

A History of the  
Saint James Sports  
Club Glebe

(1928-1950)

Written by the late  
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## ST JAMES SPORTS CLUB (GLEBE)

Some months ago TWT published the success of the Balmain Police Boys Club covering their association with the Balmain Junior Rugby League. No doubt it produced some top class footballers, but there have been other clubs, whose members have excelled for the Balmain District R.L.F. Club, namely Shamrocks, Old Boys, Christian Brothers, Leichhardt Wanderers, Codocks, Olympics, Gladesville, Balmain Fernleigh and of recent years Holy Cross College (Ryde).

However the achievements by members of St James Sports Club (Glebe) would be very difficult to beat. This club was formed by teenage students from the Patrician Bros School, Forest Lodge in 1928, changed its name to the Glebe District Sports Club in 1947, and existed until 1950. But re-unions continued annually, firstly at Jubilee Oval, under the Railway viaduct, in what was known as the "Archers" and later at the Camperdown Bowlers Club up until 1990. Membership was open to both sexes, and its activities commenced with a weekly dance, held each Thursday evening, at the Glebe School of Arts, located in Bridge Rd, Glebe, whilst cricket matches were played at week-ends. The club also made provision for their parents and adult friends by arranging social functions, such as Sunday picnics, moonlight excursion, euchre parties, and bingo games. After a few years of operation, the club grew considerably in numbers and with a very progressive executive consisting of Bill Bourke, Ted Mockler, Carl Schultz, Jimmy Burt, Jack Taylor, Steve McCormack, and Denis Donovan, the following was achieved:

1. a lease of Jubilee Oval, Glebe Point, from the Glebe Municipal Council for the purpose of playing Sunday sport, namely cricket and football
2. a lease of the Municipal Tennis Courts in Rest Park, now known as Foley Park at the corner of Glebe and Bridge Roads Glebe
3. a lease of Brays Hall, located on the opposite corner of Glebe and Bridge Rds, which became the clubs headquarters, and was used for indoor sport and social functions
4. an orchestra was formed which consisted of four club members, a pianist (Kath Gross), a saxophonist (Les Elliott), a drummer (Reg Bible) and a singer (John Hynes) which played at the weekly social and other functions. The club also made provision for holidays at Easter and Eight Hour Weekends at Murrays Cottage at Booker Bay on the Hawksbury River which accommodated twenty persons (Males only). But this was discontinued in 1937. Another feature on the list of club activities was the annual Xmas Dinner Dance, when prizes for the sport awards were presented to the winners.

An amalgamation with the Forest Lodge Old Boys cricket club took place in 1930, which paved the way for the club to play competition cricket in the NSW C.Y.M.C. ASSN. At this stage it should be recorded that a near tragedy occurred on Sunday evening the 16th October 1932, when the members and friends were returning from a picnic to Killarney Pleasure Grounds, Middle Harbour, on the launch "Regant", with over one hundred persons on board. The launch ran aground on the Sow and Pigs, a rock in the middle of Sydney Harbour. Nine members jumped into the water, one York Evans with his sisters baby daughter, Dawn. They were all later picked up by the pilot ship, (Capt Cook) and taken to Watsons Bay. The incident was next morning featured on the front page of the Daily Telegraph, the Herald and the Labor Daily.

## CLUB ACHIEVEMENTS

### Rugby League

A Grade Premiers Balmain D.J.R.F.L. 1938, 1940, 1943, 1946, 1948

A Grade Dawes Cup Winners 1948

B Grade Premiers Balmain D.J.R.F.L. 1947

B Grade Minor Premiers Balmain D.J.R.F.L. 1941

B Grade K.O. Competition Balmain D.J.R.F.L. 1946

C Grade Premiers Balmain D.J.R.F.L. 1945, 1946

C Grade 2nd Division Winners Balmain D.J.R.F.L. 1947

C Grade Heffernan Cup Winners 1942, 1944

C Grade Gillespie Cup Winners 1940, 1946, 1947

D Grade Minor Premiers 1943

A Grade Premiers, City & Suburban, H.R.L.F.A. 1949

B Grade Premiers, City & Suburban, H.R.L.F.A. 1949

Note - On the 7th Sept 1946 at the Sydney Cricket Ground, prior to the playing of the Rugby League Finals, St James Sports Club C grade defeated Balmain Police Boys Club C Grade and won the Gillespie Cup. This 1946 C grade team was the best ever produced by the St James Club, and it won the Grade premiership undefeated playing 15 matches scoring 249 points against 28.

### Athletics

Leo Kennedy Memorial Cup Winners 1940, 1947

Hordernian Cup Winners 1949

### Cricket

N.S.W., C.Y.M.C.A. Premiers 1935-36, 1945-46

" " Minor Premiers 1931-32

Millard Cup Winners 1935-36

St James also fielded a C Grade team in Moore Park Cricket Assn

### Hockey

B Grade Premiers Metrop Hockey Assn 1931

Reserve Grade Premiers Metrop Hockey Assn 1932

A womens team also played in the Womens Hockey Assn

### Tennis

C Grade Winter Premiers Balmain D.H.C. Assn 1941

### Soccer Football

St James competed in the East & West Soccer Assn 1931 to 1939

### Individual Achievements

The following members gained grade status with Balmain District R.L.F. Club, T. Bourke, E. Bonser, L. Quigley, S. Quigley, P. Hyde (also West Subs D.R.L.F.C) E. McGovern, T. Brogan (also West Subs D.R.L.F.C), J. Kitchings, J. Haggarty, D. Stapleton, K. Godwin, J. Scanlon, J. Davis, G. Toner, J. Dorman, F. Hickey. R Battye and J. Clare (also South Sydney D.R.L.F.C.), M. Hughes, H. Fitzsimmons, M. Fitzgerald, W. Alexander, N. Baker, K O'Regan, K. Abberton, J. Hayes, N. Conran (also St George R.L.F.C.). Members graded to other clubs were R. Sweeny and G. Cook (Parramatta), T Schultz, D. Bartlett, D. Trusler and F. May (Eastern Suburbs), F. Tregeagle (Manly), R. Thompson (Canterbury) N. Stokes (South Sydney) W. Longhurst, F. Christianson, and L. Miller (Newtown). M. Nixon (Woolongong). Tom Bourke was the most prominent Rugby League player produced by the club. He was selected in 1937 to represent Balmain in the Presidents Cup competition, and was appointed captain. He was a member of the St James A grade premiers team in 1938, and was in Balmain's 1st Grade side which won the Grand Final in 1939 and 1944. He captained Balmain from 1945 season till 1948, and during that time, Balmain won the Grand Finals in 1946 and 1947, and were runners-up in 1948. Tom also represented N.S.W. as centre three quarter against Queensland in 1945. Tom Bourke has been rated by many football journalists, as the greatest Rugby League club captain of all time. He was noted for his team control which was fully accepted by the members and he took complete responsibility for his decisions. In 1946 Balmain had to beat Wests in the third last round, to qualify for the semi-finals. A try was scored in the last minute and they had to kick the goal to win. Tom instead of giving Joe Jorgenson (the regular kicker) the ball, he took the responsibility himself, and landed the goal to win the game 23 points to 22 points. Tom also played grade Hockey with the Glebe District Club from 1934 to 1938, and was a member of the reserve grade which won the premiership in 1934 and 1935. He went to Griffith in 1949 where he was captain coach for a few years. He now excels at bowls with Five Dock R.S.L. Club, where he won the club minor singles in 1972 and was a member of the team which won the fours championship in 1990 and the triples championship in 1991.

Another prominent footballer was Colin Pinch who played scrum half for St James A Grade, and was called up by the Balmain District Club to play grade in 1945. Colin also played cricket, and was a member of Glebe District 1st Grade team. He also represented N.S.W. and South Australia in the Sheffield Shield interstate series, and later he became Captain of South Australia. Ron Battye was a lock forward with plenty of ability, and could fill in as a back, particularly in the wing position. He was a member of the 1946 C Grade side and was elevated to Balmain District Club in 1950, with whom he played for two seasons. He then transferred to Gundagai in 1952, and in 1953 was chosen to represent country against city, and NSW against Queensland. He finished his career playing with South Sydney in 1959. Before leaving football it might be noted that Jack (Champ) Taylor, who coached the B grade teams for a number of years winning the premiership in 1947 and 1949 is still associated with Leichhardt Wanderers.

The following members played 1st Grade cricket for the Glebe District Cricket Club, J. Alleyne, A. Briscoe, R. Coombes, F. Jubb, B. Coffey, H. Alchin, C. Richardson, and E. Mumbler. R. Henderson played for St George, whilst C. Craig played for Balmain. It might be noted that on one occasion St James defeated the Glebe District Club in a social game. Also during the "Body Line" Test series in 1932-33, on the Sunday, which was a rest day, the Test umpires Messrs Hele and Borwick officiated at a social match, which St James were playing against the Irish National Forresters at Jubilee Oval, Glebe Point.

### Hockey

Hockey was introduced to the club by a Patrician Brother (Bro McCarten Keegan) who had represented the Punjab in India. He coached the club until 1932, and was captain until 1931 when he retired from playing. In 1933 the club was elevated to district status and the whole of St James sports club team became the first Glebe District Hockey club, with Bill Bourke (Tom's brother) the first captain. The Glebe Hockey Club has a very formidable record, having won twenty seven first grade premierships and twenty six club championships since the introduction of the club championship in 1948. Tom Pearce was the club's most outstanding hockey player. He played in the position of centre-half and was considered a very talented exponent of the game, as his record will show. In 1931 whilst playing for St James he represented Combined Sydney versus Queensland, and in 1932, he was selected to play for Combined Sydney against the R.A.A.F. at Canberra. From 1934 to 1940 each year he was selected to represent Sydney Metropolitan in the Foxall Cup series and also during that same period he was selected to represent NSW in the interstate series. In 1937 he was selected to represent Australia versus New Zealand.

In concluding the history of this great club it should be recorded that a few of its members were elected to a place in public life, namely Ken Booth, who played A Grade Rugby League, became the State Member for Kurri Kurri 1960-1968, Wallsend 1968-1988. Ken was elected to the N.S.W. Cabinet and became the Minister for Sport and Recreation and eventually State Treasurer. Les McMahon also a Rugby League footballer became the M.H.R. for the seat of West Sydney 1975 to 1983. Pat O'Leary, another Rugby League player, was elected to the Glebe Municipal Council. Merv Nixon also an A Grade player, became the Secretary to the South Coast Trades and Labor Council. Denis (Doc) Donovan was club secretary from 1932 to 1950 and was captain of the cricket team in the early social games, and later became captain of the B Grade side. He also played Rugby League football and in the season 1934 he kicked fifty-two goals for the club. Denis was also a football coach from 1938 to 1947, coaching the D grade minor premiers in 1943 and the C grade premiers in 1945 and 1946. He also coached the C grade Second Division Winners in 1947 the Gillespie Cup Winners in 1940, 1946 and 1947 and the Heffernan Cup Winners in 1942 and 1944. Denis was elected as an alderman to Ryde Municipal council from 1959 to 1971 and was selected as Deputy Mayor in 1967 and 1971. He was also the Vice-Chairman of the Ryde Council Centenary Committee in 1971. Jack Beasley MHR for West Sydney was club patron for many years. He lived locally and became a minister in the Curtin and Chifley Governments, and later was made Australian High Commissioner in London.

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