

Special Edition
MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION



**LENDING A HAND
FOR 20 YEARS**

Celebrating
20 YEARS



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IN THIS

EDITION

OUR COVER

Iconic image ... Ron Coote lifts first grade opponent but Test match teammate Graeme Langlands from the turf after the 1971 grand final. It's what Men of League 'mates' have been doing for two decades. Photo taken by John O'Gready

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 5 Melbourne Storm MOU
- 6 Celebrating 20 years
- 10 John Raper, last original Immortal gone
- 12 Stuart Raper's tribute to his Dad
- 16 Crazy Socks round approaches
- 18 Mark Thomas
- 23 Special lunch with Walters boys
- 26 Walters brothers' place in history
- 29 Elsie Albert, NRLW
- 30 Breakfast with legends
- 34 John Driscoll
- 37 Port Stephens kick-off club
- 38 Mick Stone's taxing professions
- 40 North Coast race day
- 42 Steve Mortimer
- 43 Royce Simmons
- 46 Cairns Brothers MOU
- 48 Sam Panapa
- 51 Bill Harvey

THE REGULARS

- 05 From Chair Helen Wood Grant
- 21 From CEO Stephen Lowndes
- 25 From wellbeing lead Roxanne Moates
- 32 Around the Grounds
- 44 Helping Hand
- 53 Committee news
- 58 Tributes

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MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN
OF THE RUGBY LEAGUE COMMUNITY

FROM THE CHAIR



HELEN WOOD GRANT

Welcome to our 20th birthday party year which has already kicked off with a bang at a range of events our committees have staged. Many more great times lie ahead.

Please look online at www.menofleague.com for events planned near you and head along to join others to celebrate all that has made us a truly a unique single-sport charity. We exist to serve the needy men, women and children who have made significant contributions on or off the field to the greatest game of all.

Rugby league lost another Immortal with the passing of John 'Chook' Raper. To his beautiful wife Caryl, sons Stuart, Aaron and Kurt and his grandchildren, we send our most heartfelt sympathies. There are some who are born with an excess of everything and Chook was one of those. He had breathtaking football genius, a big heart with endless room for family and friends, and a personality brimming with a loveable irreverence. Vale Johnny Raper.

You will see the story on page 6, 'The Making of Men of League', which is Neil Cadigan's reflection on the birth of the Foundation and its early days. As he says, the founders - despite their vision - had little idea that their vision would catch fire in the hearts of so many for so long. Twenty years on and Men of League Foundation continues to evolve. We provide different types of support in different ways and to different demographics as the world around us changes and the game we love increasingly reflects those societal changes.

2022 has not begun without its trials and tribulations. The devastating floods that ripped through so much of the east coast flattened spirits and devastated lives just as we began to have some clear air around COVID-19. The Board and I wish all of you who were affected a speedy return to normalcy and hope that you are able to rebuild your homes and your lives as soon as possible. We are here, as always, ready to help if needed.

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STORM ADDS FOUNDATION TO CHARITY PARTNERS LIST

Peter Robinson, a key link between the Foundation and the Storm, addresses the players.

The Melbourne Storm has acknowledged the Men of League Foundation as an official charity partner which broadens the already strong relationship between NRL club and our Victorian committee.

“We are excited to report that we have recently been acknowledged as an official charity partner by the Storm,” said Victorian committee president Peter Foreman. “It’s a major step for us to formalise the arrangement, although we have been extremely fortunate to have enjoyed their support since our committee was formed in 2011.”

The association with the blue-chip NRL club goes back to Men of League’s roots in Melbourne. The idea to form a committee came from Greg Brentnall and John Ribot. Brentnall, the Canterbury Bulldogs premiership-winning fullback and 13-Test Kangaroo fullback, was the Storm’s development manager while former international winger and Broncos and Super League CEO, Ribot, was chairman.

“They were joined by past players Robbie Kearns and Danny Williams along with other participants, ensuring Storm DNA runs deep within our committee and support networks,” said Foreman.

“We treat our associating with the Storm very seriously and have developed a planning process at the start of each year. The process is essentially managed by our key contacts Tayah and Michaela from (Storm) marketing, as well as former player Peter Robinson, the players’ welfare officer who is now our Men of League advocate to the football department.

“Robbo has himself been a recipient of support from our Foundation when the family house was burned to the ground some 12 months ago.

“Following a discussion with Frank Ponissi (Storm’s director of football) and Robbo, three of our team - Phillippa and Massey Wade along with myself - were invited to present to the Storm football department. We talked about what the Foundation does to lend a helping hand to the men, women and children of the rugby league community. We also gave examples of some of the people that we have provided support for locally in Victoria.

“Our objective was to boost awareness and grow membership. The result was that the entire squad including players, coaches and support staff signed up and became members. We obtained 54 new and lapsed members. We are working with Robbo to arrange to present to other Storm staff members.

“I would like to extend our thanks to Storm CEO Justin Rodski for the great support that the Storm provide to us here in Melbourne. We all operate in the heart of AFL land and the rugby league community is a very tight-knit community, and the AAMI Park precinct.

“We are fortunate to have such an enduring relationship with the Storm, a club that we are extremely proud to work with and provide support for those that need a hand.

“Teamwork and mateship is still the cornerstone of our game.”



Celebrating

— 20 YEARS —



Driving forces ... co-founders Ron Coote and Jim Hall with inaugural patron John Fahey.

THE MAKING OF MEN OF LEAGUE

WITH THE FOUNDATION CELEBRATING ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2022, THIS IS THE FIRST OF MANY NOSTALGIC STORIES WE WILL PUBLISH TO HIGHLIGHT THE PEOPLE, EVENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS, WELLBEING RECIPIENTS AND SPONSORS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE SUCCESS OF MEN OF LEAGUE.

NEIL CADIGAN (MEMBER #620)

An idea, a commitment to help others, came to fruition at the NSW Leagues Club on 11 July 2002 when 140 former footballers gathered at the invitation of a small steering committee to form rugby league's first game-wide "past players association".

They endorsed what has become ... the Men of League.

The name had originated from the title of annual footy calendar that popularly featured oiled-up muscular current players in sexy pose published by Narelle Hughes, wife of former Canterbury premiership-winning player Graeme Hughes, who was happy to provide the (copyrighted) title to the fledgling organisation looking for a name that would resonate.

Those who attended that launch function, which featured comedian Brian Doyle and food and beverage provided by Carlton and United Breweries and the leagues club, paid a fee of \$10 each to become inaugural members. Soon after, all NRL clubs were asked to provide \$1000 each to help establish an operating fund until the first of the magnificent early black tie dinners, more recently referred to as the gala dinner, was held on the Wednesday of grand final week, October 2.

Buoyed by the support of that initial call out on 11 July, the committee that had been formed in the preceding months held a meeting on 23 July with foundation president Ron Coote, secretary Max Brown, patron John Fahey, treasurer Brian James, Graeme Hughes, Grahame Bowen and Kevin Roberts present, with apologies from vice-president Jim Hall and Darrell Bampton. They were the pioneers.

And they were instrumental in building what became a wellbeing organisation that is unmatched in Australian sport, which now has 37 local committees, is host to one of the most popular black tie events in Sydney sporting circles, at one stage had more than 24,000 'members' (before the membership system changed to an annual subscription) and has provided \$10 million to people of the rugby league community that needed assistance.

Approaching the end of the 1990s, discussion began within former players who felt there had to be a better support system for past players, too many of whom the game had left behind. To be frank, rugby league was never good at that.

For inaugural president and current patron Ron Coote the plight became top of mind after he was asked to pay a drop in on former St George player of the 1950s, Doug McRitchie, in the same hospital the Souths legend was visiting, where his daughter had had a baby.

Max Brown had been recovering from a major cancer scare suffered when in his early 50s when he began to think more deeply of former players who were no longer bullet-proof and might need assistance. One day, as he sat in a café pondering his thoughts on the subject and how he could give it traction, he recognised the familiar limp of his former Canterbury teammate Jim Hall as Hall walked past as he was leaving the NRL's offices at Fox Studios (he was the judiciary commissioner). Max quickly garnered Jim's support for a past players association aimed at helping the wellbeing of others.

Jim Hall braced the idea to NRL boss David Gallop who gave it support in principal, provided it was run independently (which became a blessing for the Foundation), and the moves to formally gather the right people to make such an organisation a reality began.

They saw Ron Coote, who stood as one of the game's legendary players and being a successful businessman through his McDonalds

franchises, as the perfect president. He too had been thinking along the same lines and been discussing with others.

When the trio combined, and their admirable intentions converged, the concept became a major force.

They started working their networks and felt involving coaching legend Jack Gibson would add further credibility. Jim smiles when he recalls the moment he asked the coach of the century to take the role.

"Jack said to me, 'Sorry mate, I've got to knock you back,' which stunned me a bit, and I asked why and he said, 'Usually when you become patron, you die the next year ... but I'll do anything you want otherwise to help.'

Soon after John Fahey, a former Canterbury lower grader who went on to be Premier of NSW and had walked away from Federal politics in 2001, was approached to become patron and he became an enthusiastic member of the movement and a valuable ally.

There are many others who were instrumental when we look back at those formative years when Men of League gradually gained respect, profile and acceptance of the positive role it could play in the game at all levels, most importantly, to provide much needed company, care and compassion to many former players and other servants of the game who had become isolated or disconnected.

The initial working title of the proposed association was The Dinosaurs of League, and the dinosaur logo stands on top of the invitation for the 11 July inaugural group evening (pictured page 9) before it was changed before the meeting when the Hugheses offered Men of League. While the name became synonymous with rugby league, it was the sentiment that was its power.

"It was the right thing at the right time for the game and to have 140 at that first event at NSW Leagues showed that," said Ron Coote. "None of us could have anticipated how much it was going to grow though."

"We helped people who were socially isolated after finishing football and suddenly we gave them things to do; something to be involved with and they got together with their old mates – it was priceless; very satisfying," said Hall. "We didn't realise the value of the camaraderie of rugby league players, whether they played against each other or with each other or at what level. We reconnected people; it was enormous, and we took it to those involved in the game beyond those who just played it."

Max Brown gave a further insight of the group's other intentions, in a letter to NRL chairman John Chalk (a fine supporter) in June 2002 on behalf of the committee, when he stated: "The Dinosaurs of League has been formed to assist, with strict criteria, funding for former players who have suffered financial hardship through illness, accident or because of previous injuries suffered through playing the game. The Dinosaurs of League has been formed to assist, with strict criteria, funding for former players who have suffered financial hardship through illness, accident or because of previous injuries suffered through playing the game. Rehabilitation, counselling etc will be made available when necessary ... It is a daunting task, but those involved at committee level at this stage believe it will bring great support and comfort to those in need."

There are many others we should never forget, and who will be featured further in the following two magazine issues this year. Influential and unselfish people like Noel Kelly who was a tireless worker who would give up many hours and travel many kilometres to visit people and speak at functions; John Peard who had to overcome



Co-founder Max Brown.



First executive officer and 18 year worker for Men Of League, Martin Cook.

his own physical challenges after suffering a major stroke only to provide so much comfort to others; fellow stalwart wellbeing officers like Ken Vessey and others still keenly involved, Rabbits legend Bob McCarthy who has so often made himself available over two decades. Even Steve Ricketts and Barry Ross who have been long-time regular contributors with stories for this magazine, as well as prominent scribes who would provide content for nothing, typifying the spirit of support and respect for Men of League's charter.

Then there is Peter Simons who had returned home from the USA where he ran a business for Kerry Packer and caught wind of the fledgling organisation. He introduced himself and voluntarily dedicated himself to steering the creation of a network of local committees, based on the NFL Alumni system. He visited the San Francisco branch at his own expense and bringing back their operating details.

The NRL provided a small work space at its Fox Studios offices and Martin Cook became the first full-time employee, coming aboard as a 25-year-old in 2004. He spent seven years as executive officer before returning to his hometown of Dubbo but remained on the national board until 2015. Martin still supports Men of League as the Western (NSW) president. When he finished his role as a dedicated and passionate employee, there were 30 committees – 18 in NSW, 10 in Qld, plus Melbourne and Northern Territory (now defunct) which were formed in 2011.

Also in 2004, a Queensland division was established after Peter Simons met with future life members Greg Veivers and the late Steve Calder at the Caxton Hotel in the shadows of Suncorp Stadium and they enthusiastically jumped aboard with Veivers co-opting his good mate Darryl Van de Velde to add more strength.

Van de Velde's devotion was also recognised with life membership – an honours list that has grown to Ron Coote (2011), Jim Hall (2011), Peter Simons (2013), Steve Calder (2014), The Hon John Fahey, AC (2015), Noel Kelly (2016), Greg Veivers (2016), Darryl Van de Velde (2017), Tony Durkin (2020), Ron Atkins (2021), John Ribot (2021) and Ken Vessey (2021).

It was decided at the first meetings to undertake the large exercise of hosting a black tie ball at Darling Harbour's Convention Centre, in the days before the 2002 grand final, which proved a master step for the organisation. Graeme and Narelle Hughes were given the responsibility of organising the night. Traditions that continue to this day were established at that first wonderful event of 2 October 2002

- someone from within the footy community would sing the national anthem, each year there would be a theme which paid homage to the game's history and a pictorial tribute to those the game had lost the preceding year would be featured.

John Raper was the natural first choice to sing the anthem and the night was a tribute to super coach Jack Gibson and doyen of broadcasting Frank Hyde. More than 700 attended the first event and about \$150,000 was raised. They became magnificent annual functions, particularly in the early years when the gala dinner was such a significant part of grand final week.

However, the lead-up was not without its challenges, as Jim Hall recalled.

"We went in to book the convention centre and they were happy to have us but said we needed a \$40,000 deposit/surety to hold the booking. We had \$140 in the bank. Anyway, Graeme got out his American Express card and said 'put it on that'. As we walked away I said, 'Geez, we better start selling tables quickly'. The Broncos and the Bulldogs bought two tables each within days and other clubs, and people, came aboard pretty quickly and we were on our way.

"When the night came and the doors were opening, one of the staff of the Convention Centre came up and said, 'You're not insured (for public liability)'. We naturally thought we were covered by the Convention Centre. We went through the night terrified; if someone got injured we would have been finished."

We will devote many more pages in the next two editions on the Foundation's great history, great servants and most significant events, including a separate story on the success of the big annual event in Sydney and the wonderful themes, the memorabilia, the guests and the performers which even included the iconic Australian singer Anthony Warlow. We will also track the emergence of Queensland's annual lunch which has become an iconic event in Brisbane.

Who could forget, too, the very association with Megan Longhurst which was so appropriate and emotional considering the plight of her father Garry Longhurst, the former Penrith and St George hooker, who the Foundation assisted as he suffered from motor neurone disease. There was not a dry eye in the room when Megan sang a tribute song as a slide show honouring those who passed away during the preceding year – ended with the portrait of her dad. Megan went on to forge a successful singing career and benefitted from a scholarship to undergo voice training. We will also run articles on

some of the most special and emotional wellbeing stories and grant recipients, the people who have made the Foundation what it became and some of the first sponsors and supporters who were so valuable in those early years. To evidence that the Foundation was more than just a support group for old Sydney footballers in the early days, is the story of two women in Lightning Ridge who ran the local Redbacks rugby league club's ladies auxiliary, Dianne Brown and Judy Malone. One had cancer and Men of League helped with treatment costs and other assistance while the other required a wheelchair to get around. The mining town had no wheelchair taxis at the time so the Foundation organised for wheelchair mini-bus to be provided.

Ron Coote has been at the forefront of the Foundation, 15 years as chairman and the subsequent five as honorary president, and his devotion, hard work and profile as the face of the organisation has been invaluable. But the others whose names are also on the notice to attend that July 2002 get-together – Max Brown, Jim Hall and John Fahey – must always be eternally recognised. And, so too, those few who were already behind Men of League's establishment and the 130-or so others who joined that historic night and gave weight to the concept.

It certainly was what rugby league, which had some public profile problems at the time with players in the early years of full-time professionalism and big contracts responsible for too many instances of bad behaviour, so badly needed.

But more than that - withstanding its challenges, some shifts of direction, some differences in opinion and changes in its hierarchy - the one stand-out thing to me about the Men of League Foundation – coming from member #620 who joined late in 2002 – is the everlasting, insurmountable and passionate commitment to, and love of, what the Foundation stands for that permeates from the hundreds of local committee volunteers in the cities and the bush who so readily give up their time to come to each other's aid and raise valuable funds.

That's our strength, that's the enduring bond that breeds the little-ticket particles that have connected to create this giant jigsaw that those pioneers could never truly have envisaged and is beyond what they initially planned.

Happy 20th birthday Men of League



MEN OF LEAGUE

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(Players, coaches, administrators, referees)**

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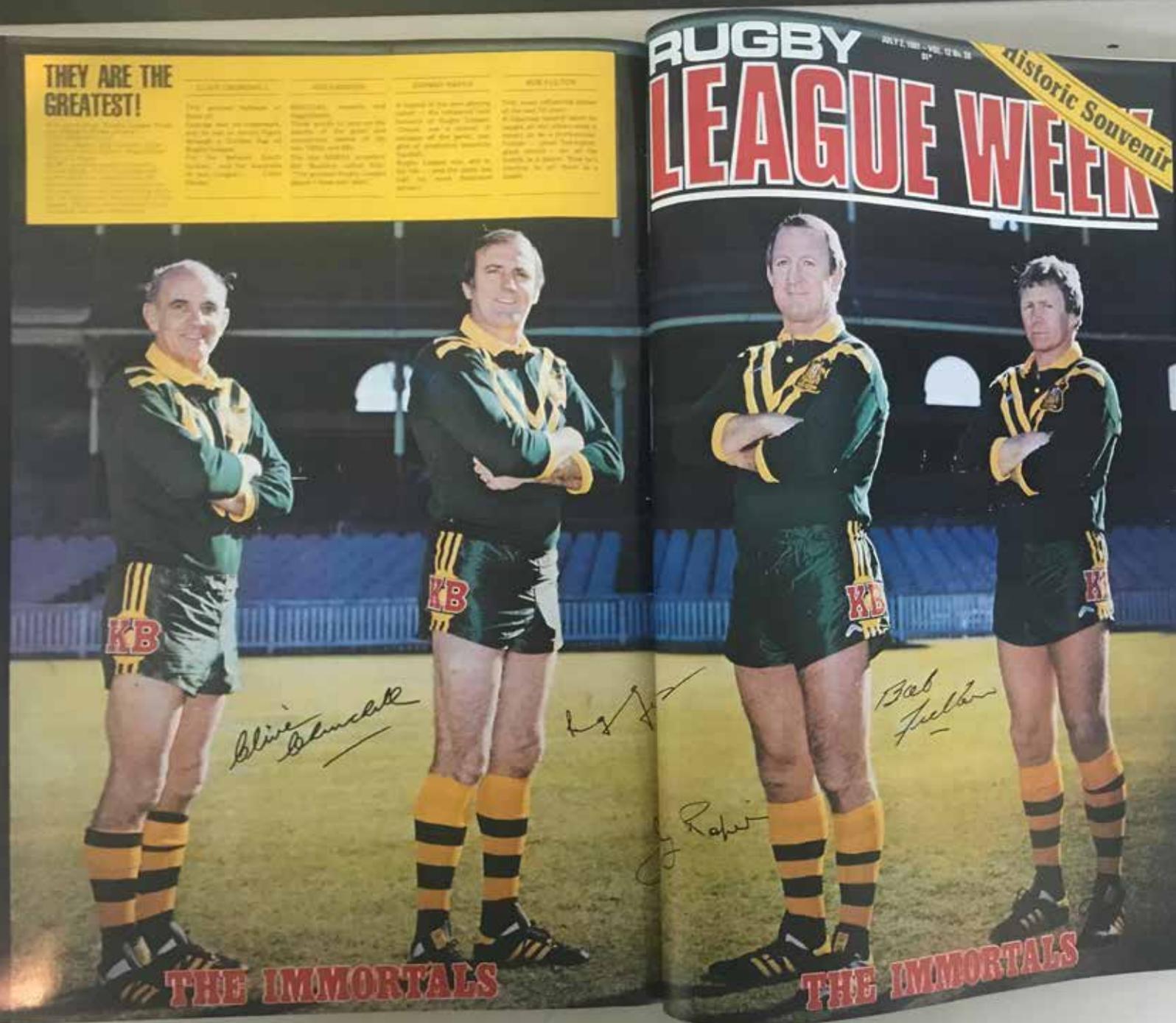
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GOODBYE TO THE LAST ORIGINAL IMMORTAL

IT'S A SUBJECTIVE CONSIDERATION BUT MANY CALL JOHNNY RAPER THE 'GREATEST EVER'. WHAT IS UNDISPUTED IS THAT HE IS ONE OF FOUR LEGENDS WHO, QUITE INNOCUOUSLY CONSIDERING THE CONCEPT WAS ESSENTIALLY A SPONSORED MAGAZINE PROMOTION, REPRESENT THE BIRTH OF A RUGBY LEAGUE TITLE THAT BECAME THE SPORT'S GREATEST INDIVIDUAL HONOUR.

NEIL CADIGAN

It was on the front cover of Rugby League Week on 2 July, 1981. The magazine, then hailed as 'The Bible', unmasked the four players who had been chosen by a select panel to be the greatest post-World War II players the game had produced.

Clive Churchill, Reg Gasnier, John Raper and Bob Fulton had gathered at the Sydney Cricket Ground the week before to pose, in Australian jerseys made especially for the first in the genre of the magazine's special celebratory promotions, for the cover shot snapped by the mag's veteran head photographer John Elliott.

While The Immortals went from magazine promotion so popular that the term Immortals became an accepted official title in rugby league, through years of conjecture about whether its intellectual property should be transferred to the sport's governing body (which happened only after the death of Rugby League Week in 2017) and to the original four being expanded, intermittently, to the current 13 Immortals, it is appropriate at this juncture to step back in time and put that day at the SCG into perspective.

Because now ... there are none.

The last of the four Immortals, the great Johnny Raper, is gone – having departed our world on 9 February.

Only nine months earlier we lost Fulton, at age 73. The first of the Originals to depart was The Little Master, Clive Churchill, who lost his battle with cancer on 9 August 1985 at the age of just 58, with his adoring fans, friends and family paying him tribute days later at a state funeral at St Marys Cathedral. Then there was The Magic Dragon, Gasnier, who passed away on 11 July, 2014 at the age of 74.

'Chook' Raper outlived them all, and attained the highest age at 82, which would have surprised many – certainly hall of fame commentator Frank Hyde who told a young, full of life Raper on the 1967-68 Kangaroo tour, "John, if you keep living like you do, you won't make 40."

When that famous Immortals photo was taken in 1981, the first year of RLW's editorship of Ian Heads, Johnny Raper and Reg Gasnier were 42, Clive Churchill 54 and the youngest, 'Bozo' Fulton, 33 and looking fit enough to still play (he'd retired at the end of the 1979 season).

No one at that time could have envisaged the popularity, and the ultimate status, that the Immortals idea would generate. And while the list has been extended to include (in chronological order of selection) Graeme Langlands and Wally Lewis (1999); Arthur Beetson (2003); Andrew Johns (2012) then the first pre-war recipients Dave Brown, Frank Burge and Dally Messenger along with Mal Meninga and Norm Provan (2018), the four originals retain a unique standing in our history.

There is further perspective too in that realisation that, of those chosen 13, only three remain alive – Johns at age 47, Meninga at 61 and Lewis at 62.

I joined the Rugby League Week staff the following season, in 1982, and the aura of The Immortals was obvious. And that photo, which sat framed near the office's entry with the autographs of the four players standing out over the lush green of the SCG turf, a landmark decoration.

There was controversy, don't worry, in the selections of the judging panel of former Sydney Morning Herald league writing legend Tom Goodman, international player and coach Harry Bath and Hyde, the familiar gravel voice of the game courtesy his decades calling for 2SM.

Langlands was the most debated omission, ahead of Beetson who had only finished his Sydney career the season before at Parramatta and was running around for one last season with the Redcliffe Dolphins. 'Changa' Langlands' selection would have given the great St George side of the 1960s three of the four with, presumably, Fulton the one to be relegated, or the list extended to five.

Heads recalls that, over a long lunchtime discussion after the four were decided through secret ballot, that it was Fulton's great mate, former teammate and then NSW editor of the magazine, Peter Peters, who came up with the title of Immortals.

Over the ensuing years, during my time at RLW (1982-89, 1992-95) there was no consideration of expanding from the original Immortals – which was celebrated with a specially struck edition of Elliott's 1977 vintage port – to preserve its prestige. Instead, other promotions that involved panel selections, and readers being invited to match their choices, were rolled in with consideration.

The next was the 'Hall of Fame' in 1982 with the panel of Goodman, Hyde, Herman Peters, Jack Reardon, Herb Steinohrt, Alex Mackie, Dick Dunn and George Crawford selecting the greatest team of all time. The team was: Clive Churchill, Harold Horder, Dally Messenger, Reg Gasnier, Ken Irvine, Vic Hey, Duncan Thompson, Mick Madsen, Sandy Pearce, Duncan Hall, George Treweek, Norm Provan and John Raper.

The Masters followed in 1985, a hypothetical best team of RLW's lifespan since 1970. The team was: Graeme Langlands, Kerry Boustead, Mick Cronin, Steve Rogers, Eric Grothe, Bob Fulton, Billy Smith, Arthur Beetson, Max Krilich, John O'Neill, Bob McCarthy, Ron Coote and Ray Price.

And in 1986, the magazine unleashed a quest to establish what was chosen as the greatest rugby league moment. That honour was bestowed on the try in the right corner in a muddied SCG in July 1950, scored by winger Ron Roberts, that gave Australia a 5-2 victory over Great Britain to claim the Ashes for the first time in 30 years – after coming from 1-0 down in the series due to the 6-4 loss in Sydney (Australia won the second Test 15-3 in Brisbane).

The game's administration finally fell into line of formally recognising its history during the game's centenary year of 2008 by launching its hall of fame and team of the century while many other levels of the game rolled out teams of the century. Still, being hailed an Immortal remains the greatest potential attribute of a player's standing.

The select few. The genuine champions. The ageless icons.

And the last of the originals to leave our presence, the man they called 'Chook', is the one who perhaps shades the others in the learned minds of most historians.

Certainly, his array of skills, instinct, fitness and dogged determination on the field gives him the title of the most 'complete' player we have seen, if you ask those who watched a good part of the last half-century of action. Frank Hyde summed this up best with, "When Johnny Raper was born they not only destroyed the mould, they pulped it. I rate him the finest footballer I have seen." It is a gesture shared by many eminent judges.

Indisputably, his performance in Australia's 50-12 flogging of Great Britain at Swinton's Station Road ground in 1963 is rated as the best individual performance by a player ever at Test level. If you can find the grainy black and white footage of that match, it is worth viewing. Raper dominated to inspire what was then a record Australian victory. While the English will point to them playing the second half with 11 men after backs Frank Myler and Eric Ashton were unable to return from the halftime break, the fact is Australia already led 31-8 at half-time.

It's a sobering thought that, with the deaths of Fulton and Raper nine months apart, the participants of that promotional photo taken by John Elliott in July 1981 have all now been taken from us.

It reminds us that even our most seemingly indestructible and irreverent heroes may always remain Immortal in stature but, no matter how great, can never be immortal in life.

FOOTY AND FAMILY

CHOOK'S GREAT LOVES

JOHNNY RAPER, IMMORTAL AND THE GREATEST OF THE GREAT ST GEORGE ERA, PASSED AWAY IN FEBRUARY AFTER YEARS OF POOR HEALTH, AGED 82. WE ASKED HIS SON AND FORMER MEN OF LEAGUE NSW STATE MANAGER STUART RAPER TO PROVIDE AN INSIGHT INTO THE LIFE OF A LEGEND.

STUART RAPER

The one thing you learn very quickly when you're the son of Johnny Raper is that you're part of a big family. A rugby league family. And I'm not just talking about 'Chook' being one of nine brothers – five of who played first grade – and two sons who did too.

Dad had 'brothers' right across rugby league and the life of 'Chook' and Caryl Raper was enriched enormously by the wider footy family that embraced them so fondly.

And if I was to summarise my view of the life of Johnny Raper the Immortal, I'd say that family was just as important to him as rugby league. And I could list plenty of instances, some a little unusual, that typified that.

He wasn't the doting dad but he was definitely a loving and proud dad, and granddad. And I never felt that being the son of John Raper who aspired to play first grade footy and for Australia, like Aaron and I wanted to, was a burden although Aaron had more pressure than I did because he was good enough to play rep footy.

When we or family members were hit with the snipe that, 'You'll never be as good as your dad,' our response was a pretty easy one to reply with ... "who is?"

We found that being a Raper was generally a gift rather than a burden because it gave my parents a wonderful life, and so many friends and experiences even though Dad played in the era when you didn't get rich off being the best. Having said that, it's fair to say that Dad became probably the first rugby league celebrity as far as his profile, and his character, giving him opportunities. Like singing on a Jax The Ripper Tyres TV commercials and other marketing and advertising deals. He released single called 'Have A Go Mate' that sold 32 copies and was a Cleo nude centrefold. Yep, life was never dull or mundane around Johnny Raper.

He was no angel, as anyone who knew him or knew rugby league could attest to, and he's lucky he had such a special wife as Caryl who was by his side for over 60 years from when they married in 1961 (they met in 1956, the year before he debuted in first grade for Newtown). Mum knows how fortunate she is to have travelled so much of the world and been at so many events, from the special St George grand final days of the 1960s to Test matches and major functions in the past few decades.

But, gee, he tested the marriage plenty of times.

Like the time Chook was hours late (yet again) getting home from a training session because he's spent too much time at the pub afterwards. The odd plate full of his dinner has been thrown at him

over the years when Dad was late getting in but this time Mum had had enough and told Dad to pack his bags and get out.

So Chook grabbed his suitcase and filled it with some clothes but as he walked out the door Mum could hear me and my brother Kurt crying. She opened our bedroom door and we weren't there. She heard us cry again and followed the sound only to find Chook walking out the front door and the noise was coming from the suitcase.

She promptly told him to get back inside. Chook said to her if you're kicking me out the boys are coming with me! God knows where we would have gone, but that was a slightly bizarre example of how important his kids were to him.

And the fact rugby league was too, made it a wonderful life for us. The three of us sons were too young to remember him playing for the Dragons but I can recall living near the beach at Dixon Park in Newcastle when he went up there to play for Wests, my first memories of him being a special footballer. He got a job driving a brewery truck (yeah, I know what you're all thinking) but the perks were good, I can still remember the cartons of grog piled up along the hallway wall.

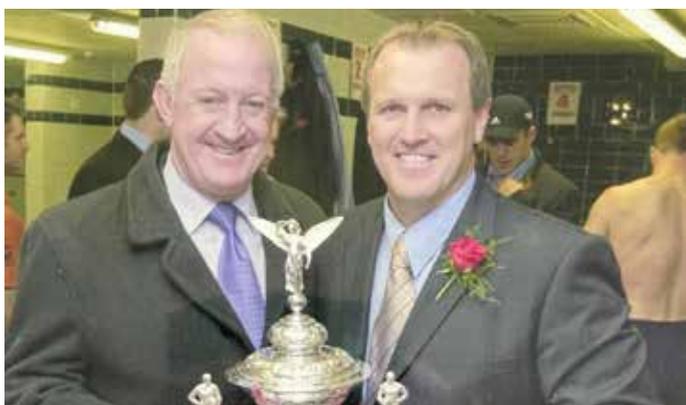
After stints at Wests and Kurri, Dad got the call to go back to Sydney to coach the Sharks which was a really exciting time and the first time I got an understanding of his fame. For example, for my sixteenth birthday he invited Test cricket fast bowler Jeff Thomson for dinner as a present.

Life with Dad was like a roller coaster and you just had to hang on for the ride and we never knew where it was going to take us. After he'd finished at the Sharks, some French delegates offered Dad the French national coaching job and we all were quite excited and nervous. We were planning for the trip overseas and were doing French lessons when he came home and said. 'France is off, we are going to Newtown'. John Singleton got him to take over from Paul Broughton for the rest of the 1978 season before Warren Ryan was given the job full-time (from 1979).

Dad became a NSW and Australian selector after that which created some very interesting stories around the use of cab charges. Chook thought keeping a cab waiting for hours was the norm.

Mum and dad really lived an exciting life and they would always be invited to any event going on in Sydney and they rarely missed a grand final, interstate or international game and were always the life of the party, working the room and usually being the last to leave.

His employment life away from footy is quite remarkable but hard to document. He was a great sales rep back in the day when you could write off a lunch with clients, which Chook milked to the hilt. He was always first in at work and always the best dressed (as he was at



John and Stuart Raper at Wembley after Stuart coached Wigan to a Challenge Cup victory.



John and wife Caryl.

everything he attended). His biggest working achievement, though, was being a policeman early on in his life. He loved being a copper. When Dad was struggling towards the end, he would talk about being a policeman more than his football career.

I know he was very proud of us boys and supported all our football careers. He watched us all during our junior years, driving me down to Wollongong for my first grade debut and warning me about Rocket Reddy's elbow and knees. 'Kurto' wanted to play soccer when he was eight and asked Dad if he was OK with this and he was proud as punch for him to do so and was front and centre watching him. He'd get down and watch Aaron at Gynea Gorillas, the start of a career that would eventually go all the way to international honours, and I know he was so proud of that.

He and Mum even came all the way to England to support me when I was coaching Castleford and later Wigan, and Aaron when he played a season for Cas. The Pommy supporters loved having a chat with him, and him with them, and he'd catch up with old opponents who'd become mates.

Dad was a loving and unique grandfather too. On Saturdays I would drop my son Jake over to mum and dad for the day. Dad would take him up to Cronulla, go to the TAB, put him up on the bench and fill his cards out. They would then go to the toy shop to get a toy for Jake (which would end up a toy gun), buy some prawns and go home eat the prawns and watch the races.

Christmas was always special with Chook appearing as Santa Claus in any makeshift outfit he could find, even once using a plastic bag as a Santa beard. One of his Christmas traditions was pulling out a \$100 note covered in pudding out of his mouth. The grandkids were in shock and went straight to the pudding to see if there was any more.

Boxing Day is a Raper tradition and in recent years went from home to Shelly Park at Cronulla. Chook would get up at 6am to go down and get our spot. The Rapers have such a great bond and the connection continues down through the cousins and their kids which I know dad was proud of. And, always, the singing would break out with Chook at the forefront, although my favourite is his brother Lurch's (Paul) rendition of Mohammad Ali song.

Dad was the eldest of nine boys, the others being (in order) Terry, Ronnie, Robert, Maurice, Michael, Paul, and the twins Peter and Gerard. Ron, also a lock, played nine seasons of first grade for Canterbury in Sydney and two more for Redcliffe in the Brisbane competition; Maurie (a five-eighth) played 76 first grade games for Penrith and Cronulla while Peter and Gerard also played some first grade and plenty of lower grades and Michael played lower grades in Sydney and played in England.

Add Aaron and me to the list and Terry's son Grant who played reserve grade at Canterbury, his son Monty who did well at the Jets and Aaron's son Kai who was in the Sharks' S G Ball squad before he suffered an injury, that's a big Raper footy tradition and love of the game.

Dad was the patriarch who everyone idolised. Just about everyone knows of his exploits - 232 first grade games for Newtown and the Dragons (then five seasons between Wests Newcastle and Kurri Kurri), winning eight consecutive grand finals in the Red V jersey, City honours, 24 games for NSW and 39 Tests for Australia, being chosen in the ARL team of the century as lock and one of the original four Immortals.

And the friendships from those times are still strong today. I can remember many nights when the Gasnier, Rileys and other families would come around and there were always people heading over for barbeques and Dad looked always forward to the reunion of the 1959 Kangaroos every year. And it was not just the strong bond between the St George people; I remember going to dinners with people like Kenny Irvine, Ron Coote, Bobby McCarthy and all those great legends and during his Cronulla days with Greg Pierce and Steve Rogers, who I got to work with at the Sharks.

I'm still great mates with Billy Smith's son Jeff, who I got to play at Cronulla with, and Mum has good friends among the footballing wives and catches up with some even after their husbands have passed away.

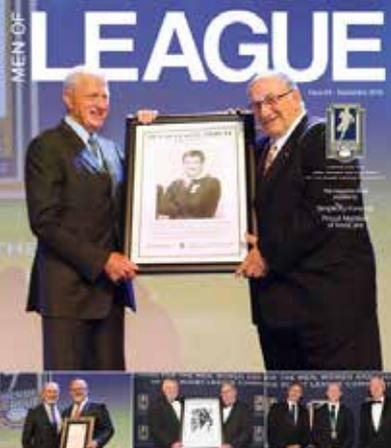
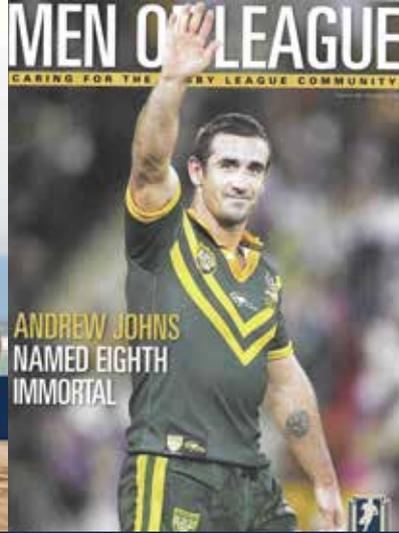
I was doing a talk once while working for Men of League and halfway through it just hit me that, with the life we had with Dad, we just had to share it with footy people and how lucky we were that we did. Mum had to make sacrifices being the wife of such an iconic figure who lived life to the fullest but she knows she has had an interesting and exciting life and appreciates that.

And Dad knew the value of the brotherhood that rugby league created, and how important it was to keep generating that well beyond the days when he was directly involved in the game. And that's why he was such a supporter of Men of League, he knew how important the organisation is to people who have had all sorts of involvement with the game whether at junior or bush level or in the big time.

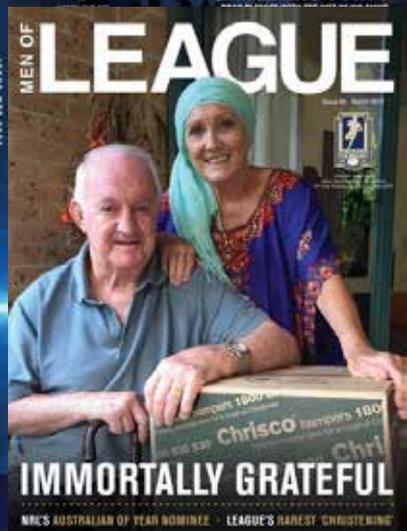
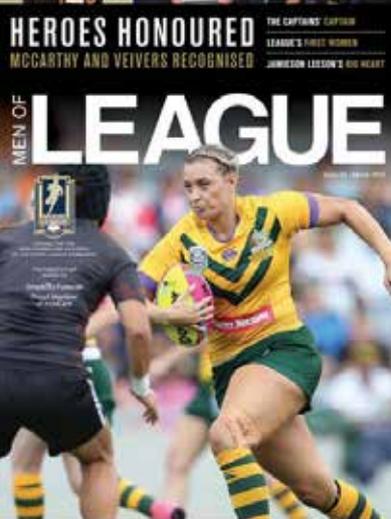
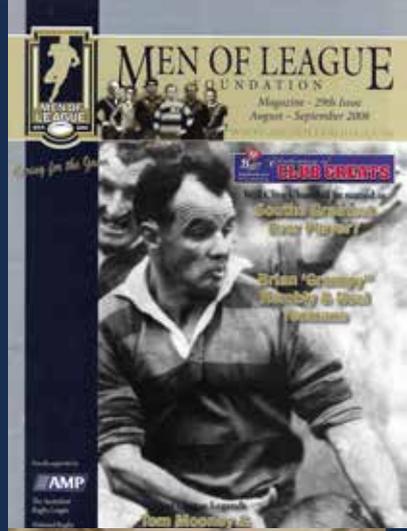
Any time he was asked to attend a function he was there, every time. He was just an old school footballer like many others who had injuries or illness and had never made a lot of money so he never underestimated not just the assistance but the mateship that Men of League generates at all levels. He and Mum really appreciated the assistance the Foundation gave them over the years too.

Because no matter how famous you are, you're still vulnerable, you're still imperfect and you're still needy - and Chook Raper was all of those things, especially in the very tough final few years as his dementia got worse.

His family has been good for him, rugby league has been good for him, and he for them I hope. And for us Rapers, both those things have always gone hand in hand.



LOOKING OVER THE YEARS THROUGH OUR MAGAZINE



MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION EVENTS CALENDAR

MAY 2022

| | | | |
|-------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 06 | Northern Sydney | Golf Day | Mona Vale Golf Club |
| 06 | Riverina | Gold Cup Breakfast | William Farrer Hotel Wagga |
| 06 | Tweed | Golf Day | Coolangatta & Tweed Heads Golf Club |
| 13 | Brisbane | Kick-Off Club | Broncos Leagues Club |
| 13-15 | Magic Round NRL | 50/50 Raffle | Suncorp Stadium |
| 14 | Qld State Office | Race Day | Doomben Racecourse |
| 20 | Qld State Office | Qld Golf Day | The Brisbane Golf Club |
| 21 | Port Stephens | Dinner | Port Stephens Golf Club |
| 22 | Port Stephens | Golf Day | Port Stephens Golf Club |
| 22 | Mid-West | Golf Day | Bathurst Golf Club |
| 27 | Bundaberg | Golf Day | Bundaberg Golf Club |
| TBA | Southern Sydney | Sharks Lunch | TBA |
| TBA | Newcastle | Bowls Day | TBA |

JUNE 2022

| | | | |
|-----|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 03 | National Office | Windsor Wolves | Windsor Leagues Club |
| 03 | Moreton | Kick-Off Club | Redcliffe Leagues Club |
| 03 | Western Sydney | Golf Day | Cabramatta Golf Club NSW |
| 08 | Qld Office/Caxton | State of Origin Lunch | Caxton Hotel |
| 10 | Gold Coast | Internationals Dinner | Burleigh Bears Leagues Club |
| 10 | Far North Qld | Golf Day | Cairns Golf Club |
| 11 | Qld office/Broncos | 50/50 Raffle | Suncorp Stadium |
| 17 | Sunshine Coast | Origin Lunch | Mooloolaba |
| 26 | Northern Sydney | Berowra Wallabies | Hornsby |
| TBA | Tuggerah Lakes | Kick-Off Club | TBA |
| TBA | Fraser Coast | Bowls Day | Doon Villa Bowls Club |
| TBA | Newcastle Hunter | Sportsman's Dinner | TBA |



Crazy Socks superstars from the North West Magpies, Kellyville Bushrangers, Western Vikings, St Marys RLFC, Windsor Wolves and Quakers Hill junior rugby league clubs get into the spirit of this year's campaign.

CRAZY SOCKS CAMPAIGN

AIMS TO HIT NEW HIGHS

Despite tough logistical setbacks caused by the global pandemic in 2021, Men of League's 'Crazy Socks' campaign was a major success, reaching new heights with media and public support.

Several NRL clubs got behind the campaign in 2021 by wearing the socks in nationally broadcast matches, and in training sessions including their regularly publicised 'captain's runs' (final session of the week). NRL and grassroots clubs also supported the campaign with heavy social media engagement – sharing images of their crazy socks fun.

The growth of the campaign has now seen stock orders double since 2019.

As a result of the international freight delays experienced last year, our suppliers Paladin have moved manufacturing of the socks to Melbourne, which means we are supporting an Australian manufacturing business and implementing more efficient logistics. The cost of the socks has increased slightly to cover this change,

however we believe our supporters and clubs will appreciate the decision to shift to a local manufacturer and ensure supply.

The support at grassroots level remains high thanks to state rugby league bodies within the NSW Rugby League, Queensland Rugby League, NRL Victoria and NRL Western Australia.

Some well-known NRL faces and a few younger 'stars of the future' will once again help us promote the campaign as thousands of players of all ages from hundreds of clubs around Australia put their crazy socks on to support the Men of League's national wellbeing program.

It is our hope that many more grassroots clubs will this year get on board and all NRL clubs will support the Men of League Foundation by wearing the socks in July.

Keep your eyes out for some fun social media posts soon.

Footy clubs and individuals can purchase their Crazy Socks online now from our shop at menofleague.com
If you require order assistance, or have an enquiry, please call us on (02) 8756 7080 or email info@menofleague.com



Celebrating
20 YEARS

NATIONAL CRAZY SOCKS ROUND



Celebrating 20 years of Men of League!
15 JULY - 17 JULY 2022

**CALLING ALL RUGBY LEAGUE PLAYERS AND FOOTY CLUBS AROUND AUSTRALIA
IT'S TIME TO GET YOUR CRAZY SOCKS ON!**

THIS YEAR WE ARE CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF SUPPORTING THE MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF THE GRASSROOTS RUGBY LEAGUE COMMUNITY. SINCE 2002, WE HAVE DELIVERED \$10M IN PHYSICAL, FINANCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ASSISTANCE, AND OVER 10,000 HOURS OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE NATIONALLY.

BY PURCHASING CRAZY SOCKS FOR YOU OR YOUR CLUB, YOU WILL HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

**PURCHASE YOUR
CRAZY SOCKS!**

MENOFLEAGUE.COM/SHOP

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\$15 PER PAIR

 **PALADIN**

THE BOLTER NOT FROM THE BLUES

FLASHY CENTRE MARK THOMAS WENT FROM VIRTUAL OBLIVION IN BRISBANE CLUB FOOTY INTO THE AUSTRALIAN SIDE IN A FLASH IN 1977 BEFORE BEING BASHED BACK INTO THE SHADOWS AGAIN.

STEVE RICKETTS

The story of the rise to stardom of Mark Thomas in 1977 to Australia's Test team is one of the most remarkable in the annals of rugby league.

The previous year the former schoolboy rugby union halfback had been playing centre in reserve grade for Brothers in Brisbane, with Graham Quinn and Paul Beauchamp having a stranglehold on first grade spots.

In '77, Quinn signed with St George in Sydney and Thomas was given first crack at a top grade spot in a trial against Sydney premiers Eastern Suburbs (Roosters) at Brothers' home ground Corbett Park. Immortal Arthur Beetson captained a full strength Roosters' side.

"That's where it all started. I scored two tries and I was on a ride which I couldn't get off," Thomas recalls.

From there he was chosen in the City side for a match against Queensland Country and then a South Queensland selection to play the touring New South Wales Country side. Next stop was the Queensland team for two interstate matches. Then, bang, his name was read out in Australia's World Series squad.

He hadn't got there through good luck. His form had to be rewarded. Mark Thomas had natural speed, beautiful timing and the ability to take full advantage of passes from the likes of Chris Ryan in club football and Peter Leis, Steve Crear, John Salter and Greg Oliphant at state level.

Thomas played three Tests - against New Zealand, France and Great Britain - during that 1977 World Series campaign but was controversially dropped by coach Terry Fearnley for the final against Britain at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Thomas would go on to play only one more representative match - a Tooth Cup game for Brisbane against the Roosters in 1980 when he was chosen on the bench alongside Wally Lewis.

He finished 1977 with three concussions in five club matches as he was targeted by rivals in the BRL who thought they would bring the youngster down a peg or two. Then he suffered a knee injury which effectively ruined his 1978 season when he hoped to capitalise on what he had learned the previous year.

Thomas went to St Thomas Catholic Primary School at Camp Hill and then to Villanova College which overlooks Easts' rugby league headquarters, Langlands Park.

Villanova is a rugby union school although it has produced its share of league stars, among them Broncos Test forward Bradley Meyers and most recently Melbourne Storm co-



Mark Thomas today.

captain Christian Welch. When Mark Thomas played rugby union at Villanova, the star was future grand slam Wallaby skipper Andrew Slack. In the firsts team one season were Mark Thomas at halfback and Andrew Slack at five-eighth.

"My father (Ray) was groundsman at the school for 24 years but he was a league man," Thomas recalls. "He took me to Lang Park to see Brisbane club games and my football heroes were the likes of Wests second-rowers Richie Twist and Ian Robson. I loved the league set plays, and always had a yearning to play the game.

"But when I left school, the natural thing to do was to go to Easts rugby union. I played colts but didn't enjoy it, mainly because we got a flogging most weeks. It was suggested I have go at league at St Brendan's (Rocklea), so I went there in 1975 and met up with blokes like Paul O'Donnell and Kev Cameron who were going to try out with Brothers. I decided to follow them and (St Brendan's coach) Brian Burke negotiated a contract for me, which meant Brothers couldn't drop me below reserve grade. In those days, hundreds of blokes would try out for the three top grades at the club and it could be hit and miss.

"I played reserve grade for most of 1976 under (coach) Ivan Cohen, playing outside (co-centre) Murray Schultz who had played for Brothers in the 1974 grand final with Wayne Bennett. Murray was a great centre. He just told me he would put me through gaps, and he did. I played three first grade games that year with (coach) John Lohman putting me at fullback."

Thomas started 1977 in first grade, alongside Paul Beauchamp, and stayed there. When Thomas's name was read out in the City team to play Country, The Courier-Mail's





As part of the Queensland team in 1977 (far left, back row)

Jack Reardon wrote that the selectors had taken note of club form not reputations. The City, South Queensland and state sides were coached by former Test halfback Barry Muir.

Thomas scored two tries against Queensland Country and one against NSW Country before being chosen in the Queensland side. Queensland lost the midweek floodlit match 19-3, with Thomas setting up the Maroons' only try for winger John Callus. Queensland lost the return clash at Lang Park, 14-13. The Maroons dominated for 70 minutes but Tom Raudonikis was brought off the bench to replace rookie Steve Mortimer, sparking a late Blues' surge.

"Queensland centres Peter Leis and Mark Thomas dulled the reputations of Mick Cronin and Steve Rogers," Reardon wrote. Thomas was selected in Australia's World Series squad for a tour of New Zealand, alongside Cronin and Rogers.

Asked if he had been greeted warmly when he arrived in Sydney to be kitted out for the tour, Thomas replied: "Not really, although I couldn't fault the Country boys. The thing I remember is (captain) Arthur Beetson driving into the SCG, marching up the stairs to the dressing rooms and giving the selectors what for, before getting in his car and driving away."

Beetson had been omitted from the original squad but it was rejected by the ARL, with Beetson then being named captain in a revised touring outfit. Beetson said his conscience would not allow him to take the place of a player the selectors deemed more worthy, so he quit. Queenslander Greg Veivers was named as captain for the trip across the Tasman.

Steve Rogers was injured in a warm-up game in Christchurch and there was talk of Allan McMahon or Mark Harris being moved from the wing into the centres to partner Cronin.

"But (manager) Duncan Hall pushed for me to be one of the centres," Thomas said. "He was a Queensland selector and he looked after me. 'Oscar' (Veivers) said if anyone put shit on me, just to let him know and he would take care of them."

Thomas played a starring role in Australia's 27-12 win over the Kiwis at Carlaw Park, scoring a try between the posts the first time he touched the ball. He also set up a try for McMahon.

Beetson was recalled as skipper for the next Test against France at the SCG, which Australia won 21-9. Thomas did enough to retain his spot for the next match, against Great Britain at Lang Park, which

Australia won 19-5 with fullback, Graham Eadie the star. Thomas was dropped for the final against Britain at the SCG, with Russel Gartner taking his place.

It is part of Queensland folklore that Thomas was effectively squeezed out of the side by the New South Welshmen, who did not think he deserved to be there, and they cut him out of backline moves, particularly in that match at Lang Park.

"I've heard it all but people have to remember that my inside centre was Mick Cronin and he would never do that," Thomas said. "Before the match against the Poms, Mick said their centres would be on to me and that he was going to bring 'Wombat' (Eadie) into the backline. If I was in a gap, he would still give me the ball but the plan was to use 'Wombat' as a shock weapon."

Initially, Thomas was named in the starting side for the final but at the last minute Fearnley went for Gartner without really giving Thomas an explanation. Australia won 13-12, with many experts saying the better team lost.

"I sat on the bench for the 80 minutes," Thomas said. "I swapped my number 16 jersey with (British five-eighth) Roger Millward and I've still got his jersey. It would have been nice to play in the final but I still have to pinch myself when I look back at that season."

On his return to club football, Thomas was heavily marked with the most notorious incident leading to the dismissal of Redcliffe fullback Tony Obst who was banned for three weeks for a classic coat hanger tackle. Teammates called for the touch judge's flag to prevent Thomas swallowing his tongue. After the match, Thomas was able to walk to his car and went home with his parents.

"I had three concussions in five games. Things were a bit different back then," Thomas said. "I did my knee when I tackled (Norths forward) Darryl Brohman late in the season and that was me for six months."

Thomas played for Brothers for another three seasons and was named in the Brisbane representative side early in 1980.

"That gave me almost as much satisfaction as playing for Australia because I had done it the hard way, coming back from injury through the lower grades," Thomas said. "It was hard to break into the centres with Mal Meninga, Chris Close and Gene Miles on the rise. To be on the bench with Wally Lewis was an honour. He's the best player I've ever seen. I remember making a break against Valleys at Corbett Park in '79, and Wally picking me up in cover and driving me over the sideline. I thought, 'this long haired bloke is going to go far.'"

Thomas finished his footy career with two seasons at Easts Tigers. A qualified meat inspector, he took a different career path in 1984, working for sports goods company, World of Sport Wholesalers which supplies schools throughout Queensland.

He and his wife, Denise have three children - Sean, Joshua and Anna - and six grandchildren. Sean is 1.956m tall and has toured overseas with Australian volleyball teams while Joshua played in the firsts rugby at Villanova and Anna was a fine netball and tennis player.



Playing for Australia (far left in photo)



Next Dimension ACCOUNTING



Founder & Director
Brendan Lucas is passionate about supporting others in the Rugby League community. Brendan is a former player, referee and volunteer with over 20 years' service to the game of Rugby League.

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**FROM
THE CEO
STEPHEN
LOWNDES**



Welcome dear members to the first edition of our magazine for 2022. Firstly, a sincere thank you to all of you who have again supported the valuable work that the Foundation undertakes in assisting those in the rugby league community in need of a helping hand – your annual membership subscription really does underpin the work that we do.

And to those joining us for the first time, I trust that you will gain a real sense of contribution as you hear of our wonderful wellbeing stories through this magazine, and through our regular member communications – stories which just wouldn't be possible without your support.

We are certainly entering 2022 with a real sense of 'cautious optimism' so far as COVID goes – while it is still amongst us, we have managed to hold several very successful local fundraising events, and our second gold member event in Sydney was very well attended and greatly enjoyed.

There are, of course, still restrictions on many of our wellbeing visits to homes and hospitals and aged care facilities but wherever possible our wonderful wellbeing volunteers are still reaching out even if just through a friendly phone call. Sadly though, there will be many in the rugby league community who have been severely impacted by the recent flooding in many parts of New South Wales and Queensland and our thoughts certainly go out to you.

If you or anyone you know in our rugby league community is in need of assistance, please jump onto our website or contact us on 02 8756 7180.

We are excited by the scope of activities we are planning for the coming year – celebrating 20 years since the Foundation was conceived by Ron Coote, Max Brown and Jim Hall. Twenty years of service as a not-for-profit organisation which exists solely for the benefit of the men, women and children who contribute to the great game wherever it is played in Australia is a most notable achievement.

In that time we have distributed over \$10 million in wellbeing support to those in need, and our tremendous army of volunteers have conducted thousands of hours of home and hospital visits, online and telephone support calls to remind everyone of what a strong and connected network exists within rugby league.

Keep an eye out for our 2022 Crazy Socks Campaign, and if you are involved in junior rugby league, or part of one of the many 'grassroots' competitions through the country, please see the feature in this magazine or hop onto our website and see how your club can be actively involved – to help raise awareness within the rugby league community of the fantastic work we do!

I trust you enjoy the rich and varied stories in this latest edition of our magazine, and please spread the word to your friends and colleagues – there is no other sporting charity like us and no sporting community so strongly committed to supporting those in need who have helped or still help to make the game of rugby league so strong in Australia.

THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT.



CARING FOR THE
MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN
OF THE RUGBY LEAGUE COMMUNITY

QUEENSLAND EVENTS SAVE THE DATE 2022



QLD Charity Golf Day

Brisbane Golf Club
Friday May 20



STATE OF ORIGIN

Long Lunch

Caxton Hotel
Wednesday June 8

Save the Date

Queensland Annual Lunch

Brisbane City Hall
Friday 16 September

For enquiries contact Belinda Perry ph. (07) 3367 6002

LUNCH OF A LIFETIME

WITH THE WALTERS

ANDREW BLUCHER, QUEENSLAND STATE MANAGER

A group of ten enjoyed a once in-a-lifetime luncheon experience recently in the company of the celebrated Walters brothers - Kevin, Steve and Kerrod – who between them played 781 NRL games, 41 Origin games for Queensland and 34 Test matches.

The business people had each purchased a place at the table as part of a silent auction prize sold at last November's Queensland annual lunch held at Brisbane City Hall.

Lunch conversations covered a wide ranging topics across the lives of one of rugby league's most famous and popular families, including growing up in Ipswich, childhood stories, playing for Canberra Raiders, Brisbane Broncos and Adelaide Rams, Queensland and Australia plus the current state of the game and Kev's plans to resurrect the Broncos.

It was a lively, interesting and entertaining three hours thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. I'm sure it is an experience that guests will relive for many years to come.

"It was just a cracking day out, such a unique experience to be able to hear the stories from for boys in a personal, relaxed setting," said managing director of Octopus Consulting Group, Darrell Ballard.

"Credit to the three of the guys to give us their time and be so open in sharing their stories."

The lunch was held outdoors at Oakwood Hotel and Apartments, located above Howard Smith Wharves, which provided a glorious view over the river, Story Bridge and city of Brisbane.

A huge thank you goes to the general manager of Oakwood, Luke Deayton, who sponsored the beautiful three-course lunch, just part of Oakwood's long-standing support of Men of League.

Thanks also go to another long-time sponsor, Angove Wines, and Tim Dinnen who provided wine for this very special event.

The Walters brothers have been incredibly generous with their time in supporting Men of League events over many years. This was just another example. The boys were very open, honest and engaging, much to the delight of all our guests.

The Men of League extends its sincere thanks to Kev, Steve and Kerrod for their wonderful support once again. They are fantastic ambassadors for our game.

A position at this boardroom lunch has become a much sought part of our Queensland annual lunch and will continue to be so.



A lunch to remember ... pictured (from left) Tony Woodgate, Wayde Cunningham, Trent McKenzie, Steve Walters, Scott Clark, Terry Mays, Kevin Walters, Darrell Ballard, Lachlan Begg, Caleb Harry, Tim Dinnen, Andrew Blucher, Shane Boyes, Luke Deayton, Kerrod Walters and Andrew O'Brien.



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FROM NATIONAL WELLBEING LEAD

ROXANNE MOATES

There is an old saying “Jack of all trades, master of none” and this is perhaps a fitting way to describe the last three months working within the wellbeing space for the Foundation. You see, in order to provide the level of support that our recipients require there is an essential need for the wellbeing team as a whole to be “all things, to all people.” From navigating NDIS and My Aged Care eligibility requirements and support options; to understanding the State and Federal Relief packages available to those in flood affected areas; and providing safe face to face contact for recipients in areas where COVID restrictions have been easing and visits have been able to resume, there is never a dull moment.

Instead of seeing these challenges as hurdles, we choose to see them as opportunities. The chance to not only learn more about the communities within which we operate, but also to grow and strengthen the skills not only within ourselves, but within the team as a whole. Every person who seeks support from the Foundation does so for a variety of different reasons, they come from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences, however we all share at least one thing in common our love for the great game of Rugby League. This is perhaps why when people ask me what my work days look like it can often be so difficult to describe. Instead I just smile and say, I get to help people and talk about footy.

2022 has definitely reinforced the true importance of the social and emotional aspect of the wellbeing work that the Foundation undertakes. After almost two years of COVID restrictions, working from home, not being able to attend events and generally feeling like everything that we had come to know and love had been irreparably damaged, and being helpless to do anything about it, it has never been more important to remain socially and emotionally connected to those that we support. A friendly phone call is sometimes all it takes to lift someone’s spirits and to remind them that they are being kept in our thoughts, and it is always heartening to hear the team share their experiences during our ongoing fortnightly wellbeing Wednesday video conferences.

It is also equal parts exciting and crazy to acknowledge that Sydney based Wellbeing Lead, Sam Gordon, has been with the Foundation for almost nine months...not entirely sure where the time has gone! Having been onboarded via zoom due to COVID restrictions Sam’s induction has been anything other than conventional, however she definitely hit the ground

running, and for anyone who has had the opportunity to either speak with Sam on the phone, or indeed meet her in person, you would know that she has a rich life experience and a genuine passion for empowering others, and of course is a fan of the game that we all love.

It was fantastic to travel to Sydney in March and spend a week undertaking stakeholder engagement activities, coordinate training and convene a face to face National Wellbeing Committee meeting. These opportunities are so vital in regards to continuing to expand the understanding of the work undertaken by the Foundation as it is understood by those outside of our organisation, but to also continue to shape the way that our wellbeing program is defined and managed internally. From meeting with the RLPA and Paramatta Eels, to presenting at the launch of the Macquarie University Australian CTE Biobank, and engaging with KARI to create opportunities to explore referral pathways into Indigenous communities and also increase the Cultural Capability within the Foundations practice and workforce alike.

The opportunity to review the Standard Operating Procedures relating to wellbeing with the National Wellbeing Committee, and then meet with some local wellbeing officers to roll out training in regards to these processes was truly valuable and will form the basis of ongoing training that Sam and I are looking at taking to regional areas in the coming months. We are always reviewing our procedures to ensure that all essential grant information is able to be collected and processed as quickly as possible as the priority always lies with ensuring that we are able to be as responsive as possible to those who need it the most.

Finally, as we begin to phase into the next chapter of our journey as a foundation, I sit in proud reflection of how ten million dollars and thousands of hours of dedicated volunteer service has impacted the lives of so many since 2002. From a simple hospital visit, to the gift of sight, the responsibility to uphold this legacy remains infinite and we will continue to deliver hope, compassion and genuine outcomes to those who need our help.

So please raise your glasses to the next 20 years of this Foundation making a difference to those in need in our footy community!



WHY THE WALTERS' FEATS STAND ALONE

MOST LEAGUE FANS ARE WELL AWARE OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF STEVE, KEVIN AND KERROD WALTERS, ONE OF NINE SETS OF A TRIO OF BROTHERS TO REPRESENT THEIR COUNTRIES. YET THE STATE REPRESENTATION ELEVATES THE WALTERS BOYS BEYOND ALL OTHER FOOTY FAMILIES.

BARRY ROSS

They are a unique footballing family in the annals of Australian Rugby League. And while NRL fans are familiar with the faces of Kevin and Steve Walters who are often seen on the sidelines at Brisbane Broncos matches, and well aware that 'Kewie's' twin Kerrod also played for Australia, the family achievements go well beyond.

Not only are the trio the only set of three brothers to wear the green and gold jersey for Australia in Test matches, if you add Andrew ('Drew') and Brett Walters, the family has the rare distinction of having provided five brothers to have worn the maroon Queensland jersey at interstate under-18 level.

"All five of us brothers have been close since we were young boys and we still are," said Kerrod. "Drew is a fiery redhead and he could get angry quickly. We were competitive with each other but not in the wrong way."

That competitiveness, and a good dose of natural talent, saw Queensland under-age teams field a member of the Ipswich-based Walters clan every year from 1980-86. The record is that Brett played on the wing in 1980 and centre in 1981, Steve as hooker in 1982-83, Drew as hooker in 1984 with Kevin the halfback and Kerrod and Kevin as the hooker-halfback combination in 1985 (under-18s) and 1986 (the age group was altered to under-19s).

But it is on the international stage that the Walters stand with the world's best. They are the only set of three brothers to have represented Australia, putting them in the most elite company compared with other league playing nations.

There are seven major league-playing countries that have had three brothers play international rugby league. For England there

are the Burgess boys, Sam, George and Tom, and the Pepperell brothers, Stan, Russell and Albert. New Zealand has produced Ted, Walter and Wilfred Brimble and Joe, Iva and Tea Ropati. Tom, Eddie and Keiron Cunningham have played for Wales while the Australian-raised Andrew, Kevin and Ian Henderson wore the Scotland jersey in the 2008 World Cup. Then there is Tongan representatives Lelea, Lopini and Mickey Paea and Samoan reps Sione, Pat and Peter Mata'utia while Fiji proudly boasts Ashton, Tariq and Korbin Sims while their sister Ruan has played for Australia in many women's Tests and World Cup matches.

The oldest of the Walters brothers, Brett, who was born on 16 May 1963, could have been the first of the boys to play for the Canberra Raiders when he was offered a contract but, because of a mail strike in NSW, it did not arrive as expected and when it was finally



Steve Walters in action for Australia.



Kerrod Walters in his Broncos days.

Steve was awarded an Australian Sports Medal in 2000 and was named as one of Australia's greatest 100 players in the game's centenary year in 2008. He was the Dally M hooker of the year in 1991, 1993 and 1995, the Rugby League Week Player of the Year in 1993 and played 14 Origin games for Queensland and 16 Tests for Australia.

During their playing days there was no love lost between Steve and Balmain hooker Ben Elias, who was often his State of Origin opponent. Steve tells a story that typifies their rivalry.

"A few years ago a bloke from The Footy Show rang me up and said they were going to do a piece on Benny bungee jumping from Brisbane's Story Bridge. He said they would pay me if I came along and pushed him. I said if you don't put a rope on him, I will do it for nothing."

Steve went on to add that he and Benny are quite friendly now. "We just laugh about those days," he said, "And I enjoy catching up with him and having a beer." Steve is still involved in the game in football operations at the Broncos where Kevin is head coach.

Kevin joined him in Canberra as an 18-year-old in 1987 and played off the bench in the '87 grand final loss to Manly and in the 1989 victory over Balmain before heading back to Queensland to join the Broncos in 1990 and winning five more titles there (1992, 93, 98, 2000 ARL/NRL and 1997 in Super League) for a family record of six first grade premierships.

He also played 11 Tests (including on the 1990 and 1994 Kangaroo

tours) and 20 Origin games for Queensland and his NRL career ended with 292 matches and 73 tries in 15 seasons. He was awarded an Australian Sports Medal in 2000 and was admitted to the Broncos Hall of Fame.

Kevin played through a golden era for five-eighths (Allan Langer played inside him at halfback for most of his career) with his main rivals varying from Brett Kenny, Terry Lamb, Cliff Lyons, Brad Fittler and Laurie Daley. While he says he cannot separate Brad Fittler and Laurie Daley as his toughest No. 6 opponents, he singles out another who made an impression on him.

"Brad Izzard was also a handful and I remember well a game against Penrith back in the early 1990s. Brad was my opposing five-eighth and I moved up to tackle him early in the game but he stepped around me and a try resulted.

"Chris Johns was playing in the centres and he bagged me, saying, 'You get out here and I'll move to five-eighth where I will take care of him'. Not long after we changed positions. Brad did the same to Chris and set up another try.

"As he walked back to his teammates I patted him on the back. Brad is the only opponent I have ever patted on the back after a try against us."

Drew, who was born on 17 September 1966, suffered a severe injury at 18 years of age while playing junior football with the Booval Swifts. He displaced a vertebrae in his neck while making a tackle, which required surgery and a bone graft. This injury



Mighty Maroons from the one family ... Rear (from left): Steve, Brett, Kerrod. Front: Kevin and Drew.

stopped him from playing for two years but he returned to the field with the Ipswich Jets first grade team.

Kerrod was part of the Broncos' team from their inaugural season in 1988, joining them from the Ipswich Jets. He made his first grade debut from the bench in the 20-18 win over Penrith at Lang Park on 12 March 1988. When he left the club at the end of 1996, he had played 181 first grade matches, scoring 23 tries and was a member of the 1992 and 1993 premierships winning teams as well as the 1992 World Cup Challenge win over Wigan in England.

He played 41 games with the Adelaide Rams in 1997 and 1998 before the club was wound up just before the beginning of the 1999 season. Then he played 22 games with English club Gateshead Thunder in 1999 before coming home and returning to the Broncos in 2000 before retiring with 223 NRL appearances to his name. Kerrod and his family moved to the Sunshine Coast in 2001 and he is successfully involved in real estate, commercial cleaning and ladies fashion, while he is also a board member of the Sunshine Coast Rugby League competes in the Queensland League's Hostplus Cup.

Kerrod was the first of the three brothers to play Test football. He was 21 and scored a try in the 26-6 win over New Zealand at Christchurch in 1989 and went on to play eight Tests and toured New Zealand (1989), England and France (1990) and Papua New Guinea (1991), as well playing in the 1992 World Cup.

He played six State of Origin games for Queensland, with his first in the 36-6 win over NSW at Lang Park on 23 May 1989. Like Steve and Kevin, he received an Australian Sports Medal in 2000, was Dally M hooker of the year in 1989 and 1990 and is also a member of the Broncos Hall of Fame.

Kerrod, lightning fast and creative out of dummy half, and Steve, competed for the Australian Test No. 9 jersey for several seasons and packed in against each other in hundreds of scrums at first grade level as they are the only combination of the three international brothers not to play in the ARL competition together.

Kevin and Steve combined with Canberra from 1987-89 while Kerrod and Kevin played seven seasons together at the Broncos from 1990-96.

"Steve was my direct opponent in many club games and I don't want to be disrespectful to my brother but we all know who is the better player," laughed Kerrod.

Steve countered with praise for his younger brother. "Over the years I played opposite to Kerrod in many games and it was always a battle. He did well in the scrums and was quick to take advantage of any gaps around the dummy half area."

Certainly, all three brothers share a great amount of gratitude for what they have been able to achieve, together and individually, in rugby league and that Steve and Kevin are grateful to be still involved at the highest level four decades after they came to prominence in the tough Brisbane competition pre-Broncos.

"We started playing the game at five years of age, so I have been involved in rugby league for 50 years or so," said Steve. "We are grateful for what the game has given us and I hope I can continue being involved for many more years and I know my brothers feel the same."



Still working together ... Steve (seated) and Kevin on the sideline during a Broncos' clash.

DRAGONS' 'JUKEBOX' IS MUSIC TO COACH'S EARS



Elsie Albert ... as tough as they come.



Elsie takes on the Parramatta Eels' defence

BARRY ROSS

Now in its fourth season, the NRLW has provided new opportunities for athletes from many locations and this will increase over the years. And Glenn Jackson, the NRL's senior manager, media and communications, says head office is thrilled by the way the women's competition has continued to improve over its short lifetime.

"It is the fastest growing participation area of our game and it is providing more scope for women from a many different locations," he enthused.

The development of Papua New Guinea-born St George Illawarra prop Elsie Albert typifies the expansion of the women's game. She is the first home-grown Papua New Guinean woman to play in the NRLW and has quickly established herself as one of the leading forwards in the competition.

The 25-year-old made her debut for the Dragons in 2020 against the Roosters and played three matches that season before cementing her place in 2021 and gaining a reputation as a powerful ball-runner who is tough to bring down. She made 248 post contact metres in her first five matches in elite company.

She ran for 159 metres during her 47 minutes of playing time in the Dragons' four 10-0 win against Parramatta in heavy conditions in the round two clash this year. The next week, Elsie played 50 minutes and scored her first NRLW try in the Dragons' tight loss to competition leaders Brisbane Broncos at CommBank Stadium.

Elsie continued to be a prominent performer for the Dragons in the run to the grand final against the Roosters.

"She is the fittest she has ever been and very strong in the gym," said her coach Jamie Soward, the Dragons' 2010

premiership player. "We are delighted with her form and happy to have her. Over the next couple of year we might sign more women from PNG."

Born at Nipa in the southern highlands, about 560 kms north west of Port Moresby, Elsie was a boxer as a young girl and she began playing rugby league at high school. She played for PNG in an NRLW trial game against the Broncos at Suncorp Stadium in September 2018 and 32 days later made her Test debut for the Orchids in the loss to the Australian Prime Minister's XIII at Port Moresby. In June 2019, she started at prop for PNG in their loss to Fiji at Leichhardt Oval and in October of that year, she represented PNG in the World Cup 9s.

In November 2019, she captained PNG in their first Test win, a 20-16 victory against England at Port Moresby and has since established herself as their respected skipper. In 2020, she moved to Brisbane where she began playing with the Souths Logan Magpies in the QRL women's competition before the Dragons signed her on for the 2020 NRLW season.

Nicknamed the 'PNG Jukebox', she is a strong defender and a hard, straight runner with the ball. She weighs 95kg and stands 170kg, making her a formidable challenge for the opposition's defence. She shares a house in Wollongong with Dragons skipper and international forward Kezie Apps and five other team members.

Elsie attained a Bachelor of Tropical Agriculture from the University of Natural Resources and Environment at Rabaul and works as a plant and insect specialist.

Parramatta player, 32-year-old Therese Aiton, became the second PNG woman to play in the NRLW when she came on as a replacement hooker in the Eels' 13-12 win over Newcastle in the opening round of this season's competition. She was injured late in that match and had to miss the Eels' clash with the Dragons. A PNG Orchids Test player with Elsie Albert, Therese holds a registered nurse's degree.



Legends let loose ... Ian Thomson (right) interviews (from left) Max Krilich, Michael Cleary, Bob McCarthy, Don McKinnon and Terry Randall.

LEGENDS ENTERTAIN OVER BREAKFAST

The Northern Sydney committee held its long-awaited Rugby League Legends Breakfast at the newly renovated Manly Leagues Club on the 27 March. The previous Legends Breakfast was held back on the 17 November 2019 and its success looks like ensuring it will be an annual event.

President Trevor Bailey welcomed all present and amongst other matters outlined the difficulties faced by the Foundation and our local Northern Sydney committee during COVID-19 restrictions in the past 12 months and thanked the Manly Leagues Club board members for their continued support.

Wellbeing officer Ken Vessey followed with an overview on the Foundation's aims and charter in relation to assisting the men, women and children of the rugby league community who were facing hard times. Ken gave details of how wellbeing activities are conducted, the need for ongoing advice from the rugby league community on those not doing well, how wellbeing funds have been distributed in recent years between different groups of applicants. He introduced three wellbeing recipients in the audience and expressed the importance of becoming a member from as low as \$25.

By this time there was an exciting feeling amongst the audience when Ken introduced master of ceremonies Ian Thomson, the former Manly Warringah and Balmain front-rower and a member of the 1978 Kangaroos who toured Great Britain and France.

Ian introduced the present parade of Australian rugby league legends in in former Rabbitohs of their golden era of the 1960s-70s in Bob McCarthy and Michael Cleary, who is one of only four Australian sportsmen to represent the country in three sports (rugby union, rugby league, athletics) at international level); and fellow internationals Wayne Pearce, Don McKinnon, Max Krilich and Terry Randall.

Ian firstly conducted a one-on-one in-depth interview with Wayne Pearce who spoke freely about his playing and coaching careers, the highlights of his career, his role as an Australian Rugby League Commissioner since 2012, his role in today's professional game and the state of today's competition.

The audience was impressed by Wayne's insights and willingness to answer any of Ian's thought-provoking questions.

Ian then called each of our remaining five Australian legends to the stage and conducted masterly interviews with each of the guests by asking interesting questions ranging from serious, diverse, humorous, statistical, their greatest moments experienced, high and lows of careers and some funny touring stories. The audience were impressed by the manner in which all of the legends answered and became fully engaged in the moment.

The committee's special thanks go to Ian and all of the former playing legends, as well as the volunteers and patrons who played a big part in the success of the function.



Enjoying a morning with legends ... Lindsay Grinkle, Greg Broome, Kenyon McKie and Alex Sexton.



Wayne Pearce chats with his 1982 Kangaroos tour skipper Max Krilich.

GOLD, CORPORATE MEMBERS' SPECIAL VIEW OF RON COOTE CUP

Men of League Foundation held its second annual NSW gold members' 'Thank You' event at the NSW Centre of Excellence, on 23 March with just over 60 of our valued gold members and their guests joining special guests Ron Coote and Souths CEO Blake Solly for an informal 'beer and champers' gathering.

They then joined our esteemed patron Ron and headed across to Accor Stadium to watch the first leg of the Ron Coote Cup – the traditional NRL grudge match between Ron's two former foundation clubs, the South Sydney Rabbitohs and the Sydney Roosters. Ron won five premierships with the two arch-rivals – four with the Rabbitohs from 1967-71 and two with the Roosters in 1974-75.

Souths won a hard fought and entertaining game 28-16.

Master of ceremonies Mark Warren did a tremendous job overseeing the show, extracting some great insights into a modern NRL club's challenges from Blake, and some very amusing anecdotes from the Ron who could not be drawn on his favourite for the night's game.

Men of League CEO Steve Lowndes welcomed guests and

thanked them for their wonderful support of the Foundation and our national wellbeing lead Roxanne Moates reminded everyone just how important our members' annual subscriptions are in assisting those in need with a very moving but inspiring video and tales of some of our grateful wellbeing recipients.

They were delighted also to be joined by one of our very dear wellbeing recipients Molly Croft and her family. Molly has had significant battles with cancer but, most happily, was recently declared cancer-free and is back cheering the game she loves.

Guests enjoyed wines from Mortimer's Wines, and some of Sean Garlick's Garlo pies. Thanks to the support of these two former topline players. As always at such events, it was a great opportunity to talk rugby league and for many, to renew acquaintances from their playing days.

The event was way for Men of League Foundation to acknowledge the financial contribution that our gold and corporate members make to the Foundation and we look forward to holding similar events in Brisbane and in Melbourne over the coming months.



Corporate member Ross Parker from Sell Parker with guests Dawn, Lorraine and Deborah.



Blake Solly, Ron Coote and Mark Warren.



Corporate member Brendan Lucas from Next Dimension Accounting (second from right) and guests.



Neville Anitelea with Riad Tayeh and Rory Muscat.

AROUND THE



A STEELY RESOLVE

The Bundaberg District committee appreciates the enormous support from McHugh Steel, a proud local company headed by Robert McHugh which has been its major sponsor for three years. The local company, which manufactures and builds residential, commercial and industrial carparks, sheds and garages, has committed to continue its generous support in the years to come. Robert McHugh (left) is a regular attendee of the Foundation's functions and is seen here presenting a cheque for \$5000 to the committee at the recent sportsman's dinner to Bundaberg wellbeing officer Mark Hanson and president Greg Pershouse.



SPARKES FIRES IN TIPPING COMPETITION

North West members Don Pascoe and Peter Haley assist staff at Gunnedah's Alkira Hostel with the NRL tipping competition for residents who eagerly complete their selections weekly and look forward with great anticipation for the regular Thursday visits by the pair.

Last year's winner was Mick Sparkes (pictured), a former Gunnedah and Dunedoo first grade front-rower who is a keen Men of League member and supporter of events. Mick cheered his beloved Parramatta Eels all the way to the finals and joined the other contestants for a morning tea presentation at season's end.

THE HUNTER'S LYNCH-PIN

Kevin Lynch proudly displays his Order of Australia Medal he was awarded in 2021 for his services to the community of Newcastle and Port Stephens. Kevin is a life member of Newcastle Rugby League and Newcastle JRL, Lakes United RLFC and the Newcastle Knights plus the Soldiers Point Bowling Club.

THE GROUNDS



RARE PHOTO FROM THE ARCHIVES

This is a one-off photo of the famous Raper brothers which emerged as Johnny Raper's families dug into the archives for his recent service. It shows (taken in the mid-1960s) the nine Raper brothers and their father Arthur, gathered at Paul Raper's wedding. They are (from left) John, Terry, Robert, Maurice, Ron, Arthur, Michael, Paul, Gerard and Peter.



MARKING TIME WELL

Age shall not weary, it seems, these two former Norths Brisbane teammates Mark Graham and Mark Murray who not only were prominent in the Devils' premiership victory of 1980 under Kiwi coach Graham Lowe, but went onto outstanding international careers. Graham, who has been voted as New Zealand's greatest player ever, had not ventured south for some time before agreeing to speak at the Brisbane committee's recent Kick-Off Club at Norths Devils Leagues Club where Mark Murray, the 1982 Kangaroo tourist who played six Tests and 17 games for Queensland, is the club boss.

TURVEY AND LORD TED

It has been wonderful how the rugby league community has bonded to support Bulldogs champion Steve Mortimer who has been struggling with dementia at age 65 (see story page 42). This photo typifies that spirit – 'Turvey' Mortimer, the will-o-the-wisp halfback and the Dragons' brilliant fullback-centre 'Lord' Ted Goodwin, both among the great crowd-pleasers of the 1970s, at the first lunch organised by Canterbury Leagues Club for their hero.



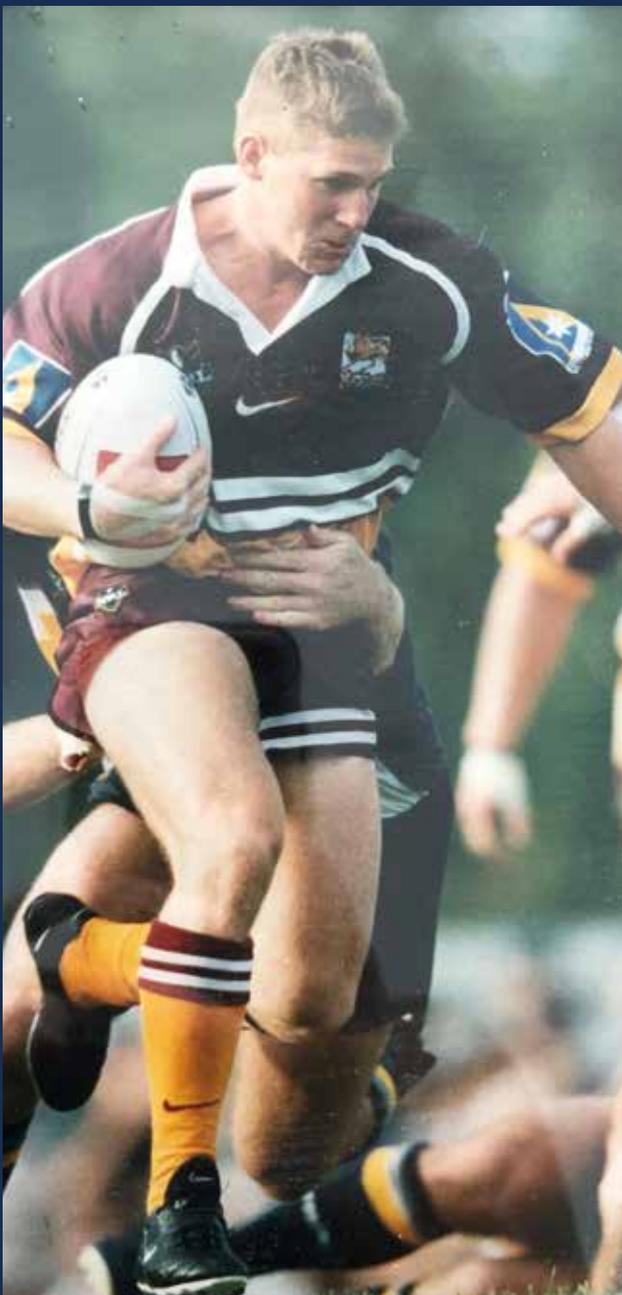
BING AND THE DUFF

Two Balmain teammates of the 1970s caught up recently at Coolangatta on the Gold Coast. Neil 'Bing' Pringle is well known around league circles and is a wonderful contributor to Men of League around the border. He warmly received the annual visit from his former halfback Peter Duffy who was an absolute stalwart at Leichhardt Oval, playing for the Tigers for a decade, then coaching lower grades for several seasons and worked as maintenance manager for the leagues club. Yep, where is Larry Corowa? Running late perhaps?



GIVING BACK TO THE GAME HE LOVES

JOHN DRISCOLL WOULD HAVE LIKED TO HAVE PLAYED MORE THAN 32 TOP GRADE GAMES FOR THE BRONCOS BUT FATE INTERVENED ... AND ULTIMATELY SENT HIM IN A DIRECTION WHERE HE SERVES THE RUGBY LEAGUE COMMUNITY, AND BUSINESS, IN ANOTHER IMPORTANT CAPACITY.



John Driscoll during his playing days for the Broncos.

STEVE RICKETTS

Former Junior Kangaroos skipper John Driscoll shaped as the Broncos' long term hooker in the late 1990s before fate intervened and set him on a new path of fulfilment from the game he loves.

Today, this Brisbane-based chartered accountant/entrepreneur is a dynamic member of the Brisbane Broncos' Old Boys, Men of League Foundation's Brisbane committee and the Carl Webb Foundation.

Driscoll, 47, was born and raised in Rockhampton, where he was placed on a scholarship by one of the city's favourite sons, the late Cyril Connell, the legendary Broncos' talent scout and former Australian Test five-eighth and 1956-57 Kangaroo.

In 1997, with former Test star Kerrod Walters having moved to the Adelaide Rams, Driscoll played every first grade home and away match but missed the Super League grand final against Cronulla because of a broken cheekbone, which also ruled him out of the World Club Challenge final against Hunter Mariners in Auckland.

The following year he played five first grade matches with the Broncos, as utility John Plath slotted into the number nine role before the arrival of Luke Priddis in 1999.

His career presents one of those 'what might have been' stories but Driscoll does not have regrets as he looks forward to exciting new chapters in his life. He reflects fondly on the amazing ride provided for him by rugby league.

He was a Queensland Primary Schools representative, chosen from Allentown State School in Rockhampton, and also played for the Queensland and Australian under-15 sides. He attended Emmaus College and played club rugby league for Brothers, where one of his coaches was current St George Illawarra coach Anthony Griffin. At Emmaus, Driscoll was chosen for a Queensland Schoolboys side which included Brad Thorn (Aspley), Steve Price (Harristown) and two North Rockhampton players, Matt Sing and Sid Domic.

In 1993, Driscoll moved to Brisbane, turning out in a Broncos Colts side which played under the Kawana banner in the Sunshine Coast first grade competition. The following year

he played for another Broncos affiliate, Brothers, in the Brisbane competition and also was called up for duty with the Broncos in the NSWRL league, making his first grade debut against South Sydney in round 14 after Kerrod Walters was suspended.

Driscoll played four first grade matches in a row, the only loss coming against a Newcastle Knights side which included the Johns brothers and a giant pack spearheaded by Paul Harragon and Mark Sargent. In 1994, Driscoll captained the Junior Kangaroos against a touring Great Britain. Fellow members of the Australian squad included the Thorn, Domic, Adam Ritson, Ben Walker, Anthony Mundine and Robbie Ross.

In 1995, Driscoll was on the verge of joining the fledgling South Queensland Crushers but elected to stay with the Broncos.

“There were problems with my registration with the ARL and I didn’t get a game for six or eight weeks,” Driscoll recalls. “Then (coach) Wayne Bennett said he was going to play me against the Western Reds and, if the club lost points, so be it.”

Nothing came of it but Driscoll played only four top grade games, describing 1995 as “a slack year”.

In 1996 he was captain and player of the year in Brisbane’s reserve grade and was approached by Adelaide coach Rod Reddy, another Rockhampton product, to play with the Rams.

“It was at Shane Webcke’s wedding when Wayne (Bennett) told me they were keeping me for the first Super League season (in 1997) and letting Kerrod go (to the Rams),” Driscoll said. “It was an amazing year, with a trip to England in the (UK) summer months for the World Club Challenge and we even had a few days in Ireland. My ‘roomie’ was John Plath, who went on the trip even though he was suspended. We played London, Wigan and Halifax. I couldn’t hear the calls from the players at Central Park (against Wigan) because of the crowd noise.”

Driscoll was set to take his place in the Broncos’ pack for the historic Super League grand final in Brisbane but with 10 minutes left in the major semi-final against Cronulla in Townsville he broke his cheekbone while making a tackle on Les Davidson. The injury required the insertion of three metal plates. In 1998, Driscoll broke his jaw tackling Cronulla’s Danny Lee, and needed an operation to insert another three plates.

In 1999, Driscoll played one top grade match - against Penrith - spending most of the season with Broncos’ affiliate Toowoomba Clydesdales in the Queensland Cup under the coaching of Ivan Henjak. Driscoll was the team’s player of the year.

In 2000, Driscoll and his wife, Brooke travelled to England to live. “I watched the 2000 grand final (the Broncos beat the Roosters), downing ‘snakebites’ at a Walkabout Bar in London,” he recalls. “Brooke and I travelled through Europe and I ended up playing with Pia Donkeys in the French Elite competition with fellow Queenslanders Damon Driscoll and Darren Fritz.

“Brooke and I returned to Brisbane at the end of 2001 and I was keen for another run, so I called up Easts (Tigers) and their coach Michael Booth said to come to training. I ended up captaining the side and it was probably the most fun



I've had playing footy. We made the semis, and we had good players like Scott Thornburn, Jason Bulgarelli, Graham Cotter and Sime Busby, who was from Rockhampton."

By then, Driscoll was well on his way to a successful business career, having made up his mind at the height of the Super League War, that he had to look to life after football.

"We had so much spare time as professional footballers in the mid-1990s," he reflected. "Brad Thorn, Ben Walker, Leo Dynevor and I would play cards and golf, and head to the beach. 'Thorny' loved the beach. Halfway through 1996, I knew I needed more mental stimulation and I started to think long term. I read a novel a week, and then in '97 I started an accounting degree. The cheek injury rammed home the need to get qualifications and I finished my degree in 18 months."

Driscoll and Thorn were born on 3 February, 1975, and remain close friends. Thorn has taken the coaching path since he finished playing and is currently in charge of rugby's Queensland Reds. Driscoll was never interested in the coaching side of the game and Bennett helped him get a start with an accounting firm. In 2008, Driscoll went out on his own and grew to love the entrepreneurial and innovative aspects of accounting.

It was while playing touch football at Ashgrove Marists College in 2013 that Driscoll struck up a friendship with Justin Barlow, who was the public face of a bid team that was trying to interest the NRL in the concept of an expansion side, based around the network of Brothers' clubs in Queensland.

Driscoll was always interested in new business ideas and being involved at the start. He was impressed by the logic of the Brothers' bid, which planned to play eight home games each year at Suncorp, and to take four to the regions, where there were Brothers clubs from Toowoomba to Townsville and from Cairns to his old stamping ground, Rockhampton. There also was a Central Queensland bid, based in Rockhampton, which has now come under the umbrella of the Dolphins' franchise.

"The Queensland Government loved the concept (of the Brothers' bid) given it supported regional areas," Driscoll said. "Around 2016-17 we met with Channel 9 and the NRL. The NRL was looking to expand the game and Channel 9 was

looking for new viewers. We fitted the bill, on both counts."

Ultimately, better financed bids from the Dolphins, Easts Tigers (Firehawks), Bombers and Western Corridor stole the limelight, with the Dolphins getting the go ahead for 2023.

Driscoll has thrown some of his considerable energy reserves into the Broncos Old Boys, working closely with commercial manager Lisa Durkin to showcase the work and achievements of Broncos players, post football, and to keep the players closely aligned with the club. The Old Boys also are pro-active in the rugby league community at large, using any surplus funds to support junior football.

There have been fallouts between the Old Boys and the Broncos Football Club administration but relations are currently cordial.

"We implemented a weekly 'Have a Dig Award' for the NRL players last year and that has been well received," Driscoll said. "A lot of former players want to help but they don't know how to get involved. Hopefully that will change. It is also part of our charter to get female players involved now that the NRLW is part of the landscape. We're all about creating a support network for past players and officials, and those that are leaving."

Driscoll joined the Brisbane Men of League Foundation committee last year because he saw it as another avenue for him to give back to the game.

"The challenge is to get the next generation of players invested in both organisations (Old Boys and Men of League)," he says.

Carl Webb's diagnosis with Motor Neurone Disease has inspired tremendous support from the league community with Damon Keating instrumental in setting up a Foundation for the former Bronco, Queensland and Australian player. Driscoll has come on board with the Foundation.

John, wife, Brooke, daughter Blake, 12, and son Duke, 9, live at Grange in Brisbane's inner north, right next door to what was once the home ground of Brisbane Brothers, and later, the training base for the Crushers.

It seems, Rugby League is always on the Driscoll doorstep.

PORT STEPHENS' BIG KICK-OFF FOR 2022

The three guest speakers at the Port Stephens Kick-Off Club – John Muggleton, Peter Sterling and Garth Brennan.



CHARLES ELIAS

It was standing room only as a sold out crowd of more than 220 packed the Soldiers Point Bowling Club auditorium for the Port Stephens Men of League Kick-Off Club luncheon in February.

Special guests Peter Sterling, John Muggleton and Garth Brennan gave fascinating anecdotes as they recalled days gone by and talked about the modern game.

Host Gerry Collins provided the questions and kept the momentum upbeat during more than three hours of fun and entertainment.

One of the many people to attend was former Nelson Bay footballer John McKiernan and wife Janette, from Fingal Bay. McKiernan was a talented player destined for higher representative honours before suffering a career-ending spinal injury in 1983.

Former Nelson Bay club president Peter Arnold said that the promising McKiernan had progressed into grade football with his two brothers at North Newcastle in the Newcastle Rugby League competition.

"He made a big impact in his early days winning a car as the Real NRL player of the year in 1981 at just 19 years of age," Arnold said.

"He had signed to move to Lakes United, however, he did not play following a car crash in 1983. He started back in footy and played against Cessnock but after the game on 24 April he was admitted to hospital, complaining of head pains. At the time no-one had

suspected such a tragic outcome because McKiernan was in good spirits and had a few beers after the game with the Cessnock boys."

McKiernan was diagnosed as a quadriplegic and naturally his life took an almighty turn from that day.

"Just as he did on the football field, John has shown true courage and amazing fighting qualities, supported by his loving wife Janette," Arnold said.

"They face each challenge as it comes and John loves to catch up with former teammates and is a regular attendee at the Port Stephens Men of League days. He is a wonderful inspiration to everyone that meets him."

Not long after his accident, the Parramatta Eels were in Nelson Bay for a pre-season training camp when Peter Sterling and Paul Taylor met up with McKiernan at his Shoal Bay home. Forty years later Sterling and McKiernan were reunited at the Men of League event.

"John was honoured to meet up with such a legend of the game," said Janette. "Peter Sterling went out of his way to make conversation with John and it showed the quality of the man to take his time with John."

"It is days like this that truly inspire John to continue with his daily physio sessions."

Auctioneer Kieran McMahon did an excellent job, and he was ably assisted by branch president Chris Kelly and the local Men of League committee.



The day's VIPs – compere, guest speakers, organisers and committee members.

MICK REMEMBERS FONDLY HIS TAXING PROFESSIONS

HOW CAN YOU REMAIN POPULAR IN THE TOUGH-MARKING SPORT OF RUGBY LEAGUE WHEN YOU ARE A TAX MAN AND A REFEREE? MICK STONE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO.

BARRY ROSS

Being a referee and a tax collector is not a popular combination in any walk of life, let alone in the cut-throat world of rugby league. But Michael Stone handled the two jobs well and was highly respected in both fields.

Now 72, 'Stoney' still serves rugby league, having been an active committee member of the Foundation's Mid North Coast committee since its inception in 2007.

After leaving school, he completed an accountancy course at TAFE and worked in this field for several years. He then joined the Australian Taxation Office and spent 25 years there, working in the appeals and advisory branch and then became the head of prosecutions in sales tax.

His wife Judy, who he married in 1972, was the one who suggested he become a whistle blower. Not long after the marriage, Mick saw a newspaper advertisement for referees and, after gaining his ticket, began refereeing in the Western Suburbs junior league in 1973. He was graded into the NSW Rugby League's senior ranks in 1978 and controlled his initial first grade game at Belmore Oval on 16 August 1981, when Canterbury beat Souths 37-11.

When Stone hung up his whistle after the 1989 minor semi-final between Canberra and Penrith at the Sydney Football Stadium, he had refereed 206 first grade games. He also took charge of four Test matches, four State of Origins, three grand finals, three City-Country clashes, plus World Cups and two Challenge Cup matches in England in January 1987. He was the man in the middle of the historic State of Origin exhibition match at Veterans Stadium, Long Beach, California in 1987.

There were other historic moments during his refereeing journey. He had the honour of refereeing the last grand final at the Sydney Cricket Ground, Manly's 18-8 victory over Canberra in the Raiders' first grand final appearance and the first decider, the following season, played at the newly-built Sydney Football Stadium which saw Canterbury beat Balmain 24-12 and give Bulldogs' 30-year-old coach Phil Gould his first premiership.

In the first of his three successive grand finals, he sent off Bulldogs fullback Phil Sigsworth in the dramatic 4-2 Parramatta victory of 1986 – the last send off in grand final history and the only try-less grand final.

After retiring from refereeing, Mick took to the microphone in 1990, working on radio with John McCoy at Brisbane's 4BC, broadcasting the match of the round and, from 1992 to 1999, he was the referees coaching co-ordinator. He continued as the referees assistant coach under Robert Finch for a few years and then worked as a video referee until retiring in 2008.

Over the years, he has had some interesting on-field discussions with some of the game's leading players.

"Steve Mortimer was always keen to discuss my decisions," Mick recalled. "He would chirp away for some time after I had ruled on something he or his Bulldogs team did not like. The halfbacks were the main ones in your ear if they were not happy with what I had done.

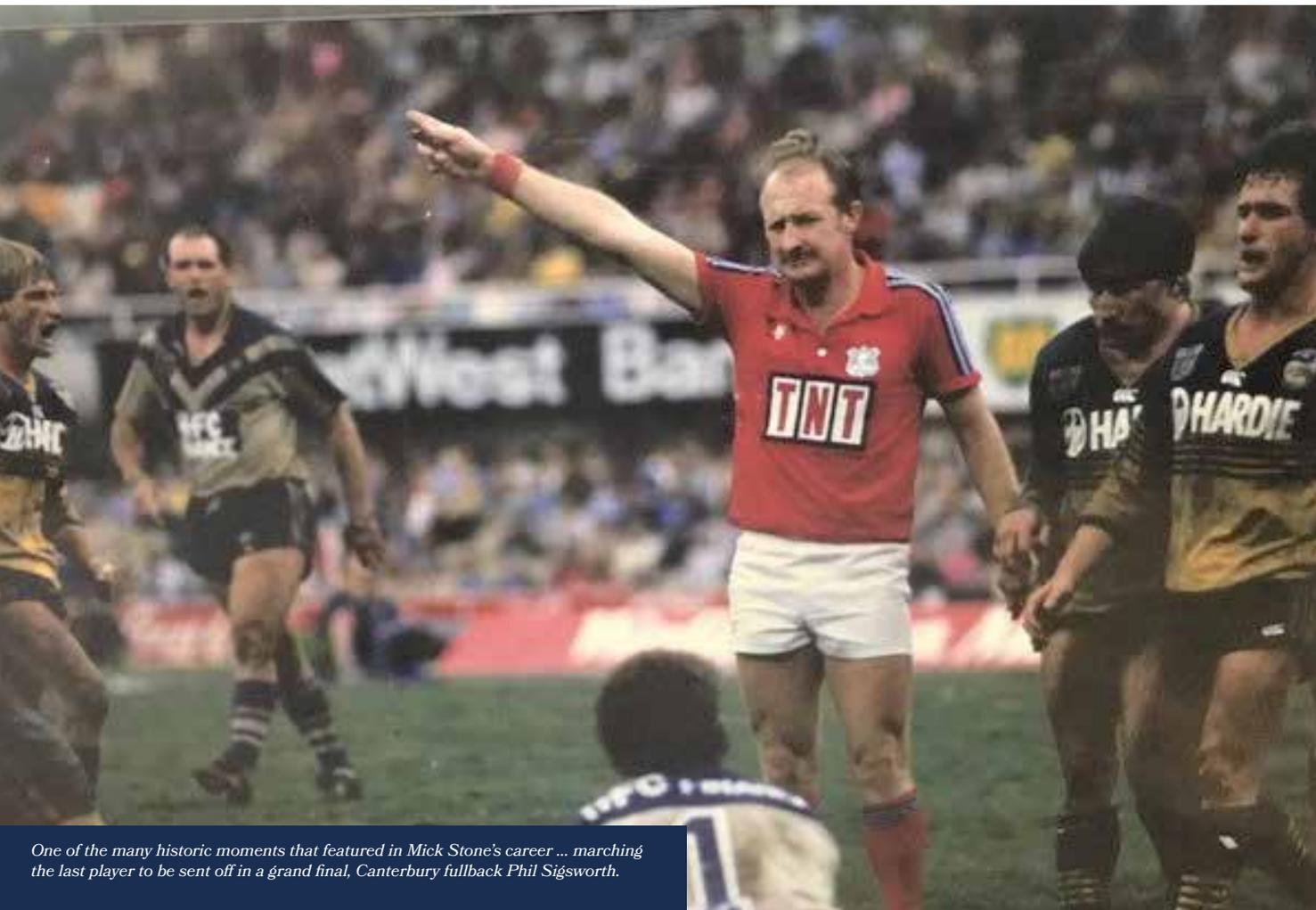
"I always knew that Balmain's Gary Freeman and Craig Coleman from Souths were on the field, while Canberra's Ricky Stuart was often in my ear.

"I refereed a Raiders game at Seiffert Oval in Queanbeyan in the mid-1980s and at that time all referees were told to keep a close eye on offside after following a downtown kick and chase. In this game I was watching the Raiders' blindside and they appeared to me to be offside. When the opposing fullback caught the ball, he was immediately tackled by what seemed to me to be players who were offside.

"So I blew the whistle for a penalty and the player on top of the fullback loudly yelled at me that he was the kicker. It was Ricky Stuart and he has to this day continued to remind me of my mistake."

There have been games that he will remember for years to come. At the old Sydney Sports Ground on 26 June 1983, Mick was carried from the field after just four minutes with a leg injury while refereeing the Eastern Suburbs-Canterbury match. He was replaced by reserve grade ref Les Green who had bad cramps at half-time, resulting in the third grade referee completing the match.





One of the many historic moments that featured in Mick Stone's career ... marching the last player to be sent off in a grand final, Canterbury fullback Phil Sigsworth.



Mick Stone, Terry Lamb and Chris Turner

At the Sydney Cricket Ground on Anzac Day 1986, Mick was responsible for the quickest send-off in first grade history when he despatched Canterbury prop Peter Kelly to the dressing rooms for a dreadful high tackle on Rabbitohs' winger Ross Harrington in the first tackle of the match. Canterbury still won the game 26-2, despite playing with 12 men for all but 15 seconds.

Another enduring moment from Mick Stone's career was the controversial try he awarded to New South Wales centre Mark McGaw in the State of Origin opening clash at Lang Park in 1987, Wayne Bennett's first series as Queensland coach. Bennett remonstrated in the stand at Stone's ruling that McGaw grounded the ball just inside the dead-ball line after chasing a kick - which video replays confirmed was a correct decision. The Blues won 20-16 with the McGaw try proving the difference at 16-all.

And then there was game two of the 1988 series, again at Lang Park. Ref Stone sent Queensland captain Wally Lewis to the sin-bin for five minutes and the furious crowd went berserk, throwing plenty of empty and full beer cans onto the field. The game had to be stopped for several minutes until the mess was cleaned from the playing arena and order was restored.

"I still watch the game regularly on TV but I am a firm believer in the rule, 'once you are finished you stay out,'" Stone said. "The referees have been professionals since the end of the Super League in 1997 and their training and coaching has gotten better and better."

Mick and Judy Stone have enjoyed life in Forster on the Barrington Coast for 15 years and Mick ran regularly be seen on the golf course and catching up with old friends at Men of League functions.

GREAT NORTH DIDN'T GO DO

MICK STONE

They say that lightning never strikes twice but rain sure does. For the second successive year, the Mid North Coast committee's golf day was booked solid but, due to heavy rain, any lies about scoring and great shots were restricted to past memories.

Like last year, we improvised. The event, which drew 160 people, commenced at around 10.30am with a finger food brunch from 11. Master of ceremonies, Mick Stone, robbed willing participants of some loose change during an amusing round of 'heads or tails' followed by our traditional round of applause for colleagues and heroes who we lost during the year.

This year was particularly poignant with the loss of three Immortals – Bob Fulton, Norm Provan and John Raper – plus the larrikin's larrikin, Tom Raudonikis. The committee's thanks go to rugby league historian Terry Williams who prepared a big-screen photo tribute to internationals who passed in the previous year.

Broadcaster and St George 'tragic', John Stanley, recalled his memories of Norm Provan, John Raper and Bob Fulton to an audience from which most had seen them play.

There were plenty of former players in the room to produce their own catalogue of history, and remarkable footy yarns. In fact, a team of 'superstars' who attended the function would look something like this:

Fullback: Warren Fisher

Wingers: Jim See, Jim Swift

Centres: Phil Sigsworth, Andrew Farrar

Five-eighth: Jamal Idris

Halfback: Gary Bridge

Lock: Jim Leis

Second row: Michael Blake, Paul Clarke

Front row: Bob Boland, Mick Healey

Hooker: Mal Cochrane

Security: Charlie Haggett

Referee: Dennis Spagarino

H COAST DAY

DOWN TO A TEE



Wellbeing recipient Mick Healey with wellbeing lead Sam Gordon and videographer Brian Lynch.



Those who make it happen ... the golf day committee members with Andrew Farrar and Mal Cochrane.



The team of the 'tournament' – well-known former first graders who gave up their time on the day: From left (standing) – Jim See, Michael Blake, Andrew Farrar, Jamal Idris, Phil Sigsworth, Warren Fisher, Bob Boland, Jim Leis, Paul Clarke, Dennis Spagarino. Kneeling: Charlie Haggett, Jim Swift, Gary Bridge and Mal Cochrane.

Jim See and Chris Turner conducted quick-fire interviews with several of our stars before the Foundation's acting wellbeing manager Samantha Gordon interviewed former North Sydney forward Mick Healey, presenting him with a new scooter to get around Forster on. Naturally, it was black and red and it demonstrated to the crowd the type of assistance Men of League gives to former players who find themselves in need.

Mick Stone then interviewed former Cronulla Sharks fullback Warren Fisher who recalled the violent 1973 grand final between the Sharks and Sea Eagles. He recalled Manly's first set of possession when the great English lock Malcolm Reilly was 'charged down' by Sharks hooker Ron Turner (well he flattened him after Reilly had kicked the ball) and explained it was a 'square-up' for past sins that Reilly had committed.

Former Manly centre Michael Blake recalled his grand final experiences in 1982 and '83, both games lost to Parramatta, and the great players both teams had in those years (21 internationals played in the 1982 decider). He also gave a great insight into the brilliance of younger brother Phil, recalling playing a semi-final for Souths against Canberra when Steve Mavin was spectacularly 'hooked' by coach George Piggins. I won't spoil the story. Ask Michael when you see him.

Charlie Haggett conducted a tremendous auction and reeled in every last penny in the room, much like Benny Elias did the previous year (what is it with hookers?).

Thanks to Joanne Baxter and Sam Gordon from our Men Of League national office for attending and joining the assorted purple-shirted non-golfers for post-event drinks at the bar.

I promise there will be golf next year.

MATES RALLY AROUND 'TURVEY'



Rivals of the 70s ... Craig Young, Ted Goodwin, Barry Ross, Steve Edge, Aaron Warburton (CEO of Bulldogs Football Club), Luke Goodwin (Bulldogs), Michael Mortimer (Peter's son), Ian Mortimer (Chris' son), Daniel Mortimer (Peter's son), Robert Finch and Steve Mortimer.

NEIL CADIGAN

Family and former teammates, and the Canterbury Leagues Club, have combined to rally behind Bulldogs' favourite son Steve Mortimer to enhance his life as he struggles with dementia.

'Turvey' Mortimer, the little halfback from Wagga Wagga who overcame his size and chronic asthma to captain the Bulldogs to two premierships, skipper the NSW Blues to their first State of Origin series win and return to Canterbury as CEO and a board member, has faced several health issues since the latter part of last year.

His brothers Peter, Chris and Glen, and their children, linked with the leagues club – with Luke Goodwin prominent and Men of League's Barry Ross assisting – to arrange a series of board room lunches at the leagues club where Steve could reconnect with former teammates, opponents and friends.

The first group to join him and family members were Dragons players of the 1970s Craig Young, Robert Finch, Ted Goodwin and Steve Edge. The following week some of Turvey's Bulldogs mates joined him for lunch – his regular halves partner Terry Lamb, George Peponis, Barry Ward, Peter Winchester (the leagues club president), Peter Mortimer, Bob McCarthy – and his mother Elaine.

Tigers greets Steve Roach, Paul Sironen and Ben Elias gave up their time for another lunch session and the Eels players, who combined with the Bulldogs to be the dominant teams of the 1980s, joined him - namely Peter Sterling, Eric Grothe and Peter Wynn.

"It was such a pleasure to take time out for him," said Wynn, a NSW teammate of Mortimer's in 1985, "and to see players from so many clubs rally behind him. Turvey is a guy who had earned so much respect over a lot of years as well as being a hell of a player."



Bulldogs reunite ... (from left) Terry Lamb, George Peponis, Barry Ross, Barry Ward, Peter Winchester, Peter Mortimer, Bob McCarthy, Steve Mortimer and Elaine Mortimer.



Grand finals relived ... Peter Wynn, Eric Grothe, Barry Ross, Andrew Mortimer (Steve's son), Glen Mortimer, Steve Mortimer, Peter Sterling.

HOW ROYCE IS TACKLING DEMENTIA

NEIL CADIGAN

When Penrith Panthers' rugby league legend Royce Simmons disclosed in January 2022 that, at age 61, he had been diagnosed with dementia the previous year, many were in shock.

Typically, the former Kangaroos hooker immediately set about not only exploring what he required to do to slow the dreaded condition's progress, his thoughts turned to assisting others who were affected by the disease – not just sufferers but their supporting families too.

Within months, Royce's Big Walk (a registered charity foundation) was a reality and the support he has received from not just many VIPs of rugby league, but the Penrith district's community and beyond, has been extraordinary.

So, among other fund-raising initiatives for Royce's designated not-for-profit support organisation, Dementia Australia, Royce will walk – from May 17-26 – the 300km from his small hometown of Gooloogong (population less than 300) through Cowra, Carcoar, Blayney, Bathurst, Katoomba and across the Blue Mountains, arriving pre-match at Penrith's Bluebet

Stadium the night the Panthers take on North Queensland Cowboys.

Along the way there will be several sportsman's dinners or lunches, and a coaching clinic, to help raise funds for local rugby league clubs located on the route – familiar territory from his junior days. And Men of League will host a golf day at Bathurst on Sunday, May 22.

You can support Royce's mission, Dementia Australia, junior rugby league and, in particular, the families who have or will go through what Royce himself is confronting, by donating or attending some of the functions from May 17-26.

The tough-as-nails former Panthers skipper, who played 237 games for the Panthers, 10 State of Origin games for New South Wales and 10 Tests for Australia, is tackling his Alzheimer's diagnosis just as he would any other opponent on the footy field – head on and with the benefit of his 'team' and their supporters as his major priority.

Below is the schedule fund raising activities for junior rugby league along the route. For details of how to get tickets, go to roycesbigwalk.com.au.

ROYCE'S BIG WALK SCHEDULE

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Sunday, May 15 | EVENT: Sportsman's lunch at CANOWINDRA SERVICES CLUB, 1pm SPECIAL GUESTS: Craig Gower, Tony Butterfield, Paul Dunn |
| Monday, May 16 | EVENT: Barefoot bowls at Gooloogong Bowls Club, 6pm |
| Tuesday, May 17 | WALK, DAY 1 – Gooloogong to Cowra, 38km EVENT: Sportsman's dinner, COWRA BOWLING CLUB, 6.30pm SPECIAL GUESTS: Brad Fittler, Andrew Farrar |
| Wednesday, May 18 | WALK, DAY 2 – Cowra to Woodstock, 20km EVENT: Carcoar Central Stock Exchange, 8.45am SPECIAL GUESTS: Kurt Fearnley, Terry Lamb, Luke Goodwin |
| Friday, May 20 | WALK, DAY 4 – Carcoar to Fitzgerald Mount, 27.7km EVENT: Sportsman's dinner, BLAYNEY COMMUNITY CENTRE, 7pm SPECIAL GUESTS: Allan Langer, John Cartwright, Martin Lang, Barry Walker |
| Saturday, May 21 | WALK, DAY 5 – Fitzgerald Mount to Bathurst, 24.5km EVENT: Sportsman's dinner, BATHURST PANTHERS, 6pm SPECIAL GUESTS: Allan Langer, John Cartwright, Martin Lang, Barry Walker |
| Sunday, May 22 | WALK, DAY 6 – Bathurst to Brewongle, 17km EVENT: 9am – Bathurst community walk and barbeque EVENT: Noon: Men of League golf day - lunch (12-1pm) followed by nine-hole Ambrose, shotgun start at 1pm, BATHURST GOLF CLUB SPECIAL GUESTS: TBA. Royce Simmons arriving at 4pm to meet guests |
| Tuesday, May 24 | WALK, DAY 8 – Sodwalls to Browns Gap (Hartley), 29km EVENT: Sportsman's dinner, LITHGOW WORKERS CLUB, 7pm SPECIAL GUESTS: Neil Paine, Chris Lawrence, Tim Sheens, Robbie Farah |
| Wednesday, May 25 | WALK, DAY 9 – Browns Gap to Katoomba, 29km EVENT: Sportsman's dinner, KATOOMBA RSL, 7pm SPECIAL GUESTS: Tim Sheens, John Skandalis, Gene Miles, Paul 'Nobby' Clarke |
| Friday, May 27 | WALK, DAY 11 – Faulconbridge to Bluebet Stadium, Penrith, 19km EVENT: Penrith Panthers v North Queensland Cowboys, NRL rd 12 |



LENDING A HELPING HAND

TO BECOME A MEMBER GO TO MENOFLEAGUE.COM



Noel Willick, Colin Bell (centre) and Garry O'Donnell.

ED WHILEY AND JOHN BUCKNALL

Two gentlemen who are familiar in the history of the Manly-Warringah club, club stalwart Ed Whiley and grand final prop John Bucknall, were delighted to receive sit down and chat with Northern Sydney wellbeing officers Alastair Turnbull and Ian Dodds in January.

John Bucknall played 35 first grade games and many more in the lower grades in the 1960s-70s, including appearances in the 1970 (loss to South Sydney) and 1973 (win against Cronulla) grand finals at the Sydney Cricket Ground. He was selected to play for New South Wales in 1973.

Ed Whiley was a teammate of Bucknall in the 1970 Manly grand final team, playing halfback inside the likes of Bob Fulton, John McDonald, Alec Tennant, Derek Moritz, Ian Martin and Bob Batty. He played 36 first grade games and many in the lowers before giving a lifetime of service off the field as a committeeman and in other roles, including club president in 1999-2000.

He is a Sea Eagles life member.

JOSH POWDERLY

Northern Sydney wellbeing officers Ian Dodds and Ken Vessey seized an opportunity to visit Josh Powderly at the Royal North Shore Hospital for a coffee and chat. Josh had been at the hospital for several weeks after suffering serious work injuries in Young including breaks to multiple ribs plus vertebrae damage.

Josh hails from Young NSW where he played rugby league for the strong Young Cherrypickers. He is now the club's president.

His wife Chloe, sons Riley, Nic and daughter Ella remained at home while he recovered and underwent rehabilitation in Sydney and visited him whenever possible.

Josh is an avid supporter of the Sydney Roosters and was most thankful to receive a signed 2019 premiership jersey signed by the Roosters team plus a training shirt.

The Foundation will continue to support Josh after his return to Young, which he will do with a Men of League polo shirt presented to him by Ian and Ken.



COLIN BELL

Western Sydney Men of League wellbeing officers Noel Willick and Garry O'Donnell made a visit to see former Wests Magpies and Wentworthville player and coach Colin 'Dinga' Bell at his home at Dural.

Colin played reserve grade for Wests in 1960 and was a hard tackling second-rower who weighed no more than 77kg ringing wet. He was earmarked as a future first grade player the following season but a bad injury forced 'Dinga' to give the game away for a year. He was then contacted by Wenty Magpies to captain-coach the local A-grade team.

The great goalkicking Welshman fullback Lewis Jones arrived at the club in 1964 to captain-coach Wentworthville in the Sydney second division competition and the Magpies had great success during reign from 1964-71, winning the competition seven times and winning 132 games out of 156 games along the way, a strike rate of 85 percent. Jones was a brilliant fullback or five-eighth regarded as the greatest Welsh player of all time.

Dinga became great friends with Lewis and regarded Lewis and Harry Wells as just below John Raper as the best players he had seen. He said: "Harry Wells was a great mentor at Wests to the young players coming through the grades. Harry helped make Reg Gasnier the centre Immortal he was."

Colin finished up coaching at Hills Bulls in the late 1990s, coaching a team of youngsters to more premierships with a lot of the boys going on to play for Parramatta.



WE WELCOME OUR CAIRNS BROTHERS

Brothers Cairns has come on board as a major partner of Men of League Foundation in Far North Queensland and will provide \$10,000 a year to the Foundation to support the rugby league community in the region.

This new sponsorship provides the opportunity for Brothers Cairns to further forge a strong presence within the Cairns rugby league community and raise awareness of the invaluable work Men of League's Far North Queensland committee provides.

In addition to the yearly donations, Brothers Cairns will support the Foundation by sourcing people within the rugby league community who need help, provide raffle prizes for Foundation events, promote Men of League to their membership of over

23,000 and host any future functions at the club with discounted rates on food and beverage.

Queensland state manager Andrew Blucher said the partnership would provide an enormous boost for the Foundation in Far North Queensland.

"Brothers in Cairns is at the very heart of the rugby league community in Far North Queensland," he said. "It's fantastic that the club has made a long term commitment to 'give back', to help us raise funds, grow awareness and membership, and support local rugby league people who are doing it tough."

"It's hoped this new partnership can be a catalyst for similar sponsorship arrangements with other local Men of League committees around Australia."



Brothers in arms ... (from left) Rick Parmenter(Brothers director/secretary), Trevor Black(Far North Queensland committee), Paul Fowler (Brothers chairman) and Kev Maher, OAM (Far North Queensland committee).

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SAM'S PASSION FOR WIDER INCLUSION

SAM PANAPA, KIWI INTERNATIONAL AND PART OF A CHAMPIONSHIP-DOMINATING ERA AT WIGAN, IS PASSIONATE ABOUT IMPROVING THE INVOLVEMENT OF INDIGENOUS AND PACIFIC PEOPLE IN RUGBY LEAGUE BEYOND JUST PLAYING THE GAME.



Sam Panapa (right), in 2021, on Badu Island as part of his role with the Queensland Rugby League.

STEVE RICKETTS

Former New Zealand, Samoan and Tokelauan Test representative Sam Panapa's goal is to see the prominent on-field role played by Pasifika and indigenous NRL players reflected in other areas of the code. As the Queensland Rugby League's diversity and inclusion coordinator, Panapa dreams of a day when the game attracts a broader demographic to administration, coaching and development and volunteering.

As a junior at Auckland's Ponsonby club, his mentors instilled into him a work ethic and desire to succeed off the field, which matched his passion for the game as a player. His heritage is Tokelauan and Samoan, with an Australian step-father (from Macksville). Sam and Rosalind have five children, one born during his playing stint in England which included two Wembley Challenge Cup final wins with Wigan and World Club Challenge triumphs over Penrith and the Brisbane Broncos.

His first big break came in 1984 when members of the Great Britain touring side watched him playing for Glenora in an Auckland club match. One of the British party gave him Sheffield Eagles boss Gary Hetherington's contact

details and later that year Panapa was turning out for the South Yorkshire club.

On his return to New Zealand, Panapa signed with Te Atatu Roosters and made the final selection trial for the Kiwis but missed out on touring England and France in 1985. Through continued good performances with the New Zealand Presidents' XIII in 1986, Panapa was named in the Kiwi squad tour to Australia in 1987 but had to wait until 1990 for his first Test jersey when he was chosen on the wing against the touring Great Britain side.

Panapa played all three Tests in a thrilling series, won 2-1 by the tourists. There were two Tests in PNG to follow, and then a chance against Australia in a massive weekend in Wellington, with the Wallabies playing the All Blacks on the Saturday and the Kangaroos tackling the Kiwis the following day.

Both Australian sides won, with the Kangaroos getting home 24-6, after a Panapa try four minutes after halftime gave Kiwi fans hope, with Australia leading only 12-4 at that stage.

"It was a typical wet, cold and windy Wellington day," Panapa recalls. "I had been brought up in rugby league



Sam Panapa on the attack during his Wigan days.

with the only goal of one day representing the Kiwis and thus adopting the hate mentality instilled to us as juniors from the rivalry between the Kiwis and Australians.

“But, that first time in England (with Sheffield), taught me how to have a calmer approach to football. Some of the old professionals, like Vince Farrar and Billy Harris, commented to me that I played like I was angry all the time. They said I should just play like I want to play a good game of football, to respect the opposition and to have a beer with them afterwards.”

Panapa played two Tests against France in 1991 but he and Kelly Sheldford were omitted from the squad to tour Australia, learning about their demotion through the media. That got Panapa thinking that his career path could be in England. Castleford coach Darryl Van de Velde was the first to show interest but the club baulked at the transfer fee imposed by the NZRFL.

Instead, Panapa signed with glamor club Wigan, coached by Australian John Monie with the enigmatic Maurice Lindsay the chairman. Panapa lived two doors from Wigan’s famous home ground, Central Park, and soon after arriving, was thrown into the cauldron of a World Club Challenge match against Penrith at Liverpool’s Anfield Stadium.

Panapa was a standby player but started at centre after fellow Kiwi Dean Bell broke down during the pre-match warm-up. Wigan led 14-4 at halftime, with Panapa scoring a try from a sweetly-timed Andy Gregory pass in the 27th minute. Wigan went on to win 21-4, with former All Black Frano Botica kicking six goals.

“Frano was a phenomenal athlete. He could have been an Olympic 800-metre runner,” Panapa said. “I had the pleasure of playing Test football with him when he switched codes.”

Panapa’s farewell match for Wigan was the 20-14, World Club Challenge win over the Brisbane Broncos in front of a crowd of 55,000 at Brisbane’s ANZ Stadium, a match in which he played centre, opposite Steve Renouf.

“It was such a relief to beat the Broncos, given what had been happening off-field with John Dorahy sacked as coach (leading up to the game) and Graeme West taking over,” Panapa said. “The boys were tiring by the end of the first half (after the flight to Australia) but then Shaun Edwards made a speech about not coming all this way to lose.”

Panapa, who won the Harry Sunderland Trophy as man of the match in Wigan’s premiership final win over Castleford at Old Trafford a week before the trip to Brisbane, suffered the same fate as Dorahy.



**SAM
PANAPA**

Wembley success ... Sam with the Challenge Cup. He also won the Lance Todd Trophy as player of the match.

"I had found out on the coach trip to Manchester Airport for the flight to Australia that I had been 'sold' to Salford where Garry Jack was coach," Panapa said. "It was a shock and the other boys in the side didn't see it coming either. That's the way they do things in the UK."

Panapa played 31 games for Salford in the 1994-95 season, scoring 14 tries, second only to the club's Welsh international Phil Ford. Panapa and Ford were opponents in the 1995 World Cup, when Wales beat Samoa 20-12 in front of a full house at Swansea.

"That was such an important moment for rugby league in Samoa, just to represent the country and to play against a team like Wales," Panapa said. "We were thrown together without much preparation but there was great camaraderie. (Former All Black) John Schuster was captain and we had Va'aiga Tuigamala (another former All Black) as well. We had a great win over the French in Cardiff but the sad thing is there was no follow-up work back in the Pacific countries."

With Pasifika players making up approximately 55 percent of the NRL ranks, Panapa is keen to see the game continue to develop in the Pacific itself. But in his role with the QRL, his immediate concern is to ensure that the different groups within the NRL 'family' have a chance to work in all areas of the code as well as being encouraged to participate in a voluntary capacity, whether it be with an organisation such as the Men of League Foundation or as committee members at junior clubs.

He says perceptions need to change as well, and people have to look at the social challenges the game faces, through a different lens of increasing social diversity and inclusion.

"The aim is to encourage connectivity between groups, sometimes as part of a reconciliation plan with the indigenous community who are under-represented in the administrative side of the code," Panapa said. "Everyone should have a chance to play rugby league but also to be involved in all aspects of the game."

"Part of my role is to influence the future direction of the game but it's important not to look back with bitterness at what has gone before. I use the term 'meet at the halfway line', just as two teams come to the halfway line to start a game or resume the contest."

"I think there is a certain status involved with working in administration in the game and I believe we need to be more pro-active about providing pathways for all sections of the community. For instance, there are very few full time indigenous staff in representative rugby league."

Panapa's off-field journey began as a 17-year-old in Auckland with Telecom, working his way up to a managerial role. In England in the early 1990s, he was a fulltime footballer but at the end of his playing days, after a stint on the strength and conditioning staff at the Warriors, he also took an academic path which has seen him become a Master of Philosophy in the field of human movement studies, among other titles.

He has experience as a coach in New Zealand, with the Auckland representative team and the New Zealand Residents, as well as working as a development manager in Auckland and in game development for the NRL on the Gold Coast. Panapa recently completed a thesis on 'Examining the social effects of rugby league among Pasifika People'.

PORT STEPHENS RALLIES BEHIND BILL HARVEY

CHARLES ELIAS

The Port Stephens community is rallying around Nelson Bay rugby league player, trainer and father of four, Bill Harvey, who suffered a catastrophic stroke 10 months ago.

And while the stroke has left him with no movement or feeling down the left side of his body, impacting his vision, swallowing, speech, walking and arm movement, it has not dimmed his courage nor dampened his enthusiasm for rehabilitation.

Bill's sister Nicole Blue, the functions and marketing manager at Nelson Bay Bowling Club, said that the long-term goal was to move Bill into his own home to remain close to family and friends in Nelson Bay.

"He is currently living in a shared home where he receives around-the-clock care and the staff there have been great," Nicole said. "But it is his wish to settle into his own modified home to meet his daily challenges, and hopefully further down the track to purchase a modified vehicle.

"Right now he is being looked after through the NDIS scheme, and at 49 years of age, he is hoping to one day have some independence in his own home."

Prior to his stroke, Bill, a single dad of four boys, was an active member of the Nelson Bay junior rugby league club, often volunteering his time where needed.

He has also been a member of the Shoal Bay Fishing Club and was a regular touch footy player in the Bay. He worked with the locally-based Drew Constructions company.

The Harvey family is well known in the Port Stephens

community and the Men of League Foundation staged a bowls day at Nelson Bay Bowling Club in March to raise much needed funds to help him realise his long-term goals.

Bill suffered his stroke in the early hours of 6 April, 2021.

He had two major operations, one to retrieve the clot in his brain and the other to remove part of the skull to relieve the pressure.

A passionate South Sydney supporter just like his father, Bill Harvey snr, Bill's junior football career was cut short to a football accident where he broke his neck in a tackle at the old Anna Bay Oval.

He played all of his junior football for Nelson Bay Eels until the incident, which occurred in an under-18s when he was only 16. The accident meant Bill could not play contact sport again.

Local league historian Peter Arnold said that Bill Harvey snr played rugby league for Nelson Bay from 1968 and once his playing career was over, he also was heavily involved with the Nelson Bay Eels, Northern Blues and Sharks as either a manager or time-keeper.

"Bill snr is a life member of Northern Blues and Bill's mother, Shirley Harvey, was always there to help out as a committee member, canteen helper and fundraiser volunteer during both her husband and son's league careers," Peter said.

"During Bill's time in hospital, he has received video messages from [former NRL greats] Ben Hannant and Craig Coleman and coach Wayne Bennett. These messages have given him the determination and strength to power ahead with his rehabilitation."

Bill with three of his sons before his stroke.



Bill Harvey with Parramatta Eels legend Peter Sterling at the recent Port Stephens committee's golf day.

GLEESON BROTHERS THE PRIDE OF THE DOWNS

Not only has Queensland's Darling Downs lost one of its greatest rugby league players in Kangaroos five-eighth Johnny Gleeson but weeks later it said goodbye to his highly respected younger brother Trevor.

The Gleesons, who played in Toowoomba All White's 1962 premiership side before both moving into the Brisbane competition, were highly respected figures in the area. Johnny died at aged 82 on Christmas Day 2021 while his younger sibling Trevor passed away on 19 February, aged 79.

Johnny Gleeson was a quiet, humble man, who largely retreated from the spotlight after a stellar rugby league playing career that saw him play 10 Tests for Australia and 25 times for Queensland, as well as winning Brisbane premierships with Brothers in 1967 and '68.

From the time he broke into representative football as a teenager, Gleeson was a marked man, and he suffered some horrendous head injuries, at the hands of rivals who could not match his brilliance.

"So many times, Johnny was the difference between winning and losing a game of football," recalls Gleeson's former Brothers' teammate Reg Cannon. "He was small but so strong, and he had a great ability to step back inside the defence. It was a mark of respect for his ability that teams tried to take him out. But there were a number of times when rivals overstepped the mark."

The Gleeson brothers grew up at Chinchilla. Trevor represented the Clydesdales in the Bulimba Cup before joining Johnny at Wynnum-Manly in 1964 (John signed there the previous season) and went on to gain Brisbane representative honours as a centre.

Johnny represented South West Queensland as a teenage halfback and played alongside Test five-eighth, Bobby Banks, who was captain-coach of Cunnamulla. After four seasons with the All Whites, during which he made his Queensland debut at five-eighth against New South Wales at the Sydney Cricket Ground in 1961, he moved to Wynnum-Manly in 1963

and gained selection in the 1963-64 Kangaroo tour in a squad rated the best Australian outfit of all-time.

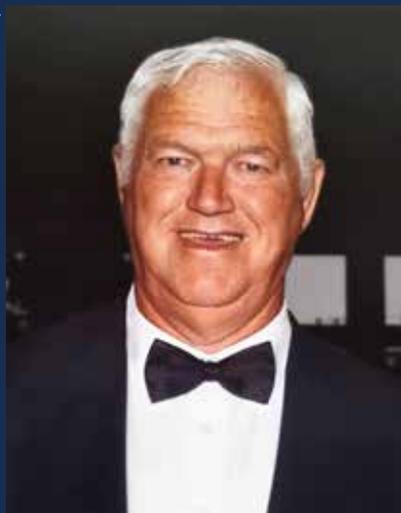
In 1965, Johnny rejected an offer from Sydney club Newtown and returned to Toowoomba to play with Souths, alongside his brothers Trevor, Mick and Joe. The following year he moved back to Brisbane to play for Brothers, winning a premiership after earlier being called into the Australian side after Great Britain won the first Test at the SCG. In front of a sell-out crowd of 45,057 at Lang Park, Australia won a try-less game 6-4. Johnny retained his spot for the decider in Sydney, which Australia won 19-14, in a match notable for the Test debut of future Immortal Arthur Beetson. In 1967, he played all three Tests against the touring Kiwis as the Australians made a clean sweep of the series, the first played under the four-tackle rule, before playing in all three Tests in the 1967 Ashes' campaign in England.

Johnny Gleeson's last Brisbane premiership match was the 1968 grand final, in which Brothers defeated Easts 21-4, with Gleeson playing in the centres, with skipper, Eric Gelling at five-eighth. Gleeson had announced his retirement earlier that year but, when Brothers approached him to have another shot at a premiership, he couldn't say no. The next year he took over at Gympie and coached them to successive premierships before coaching in Gladstone then moving back to the Chinchilla district to run cattle for many years, while he and his wife, Dawn raised six children – three boys and three girls. He was also a Toowoomba selector for many years.

Trevor, after being a key member of Toowoomba's famous All Whites club over a seven-year period which included their 1962 premiership, also played in Brisbane Brothers' 1968 success. He was a sturdily built talented centre gifted with skill and speed. He returned to home territory to link up with the Allora-Clifton Wattles from 1969-71 and was a member of the club's inaugural A grade premiership winning side in 1970.

He was also an icon of the dairy cattle industry and highly regarded member of the business community.

Trevor Gleeson ... an icon of the dairy cattle industry and football hero in the Darling Downs and Brisbane.



Johnny Gleeson (with ball) in action. One of Queensland's greatest..



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COMMITTEE

NEWS

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BRISBANE

Steve Ricketts, publicity officer

New Zealand's player of the century Mark Graham braved the threat of flood waters to drive from his Gladstone home for the Brisbane committee's sold-out event at Norths Devils Leagues Club, Nundah on 25 February.

Mark, who is a self-confessed hesitant flyer, insisted on driving down the day before the event and fortunately endured only 40 minutes of rainfall on the trip. It was a whole different story on the day of the event, with the heavens opening. But it did not stop 110 people from attending the Norths' function with Mark Graham and Mark Murray interviewed by Steve Ricketts. The two Marks were teammates in Norths' 1980 Brisbane premiership winning side but bitter rivals in the Test arena.



Special guests Mark Murray (left) and Mark Graham (right) with former Norths teammates Greg Conescu and Stan Napa.



December Kick-Off Club special guests Karyn Murphy and Ben Ikin interviewed by Steve Ricketts.

Graham told of his arrival in Brisbane from Auckland ahead of the 1980 Brisbane Rugby League season and the oppressive humidity which is part and parcel of Queensland life in February/March.

"I went to mass on the morning of our first pre-season match (against Valleys) and prayed for rain," Graham said. "My prayers were answered and it was bucketing down as I drove to Neumann Oval. But when I emerged from the dressing rooms, the rain had stopped and there was steam coming off the ground. After 10 minutes, I had had enough and started a fight, hoping I would be sent to the bin. Unfortunately, the ref left me on with a warning."

Valleys had a table at the Norths' event, as did Easts, with Easts' table including the Morris brothers, Des and Rod, who played against Mark Graham - Rod at Test level. Fellow Kiwi Stan Napa joined Mark Graham at the official table with Mark Murray, Brisbane patron Ron Atkins and Foundation national board member Ian Gatenby.

Special thanks go to Reg Green and Kellee Spencer from the committee for the groundwork leading up to the event and to Norths Leagues Club general manager Sam O'Donoghue and his staff. Norths provided four amazing raffle baskets. There was a separate raffle prize of 15 cartons of Great Northern, provided by Carlton and United, who were represented at the event by key accounts executive Nolan Fuazudeen.

Queensland Rugby League history committee member Paul Hayes provided video highlights from the 1985 Trans-Tasman Test series, as well as a table full of memorabilia.

Norths Leagues is already an impressive venue but there are big plans in place for a further upgrade of the premises. The Brisbane committee hopes to have another event at the club this year.

At the time of publication, plans were well underway for a women's high tea at Broncos Leagues on 10 June, with Kellee Spencer doing most of the groundwork.

Jillaroos' legend and NRL integrity unit chief Karyn Murphy, as well as Broncos football and performance director Ben Ikin were special guests at the Kick-Off Club lunch at Broncos Leagues Club on 8 December, the first time the committee has had a female speaker. Karyn's comments and recollections were well received by those in attendance and it is hoped she will be one of the speakers at the high tea.

GOLD COAST

Greg Sylvester, publicity officer

Unfortunately, as with all Men Of League committees, we have been forced to curtail our activities over the past few months. Hopefully 2022 will be a much-improved year (fingers crossed).

It was pleasing to receive a multitude of thanks (both print and electronic) from the recipients of the Christmas vouchers which were delivered in person by our committee member Greg Sylvester. The gratitude we received was extremely pleasing. A special thanks to the Men Of League for supplying the vouchers to us for distribution.

On the wellbeing front, former New Zealand captain Graeme Farrar has spent considerable time in hospital over the past three months, Esme Clay is continuing her treatment for macular degeneration of the eye, June Rasmussen is experiencing severe back pain, Elsie Dimond is having heart problems, Barry Muir has ceased chemotherapy treatment which he was receiving for cancer, Ron Turner is in the dementia ward at Merrimac Aged Care and is now getting around in a wheelchair, Larry Maloney is in the dementia ward at Hillview Aged Care at Merrimac whilst our esteem committee member Dennis Ward has passed away.

Committee members John Lang and Greg Sylvester were delighted to enjoy a cup of coffee at Miami with former Gold Coast committee member Greg Rousell when he was on the Gold Coast over Christmas. Greg, who now lives at Yass in southern NSW, had a few days in Pindarra Private Hospital for the removal of two melanoma from his skull.

We have been forced to reschedule our Gold Coast Men Of League Internationals gala dinner to Friday 10 June as our original date clashed with the Titans' season launch.

MORETON

Peter Affleck, president

The Moreton committee held its annual golf day at Redcliffe Golf Club on Friday 18 February. Similar to the previous year, the event attracted a maximum field of 144 players with a wonderful depth of league greats and broader community enjoying a fun packed day.

The event was again proudly sponsored by Shaw and Partners, one of Australia's preeminent investment and wealth management firms. The success of the day was further underpinned by an additional 18 corporate partners taking up hole sponsorships together with further significant donations for prizes, raffles and auctions. The four separate raffles were valued collectively at almost \$4000 and nearest the pin on the CUB 'fun hole'

provided the lucky winner with \$1100 value for an esky and drinks package. ZEDBET donated numerous \$50 vouchers for their par three challenge and the driving holes each provided attractive opportunities for the big hitters and straightest shooters.



Netti Roach and Annie Afleck display the wonderful raffle prizes available at the golf day.



The Shaw and Partners team of Para Olympian canoeing gold medallist Curtis McGrath, Broncos' football boss Ben Ikin, Mark Manson and Shane Gilbert. Shaw and Partners were the day's major sponsor.

This annual gathering has quickly become a signature event for the district and the committee expresses its extreme appreciation to the players, sponsors and community businesses for contributing a remarkable fundraising amount for the Foundation.

Our next event is a Kick-Off Club lunch scheduled for Friday 3 June at the Redcliffe Leagues Club with special guest being the coach of the newly established NRL Dolphins team Wayne Bennett. Having Wayne talk through the early journey and strategic direction will no doubt attract another full house for such a value-add luncheon. The details of the event will be outlined on the events section on the Foundation's website shortly.

We are continuing to keep in regular contact with a number of wellbeing recipients who we provide that small degree of 'support relief' whether financial or emotional. Please reach out to us for any personal needs but also for friends and colleagues.

ILLAWARRA

Gary Hart, secretary

Although attendance figures were not as high as in previous years, no doubt due to COVID restrictions still being in place, our annual Kick-Off Club Christmas function held in December was still well attended. MC Andrew Farrar did a top job interviewing our two guest speakers in St George-Illawarra coach Anthony Griffin and recent addition to the Dragons' roster, ex-Wests Tigers, Canterbury Bulldogs and Cronulla Sharks prop forward Aaron Woods. There were plenty of laughs in response to some of the tales told and both received warm applause on the day.

Now that COVID restrictions have eased somewhat, we are in the process of finalising further events in the upcoming months and all Men of League members will be notified when final details are known. With this in mind a timely reminder to all members to ensure their contact/email details are up to date so that notification of events will reach you.

Our Illawarra committee annual general meeting was held in February. Ted Fitzgerald, after some time away from the position, is back on board as wellbeing officer. Many thanks go to Bob McKellar for his commitment to this position and in many other committee positions previously. All other committee position holders remain the same for the upcoming year.

Finally we would like to congratulate and acknowledge South Coast junior and former NRL star Ashton Sims on his recent appointment as South Coast Group 7 football operations manager and former NRL Illawarra Steelers centre Nigel Roy on his appointment as Illawarra Rugby League operations manager. Good luck to both men in their respective positions.

SOUTHERN SYDNEY

Bruce Thompson, secretary

Our first event of 2022, A Kick-Off Club function was held on Friday 11 March to celebrate the start of the 2022 NRL season.

Just over 70 guests supported the function where they heard stories from Johnny Riley, a 1959 Kangaroo and St George stalwart from the 60s, and Craig Young, current chairman of the St George Illawarra NRL club and distinguished player at all levels and as an administrator.

These gentlemen give freely of their time and we really appreciate their support. Great stories from wonderful careers.

Stuart Raper also gave the gathering an insight into what was the amazing life of his father, best known as 'Chook', the great Johnny Raper.

It was nice to have our wellbeing lead Samantha Gordon along on the day.

Our next function will be one of our main lunches and will be held on 24 June. Keep an eye out for more details

SUNSHINE COAST

Mick Legg, wellbeing officer



Paul Legg, Bob 'Monk' Rogers, Al Stewart and Jock Gilbert at the Christmas lunch.

Well that's 2021 done and dusted! A much more social year than its predecessor but nevertheless nowhere near as social as we would have liked.

Our annual Christmas lunch went ahead with Terry Reader, from the new Dolphins NRL franchise, and Ben Ikin from the Broncos as guest speakers. We aimed at having 150 guests and were pleased to be able to achieve that goal.

Raffles and auctions were well supported and we again thank all our event sponsors. Ben assured Broncos supporters that brighter times were ahead for the club with its new roster.

The pre-season for every club is always a time of optimism. Time will tell, was the comment from a very loyal Broncos supporter at my table.

Terry spoke more of the goals and aspirations of the fledgling club. The casual listener may have come away with the impression The Dolphins had only signed one player, given the constant ribbing Terry received from his mate Ikin. Wayne Bennett is confirmed as speaker for our State of Origin lunch, so I'm sure more and better details will be available then.

Kawana Dolphins stalwarts Al and Sandy Short also related their experiences with the wellbeing services provided locally.

We had a very hectic end to the year with our wellbeing activities. As well as our ongoing assistance to Al and Sandy, other Kawana identities, Ritchie 'Barry' Jarman, Bec Thompson and Rod O'Brien all suffered serious illness and we were able to assist them all.

Inaugural Falcons coach Des Allen had a losing argument with a circular saw and was out of action for a while. While Des is on the road to recovery, it is with sadness I report that his wife Dee, well known to many in the Sunshine Coast Rugby League community, died on 22 February after a long struggle with cancer.

Mick Plant, former Roosters hooker and one of the founders of the Noosa Pirates, is also suffering ill health and we have been able to assist with a chair to aid his mobility.

My first visit to Mick was like a return to Roma weekend given the Roma connection to the Pirates in the early years. I am a Roma old boy!

Former Central Queensland and Valleys and Queensland forward Leon 'Moose' McGuire is also suffering ill health and has recently returned home after a stint in hospital. Fellow wellbeing officer and Valleys Diehard, Ron Gurnett, is arranging for former teammates to visit Moose. After a recent visit with Moose, I discovered he also has a Roma connection. We are everywhere!

Steve Browne has returned from his overseas sojourn and resumed his position on the committee. Tony Morgan however would not relinquish the pencil, pencil sharpener and eraser and will continue as secretary.

Committee man Russell Johnson continues to be out of action following complications after surgery on his leg. Rumour has it he's not a good patient.

With there now seeming to be some certainly returning to the community, the committee is looking at locking in dates for future Kick-Off Club functions and our two major lunches and golf day. All will be revealed later, however we continue to look forward to the continued support of our members and their friends.

SYDNEY METRO

Brad Ryder, media officer

Our committee began our 13th year with a 'Good To See You Back' luncheon on Friday 1 April at Souths Juniors, Kingsford. MC Steve Gillis welcomed the sold out crowd of 320, called committee president Henry Morris to the stage who noted the presence of Men of League CEO Stephen Lowndes, patrons Bob McCarthy, Keith McCraw (Souths Juniors chairman), Johnny Lewis and Kevin Maloney and Member For Kingsford, Matt Thistlethwaite. An apology was read out for Men Of League chair Helen Wood Grant.

A video tribute of those departed in the last year was shown, then Bob McCarthy called newly elected life member of Men Of League, Ken Vessey, to the stage, a fitting tribute to Ken's hard work in welfare visits.

A stellar array of guest speakers included 24-year-old boxer Harry Garside, cricket legend Geoff Lawson, well known former player and coach Tim Sheens, Gary Jubelin (detective in charge of the William Tyrrell case which has been well documented) and former

Australian Test and Queensland batsman Greg Ritchie, who began by saying it was the first time he had met Bob McCarthy, and had the crowd laughing with his various stories.

Auctioneer for the day was former Souths, Canterbury, Western Suburbs and Penrith player Darren Brown, and raised around \$10,000.

TOOWOOMBA

Tony Coonan, president



Greg Platz (Wattles) and Peter Connell (Oakey) were opposing captains in the 1977 Toowoomba Rugby League grand final. Peter is holding the trophy he held up on the day.



This year's Johnson Star Award winner for Toowoomba volunteer of the year Joan McDonald with last year's winner Peter Young.

The 2022 Toowoomba committee annual golf day was held at Toowoomba Golf Club, Middle Ridge on Friday 4 February. Over 150 people attended another successful event. The event team, led by Col Lindenberg, raised more than \$11,600. The special guest speakers for the day were Des Morris and Greg Holben.

Des and Greg completed a golf team with two other Easts Tigers legends Alan Currie and Wayne Lindenberg. We heard some great stories of the 1970s and the Brisbane Rugby League competition in the 1980s, State of Origin and Des's reflections on his long career as a Queensland and Australian selector. It was great to see the return of local media personality Ian Knight, who did an amazing job as MC on the day.

The event was a sell out and supported by numerous sponsors including Hutchinson Builders, Carlton & United Breweries, Meringandan Hotel, Criterion Hotel Dalby, Col Lindenberg's Fashion Coat Painting, Rallim, Bob Jane T-Marts, Gatton RLFC, Crisp's Coaches, Butch Smith, Hughes Car Sales, Downs Finance & Leasing, Peter O'Callaghan, Valleys Diehards, Gatton Old Boys, Bernie McGlynn Building, Warren Green, Brisbane Easts Tigers, Insight Control Services, Xceler8 Constructions, Lee Group

Electrical, David McCall, MT Building, Robert McDougall, Down's Designer Homes, iThink Property, Greg Milne, Billy Bunter Auto City, Dulux Accredited Painters, Betta Home Living, K&R Plumbing Supplies, JBS Meats (Beef City), Toowoomba Golf Club Middle Ridge and Treg Smith Auto.

Thanks again to the Men of League Brisbane office for supporting us. Thank you for the ongoing assistance from John and Joan McDonald, Peter and Judy Young, Bruce and Ann Fallon, Paul Galler, Peter Connole, Fraser Hess, Pat Johnson and Noel Davis. At the event, Joan McDonald was awarded the 2021 volunteer of the year award for her outstanding work over a long time and adding such a positive energy to every event we have.

VICTORIA

Peter Foreman, president

Well we are off and running in 2022. Our annual golf day at Keysborough Golf Club was our first event of the year on 12 February and the numbers were a little down on previous years. However, thanks to our dedicated band of workers we were able to generate a little over \$5000 in revenue and \$2000 in profit.

We also had the opportunity to host our Queensland state manager Andrew Blucher to Melbourne in the week of the golf day and we were able to coincide a number of meetings with the various stakeholders from within the Storm, NRL Victoria and most of our committee. I know that Andrew was able to better understand about how the rugby league community here in Melbourne and Victoria are all connected and intertwined.

Our committee member and general manager of NRL Victoria, Brent Silver, extended an invitation for us to participate in a Zoom meeting with the presidents and secretaries of the various local clubs to improve awareness of what the Foundation does to support the men woman and children of the rugby league community.

Philippa Wade from our committee represented our team and received valuable feedback from the clubs on what they required from us to better connect with their members and players.



Victorian committee members at the Storm family day (from left): Billy Brant, Peter Foreman, Stephen Hicks, Philippa Wade and Stephen Martin.

Basically, they have requested that we supply Men of League signage that details who we are, what we do, how they join and how they apply for support. We have communicated this to both Andrew and Stephen and will hopefully be in a position to provide what is required to the clubs in the near future.

We also had a series of meetings with our allocated contacts from within the Storm team and have completed the support plan for the year. I would like to thank Storm CEO Justin Rodski and all of his great team for the valuable assistance that they have provided to us, we simply couldn't do what we do without the kind support that they provide.

As always, thanks also to our sponsor Aces Sporting Club for the continued outstanding support. Our partnership is now in its 12th year and the funding that they provide is at the forefront of all of the people that we have supported here in Victoria.

WESTERN REGION

Ross Tighe, secretary

Hello members and supporters. We are up and running again with our Jimmy Lang Memorial Golf Day to be held on Friday 21 October, 2022 at the Dubbo Golf Course. A great day is assured with former great NRL guests, good prizes, auctions and novelty events.

Write it in your diary, get a team, together and we would love to see you here. The course had nearly \$2 million spent on improvements since our last day and is in great shape with all the rain.

Great city, course, company and day to assist Men of League in raising funds to support the men, women and children of rugby league.

More info will be given down the track. Look forward to seeing you again.

WESTERN SYDNEY

Kylie Murphy, secretary and media officer

The Western Sydney committee ended the year 2021 with a casual luncheon of 90 guests at the Coolibah Hotel, Merrylands. MC for the day was 'the Encyclopedia of Rugby League' Terry Williams who interviewed our special guests Eels Elite Pathways manager Joe Grima and Parramatta Eels players Dylan Brown and Jayden Yates.

Terry also ran an 'around the grounds' update, asking questions to our other footy personalities in the room Gavin Miller, Brett Clark, Steve Ghosn and Chris Yates.

Sadly, we farewelled our Western Sydney treasurer Paul Wadick who has retired from our committee after nine years. Thank you 'Wal' for your many years of loyal service.

I'd like to also pass on a huge thank you to companies New Era & Mark Walker from Gold Security Management who both donated \$2000 each to the Men of League Foundation.

Also thank you to Men of League's CEO Stephen Lowndes and wellbeing lead Samantha Gordon and to our Western Sydney committee members for all their hard work and to everyone who attended on the day.

We look forward to our 2022 functions with a golf day on 3 June at Cabramatta Golf Club and sports luncheon in September at Smithfield RSL. If you would like to join us please RSVP to Kylie 0412 716 716.

TRIBUTES

REMEMBERING THOSE NOW GONE

BOB BATEMAN #2680

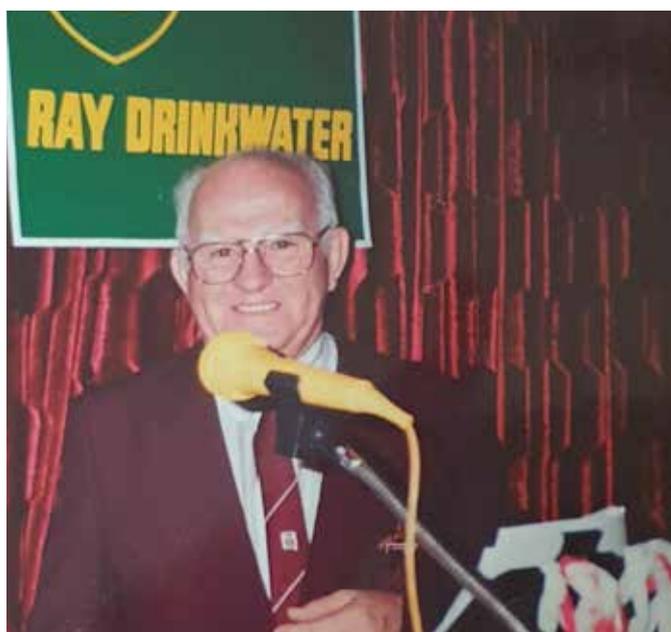
Bob Bateman, a Toowoomba native, was Queensland's co-manager during one of the Maroons' most dominant periods in State of Origin during the 1980s. He passed away in December at the age of 85 on the Sunshine Coast.

Bateman joined legendary official Dick 'Tosser' Turner on the Queensland management staff in 1987, when Wayne Bennett was in his second year as coach. The previous year Queensland had lost all three matches by narrow margins as New South Wales swept to their first ever clean sweep.

Things started badly again in 1987, with a loss in the first game. But the Maroons rebounded to win the next two games and the series. With Bennett again at the helm in 1988, Bateman and Turner remained as managers and Queensland won all three games for their first clean sweep. The likes of Allan Langer, Trevor Gillmeister and Sam Backo made their Origin debuts during the reign of Bennett, Bateman and Turner.

Bob Bateman was synonymous with rugby league on the Darling Downs. He was a life member of Southern Suburbs, Toowoomba Sports Ground Trust, South West Division and Toowoomba Rugby League and also served as a QRL director.

VIC BEARDMORE #1251



Vic Beardmore

After playing first grade for Valleys in Brisbane, Vic moved onto All Whites Nambour Railways in Rockhampton in the 1960s, mostly playing hooker. While in Rockhampton Vic was on the first Rockhampton Rugby League committee and for many years appeared on a Saturday ABC morning radio sports program and would report on sports results on Sundays. He also served on the

Central Queensland's junior committee and was ground announcer in Nambour and Maryborough where Vic was a railway electrician. He and his family settled from 1982 and he went on to serve on the Maryborough and Wide Bay juniors committees. He was also the manager of the Queensland under-16 side.

Vic joined the Fraser Coast Men of League Committee in 2011, was elected as secretary in 2012 and served in that role until 2017. He was a tireless worker for the Foundation.

DOUG CAMERON #4229

Doug Cameron, a gifted former NSW and Easts halfback, passed away in January. He represented NSW Country in 1954-56 and played against all the major touring sides - Great Britain 1954, 1958 and 1960, France in 1955 and 1957 and New Zealand 1956.

Born on Gamilaraay Country in Coonabarabran, he moved with his family to Sydney when he was five. He was signed from South Sydney juniors by the Young Cherry Pickers at 18 and went on to play in many Maher Cup games and led Young to victory in the Claytons Cup in 1955.

From 1954 he was selected in several representative teams - Country Firsts, Riverina and Southern Districts and in 1956 was selected to represent Australia against Great Britain but a broken ankle prevented him from taking his place in the Australian side. He returned to Sydney to play for Eastern Suburbs and played for NSW against Great Britain in 1958. He had just one season in Sydney before returning to the bush as player-coach of Crookwell and captained the Monaro side against France in 1960. He played for, and coached, at the Wagga Kangaroos and he and wife Marilyn were successful publicans in Tumut and Wagga for 40 years.

OSCAR DANIELSON #555



Oscar Danielson (far right)

Pasifika pioneer of Australian rugby league, former Newtown prop Oscar Danielson, has passed away in Wollongong at the age of 83.

Apia-born Danielson, one of New Zealand's original exports to what was then known as the New South Wales Rugby League premiership, was the first Samoa-born player to play in the competition when he signed with Newtown for the 1970 season. The same year fellow prop Bill Noonan started his 196-game Sydney career with Canterbury.

Other Kiwis followed soon after like Eddie Heatley (North Sydney) and Bernie Lowther and Henry Tatana (both Canterbury-Bankstown), who all commanded interest from Sydney clubs in the wake of the Kiwis' all-conquering deeds in 1971 but were banned from future Kiwi selection in response to their dejections.

Danielson, who played five Tests for the Kiwis from 1967-69, made 47 appearances for Newtown from 1970-1972 before becoming player-coach with the Corrimal Cougars in the Illawarra competition in 1973, guiding the club to premiership victory the following year, their first for 26 years, when they defeated the Cliff Watson-coached Wollongong 22-8 in the grand final. He captain-coached Corrimal in 1975 and had a year off before returning as non-playing coach in 1977.

JOE DAVIDSON #475

Joseph Henry Davidson, OAM, was born in Arncliffe in 1948 and went on to play junior representative football in the Cronulla-Sutherland area before and after the Sharks were admitted into the top competition in 1967. Joe's four decades of involvement with rugby league in the Wollongong area began in a role as strapper-trainer for Collegians. He coached St Therese West Wollongong minor League teams between 1979 and 1982 and assisted Collegians' junior teams in which his son Matthew played between 1983 and 1988. Joe moved to Western Suburbs Red Devils in 1981 and remained there as a strapper-trainer until 1989 under coaches John Dorahy, Rod Henniker and Brian Hetherington.

Joe was involved in the Illawarra Steelers junior teams from 1986-199 and was the Steelers' head trainer between 1995 and 1998. He continued with St George Illawarra between 1999 and 2006 and enjoyed duties with Country Origin in 1995 and City Origin in 1996. He returned to Collegians in 2007 and remained there until his passing in 2021. With two children who were police officers, Joe also took a keen interest in police rugby league.

Joe, an Illawarra Steelers life member, was the Western Suburbs club's clubman of the year 1988, Collegians' clubman of the year twice, NSW Police Country South Rugby League clubman of the year in 2016 and donated his time as a first aid officer over many years for local school sports carnivals. He also served on the Wollongong RSL sub-branch committee for many years and was its longest serving honorary secretary.

JOHN ESTENS #7409



John Estens (front left) and his beloved Coonabarabran Blues teammates.

John Estens passed away in his home town of Coonabarabran NSW, aged 89, in late November. He was greatly known in the region for his feats as a tough prop or second-rower for the Coonabarabran Blues, representing Group 14 many times, and was made captain when country men of the era were some of the toughest in bush footy - railway fettlers, shearers, World War II veterans, sleeper cutters, farm workers, road workers, bridge

builders, grain lumpers and drovers.

The team gave him the nickname of 'Mother' as he would do what he had to do to keep the team together and ready to play. On many occasions he would be at the local Savoy Picture Theatre and, during the intermission on a Saturday night, would run to the three local pubs, the Royal, Coona and Imperial, to hunt down any players who were drinking and send them home to be ready for Sunday's game.

John played just over 350 games, a great bulk of them in first grade and was never dropped. He started his football career as a fullback but settled into the second row not long after. In the 1960s Western Suburbs team scouts came to Coonabarabran to entice him to Sydney league but, due to his dedication to his family and wife Annette plus his loyalty to his town club, he was happy to stay in Group 14.

NOEL DOLTON #6150

Tough forward from the 1950s-60s, Noel Dolton, passed away in December weeks before his 84th birthday, aged 84. Noel played 64 first grade games for his junior club Newtown, Parramatta and Wests and also enjoyed two seasons with Wakefield Trinity in England. While there, he represented a 'Commonwealth' team against New Zealand in the opening match of the Kiwi tour of England and France at London's Crystal Palace stadium. Team-mates included Bob Hagan, Merv Hicks, Trevor Lake and Charlie Renilson.

Noel worked as a health inspector at Parramatta, Wollongong and Moruya councils and lived at Austinmer for the past several years.

OLSEN FILIPAINA

The powerful Kiwi Test back, known forever as 'The Big O', was one of the first players from New Zealand to relocate to Sydney and forge a successful career in the toughest competition in the world.



'The Big O', Olsen Filipaina, on the attack for the Kiwis.

Somewhat enigmatic as a player who worked for most of his career as a garbo for Ryde Council in Sydney, on his day there was no more powerful attacking force and whenever he wore the black and white Kiwi jersey, he made life hell for his opponents. There was no better case than when he was plucked from North Sydney's reserve grade to play against Australia at Carlaw Park in 1985 and monstered the Kangaroos, matching up against skipper Wally Lewis, to inspire an 18-0 victory.

Olsen, who began his senior career with Mangere East in Auckland, played 107 first grade games for Balmain, the Bears and Roosters and played 29 Tests for New Zealand from 1977-86 (plus for Samoa in 1988) and was named a NZRL 'legend of league' in 2007. He had been battling kidney failure and was admitted to Westmead Hospital in January.

His family released a statement which read in part: "He was a fighter and fought for 16 days in ICU but our heavenly father needed a stand-off for his rugby league team, and now he has the best."

BRUCE FITZPATRICK #3852

One of the NSW Central Coast's best players of the 1970s and long-term servant of the game, Bruce Fitzpatrick, has passed away at the age of 73. 'Fitzy' was an outstanding sportsman in his youth while attending Gosford High, part of representative teams in rugby league, swimming and athletics and was school captain and sportsman of the year. He went on to captain his beloved Erina Eagles, as prop, to their inaugural premiership in 1977 and won the Sterland Medal as the Central Coast's best and fairest player an incredible four times.

He was enticed to play for the North Sydney Bears for three seasons where he played mostly reserve grade but also five first grade games under coach Noel Kelly. Bruce played for the Eagles until 1982 and then took on various coaching and managerial roles. Bruce, an Erina Eagles life member, spent more than 20 years as a director on the board of the Erina Leagues Club. He was an active member of Men of League. Bruce also had an impressive career as a high school teacher at Granville Boys High School, The Entrance, Terrigal and Erina.

DAVE HADFIELD

Rugby league lost one of its most polished and devoted writers when Dave Hadfield passed away in England in March. Dave was well-known to Australian fans as Rugby League Week's UK correspondent for more than two decades, initially under the alias of George Dunkerley. He went on to be The Independent newspaper's league report from 1990.

Dave, a native of Bolton, had many trips Down Under, covering Great Britain tours, often coming on his own accord around finals time, and developed many strong friendships here. He was the author of five books and also did several wonderful videos of walks around the rugby league towns of northern England, and even did a tour of every elite leagues club of Sydney.

Dave had been suffering from Parkinson's Disease for several years before his death at age 70.

JOHN HEARD #18516



John Heard in his playing days.

Popular all-round sportsman John 'Hardy' Heard passed away in Sydney on 20 July, aged 80. Hardy excelled in rugby league, playing all his junior football with Chelsea United and grade with

South Sydney. He also played in the Kingsford premiership team of 1963, scoring two tries in the final.

Growing up in Surry Hills with best mates Leo Toohey and Kevin Roberts, John also excelled in basketball, cricket, tennis and was a professional runner. Following his retirement from active sport, John became a successful trainer of greyhounds and is highly regarded by his peers having great success, notably with the champion greyhound FortyTwenty.

Men of League and Chelsea Old Mates supported John after he had a leg amputated a few years ago and regularly visited him where he lived at The Entrance on the Central Coast. John was cared for by his loving and devoted sisters, Beverley, Kay, Robyn and Joan.

NORM JONES #12254

Men Of League lost one of their great supporters a few months back in avid Eels fan Norm Jones who died at the age of 75.

Norm moved from Portland to Wollongong when he was young and played several years for the Thirroul Butchers. He also represented NSW in hockey. Norm and his wife Lyn were the ringleaders at many Clubs NSW after-parties in Darling Harbour where they promoted their business Technoprom and try to entice other business to support his selected charities.

Norm spent some time as a bookmaker in Papua New Guinea and this led to him bringing some young PNG players to the Illawarra league. His other passion was the Parramatta Eels and having a punt and being generous to his many friends.

PETER KELLY #3787

The former Balmain and Manly player was highly respected along Sydney's northern beaches for his community and charity work for St Vincent De Paul. Peter, a talented fullback who could kick goals from many parts of the field, played 13 first grade games and many seasons in reserve grade in the 1960s.

JOHN MARLEY #10808

Group Seven's first player of the year has died at aged 73. In 1969 Group Seven decided that its selection committee should name the top player and the then Albion Park Oak Flats fullback won the historical award. The previous year John had captained Group Seven when they played Western Australia (in Kiama) - the only time an interstate team have played in the area.

He was part of Albion Park Oak Flats' 1966 undefeated under-18 premiership winning side and won a first grade title with the club in 1975. He played two seasons at Shellharbour where he scored two tries in the 1973 grand final win over Gerringong and also played one season at Port Kembla. John represented Group Seven many times including when Michael Cronin made his representative debut. John lived the last years of his life on the Gold Coast.

TOM NELSON #798

Tom Nelson is a legend of Dubbo rugby league and a mentor of many players who came from the region and went onto higher honours like Bulldogs international David Gillespie.

He coached club and representative teams, from Dubbo CYMS to Western Division and NSW Country teams, for many years and took the 'Fishies' to the 1974 A-grade grand final victory. Tom was a foundation member of Dubbo Junior Rugby League, St Johns JRL and Dubbo Rugby League and served as a Country and NSW selector, manager and on the referees appointments board member. He was a life member of Dubbo JRL, St Johns, CYMS, Group 11, Western Division and NSW Country.

After entering coaching with Westside and St Johns in the late 1960s, John coached Western Division Under 18s from 1975-88

- except for 1979 and 1980 when he coached Dubbo CYMS' first grade. He steered the Western Rams under-18s to seven titles in the 1970s and 1980s and coached NSW Country to an historic win over City. The Country under-18s championships, the Tom Nelson Shield, was named after him and such is his stature that the player of the final of the statewide Laurie Daley Cup wins the Tom Nelson Medal.

Tom and his wife Marcia called Dubbo home until his death after a long battle with illness. He was 81.

VINCE O'BRIEN #7239

Vince, who died in January aged 72, lived and breathed rugby league his entire life and was involved in the Wauchope and Beechwood clubs as a coach and player. He played his first senior game for Beechwood at only 15 in 1965. By 1968 he was a fixture in the Wauchope first grade side, winning the 1969 premiership.

He played a season in Port Moresby in 1971 before returning to northern NSW to win another premiership with Wauchope before ending his playing days with the club as captain-coach of reserve grade, winning two more premierships. He then went back to Beechwood where he played for five more years (and won a title in 1982).

Vince coached under age teams for over two decades, inspiring his players to respect their teammates on the field and respect everyone else off it. He served as a representative selector for Group 3 and North Coast under-18s, was a life member of Wauchope RLFC (juniors and seniors) and Beechwood RLFC. In 2007 he was a finalist for the NRL's volunteer of the year and was nominated for the AAMI Community Service Award. In 2008 he was awarded the NRL Centenary Medal for Service to the Game. From 2008 he was a busy worker for Men of League.

BILL NOONAN #144



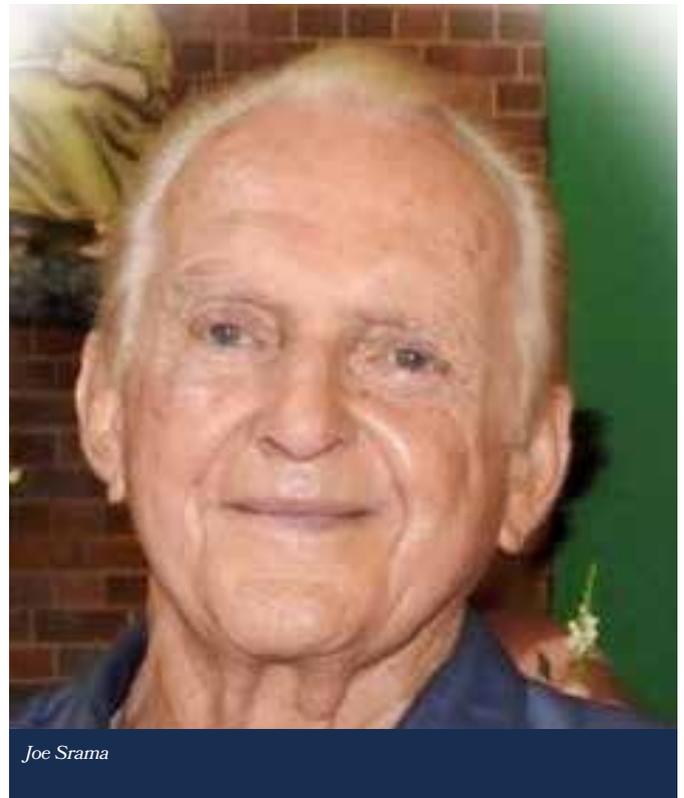
Bill Noonan receives a memento from Newtown coach Warren Ryan before he played his last game at Henson Park in 1980. Photo: Newtown Jets.

Former New Zealand Test prop Bill Noonan, the first Kiwi to play in a Sydney grand final - for the Bulldogs in 1974 against the Roosters - passed away in Sydney on the 30 December, aged 74, after suffering dementia for a number of years.

Noonan, who played his first representative football for NZ provincial side as an 18-year-old hooker, represented New Zealand in three Tests from 1967-69 and toured Australia in 1967. He became one of the leading Kiwis to play in the NSWRL competition after joining Canterbury in 1970, gaining wide respect for his tough play and was regarded as one of the hardest tacklers in the game. He played nine seasons at Belmore before heading to Henson Park to finish his career with the Newtown Jets. He played 196 NSWRL premiership games (161 for Canterbury, 35 for Newtown).

The Kiwi called 'Tough Teak' was Canterbury patriarch Peter Moore's first overseas signing after Moore flew to Christchurch to sign Test halfback Graeme Cooksley but Cooksley knocked 'Bullfrog' back and he instead returned with the signature of the 21-year-old Noonan, who was playing with the Linwood club. The Berries had to pay a \$6000 transfer fee and Noonan was banned from playing Tests for the Kiwis again.

JOE SRAMA #22030



Joe Srama

One of league's tough men in the Toowoomba region, former Millmerran forward Joe Srama, passed away in January, aged 74. A Polish immigrant and devout family man who made his way to a farming life on the Darling Downs as a 17 year old, Joe earned the moniker of being 'tough as nails and built like a Sherman tank'.

The prop became a regular in Toowoomba Clydesdales teams in the 1970s and even teamed up with his son Paul in the Millmerran A grade side in the mid-1980s, the first father-son combination to play in the Toowoomba Rugby League. Another son Matt played 65 NRL games for the Titans while another, Luke, played in the Queensland Cup competition (as did Paul).

KEITH ROBSON #13763

Keith Robson recently passed away aged 83. Keith will be sadly missed by the rugby league community, particularly those from the Ourimbah-Wyoming Rugby League Club.

Keith was a player, coach, committee member and president of the Ourimbah-Wyoming Rugby League Club from 1957 to mid-1970s and was a life member of the senior and junior sections. Keith was also included in the Magpies' squad of the century when launched in 2013.

He was awarded life membership of the Lisarow-Ourimbah Cricket Club and was president at the Mangrove Mountain Golf Club for many years and was a great supporter of the Foundation.

MARK SHULMAN #1859

Many league fans will remember courageous little St George halfback of the 1970s, Mark Shulman, who was often referred to

as the smallest player in the game (at 157cm and 60kg). He played 168 grade games in his nine seasons with the Dragons, 58 in first grade, including the 1977 grand final against Parramatta (he missed the victory in the replay because of injury).

Mark captained St George in several matches during his last season with the club, 1978, before moving to Wollongong to coach for two seasons. He was back at Kogarah in 1981 to coached the Dragons' reserve grade for three seasons, taking them to the preliminary final each year. After a year on the club's board, he joined Cronulla, coaching the Sharks' reserves for four seasons from 1985.

He worked for Penfolds Wines company for 24 years, including several years in Brisbane as Queensland state manager. In 2001, Mark joined Paynter Dixon Queensland as business development manager, retiring in 2018.

ROD SMITH

Rod Smith, a member of Sydney junior club Enfield Federals' most renowned family, has passed away after suffering from dementia for several years. He was an inaugural Enfield Federals player in 1959, a club for which brothers Robert and Wayne played and their father Alex coached for many years. Rod and Wayne in 2019 were selected in an outstanding Federals' team of the century that included internationals Tim Pickup, Jim Serdaris, Robbie Farah, Graham Mackay, Denis Pittard and Hazem El Masri.

Rod, a lock, played six seasons for Wests Magpies (mostly reserve grade) where Robert also played lower grades. The youngest, Wayne, went on to play 161 top grade games for the Magpies before switching to Cronulla.

BRIAN SURTEES #3750

Popular Wollongong media identity Brian Surtees had died (late October), six days before his 87th birthday. His radio career began at 2WL when he was a sports cadet, in 1950, and he later wrote a regular basketball column for the Illawarra Mercury. In 1962, along with Sid Hayes, he began broadcasting the Illawarra Rugby League match of the day. He began working for 2GB and Macquarie Radio Network as chief caller and covered the match of the day at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Saturdays and would return to Wollongong to do the Illawarra game on Sundays. A memorable highlight for Brian was covering the 1970 World Cup, which was the fifth World Cup, in England and during that year he called more than 70 matches.

When 2WL stopped their Illawarra match of the day broadcast in 1976, Brian worked on around the grounds coverage for 2GB and 2KY for a decade. After 32 years he left 2WL in the early 1980s and did a year with 2 Double O. Over the years, he had written stories for the Illawarra Mercury, the Sun, the Daily Mirror and the Sydney Morning Herald and from the mid-1960s until 2009 he provided an Illawarra sports round-up for Daily and Sunday Telegraphs. Ill health caused Brian to end his 59-year media career, which included a book called 'Sports Stories, Yarns from the Sidelines' which was launched in 2007.

DENNIS WARD #270

For a brief period in the early 1970s, Dennis Ward – a valued and active member of the Foundation's Gold Coast committee and creator of the World Cup's greatest try that never was – was the number one halfback in the game. He had formed a brilliant halves combination with Bob Fulton which took Manly to a grand final appearance against South Sydney in 1968, before he won his Test spurs on a short tour of New Zealand in '69.

But just as his career was taking off, injury intervened and a knee cartilage injury was followed by a ruptured spleen, suffered in a club game in 1971, that led to a severe punctuation mark to his football aspirations. He returned strongly in 1972, playing a major

role in the Manly's maiden grand final success against Eastern Suburbs, earning him retrospective recognition as man of the match and it also propelled him into Australia's squad for the World Cup, where he figured in one of the most controversial incidents in Cup history.

In the final against Great Britain at Lyon's Stade Municipal de Garland Ward punted high to the left corner for fullback Graeme Langlands to follow on and, in one breathtaking movement, Langlands dived full length and caught the ball for a try, only for French referee Georges Jameau to disallow it for offside. The match ended in a 10-all draw and with no addition after 20 minutes extra-time, Great Britain were declared Cup champions due to their superior preliminary record. Television replays showed Langlands was clearly onside and Jameau later apologised for the error.

Ward took on a captain-coach role at Wests Newcastle in 1973, toured with the Kangaroos later that season and played until 1975. He coached Wynnum Manly in Brisbane in 1977 and was the QRL's coaching director for many years where he was regarded as a master 'coach of coaches'.

In more recent years he has lived on the Golf Coast with his wife Cheryl. He died in hospital there on 11 December, aged 76, after battling prostate cancer.

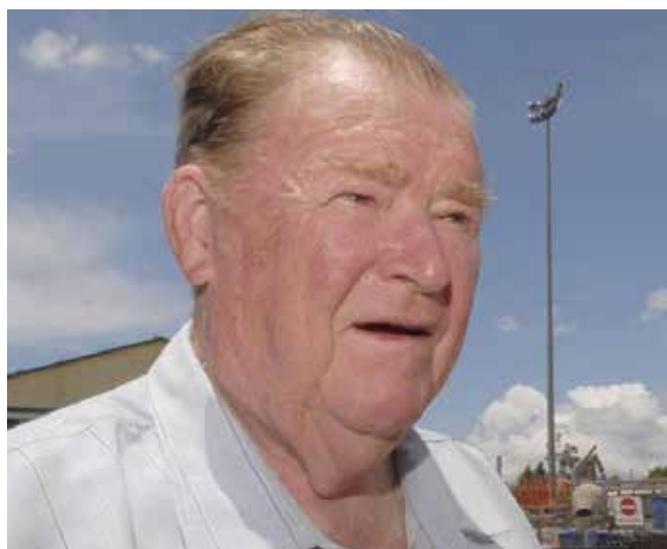
ERIC 'BLUEY' WILLIAMS #15138

Toowoomba born and bred All Whites Rugby League Club devotee and long-serving Toowoomba Rugby League executive member Eric Williams passed away on 30 December after a short illness.

The Queensland Rail worker spent his winter weekends at juniors and seniors matches, ran raffles on Friday nights and sometimes Saturday mornings and attended meetings just about every weeknight.

A tireless volunteer with a flash of red hair, Eric sat on the executive of the senior Toowoomba club for more than 43 years, and was a member of the inaugural junior club committee in 1970 and spent time as president of both the senior and junior clubs.

After retirement 'Blue' maintained his support and leadership of rugby league both at club and TRL level. There wasn't a thing Blue didn't know about the local rugby league scene, and on his death, it was remarked, "Toowoomba Rugby League has lost an encyclopaedia of local knowledge".



Eric Williams.

2022 Membership Application Form



Sign up online at menofleague.com/membership

Step 1: Add new member details (Fill in & tick below)

| | | | |
|--|--------|---------------------------------|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mr <input type="checkbox"/> Mrs <input type="checkbox"/> Ms <input type="checkbox"/> Miss | | Email: | |
| First name: | | Mobile: | Phone: |
| Last name: | | DOB: | |
| Address Line 1: | | Favourite NRL team: | |
| Address Line 2: | | Favourite State of Origin team: | |
| Suburb: | State: | Postcode: | |

Step 2: Select your membership package (Tick below)

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Bronze \$25 <input type="checkbox"/> | Silver \$65 <input type="checkbox"/> | Gold \$150 <input type="checkbox"/> | Corporate \$1,000 <input type="checkbox"/> | Junior (16 & under) \$25 <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|

| Category | Membership Card | Keyring | Bumper Sticker | 3 digital magazines per year | Lapel Pin | Playing Cards | Stubby Holder | Members Cap or Polo (see Step 4) |
|-----------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Bronze | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Silver | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Gold | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Corporate | x 3 | x 3 | x 3 | x 5 (printed) | ✓ | x 3 | x 3 | x 3 |
| Junior | 6" Sponge Football | | Drawstring Kit Bag | | | Men of League Junior Headgear | | |



I DO NOT WISH TO RECEIVE ANY MEMBERSHIP MERCHANDISE

Step 3: Magazine Postage (Tick below)

| | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> YES, please post my magazine for an additional \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> NO, I wish to receive my magazine via email |
|--|--|

Step 4: Donation and Gold Member Merchandise (Tick below)

| | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> YES, I would like to make an additional donation: <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> One-Off <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly | <input type="checkbox"/> Cap (Note: Caps will be sent to Gold Members who don't indicate a preference) <input type="checkbox"/> Polo – Size (SML-5XL) _____ |
|---|--|

Step 5: Payment (Fill in & tick below)

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cash <input type="checkbox"/> Cheque <input type="checkbox"/> Credit Card* | Payment Total: |
| Card number: | Expiry date: CVC: |
| Cardholder's name: | Signature: |

***Automatic Payment Plan:** The Men of League Foundation want to make the process of renewing your annual membership simpler. We will continue to renew your membership each year automatically until you choose to opt out. You will be added to the Automatic Payment Plan when you join via credit card or bank transfer. See menofleague.com for Membership Terms and Conditions.

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