in a 10-all draw and Great Britain were awarded the World Cup because of their victory against the Aussies earlier at Perpignan.

"Graeme definitely scored a fair try," implores Knight, a member of the 19-man Australian World Cup team which also included current ARL Commission chairman John Grant.

"The referee thought he could not have been onside after coming from so far back to leap higher than the defenders and then touch down. But replays showed he was onside and the French referee, George Jameau, apologised for his mistake after the game."

Knight, then a PE teacher, became used to controversial moments in sport.

He played in all three Tests against the touring South Africans in 1971 which led to bloody protests and riots because of their country's Apartheid rule.

This tour is remembered for anti-Apartheid demonstrations which dominated news bulletins. Future political leaders and famous citizens were at the forefront of these demonstrations.

In Melbourne Gareth Evans was among the activists, while in Sydney Meredith Burgman, who later became a member of the NSW Parliament for 15 years and president of the Upper House for eight years, and the late Dr. Fred Hollows, were arrested. In Brisbane, future Queensland Premier Peter Beattie was very involved in the protests.

After that season, Knight accepted an offer to play rugby league with the Western Suburbs in Sydney under coach Don Parish, Men of League's Central Coast president. In his first season of League, he was



Steve Knight (left) with his family.

selected for NSW Colts against Queensland before being chosen in the World Cup side.

He played four seasons with Wests then joined Balmain for two and finally Manly (32 games 10 tries) in 1978 for two seasons. In 1978, Stephen was a member of the Manly side that played six games (including two finals replays) in 24 days before winning the grand final replay against Cronulla. The amazing run was embroiled in refereeing controversy under Greg Harley, who controlled five of the six Manly play-off games. Coaches Jack Gibson (South Sydney), Terry Fearnley (Parramatta) and Roy Masters (Wests) asked the NSWRL not to appoint Hartley to any of their games in 1979, but this request was denied.

Knight married his wife Gudrun in May 1976 and the couple are still living on the northern beaches of Sydney. They have two children and two grandchildren.

He worked as a physical education teacher for many years including 17 at the highly regarded rugby union school, St Josephs College, where he was backline coach of the first XV for three seasons from 1990. St. Josephs won the GPS competition in each of those three years and among the young men he coached was future Wallabies fullback Matt Burke. In 2001 Knight joined the TAB, supervising the staff gymnasium until he retired at the end of 2014.

Although he still takes an interest in the Manly through watching matches on TV, he has rarely attended any matches since retiring from playing but regularly watched his son Matt play for Narrabeena, where he progressed to their A grade team.

He has followed a rigorous fitness program for many years involving swimming, sand running and weights and still looks a picture of health.



Men of League's Michael Buettner, Corene Strauss and Ben Ross accept the cheque from the TAB's Glenn Munsie.

SPECIAL THANKS

The generosity of organisations, communities and individuals around the country that support Men of League make such a difference to the ongoing success of the Foundation.

In December, the Easts Group launched their 'Cheers for Champions' campaign – an ongoing initiative that sees proceeds of all VB sales each Thursday between 5pm to 7pm donated to the Men of League Foundation. Patrons can support the 'Cheers For Champions' campaign at each of the five clubs that comprise the Easts Group – Easts Leagues Club, Waverley Bowling Club, Kingswood Sports Club, Berkeley Sports Club and Woy Woy Leagues Club, the campaign has already raised \$3,200 for the Foundation.

To celebrate the Charity Shield match between South Sydney Rabbitohs and the St George Illawarra

Dragons at the beginning of February, Tabcorp pledged to donate \$1000 to the Foundation for every try scored in the game. When the game wrapped up and the scoreboard only racked up four tries, the generous folk at Tabcorp decided to double their donation – contributing a huge \$8,000 to help support the Foundation's ongoing welfare efforts.

From the entire team at Men of League, we thank Tabcorp and the Easts Group for their support!



REVOLUTIONARY FIGURE IN THREE FOOTY CODES

Inaugural Kangaroo Patrick ‘Nimmo’ Walsh is an intriguing figure during the time of disquiet that led to the league’s formation in 1908. He played three sports in three countries and was a sports medicine guinea pig.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

Patrick Walsh, one of the first Kangaroos of 1908 and a fair, hard pioneering forward, was a successful player in three codes of football in three different countries whose mistreatment fuelled a groundswell of animosity by many players against rugby union authorities which eventually led to the birth of rugby league in Australia.

Despite the controversies, the Novocastrian never complained but went on to play rugby union in New Zealand, Australian football in South Africa and was the first player approached by English clubs to play rugby league in England where he was also one of the first players in history to have a knee cartilage removed in what was then a revolutionary procedure.

Born in Cooks Hill on May 3, 1879, Patrick Bernard Walsh was an amazingly gifted athlete, receiving medals for running and as a cricket all-rounder while at school.

Aged 17, he joined the Norwoods Rugby Union club who were undefeated while also conceding zero points during his debut season of 1896. After a residential system was introduced Walsh and many of his Norwoods colleagues linked with players from the Carlton club to form Newcastle Central for the 1899 season. Walsh won the first of his four consecutive premierships that year.

In 1899 he represented Northern Districts against the touring British side that contained the player Blair Swannell, whom Walsh would have several clashes with later in his career. By 1903 Walsh was regarded as one of the premier forwards in New South Wales. He represented Combined Country against Sydney Metropolis and the touring New Zealanders, before earning his first cap for NSW when selected to play against Queensland.

On July 2, 1904, Walsh made his debut for the Wallabies against Great Britain. Despite his own good performance, the Wallabies lost 17-0. Also in the

Australian team that day were future rugby league pioneers Alec Burdon and Dinny Lutge. Walsh’s opponent in the British side was Swannell.

After the Test, Walsh played for Northern Districts against the British. During the game he collided with British winger Fred Jowett, causing the winger to retire from the match with concussion. The tourists went after Walsh, but he held his own in a match best remembered for the “Dobson incident”.

It was alleged that British player Denys Dobson swore at referee Harry Dolan. After refusing to apologise, Dobson was sent off which incensed England captain David Bedell-Sivwright who ordered his team to leave the field, before returning 20 minutes later.

Walsh, nicknamed “Nimmo”, was one of five Northern Districts players who supported the referee’s decision at an investigation into the “Dobson incident” by the NSWRU, who surprisingly sided with the English, claiming the referee had heard wrong. Walsh’s stance is believed to have ostracised him within rugby union’s hierarchy.

Walsh played in the second and third Tests, both won by the British, but Walsh was one of Australia’s best and he faced the tourists for a fifth time in their match against NSW where he was at the centre of very heavy forwards clashes.

He retained his place in the state side for the first interstate game of 1905 and was considered one of the best three players in the losing NSW side and a week later starred in the NSW victory against Queensland, however, he was oddly dropped from the NSW side for the match against New Zealand, ironically replaced by British forward Swannell who was playing for North Sydney.

The Referee newspaper reported that “Walsh’s exclusion is simply a Chinese puzzle” after selectors suggested Walsh’s form had dropped in his last two



The 1908-08 'first' Kangaroos with Walsh fourth from the left in the back row.

games. After the third interstate game, the NSW squad was selected to tour New Zealand. Walsh was again omitted. The Arrow reported:

“If the Australian team to visit New Zealand included Walsh, one would have no fear as to the forwards holding their own against anything in New Zealand.

“Walsh stood out as being the best player in the senior grade competition.”

There is no better forward in Australia than Walsh, probably no one quite as good. In the Newcastle district, the “Dobson incident” inquiry is thought to have in some way prejudiced Walsh’s chances of being selected. It is clear that the Newcastle forward has not been omitted on the ground of his ability not being good enough.”

Disenchanted, Pat Walsh was to play just a few more games of rugby union in Australia. He left Australia for South Africa, participating in an expatriate Australian Rules competition in Johannesburg, to maintain his fitness. He became vice-captain of the Commonwealth football team, who won the Australian Football League premiership in November 1905.

Walsh returned to Newcastle early in 1906 before departing for New Zealand in April. He admired the quality of football that the 1903 New Zealand tourists displayed and wanted to play among who he regarded as the best players in the world.

He was signed by the Parnell club in Auckland and quickly earned selection in the Auckland Province team that toured New Zealand’s South Island, a feat he repeated in 1907. Many believed he would be selected in the New Zealand All Golds squad that was to tour Australia and England, with one commentator stating “Walsh stood out as being the best player in the senior grade competition.”

In 1908, the Auckland press proclaimed Walsh as the best forward in New Zealand. He was expected to be named in a representative side to face the British tourists, however he was again oddly omitted.

Walsh received a cable from James Giltinan in Sydney, asking him to join his newly formed Rugby League, where he could be selected in an end-of-season tour to England. He accepted the offer as he saw it as his last chance to visit England.

He was greeted at Sydney wharf on the Saturday morning of July 18 by NSWRL secretary Henry Hoyle, who took Walsh to the Royal Agricultural Showground. Walsh was given an hour to learn the new game before lining up for Queensland against NSW. Queensland lost 12-3 in Walsh’s first game of rugby league.

He played the last two games of the season for Newcastle and was a late inclusion in Giltinan’s squad to tour England but was unable to get a ticket on the SS Suevic ship with the rest of the squad, so he boarded the SS Salamis instead. He brought a kangaroo with him as a mascot, which he was training to lead the team out carrying the ball, but with no success.

The 11th game of the tour saw the Australian's face Northern Union champions Hunslet, whose forward pack contained the formidable "terrible six." Walsh overcame them and led Australia to an impressive 12-11 victory.

Walsh played in all three of Australia's Test matches against England and in 29 matches during the exhausting 45-game tour.

He also became the first Australian player approached by an English club and accepted an offer from Huddersfield. He remained in England at the conclusion of the tour, playing six games for Huddersfield at the end of their 1908-09 season. Kangaroo tour manager Giltinan stated at the time that Walsh was "the finest forward in the Northern Union."

In the 1909-10 season, Walsh suffered a knee injury in a game against Hull. He travelled to London to have an innovative and rarely performed operation on his knee.

In his first game back against Hull KR, he displayed his trademark unrelenting defence and hard running, but just before full-time he re-injured the knee.

Walsh travelled to Liverpool and had the damaged cartilage removed. He revealed: "The club regarded me as something of a guinea pig. When my operation proved successful, they sent three other players along to have their cartilages removed. They'd been on the crock list and weren't game to have the operation. I had it only because I knew that if I didn't take the risk with a surgeon in England, there was no one in Australia who could help me."

Walsh played seven games for Huddersfield in the 1910-11 season before returning to Australia with his future wife Rebecca Eve, who he met when she played piano at post-match functions during the Kangaroo tour. Walsh joined the Newcastle Central team and three weeks later captained a local team on a tour to Queensland, winning all three of their games.

Early in 1915, Pat and Rebecca married before the outbreak of war. Walsh enlisted with the 12th Light Horse Regiment and was promoted to corporal two months later before being transferred to a railway construction unit.

Sadly, Pat suffered a number of illnesses while on duty, one causing a paralysis that required metal callipers on his legs and the use of crutches to get around.

His son John Patrick Walsh was born in 1922 and John played rugby union for Newcastle Wanderers, earning selection in a Newcastle representative side and later became secretary of the club.

Pat enjoyed a peaceful retirement from the game and loved sailing around Newcastle with his younger brother Clem. He passed away on May 22, 1953, aged 64.

While at Huddersfield he was described as "a grim, gaunt forward, with a deadly embrace, tackles with scrupulous fairness and proportionate effectiveness."

James Giltinan succinctly described Walsh as "a generous-hearted, able forward and a sterling character." Indeed he was one of the major figures during the rugby rebellion that led to league being formed.



KID AND BUSH HERO REUNITED



Don 'Bandy' Adams (left) and Geoff Richardson ... reunited.

When a 17-year-old Geoff Richardson wore the number six jersey for Taree Old Bar in 1966, he was in awe of his opponent - 34-year-old country rugby league legend Don 'Bandy' Adams.

To receive the praise after the match from the veteran of five Tests for Australia, nine games for NSW, 11 for NSW Country and 21 for the strong Newcastle division, was never lost on Richardson who would go on to become a dual rugby union-rugby league international after moving to Brisbane.

What Richardson didn't know at the time was that Adams, an awkward-to-tackle winger most of his career, also made his first grade debut at 17 and was far from overawed, despite that introduction to A-grade action being in a grand final for Maitland. So the connection, and mutual respect, was obvious.

More than 48 years later, they were reunited a few months ago after Richardson was visiting Scone -

Adam's hometown for decades – made contact with Adams through Men of League and arranged an enjoyable hour of reminiscing.

“Our previous meeting had been in 1966 at Gloucester, near Taree, when we played a match against each other,” Richardson said.

“Bandy, in his coaching role, had moved to five-eighth from his Test position of wing, and I played in the No 6 jumper for Taree Old Bar. I can recall that we acknowledged each other after the game and I can remember Bandy mentioning that I had a good game, for a kid.

“After Gloucester, Bandy had a successful playing and coaching spell at Scone and when this opportunity arose, when we were travelling through Scone, I made contact and had an enjoyable hour talking about our footy.

“I probably rated Bandy as being a “significant person” who I had met on my journey through my playing career. Country Rugby League benefitted by ex-internationals plying their trade as captain-coaches towards the end of their playing days, which does not get the same spread today.”

Those few encouraging words were never lost on Richardson and emphasise the power of a few moments spared by a “legend” can have on an aspiring footballer.

Adams toured with the 1956-57 Kangaroos to England and France, playing two Tests on tour, while Richardson, who turned to league after being a three-year Wallaby from 1971-73, was chosen to play two Tests against Great Britain in 1974 from Wests Brisbane.

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NRL WELFARE & EDUCATION

OUR PEOPLE ARE BETTER FOR HAVING BEEN PART OF THE RUGBY LEAGUE COMMUNITY



This is the vision of NRL/RLPA Welfare and Education. From our Holden Cup “No Work or No Study = No Play” philosophy, to our NRL career and social responsibility programs through to career transition services for retiring players, we aim to help players be successful both on and off the field. Here are just some of their exciting success stories.



2015 INDIGENOUS PLAYERS' LEADERSHIP CAMP

The 3rd NRL Welfare and Education Indigenous Players' Leadership Camp was held ahead of the All Stars game. This camp consisted of 23 players, which included players who were selected in the Indigenous All Stars team and other Aboriginal or TSI players from all clubs. The camp strengthened the identity amongst the playing group and created a better understanding of the issues Indigenous people deal with in their communities and in the NRL system so they realise their potential to create positive change within and outside of the game.

The camp focused on four key areas:

- Career aspirations
- Leadership
- Mental wellbeing
- Cultural war cry

Career aspirations - many of the same skills required to make it to the elite levels of rugby league are the same skills that can lead to success and open up rewarding vocational pathways off the field. Many of the guys in the room were actively involved in studies and work experience that gave them a chance to demonstrate these skills and explore future career interests. Additionally, having meaningful activity to engage in off the field helped with focus and a positive mindset at training and on the field. Some of the occupational



DID YOU KNOW

2.5% of the total population in Australia are Indigenous, compared to:

9% of NRL & NYC players
15% of Origin players and
25% of the Kangaroos

areas of interest amongst the guys included property development, youth work, media and coaching.

Mental wellbeing workshop - this included mental health and the components of mental wellbeing with Clinton Schultz and Joe Williams. Clinton is an Indigenous psychologist and spoke with players about understanding what their safe place is and how to address issues they may be dealing with. As an ex player dealing with mental health issues Joe Williams gave great advice to the players on coping with the ups and downs of a professional sporting career.

Development of the cultural war cry - the players designed their own war cry to be used across the game and showcased it before the All Stars game.

“It’s a special sort of feeling,” said NRL Indigenous welfare and education manager Dean Widders, who has been the driving force behind the war dance. “We sit there at the camps and talk about the traditional values and connecting to who you really are and what you are playing for, and I think that any player who plays at the level thinks about where they come from.

“That is why they get teary-eyed in the anthem and why it means so much to pull those jerseys on, and this is just about giving everyone the chance to pay respect to where you have come from, where you are and what this country has been through. That



gives everyone strength, no matter whether you are Indigenous or non-Indigenous.”

Leadership - players learnt how to develop leadership skills to be utilised in the game and in Clubs to help Clubs better understand their Indigenous players and how to achieve the best from them on and off the field. Johnathan Thurston, Captain of the Indigenous All Stars and North Queensland Cowboys teams, delivered a parting message to those who had attended.

“When you go back to your Clubs, tell them how good this camp was ... tell them how much you enjoyed it, tell them what you got out of it and tell them why you want to come to the next camp”.

COMMITTEE NEWS

BRISBANE

BY STEVE RICKETTS, PUBLICITY OFFICER

Former Test five-eighth and new Broncos assistant coach Kevin Walters was guest speaker at the December 17 Kick Off Club lunch at Broncos Leagues Club and spoke frankly about his career.

Walters said he almost joined older brother Steve at the North Queensland Cowboys in 1997 before deciding to stick with the Broncos.

Walters also confirmed he had fallen out with coach, Wayne Bennett after he had sacked him as an assistant in 2005.

“There was a time there I wouldn’t cross the street to say hello to Wayne,” Walters said.

One of his post-Broncos jobs took him to France to coach Catalans Dragons and he tried to do the right thing by speaking French, before the locals told him to stick to English. “They thought I was speaking Russian,” he said.

Sitting at the official table alongside Walters was former dual rugby international five-eighth, Geoff Richardson who still looks fit enough to play.

Richardson, a product of Taree rugby league, played 10 Tests for the Wallabies from 1971-73 before switching back to league with Wests in Brisbane, from where he played seven times for Queensland as well as two Tests against the 1974 Great Britain tourists.

A minutes silence was observed before the lunch for recently deceased players Mick Crocker, Hugh Kelly, Trevor Nipperess, Alf McGrath and Frank Farrington.

A number of former greats will be acknowledged at the April 15 Kick Off Club lunch at Broncos Leagues Club when the book, ‘For the Love of the Game’, is officially launched.

The book’s author is league historian Murray Barnett who has written about Queensland league legends from the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s.

At the time of writing, former internationals Frank Drake, Johnny Gleeson, Lionel Morgan, Dud Beattie, Jim Paterson and Col Weiss had accepted invitations to attend the launch, where they will be interviewed by radio personality John McCoy.

Congratulations to former Men of League state chairman and later manager Steve Calder and his wife Suzanne who celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on December 6.

Steve and Suzanne were childhood sweethearts at Narromine in western NSW where Steve played his first senior football under Englishman Phil Jackson. Steve went on to play for Canterbury Bankstown, Brisbane Norths, Hull (England) and Corrimal, and later was part of the coaching staff of the Illawarra Steelers and Brisbane Broncos.

BUNDABERG

BY TERRY DODD, PRESIDENT

As we look forward to 2015, plans are well under way for our upcoming events.

Membership is still growing which is great not only for Bundaberg but Queensland as well. We would like to encourage members to spread the word on what we are all about, in the hope of attracting new members.

2014 was great for our committee, especially the sportsman’s dinner in October. Plans are now underway for the dinner on 23 October 2015. I am negotiating with a couple of special guests so hopefully it won’t be long before we announce who it will be. Don’t forget to book early as we have limited numbers.

Kick Off Club nights started on 27 February and by request this year we have increased it to nine nights. Our committee have 2015 diaries available for members on request. They can be collected from the committee. We would like to send our special thoughts to Queensland State Manager Steve Calder who is doing it pretty tough. Steve was great and helped me get our local committee up and running some six years ago. Thinking of you mate, get well soon.



Our patron Don Furner OAM, chats with Blake Austin at our bowls day

CANBERRA MONARO

BY NOEL BISSETT, OAM, PRESIDENT

There was an enthusiastic turnout for the annual Canberra Monaro Men of League bowls day held on 15 November 2014 at the picturesque Canberra Bowling Club in Forrest. Despite the threat of wet and windy weather, the rain held off until the dying stages of the day's competition when the final teams were dragged from the green for fear of being struck by lightning.

Our MC for the day was Men of League NSW state manager Stuart Raper. Stuart welcomed the gathering and thanked the local members for their support throughout the year. Stuart then welcomed new Raiders recruit Blake Austin to the microphone for an entertaining Q & A session. Blake captivated the audience with his honest and open answers to Stuart's probing questions and thanked those assembled, and all in Canberra, for making he and his family feel so welcome.

Special mention is also made of the welcome attendance of our patron, Don Furner OAM and his wife Lee, who joined the gathering for lunch. Their presence was a highlight of the day.

While technique, skill, and rule interpretation may have varied across the rinks, all teams entered into the game with enthusiasm. Crookwell Crackerjacks were the ultimate winners of the day.

Many thanks to Mark Thompson, manager of the Canberra Bowling Club and Mick who was in charge of the BBQ, also the Ladies Auxiliary who looked after us so well during the day, nothing was too much trouble and the salads were, as always, excellent.

We also greatly appreciate Stuart Raper making the journey down to Canberra and Blake Austin for finding time in his busy training schedule to come along and mix with the gathering. Their company made the day all that more enjoyable! Finally, thank you to all the Men of League members, and their family and friends, who contributed so enthusiastically to the day's success.

Unfortunately one of our inaugural Canberra Monaro committee members, Doug Crampton who has been ill for the past couple of years has recently been admitted to a home in Batemans Bay for treatment.

Doug represented NSW Country and was a member of the strong Queanbeyan Blues premiership winning teams coached by Don Furner in the late 1960s and 70s. Doug has many friends from these days and if any are in the Batemans Bay area and wish to visit him, you would be most welcome. The address is Edgewood, 269 Beach Road, Denhams Beach, phone 02 4472 8155. All of us from Canberra Monaro wish Doug all the very best for the future.

In closing, on behalf of our committee I thank our secretary, Sue for her efforts. Sue was elected to the position last year and has worked tirelessly to achieve our goals, which in turn has contributed well towards our success throughout the year.

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Malcolm Johnston and Stuart Raper at the Men of League race day, Cowra

MID WEST

BY STUART RAPER, NSW STATE MANAGER

The Mid West committee members from Cowra had a very successful golf Day on 6 February.

Congratulations to Bob Hilton and his team on having 120 golfers and 150 for the dinner after the golf.

Special guests on the night who spoke at the dinner were Malcolm Johnston, Royce Simmons, Andrew Farrar and local legend 'Cabbage' McDonald.

The next day the Cowra races named their day the Men of League race day, with proceeds from the entrance fee going to the Men of League.

The boys at Cowra are looking to continue these events annually and are looking for bigger and better things next year.

FAR SOUTH COAST

BY DAMIAN KENNEDY, SECRETARY

A recent spark in interest in the Men of League from the towns of Bombala and Delegate on the Monaro, together with the success of the recent annual golf day, means that the year has started with some great excitement on the Far South Coast.

Eden Gardens Country Club was the venue for the recent Men of League Far South Coast golf day. Attended by 118 golfers, including ex-Eden coach and NSW state manager Stuart Raper and former Bulldog Glenn Nissen, the day was a great success. Plenty of laughs were had on the course whilst the raffles, auction, BBQ and beers after the golf were even more entertaining.

Special thanks must go to committee member Col Clarke for all of his hard work in organising the day along with Con Zurcas from the Eden Motor group for part sponsorship of the day. Local businesses and Men of League members also chipped in by sponsoring different holes.

East Coast Radio once again provided invaluable support by donating a series of ads leading up to the day. Committee member and manager of the station, Peter Dunnage, has been a wonderful supporter of the Men of League and we thank him and wish him well as he finishes up with the station.

Unfortunately, due to the results of a couple of vehicle accidents and illness, the welfare requirements in the area have increased and, as is the case with committees all over Australia, our committee members have shown great support to those in need as well as their families.

An advertisement for the Canterbury League Club. The background is a photograph of a large, multi-tiered waterfall with colorful lights reflecting on the water. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

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FOLLOW US

ILLAWARRA

BY PETER FITZGERALD, PRESIDENT

This year's Men of League Illawarra functions have been set down for the entire year:

Kick Off Clubs, all Fridays from 4pm-7pm (except December) - 20 February, Albion Park RSL; 19 June, Bomaderry Hotel; 28 August, Ryan's Hotel Thirroul; 30 October, Shellharbour Workers Club; 1 Dec (Tuesday) Collegians Club

Dates for major fund raisers, all Fridays, are: 10 April, golf day, Wollongong Golf Club; 31 July, bowls day, Warilla Bowling Club; 25 September, finals luncheon, Wests Leagues Club.

If you would like an email reminder please forward your email to barryharle@7mail.com

In local football, The Cash Back App Illawarra Challenge Cup started on 12 February. This includes all Illawarra clubs and two from outside the district playing in a knockout competition format as per the old Amco Cup. Games will be played in four 20-minute quarters.

Round 1 fixtures will be on Saturday 21 March at Rex Jackson Oval, Helensburgh and Saturday 28 March at Gibson Park, Thirroul with double header fixtures at both venues. Semi-finals will be held at Parrish Park, Figtree on Saturday 9 May, and the final on Sunday 14 June will be at Collegians Sports Complex.

CENTRAL COAST

BY DENNIS TOMSETT, PUBLICITY OFFICER

We are looking forward to a successful 2015. The fund-raising events planned for this year are a bowls day at Ettalong Bowling Club on 23 February, a race day at Gosford on 23 July and a golf day at Shelley Beach on 25 September. Further advice confirming details of these events will be sent to members via email or SMS. A State of Origin luncheon is also scheduled, for May. The venue and date for this event will be advised via email and SMS.

It is pleasing to report that Jim Williams, former Erina and Wyong rugby league player, is making good progress with his rehabilitation.

If you have not received SMS or email advice previously of our up and coming events contact me on 0458 211 817 so you can be added to our list.

SUNSHINE COAST

BY TONY DURKIN, PUBLICITY OFFICER

A casual discussion post the annual Sunshine Coast Christmas luncheon, followed by a commitment and then a pledge, is set to boost the Men of League Foundation coffers by as much as \$20,000.

During the conversation in the bar at Mooloolaba Surf Club back in December, prominent and popular businessman John Calcino conceded he was experiencing difficulties losing weight and was embarrassed by his state of health and fitness.

His good friend and long-time former boss, Ken Reed of Reed Property Group, also became involved in the conversation and a plan evolved where some mates/corporates/business associates would lay down a challenge to John, and there and then pledged financial support for each kilo he lost. And Ken declared Men of League would be the beneficiary.

The initial pledge was for \$940 for every kilo shed in the six-month period from 1 January to 30 June. Since, two more promises of \$1200 each have been lodged if 10kg or more is shed. Not only is John keen to lose his weight – and he says 25kg is a definite and achievable goal – he desperately wants that Men of League donation to be \$20,000.

Sunshine Coast committee has been active in recent months assisting a number of local welfare cases. Following the death of teenage cancer sufferer Josh Eusebio from Bribie Island, we aided with funeral expenses and also reimbursed donations which had been made by the Bribie Island Touch Football Association, of which John was an active participant.

Member and Kawana Rugby League Football Club vice president, Neil Espley, is still undergoing treatment in Brisbane's Princess Alexandra Hospital as a result of serious head injuries suffered during a fall in Sydney during the grand final weekend. Neil spent three weeks in an induced coma in St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney. We assisted Neil's wife Anita with flights to Sydney to visit her husband.

Another Kawana Dolphins family, the Gowlands, have also been supported by Men of League. Last year Paula Gowland, the wife of under-7s coach John and mum of player Ethan, was the team's first aid officer, making it a family affair. However, she had a fall and her leg was so badly broken that an amputation was required. Initial assistance to the Gowland family has helped cover some of the medical expenses.



Neville Glover was part of the winning team

NORTH WEST

BY KEVIN ROBINSON, SECRETARY

Our last fundraiser for 2014 was our bowls day run by the Narrabri sub-committee on 15 November at the Narrabri Bowling Club. Even though it was a scorcher of a day (44 degrees on the bowling green) a great day was enjoyed by all who attended. Supporters came from Tamworth, Gunnedah, Moree, Narrabri, and a bus load from the Manilla sub-committee. The main guest for the day was Neville Glover, who has close ties to this area and has been a great supporter of our functions. I believe Nev also brought three mates with him to support the day at no cost to Men of League.

A bowls day will be held by the Gunnedah sub-committee on 22 March at the Gunnedah Bowling Club to kick start our fundraisers for 2015 and president Don Pascoe is hoping for a good roll up of members and guests.

The Manilla sub-committee held a pre-Christmas get together in late November for Men of League members, wives, and partners etc (29 in attendance) at the Royal Hotel in Manilla and were well looked after by great Men of League supporters mine hosts Tom and Vickie Cocking, and a great time was had by all. They are showing the true spirit of the Men of League. They also entered a bowls team in the local business houses social bowls competition to promote the Foundation. They are that keen they are looking at entering two teams in the next comp. The Tamworth sub-committee are looking at holding a sportsman's luncheon as their fundraiser, however negotiations are still in the early stages.

Finally and on a personal note, I would like to thank the Men of League for their support and kind words on the sudden death of my eldest daughter Karen on 2 January 2015, may she rest in peace.

RIVERINA

BY IAN LLOYD, SECRETARY

Our first major event for 2015 will be our annual Wagga Wagga Gold Cup breakfast. This has been extremely popular over the years. This year the breakfast will coincide with the City v Country match which will be played for the first time at the newly upgraded McDonalds Park, Wagga. We are hoping to have both first grade coaches at the function which will give the match and our breakfast a huge boost.

In other areas we assisted Andy Britt and his family with some urgent bills. Andy, who played for the Gundagai Tigers for many years, was laid up over Christmas with a broken arm. Men of League members also made a number of visits to our incapacitated members over the Christmas break.

We were saddened to hear of the loss of Group 20 legend Ray 'Snowy' Thorpe who passed away in November last year. Our condolences go out to Ray's family. An obituary is in this month's edition.

We are looking forward to a very strong fundraising year and as mentioned above there is a huge amount of excitement building in the Riverina for the annual City v Country fixture in May.

WESTERN SYDNEY

BY GARRY O'DONNELL, PRESIDENT

Thanks to Men of League national office for our prizemoney for being the committee with the most new members early in the year; it helped us have a very successful Christmas party where we invited our great supporters Parramatta RLFC, West Ashfield, Cabramatta Leagues and Simplicity Funerals.

We were able to help two people, Steve Hall and Deanne Thomas, who have gone through tough times, to have a lot better Christmas than they expected. Special thanks to our committee who donated two large hampers plus Alan Keating, director of Cabramatta RLFC, who donated hams and turkeys. Deanne's three year old daughter was also presented with a bike from Santa, thanks to a good supporter of Men of League.

Overall 2014 was a good year for Western Sydney with our first golf day a great success. The Graham Murray tribute luncheon and the Guildford sportsman's day were great successes also. Special thanks to our sponsors and friends for their support this year.

Our goal this year is to top last year's achievements.

TOWNSVILLE

BY BARRY BUCHANAN, VICE-PRESIDENT

A very successful combined annual general meeting and Kick Off Club was held at the Riverview Tavern on Friday 16 January.

The Townsville executive met with Queensland president, Darryl Van de Velde, and Queensland events and operations manager, Tegan Jennings, prior to the AGM to resolve a number of issues before Darryl addressed members at the AGM.

Thank you so much to those who volunteered to fill positions - patron Joe Goicoechea, president Tim Nugent, vice president Barry Buchanan, secretary Terry Feeney, treasurer Garry O'Neill, welfare Greg Winter, membership Barry Peters, committee Arthur McMahon, Helen Sugars, Midge Jackson, Ron Schilling, Noel Reid, Mark Williams, Glen King, Les Walsh and Dan Jackson.

Special guests at the Kick Off Club that followed were North Queensland Cowboys football manager Peter Parr and head coach Paul Green. Both spoke with confidence about the Cowboys' prospects for 2015 and left members feeling positive about this year's results, a year of twenty years' celebration.

No social gathering is complete without a cold drink and a snack and both were duly provided by Lion and the Lillywhite Group. Thank-you Glen Cummins and Arthur McMahon.

Finally, on behalf of Men of League Townsville, I want to convey our very best wishes to Steve Calder who has stepped down from his role of Queensland State Manager due to ill health. Steve and his offside, Angelo Venardos, were instrumental in getting us started and Steve's support and guidance since has been much appreciated.

MELBOURNE

BY PETER FOREMAN, PRESIDENT

The start to the 2015 year was given a real boost for our committee when Elaine Canty, the wife of our vice-president, Roy Masters, was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day awards.

Roy received the same award four years ago so to have two AM awards in the same household is rare indeed. Our committee wishes to extend our warmest congratulations to Elaine and we look forward to celebrating the award with our team in the not too distant future.

We have completed our plan for 2015, and have worked closely with the Melbourne Storm and the Victorian Rugby League to maximise our program for the year.

The first event was our annual golf day on 12 February at Keysborough Golf Club with an attendance of about 60 players.

Our committee welcomes Massey Wade to our team as membership officer. He is well known and respected within the VRL community and I know that Massey will add significant value to our team.



Steve Carter, Michael Buettner, Sain Watson, Michael Hagan, Les Boyd

NORTH COAST

BY PETER BARRETT, PRESIDENT

We now have completed our fifth year as a committee which was a tough one with a lack of sponsor money but it never halted our progress in getting our name out there.

I would like to thank all our local venues, Sawtell Bowls Club, Park Beach Bowling Club, Coffs Harbour Hotel and Coffs Harbour Race Club for making their premises available to hold our fundraising days and nights, and our special guests who made the effort to travel to our events to make them successful, like Ben Ross, Stuart Raper, who taught me how to have fun at golf (a six-pack and a golf cart), Neil Pringle, Les Boyd, who has a great following in our area, and Michael Buettner, who was tremendous for our biggest day at the race day luncheon and introducing a punters club which we will continue.

On a sad note we lost a supporter and sponsor, Wayne Glenn at only 46 years. He was far too young to be taken away due to cancer. Wayne was involved in various charity organisations and very popular which showed by the over 1000 people attending his funeral and he will surely be missed.

In 2015 we will try to get Grafton more involved and have a Men of League day there. In their first time in Group 2 last year they won all three grades and will be favourite to go back to back. We are also hoping to get the Macksville and Nambucca Heads sub-committee more involved.



Men of League ambassador Shane Webcke with Ben Ikin looking on.

SOUTHERN (QLD)

BY ANDREW O'BRIEN, PRESIDENT

The Men of League foundation were out and about last week culminating in a golf day at the Toowoomba Golf Club on Friday with Men of League ambassador Shane Webcke and Ben Ikin headlining the event.

National welfare manager Ben Ross and Wally Fullerton spent time visiting the rugby League faithfuls around the area. The Men of League foundation also hosted guests to the NRL trial match last week.

The golf day attracted a large field from all parts. The K & R Plumbing sponsored the day with people from as far as Cobar and Glen Innes attending. The winners of the four ball Ambrose competition were Wayne Maiden, Kurt Haensch, Allan Ross and Damian McDonald with the best nett score of 52 3/4. Jason Cook, Ian O'Brien, Col Hayes and Wally Fullerton-Smith were runners up with 55 7/8.

Robert McGavin, Dick Palmer, Scott Briskey and Peter O'Callaghan were third (56 1/8) on a countback from Greg Sander, Nathan Sander, Frank Hedge and Matt Hedge.

Best gross score was 60. Nearest the pins: Gary McKinnon 424cm, Danny Freyling 182cm, David McDougall, Allan Ross 150cm; putting competition: Adam Botcher; longest drive handicap 0-14, Russell Dennis. Handicap 15-27, Ben Ross.

Many thanks to birthday boy Graham Pamerter who organised the event.

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Since 2002, the Men of League Foundation has been assisting members of the rugby league community, including men, women and children. We support players, coaches, referees, administrators, volunteers, and committees, from all levels of the game, through our benevolence and welfare program.

Annual membership is \$20 per annum. Your initial joining fee of \$20, will include a Men of League keyring engraved with your membership number, our quarterly magazine, contact with current and retired football players and access to local committee events.

Name		Date of Birth	M / F
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