

Riverstone Junior Rugby
League Club History
Post 1945

Riverstone & District Historical Society

2009

The 1947 Riverstone A Reserve grade side had an outstanding record when they won the premiership that year. They scored 301 points and conceded only 31 that season as they swept all before them. Captain Coach of this team was Noel (Butch) Drayton, one of 4 Drayton boys that played that year. The others were George, Alan and Lennie.

In 1952 there were so few players in the area that Riverstone was forced to unite with Richmond; they met with only mediocre success that year and in 1953 their coach was Bernie Becke. Things were much better when in 1954 Riverstone were able to secure the services of Freddy Brown as a playing coach.

Freddy was a top class player who had spent a few years playing with the Balmain & St. George 1st grade sides in the Sydney competition. His guile and leadership led the team to the semi-finals that year and formed the basis for their success in the years to come.

The following year 1955, the team coached by Jack Munday won the 1st grade Premiership, defeating Richmond in spectacular fashion. After trailing 1 1-0 at half-time and down 14 -0 midway through the 2nd half, they produced a whirlwind finish scoring 5 tries and 2 goals to win 19 -14.



Riverstone A Reserve premiers 1947. Back (l to r): S Locke (selector), L Humphries (VP), F Crowley (Jr VP), B Rosa (president), M Wood (treasurer), C Harris (secretary), C Nelson (selector), H Davis (masseur), J Parkes (asst sec). Centre: G Deacon, N Wallace, N Schofields, B Turner (capt/coach), E Magennis, G Britton, J Evans, J Andrews. Front: G Drayton, L Drayton, R Wood, A Drayton, A Dixon, W Whelan, A Beasley, A Harris (ballboy), J Hackett



Riverstone Junior Rugby League Club Committee

Back row: Fred Russell, George Johnston, Charlie Smith Middle row: Noel Woods, Jimmy Sandilands, Jimmy Andrews Terry Woods

Front row: 'Daisy' Fussell, Basil Andrews, Charlie Harris Brian Tozer, Jimmy Robbins



Back Row L-R: Eric Gunton*, Dick Stacey*, Daryl Hunt, Brian McNamara, Bob Webster, Colin Crouch, Matt Johnson, Bob Parkes, Alwin Mills.
Middle Row L-R: Les Schofield, Barry Allan, Len Belshaw*, Jack Munday, Fred Brown, Bill Wood, Pat Mangold, standing Brian Wood*.
Front Row L-R: Reg Wood*, Arthur Bunton, Kevin Spice*, John Waters*, Bill Erskine, Des Cartwright, Kevin Lewis, Charles Sandilands*
All Boy: Fred Mills
asterisk (*) behind a name = Deceased by 19/2/2000

[Photo Courtesy of Des Cartwright]

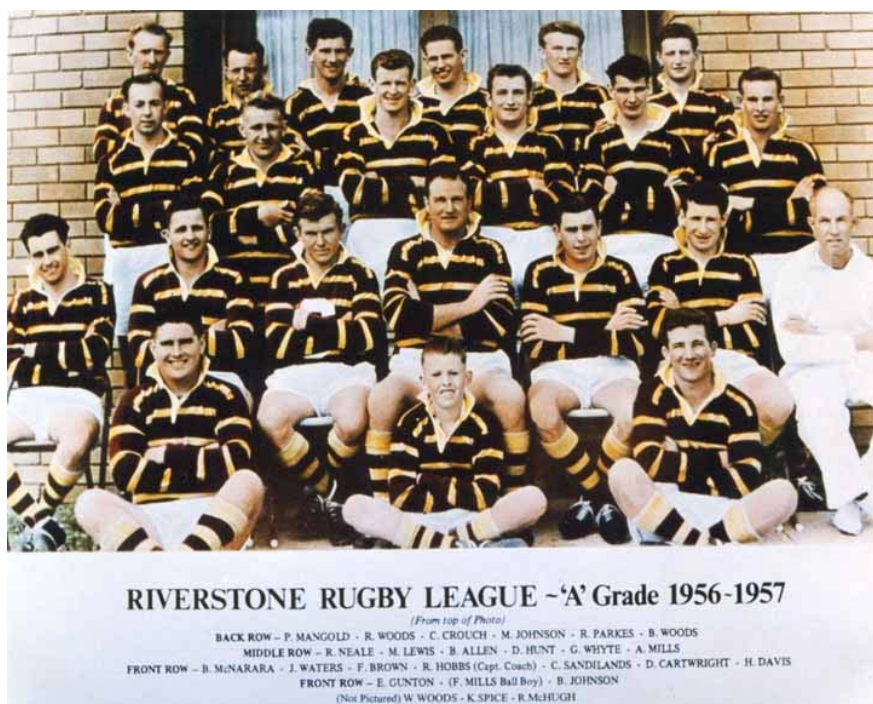


Riverstone "A" Grade 1948

Back row; 1.Wally Brown 2. Tom Creighton 3: Danny Spice 4. Dick Dwyer 5. Neville Schofields 6. Toby Marlin

Middle row: 1. Horrie Davis 2. Jimmy Harper(Capt Coach) 3. Bill MacNamara 4. Brian Doolan 5. Jimmy Demmery

Front row: 1.Ike Schofields 2. Tony Harris B-boy 3. Billy Gaynor



Jack Munday was to become a controversial figure later in his life as the leader of the NSW Builders Labourers Federation, figuring prominently in the Green Bans disputes of the 1960's. Being a member of the Communist party, he was savaged by the media of the day; he was thrown into gaol, but he was a survivor and is now credited with having saved the historic Rocks area of Sydney for the general public to enjoy.

Today, Jack Munday is the widely respected President of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW.

The 1950's was a golden era with the club winning both the 'A' Grade and 'A' Reserve premierships in 1956, and the following year the 'A' grade were beaten in the Grand Final. The '56 and '57 teams were coached by Bobby Hobbs.

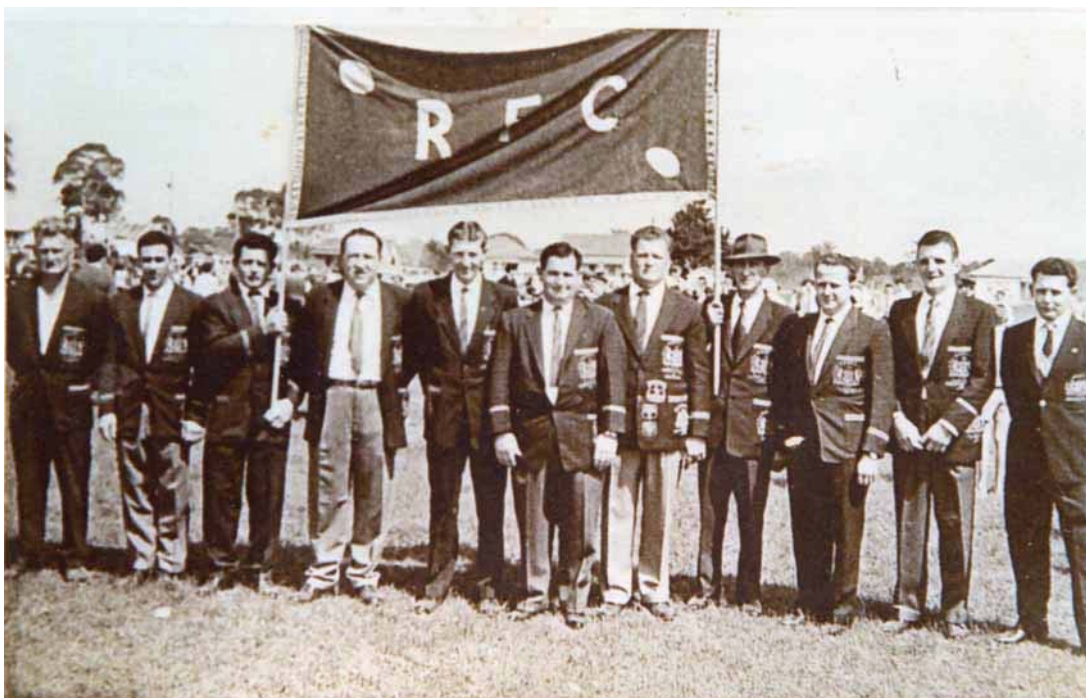
Des Cartwright recalled training as a serious task in those days when after their practice Mick Woods would boil up a large pot of meat extract for the boys to enjoy.

Several players of this era went on to play Presidents Cup and district football with Parramatta -Bob McHugh, Des Cartwright, Bobby Hobbs, Brian McNamara, Colin Crouch, Charlie Sandilands, Ron Neal and Mattie Johnston. Mattie was captain of Parramatta club's first premiership winning team, the 1964 third grade.

A promising player from this era was Johnny Waters, some believed he could have played for Australia one day. But fate struck a cruel blow when Johnny was killed in a car accident just after he finished playing the season in Parramatta's President Cup team.

Another very promising player of this period to have his career cut short was Eric Magennis, who became a paraplegic after a motor cycle accident. But this setback did not dampen Eric's enthusiasm for sport and in 1972 he won 2 Gold Medals at the 1972 Paraplegic Olympics held in Munich, and another at the games held in Toronto, Canada in 1976.

Another man who has contributed greatly to the success of the Riverstone club is Bill McNamara. After several years as a player he became a member of the committee and then served as the club Patron for many years. Throughout his life he continued this interest in football and gave up much of his valuable time to manage and coach the junior teams.



Riverstone R. L. Club Committee circa 1960s

Left to Right: 1. Dick Stacy 2. Charlie Wheeler 3. Eric Crouch 4. Basil Andrews 5. Frank Crowley 6. Terry Wood 7. John Stacy 8. Charlie Smith 9. Rob Shepherd 10. Tony Robbins 11. Barry Crouch

He was the man responsible for building the Footballers Hall at the corner of Creek St. and Garfield Rd. He organised the removal of the two army huts from Ingleburn and then provided much of the labour to help the volunteers to assemble it. The hall was opened in 1957 and was widely used for Balls, dances, wedding receptions, parties , club meetings etc. for the 30 years it existed.

Bill's loyalty to the Riverstone Club continues today, when the club in 2005 celebrated its 90th Anniversary Bill purchased at the auction, the magnificent collection of photos and memorabilia that are on display today in the Riverstone RSL Club.

It was a source of amazement to many people as to how such a small settlement as Riverstone could compete so successfully against teams from areas with much larger populations. Riverstone in the early 1950's was playing teams that represented Wentworthville, Merrylands, Guildford, Liverpool, Blacktown, St. Marys, Penrith and Richmond.

No doubt the support the club received from the community was a big factor, in the 50's the town would be deserted whenever there was a home game. This support was still evident in the 1970's when the Riverstone High School team played in the University 'Shield, a competition between teams from High School from all over the State.

These matches were usually held on a Friday afternoon and when held at Riverstone, local shops have been known to close to allow supporters to attend. For some unknown reason industrial unrest would develop at the meat works, resulting in a strike from midday. Needless to say there was always a huge crowd at the oval to support the local school that afternoon.

When Penrith was admitted into the Sydney competition in 1967 Riverstone came into their Junior League organisation.

Ron Bates became involved with the club at this time. His thoughts and recollections from the 70s till the 90s are recorded here:

Names from some the older families of Riverstone still appeared in the programs - McNamara, Britton, Smith, Watton, Johnston, Drayton, Parkes, Wallace and they were now joined by such names as Petrow, Olejarnik, Poniewierka, and Wolffe.



Riverstone 'A' Grade Premiers 1971

Back row: 1.Robbie Shepherd, 2.Peter Culina 3. Colin Watton 4. Brian Strachan 5. Brian Wallace 6. Charley wheeler 7. Ted Ritowski 8. Robert Shea 9. John McNamara 10.Werner Poniewerka 11.Harry Minton 12. Des Cartwright

Front row: 1. Maurie Smith 2. ? 3. Alan Watton 4. Lyle Cunich 5. Ricky Smith 6. Neville Fussell John Judge -ball boy John Liepa -mascot

Charlie Wheeler, after coaching the junior teams for several years took control of the 'A' Grade and was an immediate success, with the club winning both the 'A' grade and 'A' reserve premierships in 1971 and 1972. Ron recalled the celebrations lasted for weeks.

1971 was the clubs most successful year when from 12 teams they had 7 teams reach the semis and 5 won their premierships. But the year was also tinged with sadness when the club lost its greatest supporter, Basil Andrews.

This obituary appeared in the Riverstone Press at the time his death in September 1971.

Vale Basil Andrews 'The sudden and tragic death of Basil Andrews recently has taken from the Riverstone community one of its best loved and most respected members. His unselfish and tireless devotion to any task he undertook endeared him to all who came in contact with him, and a measure of the popularity and respect in which he was held was seen at the church service and in the funeral procession.

As well as personal mourners, representatives of all local Junior League clubs were in attendance, as were members from clubs in the Parramatta Junior League and Penrith District Club.

In his lifetime Basil had been associated with many organisations to which he gave that unswerving loyalty and attention that became his trademark, but perhaps the most lasting memorial to his name will be the time and effort he gave to the Riverstone Rugby League.

At the age of 16 he was a delegate to the Western Districts Junior League, he was a member of Riverstone's premiership winning side prior to the outbreak of World War 2, and was a reserve for the Presidents Cup side that year.

At the outbreak of war he enlisted in the A.I.F. and served with distinction throughout the war. Even while serving overseas he never lost his love for Riverstone League, and donated a trophy to be competed for by young footballers in his town, still playing the game.

On his discharge from the Services he returned straight back to the community and the Riverstone Junior League, and here began an unbroken run of 25 years of dedication and work for the club.



Riverstone "A" Reserve Grade Premiers 1971

Back row: 1. John McNamara 2. Bobby Gill 3. Warren Irvine 4. George Simpson (Cpt)
5. John Freeman 6. Jimmy Simpson 7. Tommy Haines 8. Peter James 9. Graham Britton 10.
Mick Shields

Back row: 1. Michael McNamara 2. Boyd Hart 3. Mark Willard 4. Glen Whitehead 5. ? 6.
Mick Carter

Front row: 1. "Stitch" Burtton 2. Tony McNamara 3. Barry Drayton 4. Phil Creek 5.
Graham Magennis 6. Robert Shea 7. ?

For almost all of those years he was Secretary and was always on the executive side of the committee. For the 2 years that Riverstone amalgamated with Richmond he was their Treasurer, and on the return of Riverstone as a single club he became their Secretary again, a position he held until his untimely death.

It can be said that all the footballers in Riverstone since the War (and there have been many good ones), have passed through Basil's hands. He was a quiet and unassuming man who seemed to bring out the best in anyone associated with him, either as a player or a fellow committeeman.

Throughout the lean years when Riverstone was struggling to field sides, Basil was almost a one man army. With the help of a few others, he held the club together, raising money one way or another to help keep the club on an even footing until they weathered the storm.

He was also an instigator of the fielding of smaller grade sides in the town and in the beginning he not only arranged transport for them to the various grounds, but he helped coached them as well.

I think he would have been proud to know that the funeral cortege passed through a guard of honour of young footballers wearing their blazers or jumpers in the colours he loved, and knew so well. In recent years while not enjoying the best of health, he still kept an unflagging interest in these younger players just as he did the senior sides.

Recognition of his work came to him in his later life. He was a life member of the Riverstone Rugby League Club and through his lifetime of work fostering and encouraging the game of Rugby League he was made the first Life Member of the Penrith Junior Rugby League, an achievement of which he and all League followers can be justly proud.

It is not so well known that he was also one of the founders of the Riverstone R.S.L. and only had to fill out the necessary forms to become a Life Member of that body. At different times he was also a member of the Riverstone Park Committee and I'm sure he gave that job the same care and attention of any job he undertook.

To me, Basil Andrews stood for all that was fine and decent in this world and certainly Riverstone is all the poorer for his passing. Generous to a fault, he was intensely proud of his town and his country, Through his unassuming ways he had a host of friends, and I was honoured to be among them.



Riverstone Rugby League Club Life Members

Back row; Geoff Binks, Eric Crouch, Ron Bates, Bany Crouch, Bill Denman

Front row: Alan Drayton, Eric Martin, Johnny Judge, Des Cartwright.

His death not only leaves a gap, which is irreplaceable, it leaves many of us without wise counsel and a true friend. From this can be said of Basil, to live on in the hearts of those we left is not to die.

In humble tribute
'Balmain'

The 1970s saw a large increase in the number of junior teams and the club was fortunate to have a willing group of supporters to coach and manage these teams. Names that come to mind are Johnny Judge, Eric & Barry Crouch, Ron Bates, Des Cartwright, Alan Drayton and Rob Shepherd. Ron recalled the Windsor/ Richmond games against Riverstone, which were always a tough battle, characterised by a real love-hate relationship, but all were the best of mates.

Throughout the '70s the club won more than its share of premierships and also won the club championship in 1976 and 1992. The club again won the A grade premiership in 1988, 1989 and 1990. Players from Riverstone that went on to play grade with Penrith include Roy West, Ken Wolffe, Geoff Pfister and Zac Olejarnik.

By the 1980s the clubs grounds received a big boost' with the construction of new amenities and grandstand. The oval was fenced and underground watering was supplied. The work was done by Blacktown Council with a lot of help from club members.

Ron said one friend he did want to give special thanks to was Russell Magennis -a mate who was always there to lend a hand. He has coached and managed teams, marked the fields, became club president, was the clubs best seller of raffle tickets, you name it, he's done it.

Ron Bates was Secretary of the Riverstone club from 1968 to 1982 and was rewarded with Life Membership. He was also made Life Member of the Penrith District J.R.L. for his years of service to that club.

His best memories of the club include -the presentation days for the kids at the end of the season, the trips away with the kids teams, selling raffle tickets at the Tourmaline Hotel, the selling of doubles on the Commonwealth Bank corner on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning. He also has good memories of the Bowls days and socials held at the Bowling Club, the barbecues after the home games and the many celebrations held in the footballers hall.



Riverstone "A" Grade Premiers . 1988

Back row: 1.Barney? 2.Grant Burgman 3. Paul Melanic 4. Geoff Hunter

3rd row: 1.Michael McNamara 2. Boyd Hart 3. Mark Willard 4. Glen Whitehead 5. Robert Butler 6. Mick Carter

2nd row: 1.Colin Russell 2. Steve Tolsher 3.Robbie Shepherd 4. Geoff Binks 5. Gerard Cobcroft 6.Evan Gunton 7.Brett Lloyd 8. Brian Davies 9. Robert Parkes 10. Bobby Cairns 11.Bany Drayton 12. John Davidson (Coach)

Front row: 1. ? 2. Max Marlin 3. Ron Bates 4. Graham Barlow 5. Trevor Niass 6. ? 7. Lyle Mackie



Riverstone "A" Grade premiers 1989

Back row: 1. Steve Welfare 2. Kirk Drayton 3. Paul Melnick 4. Paul Lewis 5. Mick Carter

2nd row: 1. John Davis 2. Peter Wijnans 3. 'Barney' 4. Brett Lloyd 5. Ernie Lundt 6. Steve Tolsher 7. Bob Cairns 8. Graham Britton

3rd row: 1. Rob Shepherd 2. Jim McTaggart 3. Michael McNamara 4. ? 5. John Cartwright 6. Grant Burgmann 7. Darryl Harris 8. Graham Barlow 9. Barry Drayton

Front row: 1. Graham Hunter 2. Lyle Mackie 3. ? 4. Geoff Hunter 5. Trevor Niass 6. Robert Parkes 7. Barney ? 8. Neil Wolffe

The backbone of any successful club is the committee, Riverstone has always been fortunate to have many members who have been prepared to give a lot of their time to the club. The club has recognised many of these members with Life Membership and they are:

Charlie Harris, Basil Andrews, Bill McNamara, Frank Crowley, Bobby Parkes, Eric Gunton, Geoff Binks, Ron Bates, Eric Crouch, Barry Crouch, Alan Drayton, Des Cartwright, Eric Martin, Johnny Judge and Bill Denman.

The Riverstone Club changed its name to the Riverstone Razorbacks in the year 2000.

When the Penrith Panthers defeated the highly fancied Sydney Roosters in the 2003 Grand Final, the team comprised 2 players who had played all of their Junior football with the Riverstone Club. They were Shane Rodney and Joel Clinton; Joel Clinton continued his outstanding season by being selected to tour with the 2003 Kangaroos to England.

Compiled by Clarrie Neal from information and photos provided by Bobby Parkes, Ronnie Bates, Graham Barlow, and Dessie Cartwright, February 2000.

Later details have been added as they eventuated. Many of the old programs on display at the museum were provided by Geoff Binks, another grand supporter of the club from the late 1940's to the 1980's.