

Memories of Cricket in the District

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Compiled by Clarrie Neal from photos and information provided by - Laurie Hession and Ron Mason (Rouse Hill and Nelson), Sid and Terese Bye, Peggy Webster, Lachie Lumsden, Phyllis Knight, Beryl Teale and Bill Griffin (Marsden Park and Schofields), Eric Brookes, Des Cartwright (Riverstone) and from the Cumberland Argus and the Windsor & Richmond Gazette.

From the earliest days of white settlement it appears that social cricket matches were played on a regular basis between teams from Marsden Park, Schofields, Quakers Hill, Rouse Hill, Box Hill, Nelson, Riverstone and Forresters (now known as Maraylya).

Box Hill-Nelson. Members of the Mason family have always figured prominently in the teams of the district and Ron Mason has in his possession medals presented to two brothers Mick and Sam by the Riverstone Club in 1894-5. Also in his possession is a medal presented to Ern Mason, another brother, in 1909 for the best bowling average with the district Cumberland Cricket Club.

In the book *Riverstone Schofields A Community Survey*, Henry Saundercock in an interview in 1934 recalled a cricket game played in 1883 between four members of the Hayes family and four members of the Mason family finishing in a tie.

Cricket pitches in the late 1800s were often no more than a levelled area of ground in a cleared paddock. Some may have had a half concrete slab at one end, which in later years may have been covered with a bituminous layer of malthoid. Sometimes a coir matting was used to cover the concrete to provide a better playing surface.

In the late 1800s there was a cricket pitch located in Mason's paddock alongside the Nelson Public School. Old district family names such as Robbins, Smith, Hynds, Ouvrier, Cusack, Hession and Mason figured prominently amongst the players.

There was also a concrete cricket pitch located on Hughie Mason's property at the end of Nelson Road. Along with Hughie and his sons Jack and Martin, other regular players were Reg Keen, Stan Edwards, Vince Hession, Leff Aksamentoff, Frank Maguire, Bob Purvines, and Danny Rasmussen.

Forresters (Maraylya). The team of 1906 included H. Mason, J. Hession, W. Mason, J. Smith, W. Shields, O. Hobbs, R. Hobbs, Green, L. Fletcher, R. Mason and H. Forrest. The Forresters pitch was located in Will Cusack's paddock at the corner of Boundary Road and Maguires Road

It would appear that most of the teams from the district were formed only when enough players were keen enough to organise themselves, and seldom had the support of an ongoing club. The Gazette in 1902 reported on a cricket match between the single and married employees at the Riverstone Meatworks.

Social matches against neighbouring areas have always been popular and were regularly played. This is understandable when one considers the problems of transport in those days. Occasionally these towns would enter a team in the Parramatta or Hawkesbury competition, maybe playing for several seasons before interest waned.

The book *A Battle Against The Odds* refers to the pitch near the Nelson school *being the venue of many exciting cricket matches, where the men of the district gathered to display their talents in sport. Some large trees still standing on the Nelson Road frontage would have provided shade for the participants and the spectators.*

The *Windsor & Richmond Gazette* 10th April 1897 reported on a match between Riverstone and Nelson with 10 members of the Mason families in the two teams. The Nelson team was comprised of four members from each of the Mason and the Hession families, two Smiths and a J. O'Keefe. The Riverstone team consisted of six members of the Mason family and F. Jones, A. Wiggins, W. Hansell, A. Montgomery, and S. Schofield. Nelson beat Riverstone outright in this match, scoring 180 to Riverstone's 23 and 43, with P. Hession and J. Hession the best bowlers. The game was watched by 100 spectators.

Marsden Park. The club was formed in c1932 and it was a family affair with Joe Griffin as Captain, Bill Griffin as Secretary and their father Tom looking after the ground. Their pitch was located in Tom's paddock on the corner of Carnarvon and Clifton Roads. It was a concrete pitch that was covered with coir matting for their matches.

The club entered a team in Parramatta competition and some of their regular players were 'Dinky' Knight, Les and Bert Alderton, Vic and Eric Gallen, Harry Nairn, Ken Bruce, Bill and Ronnie Carr, Jim Voysey, Jack Vidler, Ernie Benny, Darcy Mills, R. Valt, L. Strachan, W. Lambert, A. Cuddihy, and Jack Mills.

The team often travelled to their away games on the back of a table top truck owned by Bill White. The players paid Bill two shillings each for their fare, and also paid another two shillings each to pay for the ball and the umpire.

During the 1940s and 50s Ted Gallen and members of his family were prominent in these teams, with Eric Gallen taking over 100 wickets in the season on four occasions. Vic Gallen was the team's wicket keeper and proved very handy with the bat, scoring 157 not out in one match.

Tom Aisbett, the local school headmaster was another regular player. Other regulars were Sid and Lew Bye, Norm Schofields, Dick Dwyer, Frank Riley, Dan Rasmussen, Fred Burden, and Jack Mason.

One of the better known players with the club was Jack Mills. Jack is best remembered for the day he disagreed with the umpire when given out LBW. No matter how hard he tried to explain that he wasn't out, the umpire refused to change his decision, so Jack clobbered him. The result was that Jack was banned from playing cricket and never played competition again. He was offered the opportunity to return if he apologised but refused to, saying the umpire should apologise to him. The ban remained for many years.

The club's ground was a popular venue for teams from all over Sydney seeking a social game in the country. Bill Griffin recalled many of these games against teams from Rozelle, the Police Dept. and also the occasion the Cumberland 1st grade side came up for the day.

The club played regularly in the Parramatta comp. from the 1930s to the 1950s. Several of the Marsden Park players transferred to the Schofield club when it was formed in the late 1950s.

Schofields. The Schofields club was quite active during the 1920s with the club fielding a B grade team in the Parramatta competition for several years and in 1927 they entered two teams, one in B grade and one in C grade

Wally Williams, who owned the Produce and Hardware Store at Schofields for more than 40 years was the club's greatest supporter. He was a good batsman, has scored over 500 runs in a season, and became the club's patron for many years. Other names featured in the teams of this era include Stan Allen, R. and E. Palmer, W. Chandler, K. Rabey, A. Jeffery, F. Pye, R. Bell, W. Bassell, A. Kerim, J. Schofield, G. and J. Alderton, G. Pomfret, W. Turner and W. Saundercock.

The Schofields Cricket Club lapsed for some time and was again formed on 30th July 1958 with Bobby Hobbs - President, Jim Demmery - Treasurer, and Siddie Bye as Secretary. The club entered two teams in the Parramatta District Competition, a senior team and an under 15 years junior team. Their home ground was Schofields Park, located between St Albans Road and Station Street.

The following season the club entered teams in the B3, B5 and under 15 junior team, with the B3 team winning the competition. In the 1960-1 competition the club entered three senior teams one junior U/15 team. President that year was Albert Christie, with Ron Sandell the Secretary and Jim Demmery the Treasurer.

After a promising start the club struggled and disbanded at the end of the 1965 season. It reformed in the 1973-4 season with Lachie Lumsden as President and Geoff Pfister as Secretary and entered two teams in the Parramatta competition. The support of a strong committee has allowed the club to continue to prosper to the present day. Over the years it has proved to be the district's strongest and most successful club.

In 1976 the club transferred from the Parramatta district to the Hawkesbury District competition, entering five senior teams, one in each grade, and two junior teams. For its home games the club used the ovals at Schofields Park, Oakville and sometimes the oval at Vineyard.

The backbone of any good club is its committee members and the Schofields Club has honoured the following players with Life Membership - Herb (Dinky) Knight, Siddie Bye, Vic McWilliam, Lachie Lumsden, John Pringle, Laurie Lane, Ken Birdsey, Colin Coleman, Vince Cole, Brian Whelan, George Stanley, Geoff Lopez, and Geoff Pfister.

Many of the player's wives became keen supporters of the various clubs and carried out the duties of scorers. Two ladies who regularly performed this task were Terese Bye and Grace Mills.

Riverstone. It is believed the first Riverstone pitch was located at the rear of where the Hotel now stands. During the 1920s-30s the pitch was located in the Meatworks paddock, which at one stage was the Riverstone showground.

Des Cartwright recalled two of the stories related to him by old timers - the day 'Treacle' Alcorn hit a ball from the pitch in the Meatworks paddock over to Knights garage - a mighty hit; and how the oldtimers used to sneak over to the hotel to fill their billy cans with beer to help them through the game.

Some cricket reports in the *Windsor and Richmond Gazette* show -

20th January 1900:- "W. Mason playing with the Riverstone team last Saturday carried his bat through the innings putting together a score of 100. The other player to go over the century was Arthur Sherwood, who is also with the Riverstone club." The pointscore showed Riverstone running 2nd and playing against teams from Pitt Town, Oakville, Windsor, Richmond, Castlereagh, H.A. College, Park Villa and Military.

January 1906:- a Riverstone team of B. Eather, B. Freeman, Dr Blue, J. Myers, B. McCarthy, J. Stubbs, L. Eather, A. Eather, Drayton, Anderson and Mellish. In a match against Ashfield Dr Blue scored 101 not out.

October 1921:- Riverstone fielding an A Grade team and a B Grade team in the Hawkesbury competitions. Names that appeared in A grade were Frank Mason, W. Mason W. Andrews, W. Wiggins, Herb Freeman. B grade - C. Schoffel, T. Fletcher, S. Clark, C. Robbins, W. Anderson, F. Rosa, A. Wood, B. McCarthy, J. Freeman, H. Davis, and B. Hurley.

The *Cumberland Argus* shows Riverstone teams in the Parramatta A grade competition from 1926 to 1930. Some of the players were - Frank Mason, Horace Bambridge, Frank Parkinson, Herb Freeman, Ossie Robbins, A. Brookes, J. Somers, D. Beutel, Charlie Robbins, Wally Williams, T. Woods, R. Wenman, Harry Davis, Darcy Mills, N. Wiggins, N. Alcorn, Freddy Burden.

The *Cumberland Argus* reported Frank Parkinson scoring a double century in one of their matches. The club also entered a C grade team in 1928 with the players - R. Wilson, N. Pye, Arthur Britton, Roy Gavin, J. Schofield, 'Tiger' Locke, Dave Jennings, A. Gavin, T. Gavin and O. Day.

The *Gazette* in 1936 shows teams from Riverstone and Vineyard playing in the Hawkesbury competition. Players in the Riverstone team were Arthur Britton, Wally Cornwell, T. Greentree, 'Tiger' Locke, F. Alcorn, H. Bambridge, Les Britton, Dave Jennings, J. McCarthy, Ted Asher, D. Powell and P. Cassidy.

In the late 1930s the Riverstone Meat Co. supported B and C grade teams in the Parramatta competition - they were known as *Riverstone Imperial*. In addition to the names above, new players included Milton Jarrett, W. Miller, Ron Andrews, F. Walls, R. Higgins, Lawson Banks, and Sam Lane.

Eric Brookes recalls playing in a C grade competition in the Parramatta district in c1947. Some of the boys he played with were Kevin Greenhalgh, Laurence Glew, Barry Allen, Colin Schofield, Ray Brookes and Ron Brown. He recalled Basil Andrews keeping the gear in a shed at his place. It was just after the war with the gear in a very dilapidated condition and due to a scarcity of materials it was difficult to replace.

They played against teams from Rydalmere, Parramatta, Westmead, Girraween and Doonside and travelled on the train to their grounds. It was often a long walk from the station to these ovals and he recalled when playing Doonside they would catch the train to Blacktown, then walk along the railway line carrying all their gear to the ground at Doonside.

Des Cartwright recalls Riverstone playing in the early 1950s in the Parramatta competition with their home ground on Griffin's paddock at Marsden Park. He too remembers travelling by train and the long walks to the grounds at Wentworthville and Girraween. Some of the players were Alwyn Mills, Colin Crouch, Kevin Lewis, Charlie Weaver, Colin Bull, Johnny Waters, Matty Johnston, 'Butch' Grey and Ronnie Brown.

In the mid 1950s the football club supported a team in the Parramatta C grade competition and along with the players mentioned above were 'Dossier' Drayton, 'Butch' Drayton, Jim Patterson, Dick Dwyer, Dick Greenway, Manny McCarthy, 'Binjo' Webster, Norm Schofields and Colin Hayward. Records show Ron Brown won the best bowling average in 1955-6 for this grade.

Most of the above mentioned players formed the nucleus of the team the Riverstone RSL Club supported for several seasons in the Hawkesbury competition, commencing 1958-9. They won the 2nd grade comp. in 1958-9, and were again successful in 1960-1 when they won the 3rd grade competition with an undefeated record. The Riverstone RSL Club continued to support the Cricket Club throughout the 1960s and 1970s, playing in both the Hawkesbury and Parramatta competitions.

Vineyard. Several boys from Riverstone played for a Vineyard team in the Hawkesbury competition in c1952, including Norm Jennings, Alwyn Davis, Neville Stockwell, Ronnie Brown, Charlie Weaver, and Clarrie Neal.

The game of cricket continues to be popular in the district, with teams still being fielded by Riverstone and Schofields. These days the competitions extend to both men and women with junior teams consisting of boys and girls.