



ONCE MORE WE RAISE OUR GLASSES





Thirroul Rugby League Football Club

ONCE MORE WE RAISE OUR GLASSES



**Celebrating 100 Years
1913 - 2013**

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Printed by Coastline Printing,
Unanderra, N.S.W.



This book is dedicated to the memory of John Kelly

John became the leading authority on the clubs history through his many hours of painstaking research. John's research and narrative form the basis of this book. Unfortunately John passed away a few years ago but his account of the clubs history will live forever.



Forward

What a great achievement by the Thirroul Rugby League Club to have completed 100 years competing and contributing to the great game of Rugby League in Illawarra. Congratulations!

I have been privileged to have been associated with the “Butchers” for over 40 years through my various roles as an administrator in Illawarra League.

During that time your club has been represented by some of the game’s leading officials; including Keith Nolan, Bruce Cambridge, Greg Anderson, Dennis Harrington, Danny O’Connell, John Hobbs, Ian Grose and more recently; Aiden Beath and Kevin Anderson.

The club has also produced Australian, State and Country representative players; as well as providing endless players to Illawarra teams.

Thirroul backed the formation of the District Club (Steelers) in the late 70’s. Keith Nolan’s speech during our historical presentation to the General Committee of the New South Wales Rugby League on 13 December 1980; is still remembered by the club delegates in attendance at that meeting - it was the catalyst for ‘de-centralisation’ of Rugby League in Australia.

I was present at the old Wollongong Showground when Arthur Collinson led Thirroul to that initial First Grade grand final victory in 1954; and was there again when John McCarthy coached the “Butchers” to another premiership 20 years later.

Local products Mark Taylor, Phil Ostwald and Brett Jones have all coached Thirroul to first grade premierships. Brett Jones became Illawarra’s most successful rep coach - winning four consecutive Country Championships.

Thirroul has earned a reputation for overcoming many difficult periods during the past century. This was achieved by displaying a great community spirit that has always been to the forefront of the club - right from the pioneer days of 1913.

Credit must go to so many individuals and the business support. To all those volunteers that formed committees, ladies auxiliaries, sponsors, players and coaches of all grades and junior teams; Thirroul and Rugby League owe a big “thank you”!

How great it is that the Thirroul “Butchers” celebrate this centenary year as defending first grade premiers!

The great club spirit and achievements over 100 years continue through the dedicated committee that has planned the centenary celebrations and produced this excellent book. Enjoy the read.

Bob Millward, OAM
Director of Rugby League
Illawarra

Introduction



The Thirroul Rugby League Football Club this year celebrates its centenary, so its time to reflect on the pioneers who created our club back in 1913 and their successors who enabled the Butchers to grow through good times and bad.

We have scored hundreds of tries, won many premierships and fostered players who have gone onto represent our district, state and country. We have enjoyed plenty of highs and survived some dismal failures.

Frank Nowlan reminds us of our literary link with the English novelist D. H. Lawrence who lived in Thirroul for a short period in 1922. He wrote the Novel "Kangaroo" about that time and it seems he watched a game at our local footy paddock. An extract read:

"Just outside the railway station was a football field and Mullumbimby (Thirroul) was playing Wollondindy (Wollongong). Mullumbimby was in royal blue and Wollondindy in a rather faded red. Alongside the roadside buggies and motor cars were pulled up...on the field the blues and reds darted madly about like strange bird creatures rather than men. They were mostly blond, with hefty legs, and with prominent round buttocks that worked madly inside the little white cotton shorts."

Lawrence certainly did not play with the Butchers, but he did place our football in the literary field.

The authors spent many hours delving into past newspaper records at the Wollongong City Library, football year books, some programs from Coastline Printing and the old Butchers' Bulletins, but the real feel for our history came through discussions with players and officials from yesteryear.

Naturally enough, in any venture of this nature unavoidable mistakes and omissions will occur. At conservative estimate over 4000 players over the years had donned the blue jumper and obviously all are not included here.

Purposefully, the word blue in describing our jumper has been selectively used. Over the past 90 years our jumpers description has gone through at least three transformations with white, red and black all at some stage being utilised, but blue has been the common element since 1913.

Another common element to emerge in this research was the love of the game. Thirroul players have trained, given all and bled on that same patch of ground outside the railway station; officials have worked enthusiastically, all for the love of the game. It is to all those players, officials and supporters that this short history hopes to do justice.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the production of this publication. The aim of the book is to celebrate 100 years of Butchers history. All care has been taken to ensure the facts contained are accurate and the writers apologise for any mistakes or omissions. Thank you to The Illawarra Mercury and Rob Sheeley for permission to use their photos. The book has been dedicated to the late John Kelly for his efforts in collating the clubs history into a workable format. Special mention must also go to Barry Ross. Barry was asked to help add to John's work and his detailed research has been greatly appreciated.

We hope you enjoy the read.

1

Up & Running



Over a century ago the Thirroul Rugby League Football Club faced up for their first competition game at Mr. G. McCauley's paddock. It was May of 1913 and the enemy was Unanderra who defeated our pioneers 13-3.

Over the years clubs like Keira, Woonona, Bulli, Scarborough, Gwynneville, Unanderra, Bellambi, Balgownie, Stanwell Park and Bombo all locked horns with Thirroul on the recreation ground, but have now faded into oblivion. Thirroul in those early years were also known as the Blues.

Thirroul was basically a tourist resort in our foundation year, as Frank Nowlan found in his research. The mine had opened in 1905, but only employed a few. The main part of the town was west of the railway line and the steam train was the main mode of transport.

Overall 1913 was a big year for Thirroul. Not only the start of our Football Club's history, but also the start of electric street lighting and the opening of the School of Arts, Kings Theatre, the police station and the post office. By 1914 those well off in the district had obtained electricity.

The Thirroul marshalling yards were opened in 1917 and in 1919 the brickyards operated by Vulcan Company began operations. About this time the complexion of the town began to change. Thirroul was now a railway town and nearby Austinmer had taken up the role of the holiday Mecca of the south. Our research found that the town itself was made up of many migrants from the "Old Dart" and no doubt many had come from England's north, from the coal areas where this new game of Northern Union football had been embraced.

Actually rugby league on the South Coast began in 1911, just three years after the start of the Sydney competition and first grade teams in action that year were Wollongong, Keira, Unanderra, Balgownie and Bulli. Thirroul entered competition in 1913 with first and reserve grade teams.

Delving into the history of the club, it's interesting to note that the make up of the grades was never static. Some years the Blues were strong and fielded three grades, while in other years they failed to field any grades. Also, some years there was also a so-called super grade above first grade and this extended as far south as Berry. In other years there was an emphasis on social games against Sydney clubs.

But research into our club origins provided limited information (that also applied to later years when files on activities disappeared

and left our researchers grabbing thin air). Anyhow it was on May 20, 1913 that the Blues (later to become the Butchers) kicked off and, despite a loss, history was underway. Our players were Dansfield, A. Lacey, Hopkinson, Coulton, Grace, McDonald, Ryan, Moore, Green, Fraser, Schalel and Clarke. Stars that year were listed as E. Stacey and Grace. In 1914 Thirroul only entered a reserve grade team, but bounced back the following year with a first grade side. World War One was underway and it would certainly take a toll on sporting competitions. Many men had gone into the Army and were slogging it out on a different field.

A report from the South Coast Times in 1915 made interesting reading: *"A Bellambi player has been ordered down (sent off) for misbehaviour on the field of play. Players should remember they are engaged in sport and not war. If they feel so inclined they should go to the front where there is plenty of fight to give and be taken."*

The war meant the district went without formal competition in the years 1916 to 1918. Social games, mainly with Sydney clubs, were organised during this period. In 1918 Thirroul played eight social games; in one match we defeated Wests (Sydney) third grade 10-0 and after the match the customary get together was held at Illawarra House *"where after dinner a number of vocal and instrumental items were rendered by both teams."*

After the war Thirroul entered third and reserve grade sides in the district competition which stretched from Helensburgh to Dapto. In 1919 the comp proper was late in starting due to the deadly influenza epidemic sweeping the world. It led to many deaths in the Illawarra region. Scant reports disclose our Reserves had a nil-all draw with Port Kembla in the opening round and later defeated Unanderra 5-0, Thirroul's thirsty Thirds were tossed out of the competition for *"not keeping two successive engagements."*

Thirroul played Dapto Reserves at the end of the season in scorching heat with the temperature up to 92 degrees, which is over 30 degrees on the current scale, Dapto won 13-5. Our stars of the game were Mark Wagner and Boxer Dunlop. Press reports suggested this was a spiteful match and a Thirroul supporter writing in the South Coast Times contends *"that the game between Thirroul and Dapto played last Saturday should be replayed as it was not fair to Thirroul the way the people stormed the ground and even knocked Thirroul men over to stop them getting through with the ball. If Dapto are fair sports they will not refuse to play again, this time at Thirroul."* There is no record of any replay.

It's interesting to glance at some of the unusual rules governing the game in this era. Only one football was allowed at the game and when retrieving it from an adjoining paddock no time off was permitted. Rugby Union rules still had a large bearing on the game in that "a scrummage is formed by one or more players from each side closing around the ball when it is on the ground." The push over in the scrums on the try line was also allowed.

Our home ground had no dressing shed at this stage, but the Thirroul Recreation Ground Trust had the players interest at heart when it issued an edict stating "that no stock is to be allowed to graze on the ground on Friday night and Saturday." Fred Robb had a dual role that year. He was our club secretary and was appointed as one of the top referees. On the field that year we defeated Uhanderra in the end of the season semi-final knockout competition, but were beaten by Wollongong Buccaneers 15-2 in the final. Sipper Kermond and E. Lacy were our best players in the final.

The acquisition of club trophies was few and far between in the '20s. In 1921 our Thirroul representatives V. Lanyon, H.G. Wagner, Metcalf and E. Lacy played in the Illawarra side which narrowly lost to Newtown. Thirroul bagged its first trophy in 1922 by defeating Mount Kembla 25-10 in a knockout final. Newtown that year again beat Illawarra and it is interesting to note that they left Sydney at 8.30 am and arrived in Wollongong at 2 pm. Thirroul Progress Association that year was concerned with people loitering on the railway bridge to watch play and it suggested construction of an iron fence 9ft high around the field. Fortunately this proposal did not get off the ground.

PLAYER PROFILE

Arnold Traynor

Arnold Traynor was a brilliant five eighth/halfback who played two seasons with Thirroul in 1919 and 1920. On 3 May 1919 at Thirroul, the locals beat Keira 28-6 and Arnold scored 4 of his team's eight tries as well as setting up two others. The Wollongong Buccaneers were one of the top teams in those days and the week before the Keira win, Thirroul held the Buccaneers to a 3-all draw at the Wollongong Showground. Traynor scored the Thirroul try, while his defence prevented at least three by the opposition. In the opening competition match of 1920, on 1 May, Traynor was his side's best player when the Bucs beat Thirroul, 7-0, at the Showground. Born at Bathurst in 1896, Arnold established himself as one of the area's best players when the Bathurst competition began in 1913. Although not yet 18, Arnold was selected in the Western Districts team who took on the touring Englishmen at Bathurst on 1 July 1914. The visitors won easily 42-3 but Arnold was his team's best. After marrying local, Lily Freebody in 1915, the two left the district looking for work, as times were tough during the First World War. They settled in the Illawarra district at the beginning of 1916, when Arnold began working in the Thirroul Locomotive depot on 2 March, as well as playing some friendly games with the locals. When the Illawarra competition resumed in 1919, after World War One, Arnold was one of the team's key players. Early in the 1920 season, he was a member of the Thirroul side who were runners up in the district knockout competition.

St. George joined the Sydney first grade Premiership in 1921 and Arnold moved his residence to St. Peters. He played in the St. George junior league, was spotted by Dragon officials and made his debut with the new club in reserve grade against North Sydney at North Sydney on 11 June 1921. It was only a matter of time before he became a first grader. Except for 1929, Arnold played from 1921 to the end of the 1930 season with St. George. He was the first man to play 100 games with the club and when he finished he had played over 120 grade games, 96 of which were in first grade. He scored 28 tries and 46 goals for 176 points in the top grade and captained the firsts in about half of his matches.





The first grade competition was a monotonous affair in 1923, with only three teams - Wollongong, Port Kembla and Thirroul - contesting a three-round competition. We lapsed into oblivion over the next three years, but the club bounced back in 1927 with a gutsy reserve grade side which won only one game - on a forfeit from Port Kembla! The following year we were a lot stronger in reserve grade. The tricky Wally King, ex-South Sydney player, was captain coach and on October 12, 1928, at 8 pm he led the Thirroul team, now known as the Butchers to a victory over Mount Kembla 5-4 and our first premiership trophy.

In 1929 we had teams in the second and third grade comps. The South Coast Times previewing a local derby declared *"Bulli and Thirroul seconds clash tomorrow and by request - no flowers."* The Butchers won the game 6-2 with smart winger Gordon Colefax playing a starring role. Our players this year no longer had to train in the dark as training lights were installed at the ground.

The thirties was not a good era for Thirroul. For a few years the local League introduced a handicapping system. In 1931 we were given a six-point start in First grade and reached the semi finals, beating Unanderra 20-10. A press report said our backs tackled Unanderra out of the game. Our team was: Fred Stacey, Vic Eather, skipper & coach Barney Tiffin, Steve Hitchens, Kevin Gageler, Dave Martin, J. Robinson, W. Guthrie, T. Smith, Len Rankin, John Cambourne, R. Lanyon and Ted Ramsay. Not enough start in the final and Wollongong beat us 31-14.

We were given a 10-point start in 1932 and we managed to reach the semis of the knockout competition for the Ryan's Cup, put up by Mr Searle, proprietor of the Ryan's Hotel. We were thrashed by Port Kembla 71-11 in 1938 and was back in first grade in 1939. However it was this year that a new competition was formed. It was known as the Super League and was played between selected Illawarra and Group 7 clubs. ■

These Butchers back in 1920 were runners-up in the District knockout competition.
Back Row: F. Robb (Secretary), J. Buggy, R. Shields, E. Lacey, J. G. Smith, H. G. Wagner, T. Smith. Second Row: A. Traynor, V. Lanyon, G. Watson, A. Kermond (c), R. Lanyon, E. Metcalf, C. Kermond. Front: A. McKay, G. Phillips, A. Larkin.



*1928 2nd Grade Premiers
 Back Row: A. McMullin, D. Eather,
 D. Underwood, L. Rankin, S. Hitchins,
 N. McColl. Second Row: Dr. Graham,
 F. Hitchins, J. Douglas, W. King, A. McMillin,
 E. Stacy, P. McCracken. Front: W. Leaver,
 H. Starling, D. Dryden.*



*Our 1930 club team. Not a good year with little
 success for these lads. Better times ahead,
 but 10 years before the jackpot.*



*Thirroul young guns of 1931 - limited success,
 but lots of heart.*

2

War Years

The war is underway as the decade commences. This brought with it brownouts in the streets at night, barbed wire on the beach, rationing of food, fuel and clothing. Lots of our guys and girls were off on wartime service, while others were in protected industries. Nonetheless 1940 was a memorable year for the Butchers, winning the pre-season knockout comp and the first grade premiership. The club brought Eastern Suburbs and Australian legend Dave Brown to Thirroul to gee up our players with pre-season lectures and the inspiration paid off.

We won the premiership at the Wollongong Showground by defeating Corrimal in a cliff hanger 4-3. Our rivals led this tight grand final 3-2 with only three minutes left, but they were forced to drop out from their own try line. The ball went to our little winger Aub O'Halloran who snapped a left foot field goal, which in those days was worth two points and victory was ours. Aub was carried shoulder high from the ground by supporters. Our forwards led by big Ernie Smart, popular Bill Faulkner, young Albert Nicholls and Terry Brennan stormed into Corrimal's rocklike defence, no place for the faint hearted in this torrid match.

Thirroul's 1940 side won the District knockout and the First Grade premiership, but the existence of a so called Super League robbed it of the title Illawarra champions.

Back Row: Pop Lanyon (Secretary), Noel Walton, Hec Marr, Albert Nicholls, Ern Smart, Bill Skeene, Laurie Doran, John Brown, George Laughlin (President). Second Row: Jim English, Terry Brennan, Ray Orchard, Aub O'Halloran, Fred Ackerman, Harold Bott. Front: Laurie Spence, Bill Faulkner (c), Reg Large - Ball boys: Les Lanyon, Don Anderson.



The team was Jim English, Noel Walton, Reg Large, Jack Brown, O'Halloran, Ray Orchard, Curly Spence, Laurie Doran, Faulkner, Smart, Nicholls, Brennan and Bill Skeen. English, who was rated a great fullback with a bright future, was killed later over Europe while flying with the RAAF. Local scribes described his display in this grand final as brilliant. We also lost Nico for much of the war years after he joined the RAAF. A few words from a local scribe about that premierships victory: *"Faulkner played an inspiring forward's game and when defeat loomed he set his men an example by diving under the Corrimal forwards in the rucks to gain possession. Orchard proved a most dangerous attacker as pivot, while lock Doran, who was to play later with Newtown, nullified the smart Corrimal backline with splendid defence. Thirroul's scrum half Spence, back from injury, was an inspiration to the Butchers."*

As defending premiers in '41 we fell down a hole. Wollongong tipped us out of the KO competition 5-4 then we lost the next three games. The Butchers led Corrimal 5-0 in an early game with a try and goal from centre Ern Loughrey, but we got thumped 25-5. Thirroul was short of players mainly due to military requirements and we were forced out of the comp after a few forfeits. Our under 21's fared much better beating Helensburgh 11-5 to win the knockout cup and in July thrashed Mount Kembla 53-5. Port Kembla beat the young Butchers 13-10 in a semi-final after we had led 10-nil!!! Jack de Boynton, a lad from Gerringong, won accolades from the South Coast Times... *"a spectacular positional display at fullback."* Jim Seery and Charlie Batchelor scored tries.

The Butchers put it together in 1942 and 1943, winning Reserve grade premierships both years and providing us with a platform back into first grade in '44. We were into a play off with Mount Kembla for the 1942 minor premierships and the mountain men led 12-0 before the Thirroul boys stormed back with a 24-minute scoring spree to win 24-12...top games from de Boynton, Jacky Russell and Ray Orchard in the backs and Seery and Batchelor in the pack.

We lost our semi-final, but as minor premiers we met Port Kembla in the grand final and belted the Blacks 15-3. Another title! The return of Seery and Orchard from injury was a bonus. Also a big wrap for Slappy Air's solo try, despite a suspect knock-on.

Thirroul won the '43 minor premierships, beating Dapto 8-7 in a play off. We beat Dapto later in the season 13-5 in what the local press described as a drab display from two teams with limited knowledge of the code's fundamentals. We knocked off Wollongong 17-10 in a semi with a big game from Reg Large who scored two tries, but we were defeated by Keira in the final 19-6.

The grand final was packed with excitement. Thirroul slipped to a 6-0 lead with Brennan and Bruce Smith, switched to fullback, scoring tries, but Keira came back and it was 6-all. Herb Lane scored for Thirroul, but Keira came back and led 11-9. Thirroul's tigerish pack then took charge. Brennan picked up his second try from a rival's fumble and Lance Nobes barged over to kick the Butchers clear. That year we had two teams in the under 20s comp - the Reds and the Blues with players like Jim Redfern, Gilly Squires, Jack Klower and G. Rowles. The Blues reached the semis, by flogging Dapto 35-3 Big games from Waggy Redfern, Klower and W. King. We got an early jump on Port Kembla in a semi-final, leading 9-2 at half time, but the Blacks exploded in the second half and won in a canter.

Players listed in the celebrations of our 42-43 premierships were: Bill Faulkner (captain), N. Brown (vc), Reg Large, L. Nobes, H. Lane, D. Robinson, B. Smith, Bibby Millington, P. Smith, Ern Smart, C. Batchelor, T. Brennan, Slappy Air, Jack de Boynton, P. Cooney, Alan Whitefield, T. Doonan, C. and E. Cluett. During the celebrations on September 25, 1943, toasts included one for "Absent Players" proposed by veteran supporter Bill Seery.

In 1944 we were back in first grade and a string of wins put us in a confident mood. However Port had the wood on us throughout the season. The Blacks thumped us in three competition games and flogged us 30-8 in a torrid grand final.

PLAYER PROFILE

Bill Faulkner

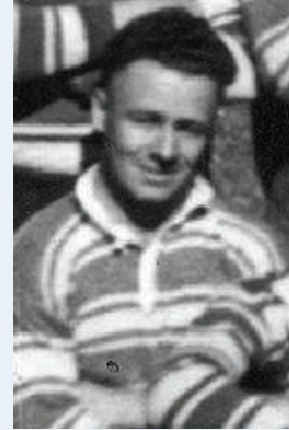
Bill was born in Dubbo in February 1914 and moved to Thirroul, with his family, in his early teenage years. He began playing Rugby League with Thirroul as junior in 1932 and made some first grade appearances in 1934. He was Thirroul captain/coach from 1939 to the end of 1943, winning four Premierships in this time. Bill also coached the 1944 under 19s to their Grand Final win over Tech OBU. Bill represented Illawarra and captained the North team in a match against a South team as an early fixture to the Illawarra-Newcastle clash as the Showground on 22 September 1940. Thirroul team-mates, Albert Nicholls and Jim English, were also in the North side. Bill was an active member of Thirroul Surf Club and for three seasons from around 1938, was the club's Chief Instructor. In 1945, Bill and his family moved to Batlow but returned to Thirroul in 1953. In this time Bill had turned his hand to refereeing and started to referee in the Illawarra competition. In 1952, he refereed the Thirroul-Port Kembla final, which did not make the Port camp too happy. Bill passed away in August 1981, aged 67.



PLAYER PROFILE

Laurie Spence

Laurie was probably the first of a long line of above average halfbacks who played with Thirroul. Born during the First World War, Laurie and his wife Lurline lived in Bath Street, Thirroul. He played a major role in Thirroul winning the 1940 first grade title and represented Illawarra in April of that season against Sydney club, Newtown. The 1940 Thirroul team only lost one match on their way to the Premiership and that was in July against Corrimal, when the clever halfback had to be carried from the field after suffering torn knee ligaments. His next game wasn't until the Grand Final, nine weeks later, when he was one of his team's best in the 4-3 defeat of Corrimal to take the title. Nicknamed Curly, Laurie served with the Australian Army from around 1942 during World War Two and after hostilities ended, he worked in the 140 inch mill at the Port Kembla Steelworks.



Bibby and Frank Beazley (Port) were sent off for a punch up, another Port player joined the fray but was decked by Batchelor. Albert Nicholls back from overseas service showed he had lost none of his fiery spirit. Our Reserves also made the grand final, but lost to an unbeaten Unanderra in a close result.

We did however win a premiership that season. Our whiz kids in the under 19s scraped into the grand final with an 8-7 win over CBC in the final where they met hot favourites Tech. The game was a heart stopper. We led 21-2 at half time with Waggy Redfern cutting them to pieces. In the team were: L. Lanyon, J. Redfern, B. Cambridge, Les Fuller, Mick Clifford, Ben Cooney, R. Critcher, R. Magee, W. Stillwell, G. Dennis, H. Bradbury, R. Mettum, M. Downs and B. Rogers. The Butchers held on to win 21-16. Tech had a classy little half 16-year-old Noel Hill described by local scribes as a lad with bright prospects. Noel would join the Butchers in 1946. Incidentally, we went into new jerseys that

year, due to wartime material shortages...blue with a red vee.

During 1945 a few players won representative selection with Group 7 and Illawarra teams (Group 7 was nominated in '44 and '45 as a combined South Coast side). They were Terry Brennan, Mick Clifford, Bruce Smith, Albert Nicholls and Greg Dennis from the Under 19's. Half Back Noel Hill was in an Illawarra Under 19's team. It seems that our local team played in '44 and '45 as Thirroul-Scarborough.

The team won the 1945 pre-season knockout comp and were set as favourites for the premiership. We had some top talent take the paddock that season. Brennan had rave reports on his ability from the local press. Bibby Millington, Clifford, Smith Nicholls and Jim Redfern also won accolades. In one press report Brennan and Smith were described as "the best second row forwards in the competition". Nico was restricted to games while on leave from his RAAF base, but rivals were aware of this fiery competitor.



Early in the season Thirroul had sweet revenge over Port Kembla following the black fever humiliation the previous year with a 15-8 win over the blacks at Gibson Park. We finished third in the comp and met minor premiers Wollongong in a semi at the Showground before a crowd of more than 2000. Our virile pack ran over the City side and we won 22-8. Tries from Millington, Ray Large, Ron Wall and Clifford plus five goals from Bill Everett took us to the final.

But guess what? Our rivals were Port Kembla and the Blacks led 9-0 at half time. Our guys fought back in the second half and we nearly had them when Wall dropped the ball over the line. The Blacks won 9-6. Thirroul Reserves won their semi over Port 11-10, but unbeaten Wollongong ended our season with a 13-6 win. Our under 19s won their way into the semis with some good wins including 28-7 over Mount Kembla (Ben Cooney scored three tries) and 29-7 over Corrimal (Ray Morgan scored four tries), but lost to Brothers. Prop Nicholls and young winger Greg Dennis were in an Illawarra side that played top Sydney club Eastern Suburbs early in 1945. Easts went on to win the Sydney premiership that year with stars such as Ray Stehr, Wally O'Connell and Lionel Cooper. They flogged Illawarra 54-19, but there were big wraps for Dennis.

Thirroul won the knockout Bill Plummer Cup in 1946 for the third successive year and so held the trophy. It was a tough draw and we fell over the line in the final beating Port Kembla 13-12 thanks to a try by Mick Clifford and five goals from Bill Everett and big games from Batchelor and Greg Dennis. It was our first season after the war and we had a few newcomers - captain-coach Sid Goodwin, tough winger from Newtown, local lad Keith Woodward back from war service (and a convert from soccer) and Noel Hill.

It was a mixed season. An early game with Port provided the usual fireworks, but why was such a placid chap like Nico sent off? Down 0-7 we fought back with a three-man scrum to 7-all at half time thanks to a regular try from Dennis. The Butchers skipped to a seven point lead, but black fever set in and Port got up for a 15-14 win. Thirroul had two players selected in the Southern Division squad to meet the touring English side Greg Dennis and Albert Nicholls.

The Southern Division side caused an upset 15-12 win over the poms at the Showground on June 2 and 19 year old Dennis earned wraps for his pace and defence as a classic bootlace tackler. A crowd of over 12,000 saw the match – a record at the time.

Our winning streak to reach the semis that year included a big win over Unanderra-Keira 39-10 (three tries to Wall and Goodwin), 25-15 win over Dapto and victory over Norths 16-14. We beat the premiers Wollongong 28-12 and Woody was man of the match. Press reports at the time said Sydney club scouts were interested in Dennis, Hill and Millington, while Bruce Smith accepted an offer from Balmain for the next season. Thirroul scrambled into its semi with Wollongong, but this time City was too good and won 5-0. A Mercury footy scribe had a lot say about the game including this: *“The ambulance men were kept busy, in quick succession four Wollongong players were stopped by stiff arm tackles which left them groggy. This method of stopping a player’s progress was introduced by English teams and will have to be wiped out.”*

He also reported *“that Bruce Smith in his final game with the Thirroul side was the pick of the forwards, although Albert Nicholls and Keith Woodward revelled in the rucks and tackled fearlessly.”*

Our under 19s coached by former winger Alan Whitefield did well in '46 reaching the final after a courageous 9-8 win over Port Kembla. The lads were down 0-8 only 20 minutes from the final bell. However in the final an unbeaten Tech came from behind to win 12-7. The team was Kevin Frost, Ray Morgan, Tom Gregan, Arthur Williams, Reg Nicholls, Pud Meades, Allan Gaddes, Bob Ackerman, Nevison, Roy Alexander, Laurie Kelly and Bill Bott. Frank Robinson missed the final through injury.

Local news in 1947 included protests over “atrocious conditions” in McCauley and Bath streets with gravel and dirt creating dust bowls, a request to Bulli Shire council for more lights in Station street, because of the risk of thugs, beer shortages and our new captain-coach was Nico. We beat hot shots Wollongong in a knockout comp semi, but lost the final to Corrimal. Yet the following week in the opening round the Butchers were too good for Corrimal 17-12, with tries to Clifford



After the war, our 1946 finalists. Back Row: Sid Goodwin (c/c), W. Everett, K. Clifford, T. Brennan, B. Smith, K. Woodward, W. Millington, H. Bott (Trainer). Centre: C. Batchelor, R. Magee, A. Nicholls, G. Dennis, R. Mettam. Front: N. Hill, J. Redfern.

(two) and Millington. After a 7-all draw with Port was on a roll winning their next eight matches, including a 22-0 demolition of Norths, 18-0 over Dapto and 15-4 win over Wollongong.

Our winning trot ended when the Blacks dumped us 24-15 and then a loss to Dapto left us in third place behind Port and Wollongong, while our gallant Reserves under the skilful coaching of former handy utility player Jack Air also grabbed a place in the semis. We met the minor premiers in our semi and beat them 11-5 thanks to our fearless pack of forwards who made the hard yards up the middle, giving genius half Noel Hill and livewire fullback Jim Redfern a chance to show their talents. Into the final against Wollongong and we looked good at half time, leading 15-3. The City side stormed back to trail by a point in the final minutes of play...from 15 yards out their star prop Tiny Russell crashed through our defence and barged over to snatch victory 17-15. Best scorers for the season that year were Everett with 48 goals from his trusty boot and two tries, Ray Morgan six tries and five goals, Herb Lane 10 tries and Bibby Millington eight.

Thirroul Reserves won their final, beating Port 18-12 and went on to defeat minor premiers Corrimal 14-9. Slappy was very happy. The Reserves scored 220 points for the season with top scorer N. Benstead contributing 21 goals and 2 tries.

1948 was a tragic year for Thirroul. Charlie Batchelor died

during a game against Port Kembla. Charlie, only 25, had seven seasons with the Butchers as a skilful hooker, playing in two Reserve Grade Premiership winning sides. In post war years he joined Nico and Woody in the coast's most fearsome front row. A post mortem said he died from a broken neck. He had told his skipper of chest pains and Nico told him to go off, but Batch refused and slotted into lock. Soon after he collapsed in a scrum and died.

Thirroul was back in the true colours (blue and white) on that fateful day and the team was: Meades, Morgan, Gregan, Gane, McKay, Redfern, Cooney, Elvin, Millington, Clifford, Nicholls, Batchelor and Woodward. The game (5-all at the time) was deferred till later in the year and we won 16-5. Corrimal won the comp that year after eliminating us from in a semi play-off 10-4. Ray Morgan had another good season with 27 goals and 13 tries. Millington, Clifford and Gregan each scored five tries.

Our 1949 season was dismal, despite talented player/coach Jim "Waggy" Redfern in control. Certainly the loss of two stars - Nicholls and Morgan - in 1949 did not help our cause and injury restricted star player Millington to only three games. It was a tough season and we managed only six wins and two draws. A highlight was beating Port Kembla 4-2 in opening round. The Reserves did better with 10 wins, but Port thrashed them 26-0 in the semi-final. ■

PLAYER PROFILE

Albert Nicholls

One of our truly great clubmen, Albert was born in June 1920. At 18 years of age, he was a first grade front rower and in 1940 was a key member of the team that defeated Corrimal 4-3 in the first grade Grand Final. Just a few weeks after the Grand Final, Albert was off to England to serve his country during the Second World War in the RAAF. Back in Australia in 1944, he was still in active service but based in Newcastle. Albert soon established himself as one of Illawarra's best forwards. The Newcastle Norths club offered him 10 pounds a game to play in their local competition on Saturdays. So Albert played on Saturdays in Newcastle, left after the final whistle to come home and pull on the Thirroul jersey the next day, returning to Newcastle after the match. Albert was a regular first grader from 1944 until his final game in 1953, when he played nine matches before being injured. There are no firm records, but Albert probably played 80 plus first grade games with the club.

In 1946, Albert's talents were recognised when he was selected in the Illawarra team who defeated Great Britain 15-12 on 2 June before a crowd of 13,300 at the Wollongong Showground.

Albert was captain/coach in 1947, 1948 and 1953. After finishing his player career, Albert served the club as President in 1955 and secretary from 1956 to 1959. Albert's son, John, played with Thirroul for several seasons, including many first grade appearances. John's son and Albert's grandson, Scott, also turned out for the Butchers for two seasons and became the third generation of Nicholls to play first grade for the Butchers.





1949. Back Row: Ern Loughrey, Mick Clifford, Bruce Smith, Ron Wilson, A. Fitzgerald, A. Woods, H. Roberts (sec). Middle: Ken Fenton, Tom Green, Bob Mettam, Barry Bolt, Laurie Kelly. Front: Jim Redfern, Al Ackerman, Phil Brown, B.B Millington. B.B. Kevin Gee.

PLAYER PROFILE Greg Dennis

A local junior, Greg was one of the major reasons Thirroul won the 1944 under 19 Premiership. He scored around 30 tries that season, including one in the semi against Wollongong, one in the final with CBC and two in the Grand Final win over Tech OBU. In late August, he scored a smart individual try for the representative Illawarra under 19s in their win over the Lithgow rep side and the week before this rep match, on 21 August, crossed for four tries in Thirroul's 61-3 win over Unanderra. Selected in first grade for the opening competition match of 1945, Greg went from strength to strength as the year progressed. He play a big part in the team winning the early season KO on 15 April, scoring two tries against Corrimal in the final when Thirroul won 29-4. Soon after he was selected in the Illawarra team to play Easts who won the Sydney Premiership that year, at the Wollongong Showground. Easts scored a good win but their captain, Test prop Ray Stehr (11 Tests), praised Greg after the match, saying he had a big future in Rugby League. Greg hit the ground running when the 1946 season began and in an early home ground match scored three tries in the 36-10 win over Corrimal. On May 19 1946, Greg picked up two good tries, for Illawarra Seconds in their win over South Coast Seconds at the Showground. This catapulted him into the Southern Division to play England at the Wollongong Showground on 2 June. The locals won this match 15-12 and Greg was one of the stars. After this form against England he was chased by Sydney clubs, St. George and Balmain. He signed with the Saints for 300 pounds and before he left for Sydney he played in Thirroul's tight 1946 5-0 semi final loss to Wollongong. Greg played his first top grade game for the Dragons in the opening game of the 1947 season against Souths at Erskineville Oval. He didn't score a try in the 30-11 win but did the next week at the SCG when North Sydney beat St. George 16-13. Greg play the first nine matches in first grade before badly damaging a hamstring. At the end of the 1947 season, Greg came back to Thirroul. He had more problems with his hamstring in an early season trial match in 1948 and had to leave the field at halftime. He played one or two competition games that year, but further hamstring problems caused him to retire early in the season. In 1946, Greg won nine of the beach sprint events at the 10 Illawarra Surf carnivals, including the Branch championship. He was second in the NSW titles the same year.



3

Early Fifties



Thirroul moved into the 50's hungry for a premiership, but there were some hurdles to overcome. The good news was we had Millington and Morgan back, but we would have to go on without key forward Albert Nicholls who suffered a career ending injury after just one game.

In round one we beat Wollongong 5-2 and proceeded to win another 8 games to grab a play off against Dapto for a semi final berth. We were able to knock them off 8-2 and would line up against Wollongong in the semi. We were subsequently thrashed 40-2!

Another casualty this season was Keith Woodward, a tough front rower, who suffered a hernia in the play off with Dapto. Bruce Smith, back from Balmain, was top scorer with 22 goals and 2 tries for the season.

It's worth mentioning a few facts about Bruce, who played much of his 15 year career as a second rower or lock. Like Bibby, he kicked off in grade with Thirroul aged about 15 during 1947. He went to Balmain for a few seasons, playing alongside Harry Bath and Pat Devery. He was back at the Butchers in 1949 and was selected captain of the Southern Districts side that beat England. He also skippered Southern Districts against touring French and New Zealand sides. A high class player, Bruce was a shock exclusion from the 1953 Kangaroo team.

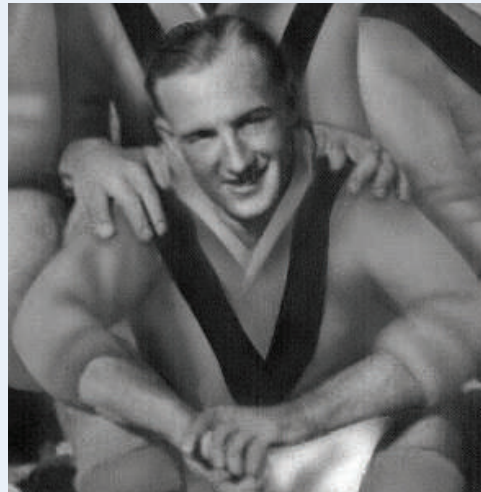
We had only six wins and two draws in 1951 and never challenged for the semi's. Bruce Smith was top scorer with 31 goals and 4 tries. Our Reserves also had a lean year and failed to reach the semi's for the first time in five years. However it was a much brighter year for long-time local Ken Horton. "Knocker" had four games with Reserves before being elevated to the first grade side.

Details for the 1952 season are sparse, but we did reach the final. Our eight wins included an upset 17-8 win over Norths. The lads from Coledale were the hot side at the time, going on to win the minor premiership and premiership. The Butchers beat Wollongong 12-11 in the semi-final before Port edged us out 9-8 in the final. Leading point scorer was again "Punchy" Morgan, one of our great wingers.

We made the semi's in 1953 with eight wins, but Norths, the team of the time were far too good and killed us 33-7. Still it was a good year for Ray Morgan who cracked the century of points for the year scoring 20 tries and 30 goals. This also marked the end of the road for Albert Nicholls. Nico had come back to coach again but could not resist another run and played nine games. ■

PLAYER PROFILE

Jim Redfern



Another outstanding player over this period was Jim Redfern, who played over 100 games in first grade. Perhaps best at five eighth, Waggy was also a handy utility back. He scored more than 30 tries in post war games and did not miss a game in the '47, '48 & '49 and missed a total of two during the '50 & '51 seasons.

Generally free from injury, Waggy met disaster in the opening minutes of our first game in 1953 versus Norths. George Jardine hit him from behind and busted his shoulder. It was virtually the end for the tireless warrior, missing the rest of the season and also our historical 1954 season.



*Back in the good old days when our guys took a break from the paddock to join a 1950 fancy dress show organised by the Thirroul Football Club at the Wollongong RSL Club.
 Top: Laurie Kelly, Ern Loughrey, Noel Alexander, Fred Woodward, Lionel Hampton.
 Lower: Stan Murphy, Dave Cook, Ken Horton, Barney Hampton. Front: Ralph Bell.*

PLAYER PROFILE

Ray 'Racehorse' Morgan

A prolific try scoring winger, Ray was a member of our 1946 under 19 team who reached the final. He came into first grade in 1947 and in his first season, scored six tries and five goals. He played in Bega during the 1949 season, but returned to Thirroul in 1950 and was selected in the Southern Division team who beat Great Britain 18-11 at the Showground. His reputation was such that Ray was selected in this Southern Division team after only three competition matches with Thirroul that season. A consistently good player for the next five seasons, Ray finished with 367 points for the club from 73 tries and 74 goals. The Illawarra selectors preferred Ray for an Illawarra wing spot, instead of one of Australia's greatest hundred players, Brian Carlson (23 Tests). In 1955, Ray made it two out of two against international teams, when he played for Southern Division in their 16-9 win over France, who had beaten Australia two Tests to one in that year's Test series. In the 1953 season, Ray finished with 120 points from his 11 matches and was the first Illawarra player to reach 100 points that year. On 9 August 1953 at McCabe Park, Ray collected 36 points from six tries and nine goals in the 46-14 win over CBC. 1955 was Ray's final playing season.



4

Champions of 1954



This the great 1954 team (players and officials) which won the minor premierships and the premierships. Top: Keith Nolan (secretary), Ern Loughrey (treasurer), Don Haigh, Noel Alexander, J. Ward (president Group 7), Alan Fitzgerald, J. Matthews, Jim Fitzgerald (president), Bruce Cambridge (manager). Middle: Fred Woodwood, Alan Aggett, Ken "Knocker" Horton, Arthur Collinson (capt/coach), Bruce Smith, John Hamilton, George Bywater (trainer). Lower: Pat Miller, Ray Morgan, Noel Hill, Kevin Mossman, Noel Speechley. Inserts: George Sorrell (patron), John Miller (ball boy). Absent: Stan Archer, Merv Nixon.

Thirroul had been "knocking on the door" in recent seasons. Now our chance was here and we grabbed it. Initially however there was a hiccup over the job of coach. The Illawarra League had organised a deal to place a number of players from the recent Kangaroos Tour of England at local clubs as playing coaches. The idea did not suit Thirroul as it planned to use champion half Noel Hill in that role. But the heavies were applied and we came up with Kangaroo lock Arthur Collinson in charge. Add to this Hill and Bruce Smith back from Maitland and our prospect were bright. Ironically Collinson had made the Australian team after playing a blinder in a Sydney grand final the previous year, nudging out Smithy who had been given a wink to prepare for the tour.

We got off to a good start to the season, winning our first four games. Then there were losses to Port and Brothers. CBC had great winger Brian Carlson at the helm. When Norths beat us 15-14 in a second round match we had the task of having to win our final three games to challenge for the minor premierships. We won them all, including a 13-11 come from behind win against Brothers. CBC was leading 6-5 at half time and only the safe boot of Bruce Smith winning the day.



Pat Miller tries to break through.

PLAYER PROFILE Bruce Smith

In 1943, at just 16, he played strongly in the reserve grade Grand Final win over Mt. Keira, after being moved from the forwards to fullback. Thirroul won this match 17-11, with Bruce crossing for a try and landing a goal. The next season, the tough second rower played some first grade games and in 1945, he became a regular top grader. In 1946, Bruce was one of Illawarra's best forwards and Balmain signed him for the 1947 season. His last match with Thirroul, before moving to the Tigers, was a tight 1946 semi-final loss to Wollongong. The Mercury said that Bruce was the best forward on the ground in the 5-0 loss.

He returned to Thirroul in 1949 and in 1950 was chosen for Country Seconds and then was given the captaincy of the Southern Division team for the clash with Great Britain at the Showground. He was captain/coach of Thirroul in 1951 and also again captained Southern Division, this time against France.

In 1952, Bruce played for Country Firsts and also Southern Division. In 1952, Bruce was rated as one of the best forwards playing the game in Australia and was told by a high ranking official that he would be chosen for the 1952 Kangaroos to England and France. That didn't happen, but he must have been very close to selection. After a year with Noel Hill at Maitland, Bruce returned to Thirroul in 1954 to play a major part in the first grade Premiership win. He played in 1955 and in 1956, but retired early in 1957 after badly



injuring a knee at training. In his 10 seasons with Thirroul, Bruce played over 100 first grade games and finished with 441 points from nine tries and 207 goals.

On Australia Day 1948 (then named Anniversary Day), 26 January, Bruce, living at Dowling Street Balmain, was holidaying at the Entrance with fellow Austinmer Surf Club member, Roy Alexander, who also played with Thirroul. Together they saved three men from drowning in the surf and were presented with a Silver Medal from the Royal Humane Society, by the then NSW Governor, Sir John Northcott.

PLAYER PROFILE
Noel Hill



After joining Thirroul in 1946 as an eighteen year old he quickly cemented his first grade position and was soon rated one of the best halves on the coast. He played with the Butchers for two seasons before being snapped up by St George in 1948. He ended up playing 58 first grade games for the Dragons over three seasons and was a member of the successful 1949 team that defeated Souths 19-12 in the Grand Final.

Noel returned to Thirroul in 1951 and was captain/coach in 1952. In this year he was selected to represent Southern Division and also Country. During these years Noel was probably rated as Australia's second best halfback, behind Australian rep Keith Holman. This was confirmed when he was selected to play for NSW against the American All Stars at the SCG in 1953.

After a one year stint at Maitland with another Butcher, Bruce Smith, he returned to Thirroul in 1954 and was an integral part of Thirroul's maiden first grade premiership. Noel was again captain/coach in 1955, which was his last with the club. Tragically Noel passed away at just 37 years of age in 1965. In recognition of his impact at Thirroul, the Noel Hill trophy has been awarded to the Best and Fairest first grade player each season since 1966.



Hamilton goes for a try.



A good run by Miller.



The referee has a look.

During the final round win against Dapto (25-13) Jim Hamilton ran in three tries. We were then asked to play Wollongong in a playoff for the minor premiership. The Butchers beat city 9-5 before a big crowd of about 3,500 and gate takings of 282 pounds. Smithy – Illawarra's leading point scorer for the second year in a row – booted three goals in tricky conditions, while Hamilton was over in the corner for our only try. We went in the semis as minor premiers, but shock, horror, we were thumped 20-10 by Port in a game described by the Mercury as "one of the best displays seen in recent years." Referee Jack Underwood sent our hooker Stan Archer off for punching in the second half straight after he had scored a try to make the score 10-all. We fell in a hole after that and the Blacks went into the final against Wollongong.

Port eliminated Wollongong 10-2 in the final and on the same day Thirroul had a workout game against Group Six premiers Bowral. We flogged the Highlanders 64-18, we could smell a premiership.

There was much excitement in the town in the countdown to the Grand Final. The club arranged for manager Bruce Cambridge to supervise a team bonding at Headlands Guest House before the big game against the old enemy. This same tactic was tried in the previous season without success, but it sure did something this time.

We thumped the Blacks 20-7, four tries to one – the Butchers had taken the title.

Thirroul had the assistance of a stiff wind in the first half, but led only 4-0 at half time before a record crowd for the time of about 6000, and gate takings were almost 600-pounds. Our boy Hill was the star of the game and thanks to Archer's domination of the scrums he gave his backs a feast of ball in the second half. Also in brilliant form was Bruce Smith, and the pair executed some great movements catching Port on the wrong foot time and again, sending Morgan in for two outstanding tries.



Jack Matthews gets one away.

While our pack mauled the Port forwards, Paddy Miller and Kevin Mossman ran over their rivals in the centres. Mossman also picked up a try and Smith booted four goals.

What a season. The Butchers had scored 336 points for versus 196 against. Smith had scored two tries and kicked sixty goals. Wingers Morgan and Hamilton each scored 14 tries, Collinson and Archer six each. Success also meant a clash with the South Coast champions, Berry. Unfortunately after a week of celebrations – oh what a week – it was a bit late for football. Berry gave us a hiding 35-9. We entered the game without Miller and Mossman, Hill came off with a busted nose early on and Aggett was sent off for an alleged punching offense.

Players in our first First Grade Premiership year were: B. Smith, J. Mathews, A. Aggett (all 17 games); R. Morgan, P. Miller, N. Hill, N. Speechley and A. Fitzgerald (played 16); others in that memorable year were J. Hamilton, S. Archer, N. Alexander, A. Collinson, R. Hampton, K. Mossman, D. Haig, Ken Horton, Merv Nixon, B. Coleman, E. Prince and F. Woodward. ■



1954 Thirroul annual presentation night. L-R: Jim Fitzgerald (president), Ernie Loughrey, Albert Nicholls, Ray Morgan & Arthur Collinson.



Jim Fitzgerald & Arthur Collinson. 1954 Thirroul annual presentation night.

PLAYER PROFILE Arthur Collinson

Arthur will always have a permanent place in the history of Thirroul RLFC, as the first player to captain/coach a Thirroul top grade Premiership winning team. Born in Tamworth, Arthur made his name as a top player in the Newcastle competition. In 1951, he joined the Wests Magpies in Sydney and in his three seasons with the club, played 40 first grade games with 20 tries. In 1952, he was selected to tour England and France with the Kangaroos. He played 20 matches on this tour, including three Tests (two against Great Britain and one with France). Arthur also played three matches for NSW and one for City Firsts. Wests won the 1952 Sydney Premiership and Arthur played a major role in the team winning the minor Premiership. But both he and Keith Holman missed the Grand Final win because they were on an ocean liner on their way to England with the Kangaroos.

Around September 1953, the Illawarra Leagues Club had established itself both financially and socially, as one of the most successful businesses on the South Coast. The secretary/manager, Dudley Locke, decided to strengthen the local Rugby League competition by paying for top line Test men to come and play in the district. His first target was Team of the Century fullback and Immortal, Clive Churchill, but the game's top player of the time, decided to stay with South Sydney. However Locke continued with his quest and so Arthur came to Thirroul, while his 1952 Kangaroo teammate, halfback Col Donohoe, joined Corrimal. 1954 is now part of Butchers folklore.



After just one season with Thirroul, Arthur moved north as captain/coach of Port Macquarie for two seasons. He did the same job with Wauchope for three seasons from 1957, then in 1960 returned to Newcastle as captain/coach of Toronto, where he stayed for two years. He had a year as a player with Central Newcastle in 1962 and finished his playing career as captain/coach of Kurri Kurri in 1963 and 1964. Arthur always kept in touch with his Thirroul team-mates and on 3 September 1967, he brought the Central Newcastle team, where he was non-playing coach, to Gibson Park for a match with Thirroul. He became a good lawn bowler later in life but passed away at just 58 years of age in late 1987.

5

Back to Earth



For the 1955 side the '54 glory was a hard act to follow. Hilly was again coach of first grade but we got off to a slow start with early losses to Wollongong, Port and Wests. We struggled in the second half of the season too and losses to Port, Wests and Corrimal meant we had missed the semi's. A highlight was Mossman scoring four tries in a 52-3 win over Brothers. Our records show that "Racehorse" Morgan ended his great career with the Butchers during 1955 playing the first three games only. From the start of our records in 1947, Morgan had scored 70 tries and kicked 72 goals for a points total of 367 points. It was also a sad finale for player-coach Noel Hill, certainly one of our legends. He went off to Victoria where he supervised his aunt's Port Melbourne pub before his untimely death some 10 years later.

So to '56 and not one of our best years, with a 13-12 win over Brothers our only win in the first five rounds. We again missed the semis. It was interesting to see a few new names on this years first grade list. Greg Anderson came down from the North (Moree and Tamworth way) and Don Jeffries, a wandering footy player from the Riverina joined the club. Greg only had a few seasons on the paddock before a nasty rail shunting accident put him on the sideline. He kicked on however to high levels in club administration. Jeffries (Jazza), a demon tackler, earned respect as a top centre and five eighth. Monty Porter also joined us for 8 games in 1957. He was then grabbed by St George where he played nine seasons, before joining Cronulla in its first year.



Barrie Stanford gets a facial from a Wollongong attacker while Kevin Black waits to assist. Ted Curran in background.



Ted Curran wrestles with a Port defender

We located an old League News program from 1956, and here are our teams to meet Northern Suburbs on a Sunday in July:

First Grade – J. Prior, J. Hamilton, D. Haigh, K. Condon, J. Haigh, D. Jeffries, R. Noonan, N. Hedley, G. Anderson, M. Porter, G. Jordan, R. Hampton, G. Race.

Reserve Grade – R. Murphy, R. Hall, J. McGarrity, W. Thomas, J. Inskip, N. Cottrell, M. Barron, J. Wilton, John Dryden, R. Burnell, W. Organ, V. Oliveira, B. Hobson.

In 1957 we struggled into the semi finals, but Port soon put paid to our efforts and belted us 33-9. The Blacks had the wood on us that year also beating us 25-16 and 43-9 in the earlier rounds. Top winger Johnny Hamilton played only the first game of the season with injury ending his fine career. Ham came to us from Newtown for our premiership year and the '55 season and his dashing style on the wing provided us with 24 tries.

Coach Athol Halpin from Toowoomba took over the scoring role booting 23 goals (and 2 tries) for the season. The season also marked the entry into grade for Peter O'Hanlon. Albert Nicholls and Gil Squires talked the surf mad lad into a third grade game with them to avoid a forfeit. The talented forward was then shot into first grade for the final four games. He would later join St George but not before he played for Southern Division in an 18-10 win over Great Britain in 1962.

PLAYER PROFILE

Ted Curran

Ted gave long and valuable service to our club. When he joined Thirroul in 1958, he had a reputation as one of the game's best prop forwards. His representative career started early, after playing strongly in a Possibles versus Probables match in 1952 he forced his way into the Country Seconds team to play their City counterparts at the SCG on his 18th birthday. Two weeks later, Ted was in the Country Firsts team who took on a Metropolitan team, again at the SGC. Two Thirroul players were in this Country team, second rower, Bruce Smith and half and captain, Noel Hill. Metropolitan won a rugged match 27-18. The next season, 1953, Ted joined Temora, where he played for five seasons. In 1957, Ted was a key member of the Temora team who were awarded the Clayton Cup as the best country team in NSW. In 1958, his first season with Thirroul, Ted represented Southern Division against Great Britain. A tough prop-cum-second rower Ted was a core member of the Butchers pack over many years. A knee injury in 1966 caused Ted to retire after eight seasons with the club and well over 100 first grade games. After retiring, he became an Illawarra, Southern Division and Country selector. He was also a NSW selector in 1981. Ted also coached Thirroul reserves and the under 21s in 1967.





Barrie Stanford comes to assist fellow Butcher Ken Sweeney with this Wollongong attacker

Our 1958 season provided us with a new look. A lad from Cootamundra, Lionel Wheatley, was appointed captain-coach and he attracted a Maher Cup mob from the Riverina. Now "Wheats" would become a club legend and so would some of his recruits, they included from Temora Bob Smith, Ted Curran (also Adelong), Don Windbank and Peter McGrath, plus West Wyalong youth Barrie Stanford from the Riverina, Maher Cup country. Bob Smith emerged as one of Thirroul's great players. He played some nine years with us and in that period he won selection as NSW half back from 1960 to 1962. Ted Curran, a tough, hard front or second rower played with Southern Division in his initial year with the club. McGrath was a Riverina representative fullback and could kick goals from all angles. We won four games!

Stats from the '58 season did show that we lost some very close games including a fiery clash with Corrimal. After our coach Wheats was flattened behind play and was carted off with severe concussion, our emotional half Bob Smith was then sent from the field for arguing with the referee. This was a cruel blow as Curran had also been sent off earlier. The brave Butchers still led with two minutes to go, but the enemy scored a late try and conversion to win 14-11. If first grade had a lean year, Thirroul Reserves had a shocker, losing probably all games. We lost the first 12 and we have no records McGrath, and that big bloke

from Port, Sidd Rodd had a blinder, scoring three tries.

Smithy and Curran had a busy season with rep duties, playing for Illawarra and Southern Division. Illawarra won a game against combined groups 52-0. In the second round and at full strength we enjoyed one of our most satisfying wins, a 30-14 hiding over the Blacks. Two tries each to Smith and Willis and one each to Wheatley and Clutterbuck, McGrath booted six goals. Unfortunately our season ended in the semi's when we were defeated 25-10 by Wests, after leading 10-0 shortly before half time. Wests were minor premiers and had beaten us in both rounds, they went on to beat Norths by four points in the grand final.

The Butchers Reserves did a Lazarus this season, rising from the bottom of the ladder in '58 to reach the grand final the next year. No doubt the reversal was inspired by the example set by Captain Coach Don Windbank, one of our Temora imports. Our Reserves had a playing list that would have been a first grade team at almost any other club. We won 11 games and had two draws for the season, finishing minor premiers. Coledale beat us 13-11 in the Semi, but being minor premiers we advanced to the grand final against Norths. It was 5-all at half time, but we lost to the Northerners 12-5. Some of the best for the year were Alex Whitby, John Dryden, Max Carrol, Don Windbank, big Bob Lowrie and strapping prop John Hazlegrove from the far South Coast. ■

PLAYER PROFILE

Gordon Abercrombie

Growing up in Towradgi, Gordon was an outstanding junior with the famous Tech OBU club in the late 1950s. He began playing grade with Thirroul in 1960 and won a Premiership that first year, when he was five eighth in the reserve grade team's 17-3 Grand Final victory over Norths. He played with Thirroul until the end of the 1966 season, when he was signed with Cronulla for their first season in the top grade. In his four seasons with the Sharks, he played 52 first grade games, scoring 75 points. In 1969, Gordon won the Cronulla player of the year award. Back with Thirroul in 1971, Gordon retired at the end of 1973. He played around 120 top grade games for the Butchers and on 25 May 1964, was fullback for Southern Division in their 11-0 win against France at the Wollongong Showground. Gordon kicked a goal in this victory.



Ted finds himself in an uncompromising position.

6

Into the 60's



Thirroul had all three grades into the semi-finals in 1960. First grade were eliminated by a strong Northern Suburbs side which went onto win the premiership. Some of our first grade players that season were John Hobbs down from Manly, Bob Smith, Lionel Wheatley, Ted Curran, Peter O'Hanlon, Gordon Abercrombie and Don Jeffries.

Reserves had their revenge thumping Norths 17-3 to win the Grand Final. The premiership side was B. Dwyer, L. Gray, R. Allen, B. Stanford, J. Wilton, A. Whitby, M. Carroll, D. Hill, W. O'Brien, G. Abercrombie, K. Black, J. Dryden and P. McGrath. "Splinter" Gray had a great season and would have made any other first grade side in the Illawarra, but elected to stay at Thirroul and in the shadow of the Maestro, Bob Smith. Third grade was beaten in its semi by Port 12-2.

Our firsts in 1961 made a playoff for the semi's but lost to Dapto 13-4. Reserves, the defending champs, were beaten 19-15 by Port in their semi, while the Thirds had little success. Some newcomers to the club that year were Jim Harrod, Bob Fitzgerald and Ross Thomas.

Thirroul was able to attract good talent to the club, but success still eluded us. First grade made a semi in 1962 only to lose again to the old enemy, Port Kembla, 20-10.

Thirds won its semi over Collegians 12-10, but lost the final to Port.

In reserves that year Kevin Riolo scored 99 points (seven tries and 39 goals). Kevin later became a leading referee in the Illawarra district and usually got a good serve at Gibson Park, despite his Butchers background.

An old program had this first grade line-up for a Friday night game: *K. Riolo, K. Black, G. Abercrombie, A. Lynch, B. Dwyer, J. Ferguson, R. Smith, L. Wheatley, P. O'Hanlon, J. Harrod, A. May, E. Curren, G. Willis.*

Club topics in the program listed some players as progressing well, such as "Nuts" Neal, Barrie Stanford, "Abo", "Crusher" Curran and "Goose" O'Hanlon. It also mentions the outstanding form of Bobby Smith playing for Southern Division against Western . . . "this little demon tackled everything in sight and spearheaded all attacks".

These Butchers in 1963 had good reason to smile, well most of them with a grin. They had just walloped Dapto 41-9. Top: Alec Whitby (he booted seven goals), Peter O'Hanlon (a try), Jeff Boland (four tries), Ted Curran, Jim Harrod, Ian Grose, Fred Smith (two tries). Lower: Bob Taylor, Gordon Abercrombie (a try), Danny O'Connell, Neil Smithard, Bob Smith (a try) and Barrie Stanford. Some regulars missing that day included Bob Whitty, Jeff Neil, John Mercer and Max Carroll. Thirroul in 1963 lost a semi-final to Wests in extra time.



PLAYER PROFILE

Danny O'Connell

Danny began his playing career with Northern Suburbs in 1950 and was in the firsts at 18 years of age. A strong running centre, he played 104 first grade games for Norths, including the winning 1952 Premiership decider. He represented



Illawarra twice in 1952 against North Sydney and Parramatta. He then had two years as captain/coach of Collegians, followed by two more years as captain/coach of Gundagai. Joining Thirroul in 1961, Danny played eight successive seasons with our club, finishing in 1968 with 96 games for the firsts. Captain/coach in 1964 and 1965, Danny combined with Alan Harris to do the job again in 1968. After suffering a bad injury during the season, Danny retired and had to resign from his captain/coach job, with Alan Harris taking over. The next year, Danny became club treasurer and in 1970 was the secretary. In 1972, he coached the reserve grade side to the final.

Onto 1963 and we had our three grades in the semis again. First grade clashed with Wests and it was 9-all at fulltime. The Devils pinched the game 19-9 in extra time. The Reserves had better fortune against Wests beating them 7-4 in a semi and downing Port 15-11 in the final. Unfortunately they were denied victory in the grand final by Norths who won 27-6. Some players with the Reserves that season included Ian Grose, John McKinnon, Charles Kerin, John Mercer, David Owens and Max Carroll. Wollongong beat the Thirds 6-4 in their semi.

There was limited success in 1964 with only First grade reaching semi finals. Their finals campaign was ended by the cruellest of margins, a single point, going down 8-7 to Dapto. The Illawarra Mercury reported this game as a rugged affair. This was a season when Thirroul players were sent from the field for various infringements. In a game in April Barrie Stanford and Ross Thomas received their marching orders. Bob Whitty had a personal score of 100 points for this season (two tries and 47 goals).

1965 was another lean season with only Reserves reaching the semis where they were eliminated by Dapto. Some names from that team: John Stanford, Geoff Cook, Jim Sky, Fred Smith, Peter Schaeffer, "Hank" Pennell, John Air, Ian Dawes and Bill Conlon. The Mercury reported that Dapto skipped away in a rough bruising match and that Thirroul folded under pressure. ■



Butchers 1964. Rear: Charlie Keiran, Des Horne, Bob Whitty, Jeff Boland, Neil Smithard, Gordon Abercrombie, Ross Thomas, Fred Smith. Front: Ron Woods, Jeff Neal, Peter O'Hanlon, Ian Grose, Danny O'Connell (c-coach). Ball boy - Ray Millington.

7

Local Talent Emerges



A young John Air on the fly.

In 1966 there was more evidence of local talent emerging from our junior ranks. Unfortunately we were to lose an "old" warhorse that season. A knee injury took out Ted Curran who had definitely left his mark at the club since joining from Temora with a band of fine footballers in 1958.

We had Ian Grose, John Air, Bill Hawke, John Stanford and Fred Smith playing grade, along with veterans Lionel Wheatley, Bob Fitzgerald and Danny O'Connell, who had joined us from Norths in 1964. In fact Danny had been coach the previous two years. The Butchers scored an early, shock win over Collegians. Des Horne scored the try after a break by Fred Smith. A few losses - twice to Port - and we hit the comeback trail with wins over Wollongong, Collies again and thrashing Wests 35-8.

In this game speedy winger Alf Biles scored two tries, Abercrombie, Stanford, Cork, Wheatley and Horne one each. Abo kicked four goals and Wheats three. Diminutive half Lionel Gray had a fine game and Grose excelled with crashing runs into the defence. We then thumped Collies again, yet the Dogs the following week wrapped up the minor premiership. Thirroul grabbed a semi spot with 19-8 win over Wollongong, but the wheels fell off the following week with City reversing the result, beating us 18-4 in the semi.



Thirroul's Bob Fitzgerald, David Grose in action while Bob Smith gets up ended.



Gerry Geloven takes down a Wollongong attacker while John 'Cheesy' Stanford comes to assist.

PLAYER PROFILE **Bob Smith**

Born in Temora in October 1936, Bob soon made a name for himself in his home of Temora. In 1957 Bob was a member of the champion Temora team that won the Group Nine premiership and then went on to defeat the Wagga Magpies in a match which carried with it the title of Southern NSW Champion. Temora also won the famous Maher Cup in the same year and were awarded the Clayton Cup as the best NSW Country team. In 1958 when Lionel Wheatley was appointed as Thirroul coach he brought with him several of the Temora stars including Bob. During that first season, Bob played mostly at halfback but he was sometimes used at five eighth and in the centres. Bob went on to have a stellar representative career, playing for Illawarra, Southern Division, NSW Country and also NSW. His first state cap came after Bob had played well for Country Firsts when they stunned their City rivals with a well deserved 19-5 victory. A record eight Country players, including the Thirroul half, were chosen in the NSW team to play Queensland at the SCG. Bob played well in the tight 21-20 win. This was the first of Bob's five games for NSW.

In 1962 and 1963, Bob was captain/coach of Thirroul and then he moved to Wagga in 1965, where he became captain/coach of the Kangaroos for two seasons. In 1967 he returned as captain/coach of Thirroul, and although he played in the final round of 1967, a tight 11-9 loss to Collegians which kept the Butchers out of the semi finals, he retired after this game because of a chronic knee problem. In his eight seasons with the Butchers, Bob played over 100 top grade matches and won the top club award in 1961 and 1963. Bob and his wife Shirley, along with their three daughters, lived at Bulli, where he worked locally as an electrician. He passed away in April 2005, aged 68. Bob was unlucky not to have won an Australian jersey and is considered one of Thirroul's greatest ever players.



There was drama in Reserve grade. The Butchers led 8-7 and needed victory to reach the major semi, when the referee walked off. He reckoned there was too much fighting. We were finally given the right to play in the major, but Port beat us 31-14, despite great games from Jeff Boland and Bob Whitty. Still as minor premiers we were into the grand final, but again we ran out of puff and Collies won 12-5. Stand out games from Boland, Bill Hawke and Neil Smithard.

Bob Smith was coach for 1967 (his third time at the helm). Talent is one thing and we sure had our share over the years, but the "breaks", well that's another thing. Nonetheless in '67 the Butchers kept their semi hopes alive through till August after an 8-3 win over Corrimal at Gibson Park in shocking conditions - high winds and heavy rain and a crowd of about 200. Lionel talked to the heavy ball and steered it over for four goals. The next week Thirroul defeated Wests 12-5 and winger Biles had another excellent game. The Mercury mentioned intelligent play from the "old" brigade Wheatley, O'Connell and Bob Smith. Young Gerry Geloven rated special mention.

In our final game minor premiers Collegians held off a strong finish by the Butchers to win 11-9 in a very rough game with cautions galore. The loss kept us out of the semis. Best that day from press reports were Wheatley, Air, Geloven and Ross Smart. Our team against Collies was: J. Air, A. Biles, D. O'Connell, J. Stanford, W. Hawke, G. Geloven, R. Smith, L. Wheatley, J. Mercer (his sons Darren and Dean would years later be surf champions), J. Nicholls, R. Smart, I. Grose and G. Hamilton. Biles was named Illawarra's top winger that year. Collies won all grades that day. Reserves 33-6 and Thirds 53-4. Thirroul's under 18s won their competition in '67 beating Port 9-8 after Geoff Bland booted a

field goal (worth two points then) from 30 yards out. The team was: R. Millington, G. Wark, L. Strickland, G. Grace and J. Wall (replacement) G. Bland, K. Squires, L. Champion, G. Mason, K. Bannerman, B. Kelly. It's worth noting that this season marked the end of a great career for Bob Smith, a supreme half and most modest guy - off the paddock. Bob had a busted knee and in those days there was no magic surgery to get him back onto the field.

In 1968 sadly our coach Danny O'Connell had to pull stumps because of an injury and Allan Harris slotted into the job. Thirroul failed to make the semis and the teams which did breathed a sigh of relief, as the Butchers were on fire in their final few games. After beating Wests 10-8 Thirroul were at home to the odds on favourites Dapto and beat the Canaries 16-11. Strong games were had by Kevin Bannerman, Allan Harris and Tom Gray in the forwards and Kevin Squires and Greg Wark in the backs. Squires at half was too smart for his Dapto opposite Warwick Shirlaw.

Thirroul were again underdogs against Port Kembla at Gibson Park in the final game, but chopped up the Blacks 18-7. Butchers' bone shattering defence halted Port's usual attacking game and our pack was too good. Big games from Harris, Bannerman and Geloven. Squires again in a starring role, while John Stanford and Fred Smith stunned Port's backline with tigerish tackling. That man Wheatley again scored over a century in points for the season, with 57 goals and a field goal.

Reserves had another good season. After a 10-2 loss to Port they reversed the result in the first semi-final, winning 6-5. Hooker "Sam" Hamilton gave us a feast of ball, but the advantage was lost with poor handling in the backs. Good games from Ian Grose and John Nicholls.



Ray Millington and Alan Davies



Frank 'Sticks' Lawrence with a ball and all tackle as Ray Millington looks on.

Thirroul was defeated in the final by Collegians 7-4 in a tight game in which our scrummage and goal kicking let us down. So close each season only to be denied.

First grade missed the semis again in 1969. In August we met the front running Port side which had been beaten only once all season and the Blacks defeated us 23-13 in a rough and tumble match. Port led 15-0 at one stage before our fight back and the donnybrook. There was a huge brawl after a scrum broke up with players standing toe to toe in the punch up. Port's star Bernie Nevin emerged with blood pouring from a facial wound. A fair bit of claret was spilled in that game.

Thirroul won its three final games (beat Corrimal 20-8, Dapto at Dapto 17-12 and Wollongong 31- 11). Stanford stood out in the centres against Corrimal, while the forwards found gaps around the rucks and shrugged off weak tackles. In the rugged meeting with Dapto young second rower Geloven sparked a fightback after the scores had been level three times, while Stanford kept top Dapto centre Lionel Simmons quiet.

The Reserves at last provided us with some glory. They had been knocking on the door in previous years and in '69 they had as captain-coach one of our legends - Lionel Wheatley, a veteran waiting to turn 40. His team of enthusiastic lads included some not long out of juniors. They made their way into the semis with a final match win over Wollongong 31-11. Two tries to Jeff Wall and tries to Ray Millington and Tom Gray. Then in a very tough semi against Norths we scraped through 9-6. Millington scored a try and Wheats kicked three goals.

The Butchers crushed Port Kembla 18-3 in the final with special mentions for Fred Smith, Geoff Bland and L. Hall. Reserves were supreme in the grand final demolishing Collegians 34-2. Lionel was the target of some nasty late tackles from frustrated Collies players and referee Mick Treacy sent the Dogs lock Barry Kerr off after one of them. Burly John McDonald chastised the ref over this and he too was sent for an early shower. Bland, Millington and Wall each scored two tries in the romp. Celebrations lasted for some days. The victorious squad was: Lionel Wheatley, Les Hall, Greg Wark, Gary Bland, Fred Smith, Ray Millington, Charles Kerin, Tom Gray, Bob Fitzgerald, Jeff Boland, Ian Grose, Jack Leary, Warren Sambrook, Jeff Wall, Barry Hazelgrove, Brian Carter and Ross Thomas.

Late in 1969 Keith Nolan, the astute Secretary-Manager of the Thirroul Leagues Club, stitched up a deal with Balmain for the services of a half back, John McCarthy, who was to lead us into the promised land. He was a great "buy" and created in the Football Club that magic we were seeking. ■



Keith Nolan (left) and Balmain secretary Kevin Humphreys (right).

8

Macca Arrives

The arrival of McCarthy proved inspirational and we won the 1970 pre-season competition, had a heap of wins and took out the minor premiership. Three of our players -fullback John Air, centre Arthur Fogg and hooker John Floyd - were selected for Southern Division to play Great Britain. We lost young Slappy for a few games after suffering a broken jaw during the game. This is a team which played Wests in August: Millington, Smith, Fogg, Pagett, Cruickshank, Stanford, McCarthy, D. Grose, Geloven, Healey, Harris, Floyd and I. Grose.

The Butchers went into the major semi against Dapto bristling with confidence and got flogged 15-0. Still we were into the final with Wests the foe. It was a most punishing game, a real heart stopper with the full time score 12-all, but what might have been. Fred Smith skirted down the sideline late in the second half to score wide out, but a linesman ruled Fred had stepped out. An ABC news clip of the incident later

suggested the linesman was wrong. Anyhow the Devils kicked clear in extra time and won 22-12.

Another boom year coming up for Thirroul in 1971 as the resurgence continues under versatile , goal-kicking half Macca. After winning our first 10 games there's the sweet smell of success. Our team which played Wests in May: Air, Lawrence, Fogg, Dickenson, Millington, Abercrombie, McCarthy, Geloven, Healey, Vasalli, Gorman, Floyd and Grose. Gordon Abercrombie had come back to us from Cronulla and Frank Lawrence, an Illawarra winger of the year, had joined from Wests. Thirroul was without the valuable service of John Stanford for the last part of the season after he suffered a serious leg injury against Port. Nonetheless we had depth. Just look at this Reserve grade team which beat Dapto in May: Mason, Eggleton, Smith, Thomas, Dawes, Mally, Bland, Fitzgerald, Healey, McCaig, Bonser, Miller and Peel.

Here's a team from the 1970 competition. Standing: G. Bland, Cyril Peel, Ian Grose, Charlie Bennett, Ken Fraser, Peter Cruickshank, Greg Wark, Kneeling: John Air, John Stanford, John Floyd, John McCarthy, Arthur Fogg, Gerry Gelovan. Ball boy: Gerard Magee.



The Macca era and seasons from 1970 to 1985 provided some recall for long time Butcher player Ian Grose, a forward who made the hard yards in more than 100 first grade games.

"This period could arguably be tagged as the 'Pinnacle & the Pits' in the history of the Thirroul Rugby League Football Club. The 'Pinnacle' referring to the unprecedented grand final appearances of all grades and winning the coveted Club Championship in 1975 and 1979. The 'Pits' being our failure to compete in the 1982 competition.

"The start of our successful years coincided with the signing of the South Sydney junior product John McCarthy from Balmain after recommendation from Kevin Humphreys to his good mate Keith (Shoulders) Nolan.

"His signing for the 1970 season caused initial controversy in the ranks as the old stalwart war horse Lionel Wheatley had led a youthful team to the Reserve Grade premiership and was considered by many a walk up "Gimme" to coach first grade.

"During the Reserves victory celebrations word leaked out that Macca had been signed. As was custom, the footballers wives were seated together when a celebrating team member exploded...'the club has signed a never was Neville Nobody to coach us' His wife said 'Ian, I'd like to introduce you to his wife!'

"Well, with hindsight, how wrong can you be. Macca's record is unsurpassed, although threatened by the later performances of Phil Ostwald. Macca certainly brought changes. He instilled in his players the will to win and achieve goals, not just to compete well.

"No doubt a major part of his success came with the arrival of young players with greater self control and fitness levels. Also some astute signings. Local product John Air back from the bush, Arthur Fogg and John Floyd.

"The early 70s provided Macca with a depth of talent. Peter Dickenson, an ex-Rooster, brilliant young lock Alan Davie, Eric Pitt from North Sydney and the return of Gordon Abercrombie from Cronulla.

"Future State five eighth Les Mara and tough prop Alan McRitchie joined us - both signings were to be master strokes for the Butchers. Mara was to form a brilliant combination with Macca and Davie, while McRitchie knew, nor would accept any peer up front.

"As this publication reports, the 'rags to riches' 1973 season proved it all worth while.

"Our Under 18s that season herald the arrival of some brilliant players for the future years - Tim McLaren, Jack Jeffries, Alan Stenning, Mark Nolan, Rodney Patison and Tony Trudgett. Their coach? Macca.

"We continued to attract top talent, both local and from outside, but the seasons after the Macca era were lean.

"Life member Greg Anderson in 1981 gave our Leagues Club publication a team of the best players he saw pull on a Butchers jersey between '56 and '81. It was a good one, but I have one which would give it a good shake.

"First Greg's side: Peter McGrath, Alf Biles, John Hobbs, Don Jeffries, Ron Wall; John Ferguson, Bob Smith; Alan Davie, Peter O'Hanlon, Peter Wynn, Cyril Peel, John Floyd and Alan McRitchie.

"My team: John Air, Peter Nolan, Danny O'Connell, Arthur Fogg, Fred Smith; Les Mara, John McCarthy; Lionel Wheatley, Brian Battese. Tim McLaren, Craig Young, Barrie Stanford, Ted Curran. No doubt there are more combinations that could threaten both sides.

"In closing I would like to jog some memories of our older members with a few observations:

Pop Lanyon - the one handed line marker at Gibson Park; Ern Loughrey - referee of a 'million' R.L. games on our local turf; Bernie Hampton -1st grade manager extraordinaire. Nature's gentleman; Johnny Kerr - tireless worker for junior rugby league; Keith Hawke - critic and singer of love songs and ballads; Controversy corner - Peter McGrath, Bill Seery and Gil Squires {hey, what about Don Jeffries and 'Knocker' Horton?}.

It's no wonder our club is rich in character, loyalty and good humour with people such as these to recall."



Kevin Humphreys and John McCarthy

We had shrugged off the black fever that had plagued us for years, but now we had a new nemesis – the red devils, Western Suburbs. Wests beat us 19-7 in the major semi and the Butchers only just fell into the grand final with a nail-biting 13-12 win over Dapto in the final. Wests defeated Thirroul 18-11 in the grand final. We led 11-5 early in the second half, but lost the plot. The squad in that grand final was: J. Air, F. Lawrence, A. Fogg, R. Millington, F. Smith, P. Dickenson, G. Abercrombie, J. McCarthy, A. Davie, G. Healey, E. Pitt, C. Peel, A. Miller and R Gorman. I. Grose, J. Floyd, G. Geloven and R. Visalli.

So its into a new season (1972) and we have a few new players, including Alan McRitchie, known as the “Gentle Giant” or the “Smiling Assassin” - a genial guy off the paddock, but a most versatile forward in action. He had played grade with Saints and Cronulla. Also a fantastic five eighth Les Mara from Balmain. Earlier Les had been at the crossroads - footy or

boxing? Fortunately for us he pulled on footy boots, otherwise he would have taken out a national boxing title, no risk. Thirroul had early success winning the pre-season Caltex Cup and some early competition wins, but a slump mid-season meant we had to regroup. We did by belting comp leaders Dapto 23-10 at the Showground to consolidate our second place on the ladder and that’s where we finished. The Butchers defeated Dapto in the major semi 11-5 and it was another show down with Wests in the grand final. The Red Devils beat us - again. “Sticks” Lawrence had to go off with a dislocated shoulder. Our team was: Gordon Abercrombie, Frank Lawrence, John Air, Peter Dickenson, Ray Millington, Les Mara, John McCarthy, Alan Davie, Gerry Geloven, John Stanford, Ian Grose, John Floyd and Alan McRitchie. On the bench: Stephen Ross, Stephen Forbes, Charlie Bennett, Peter Smith and Ross Visalli. Fogg was out injured. ■



Ian Grose goes low and Cyril Peel comes over the top.



Thirroul supporters very excited at Wollongong Showground as the Butchers storm ahead in one of their many wins in the early 70s.

PLAYER PROFILE Gerry Geloven

A local junior, Gerry began playing first grade with Thirroul in 1968 and remained with the club for the next nine seasons. He was a member of the 1973 first grade Grand Final winning team and also played in the 1971 and 1972 Grand Finals. On 27 July 1969, he represented Illawarra under 21s against South Sydney and in 1972 was a member of the Illawarra senior team who won the Country Championship. He was also an excellent surf boat rower and in the 1969/70 season, was a member of the Bulli crew who won the NSW Open Surfboat title. Gerry played well over 100 first grade games with the club.





*Rod Gorman
takes out a Dapto
attacker as Ian
Grose looks on.*

PLAYER PROFILE **John Floyd**



Born on the central coast, John played junior football with the Erina and Lakes United clubs. His early grade years were with Sydney University, North Sydney, Penrith and finally some minor grade games with St. George 1969. Starting in 1970 he played with the Butchers for five seasons and then finished with two more seasons with Sydney Uni. A durable player, John was rated one of Illawarra's best hookers during his time at Thirroul and finished with around 90 first grade games for the club. From the start John was impressive and was selected, along with team-mates John Air and Arthur Fogg, in the Southern NSW team to take on the 1970 touring Great Britain side at Wollongong Showground. This game has been described as the most vicious match ever played on Wollongong Showground, with Thirroul club-mate, John Air, sustaining a broken jaw. Britain won 24-11. During John's time at the club, the firsts made the final in 1970, the Grand Final in 1971 and 1972 and won the competition in 1973. The tough hooker played a major role in the tight Grand Final win by dominating the scrums, including a second half count of 18-5 his way. In 1974, his last season with the club, John played 13 of the first 14 competition games in first grade, then missed two rounds with injury. He played with the reserves in the final two rounds and then played in the major semi and Grand Final winning reserve grade sides.

9 | We are Champions



Our first 1973 game against Collegians saw the return of two top forwards - McRitchie and Grose –following retirement the previous season. The match was a 20-all draw, but big Mac was forced out with an arm injury. He said “well that’s it - I’m hanging up my boots.” Still we had big IG, Cheesy, Geery & Floyd and our new young lock Aidan Beath, a hungry lad from Goolagong via St George.

It was a gloomy start to the season with three successive losses by early May. However the Butchers bounced back with six wins on the trot. The first of these was against Corrimal with this team: R. Millington, M. Miller, P. Dickenson, P. Nolan, S. Ross, L. Mara, J. McCarthy, A. Beath, G. Geloven, J. Stanford, I. Grose, J. Floyd and J. Waldie. The Butchers were struggling to improve on fifth place as the semis came closer, but surprise, surprise we had that great forward McRitchie back in the boiler room.

We had a convincing 22-8 win over Wests late in the season, but still in fifth place going into the final round. Sure we easily defeated Norths in this round, but we were still not out of goal. We needed a major upset just to have a shot at the semi’s. Out of form Wollongong provided it with a surprise win over Corrimal. The Butchers were in with a chance and eventually made the final four by winning a mid-week play-off 18-5 over Corrimal.

Our old nemesis Port were our next victim in the minor semi. The Blacks led 11-3 early before we put them to the sword in scoring a 21-18 win. Thirroul was now on a roll, but our next hurdle was Dapto, the team that had belted us in round 12. It was a tough game, as was usual against the canaries and they led 5-2 at half-time. Not only were we behind but we had to run into a stiff southerly in the second half. However our fiery forwards dominated play and we got up 17-13 thanks to Macca’s magic boot. Both teams scored three tries, with Macca’s goals the difference. ■



‘Rocka’ Bob Sheeley goes all out to support the 1973 Premiership bid.

Grand Final Day - 1973

After losses to the Wests in the GF in the previous two years, the Butchers emerged supreme defeating the Devils 8-6 in a nail biter. A crowd of more than 12,600 packed Wollongong Showground to see Thirroul's second ever First Grade Premiership their first in 19 years. It was a memorable match with the Butchers fighting back after the Devils led 5-4 at half-time

It was a fitting reward for John McCarthy who in his four years with Thirroul had taken us into a final and three grand finals - all against Wests. He had scored 776 points in this period - 10 tries, 362 goals and 14 field goals.

But it was a team effort. The Butchers pack led by McRitchie, Grose and Bennett stormed over the Devils. Wests backline could not split our defence with big games from veterans Dickenson and Fogg in the centres. The Illawarra Mercury had a few words: *"Perhaps the hero of the game was hooker John Floyd who won the second half scrums 18-5 to blot Wests out of the game....The Butchers unleashed a second half blitz that shook the defending premiers to their bootlaces."* Floyd wanted to come off at half time with a bung arm, but Magic Fingers Les Griffin patched him up with a few needles. Jon Sutherland had a great game at full back until injury forced him off. His replacement was Mark Nolan from the Under 18s. He was ice cool under pressure and had a fine game as custodian. The Leagues Club monthly publication "Up the Butchers" reported: *"Our glorious, mighty Butchers were magnificent, supreme and just too good for Wests. At the end supporters were nearly delirious. What a fairy tale the whole business was this year."* The team of heroes and reserves were: Sutherland, Stynes, Fogg, Dickenson, Peter Nolan, Mara, McCarthy, Beath, Geloven, Bennett, Grose, Floyd, McRitchie, Mark Nolan, Ross, Millington, Seymour and Barnaby. Manager Ray Hunt.



Macca takes the boys through a fitness session up the railway bridge stairs.



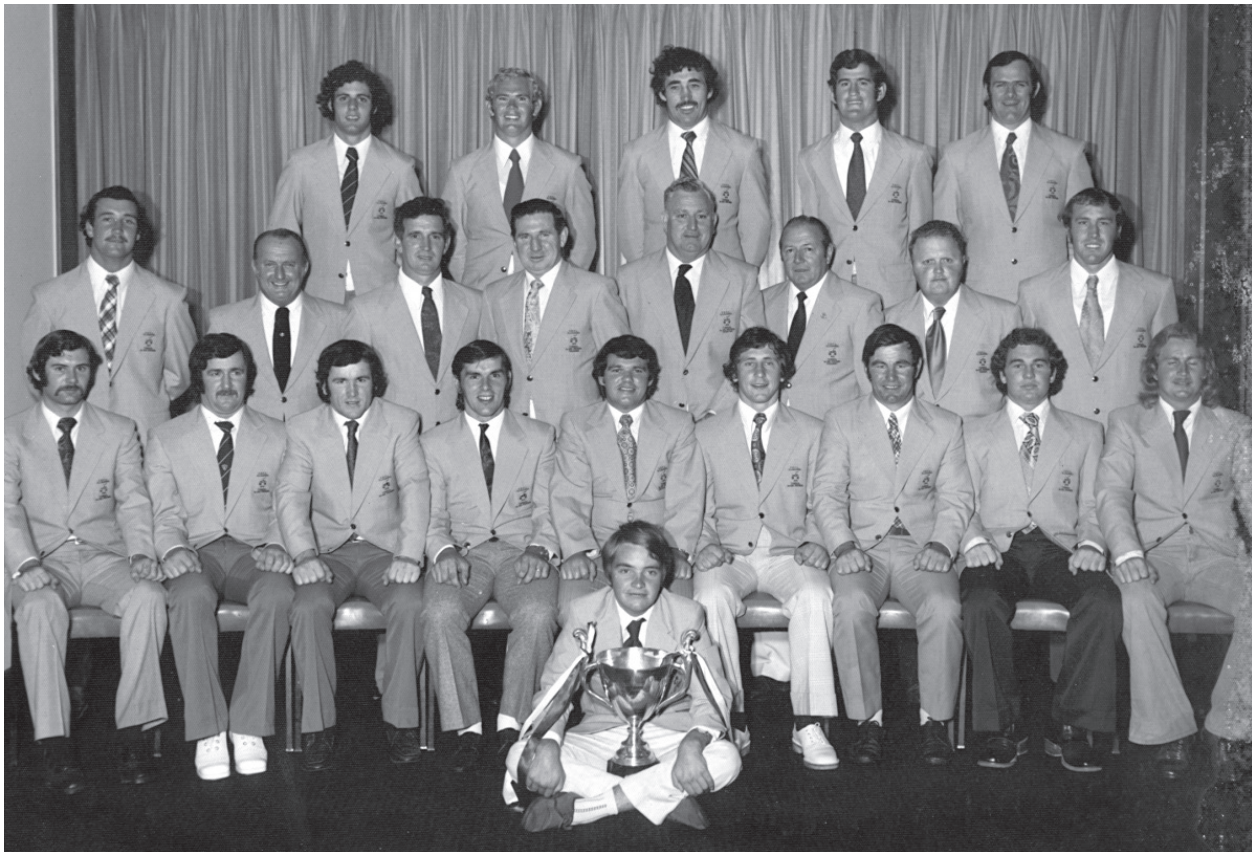
Captain Coach John McCarthy is chaired from the field by Ian Grose and Les Mara.

Two of our top players of the early 70s - John Air and John Stanford - missed out on the grand final because of early season injuries. This was a shame because Slappy & Cheesy had each contributed so much to the club over many years. Incidentally Aiden Beath also won the best and fairest award for the season and collected a car in a media award contest. We had also lost rep lock Alan Davie that season, but we were lucky enough to have Beath slot into our pack with great success.

The celebrations lasted several days. Not even a blackout at the Leagues Club on the night of the premiership triumph could dampen the mood. Electricity restrictions were in force in the Illawarra at that time. The county council official that selected Thirroul that night must have been a Devils supporter.

The Reserves had another good season reaching the final, but were beaten 11-3 by Corrimal. Lock forward Bob Cook won the team's best and fairest award, while Millington was a tower of strength in his conversion to the forwards scoring three tries and kicking 33 goals for the season. It was also a big season for Ron Wall scoring 26 tries - two with Firsts, 18 with Reserves and six in Third grade.

Also champions that season were the Under 18s, coached by Macca. What a double for our diminutive half. The young Butchers beat Corrimal 13-5 in their semi and 10-7 in the grand final. The side included five Illawarra rep players - Alan Stenning, Tony Trudgett, Rod Patison, Mark Nolan and Jack Jeffries. In the grand final John Paduch and Bill Corbett scored tries and Nolan booted two goals. Others in the victory squad were: Geoff McWilliams, Tony Bate, Tony Bland, Gerard Magee, Glen Hunt, D. Barnes, Tim McLaren, Ludi Strojny, Mark Miller, Tony Oliver, Gerry Keene and John Mey. ■



1973 Premiers. Top: Mark Nolan, Stephen Ross, Alan McRitchie, Ray Millington, Ian Grose. Centre: Charlie Bennett, Les Griffin (trainer), Harry Oxtoby (trainer), Greg Anderson (treasurer), Jack Armstrong (secretary), Bruce Cambridge (president), Ray Hunt (manager), Graham Seymour. Front: Peter Nolan, Peter Dickenson, Aiden Beath, Gerry Gelovan, John McCarthy (capt/coach), Les Mara, John Floyd, Maurice Stynes, Jon Sutherland. Ball boy: Ian Blakney. Absent: Arthur Fogg.

PLAYER PROFILE Arthur Fogg

Arthur began playing junior football in the Newtown competition and then played some minor grades with the Tigers in 1968 and 1969. In 1968, he was a member of Balmain's winning third grade Grand Final team and the next year played with the Balmain reserves in their Grand Final loss. He came south to Thirroul in 1970 for John McCarthy's first year as captain/coach and played the next nine seasons with the club. Mainly a talented all-round centre, Arthur was proficient anywhere in the backline. In his first season, Arthur collected 10 tries as Thirroul marched to the minor premiership, only to be beaten in the major semi and final. In 1971 he crossed for four tries in a single game against Wollongong at the Showground. He had some injury worries in 1973 and as a result only played in four first grade games during the regular season. But his team-mates knew what a valuable big game player he was and on the road to the Grand Final success, Arthur played in the play-off for fourth place, the minor semi, the final and the Grand Final.

He captained Thirroul in the 1975 Grand Final and on 23 May 1976, at Gibson Park against Corrimal, he played his 100th first grade game with the club. Appointed coach of the reserve grade team for the 1977 season, Arthur began the year as first grade fullback. He alternated between first and reserves that year but was brought back to the firsts for the minor semi final. He was captain/coach of the reserves in 1978. Arthur was selected for the Illawarra Country Championship winning teams of 1971 and 1974. In 1970 he also represented Illawarra and later that season was chosen on the wing for the Southern NSW team to play the 1970 British tourists. After leaving Thirroul, Arthur played a season with Bowral in 1979, captain/coached Mittagong for a couple of years in Group 6 and then Gerringong in Group 7, in 1982. He finished his playing career in 1983 playing with Ryan's Roos, who won the second Division Grand Final that season.





Thirroul Leagues Club celebrate the 1973 premiership in style.

PLAYER PROFILE

Les “Magic Fingers” Griffin

Les Griffin was one of the pioneers of modern day trainers. An ex Australian Navy man, Les and his family lived close to Bulli beach. He began working as a trainer with Corrimal RLFC club in the mid 1950s but didn't stay long before coming to Thirroul. Les spent more than 10 seasons with the Butchers. In the official photo of John McCarthy's 1973 Premiership winning first grade team, Les is standing proudly beside representative prop forward, Charlie Bennett. Success came to Les quickly, as he was trainer for NSW Country in 1961 and soon after, NSW, before being named as the successful 1968 Australian World Cup winning side. John Raper captained this team to victory and emphasised that Les was a positive member of the Australian squad. Nicknamed Magic Fingers, Les was active in the Surf Life Saving movement and used a hyperbaric chamber, long before they became common place. Later in life he worked at Thirroul Leagues Club, where John McCarthy was his immediate boss.

“Les was a very intelligent man, who did a lot for Thirroul RLFC,” John McCarthy said. “He was always willing to help with any team in any grade and I remember him coming to



Les Griffin weaves his ‘Magic’ on young Aiden Beath

Dalton Park nearly 40 years ago, to help our under 18s defeat Corrimal, who were the favourites and had much bigger forwards..

“ Born on 20 August 1917 in Leichhardt, Sydney, Les passed away in October 2006, aged 89. He served with the Australian Navy in the middle east in World War Two and was in Tobruk. An excellent boxer, Les won the lightweight championship of the Allied Forces, beating an American in the final, during his time in the middle east. In those days, he was often transported from ship to ship by flying fox for Navy boxing matches.

10

The Late 70's



As defending champions in '74, we fell short of our premiership target, well short, we didn't even make the semis. Macca had retired and Thirroul first grade had a talented new coach - Les Hutchings, who had played half for Country and NSW. The smell of the linament was too strong for John McCarthy and he came out of retirement as player-coach of our Reserves mid way through the season. First grade never got out of second gear and poor Les had opponents on and off the paddock. Despite poor form we still had three players in the Southern Division side to play Great Britain - Mara, Bennett and Floyd (for a second time). Grose and Beath were in the Illawarra Amco Cup team. Mara went back to Balmain and played for NSW in 75-76.

Reserves - runners up the previous year - were running hot with Macca booting plenty of goals and he was backed up by a few of his '73 premiership mates. The Butchers beat Corrimal in the Grand Final 15-5 after taking out the minor premiership. Joe Wilson -with long hair - had a blinder at five eighths. The squad was: John O'Dwyer, Stephen Ross, Jon Sutherland, Bruce Trudgett, Ron Wall, Joe Wilson, John McCarthy, Aiden Beath, Wayne Spence, John Stanford, Peter McLaren, John Floyd, Lindsay Foster, Rod Patison and Greg McLean. Third grade won the minor premiership by six points, but in a tense, torrid grand final Corrimal beat the Butchers 8-6. Our points from three Paul Cambridge goals.



Some familiar faces from this team of the late 70's.

Ron Wall makes another break with John Stanford in support.



New recruit Rob Pillon shares some thoughts on the upcoming season with Bob Fitzgerald.



Greg Stokoe and Rod Henderson celebrate after a try.



Peter Wynn takes another hitup with Tim McLaren in toe.

Our '74 Under 18s, with Aiden Beath coach, successfully defended their Illawarra title, defeating Wollongong 28-3 in the grand final. Big games were had by Paul Davies, Ludi Strojny and skipper Rod Patison. The team was: L. Strojny, T. Oliver, B. Pettri, C. Hunt, N. Missios, P. Davies, P. Curtis, R. Patison, T. McLaren, W. Shiels, C. Young, J. Jeffries, B. Corbett, P. Meades, D. Barnes, G. Horrell and D. Leaf.

Thirroul was seeking that old McCarthy magic in first grade in 1975 by appointing him non-playing coach for the season and it almost paid off. He had a bunch of young talent and a few battle hardened veterans. We reached the grand final but Dapto beat us 15-2. The Canaries had a gale force wind behind them in the first half and they made the most of it with high kicks putting the Butchers under constant pressure. The wind then died down at half time.

Thirroul pinched a young forward from Corrimal that season, a burly kid called Craig Young who went on to star at St. George and play many Tests for Australia at prop. We also had a smart half back from Dubbo - Bob Pilon. Butchers of '75 included S. Ross, M. Nolan, M. Robertson, P. McLaren, C. Bennett, Young, M. Hutchinson, A. Stenning, B. Trudgett, Pilon, A. Fogg, J. Stanford and R. Patison.

Reserves were again in top form winning the minor premiership. However a slump at the wrong end of the season saw them beaten in the major semi 25-15 by Wentworthville and 24-7 by Corrimal in the grand final.

Third grade showed Thirroul's depth of talent. After their narrow loss the previous year in the grand final, the thirsty mob skipped through '75 unbeaten. They encountered a temporary setback in the major semi when beaten 24-5 by Port Kembla.



Some of our most successful players – Tony Trudgett, Craig Young and Peter Wynn.



Alan Stenning - fast running outside back.



Wayne 'Moose' Shiels - hard hitting prop and a proud committee man. 2009 Clubman of the year.



Try scoring machine Ron Wall off loads a ball during the 70's.

The lads, coached by Geoff Gooch, bounced back to knock off Collegians 7-3 in the final and then they thumped the Blacks 20-7 in the grand final. With so much talent at the club we won the 1975 Club Championship.

It's 1976 and Thirroul attracted two smart Peters to the club. Centre Peter Rowles and forward Peter Wynn, who came from Werris Creek to train as a teacher at the local College. The Butchers won a play off for the semis against Helensburgh, but lost their minor semi to Corrimal 4-19. Rowles had a good season with 156 points (six tries, 68 goals and two field goals). Rod Patison was player of the year.

Our Reserves, coached by John O'Dwyer, retained their form of the previous year and marched into the grand final with wins over Corrimal (38-0 in the minor semi) and Dapto (20-18 in the final). The Butchers led by skipper John Air beat Wentworthville 19-16 in a thrilling finish. The Thirds had another successful season with Greg McLean captain-coach. They won their way into the final with a 20-13 victory over Dapto and tossed Wests 20-13 in the final. The wheels fell off in the big one and Wentworthville thumped us 33-9.

Former top centre Peter Dickenson was coach for 1977, following a season as coach of Sydney Reserve grade premiers St. George. More new talent included Terry Westblade, recruited from St. Gregorys, brothers Kim and Rick Patrick, exciting winger Greg Stokoe and Glen Flack. We reached the minor semi, but lost to Port 8-12. The Blacks led 12-2 at one stage and we finished strongly, but time beats us. Try scorers were Kim Patrick and Alan Stenning, while Peter Duffy kicked a goal. Ross Visalli played for much of the first half with a broken arm. John Hobbs, club secretary for six terms, said the away trip to Coolangatta that year was a ripper. Fun men on the trip included Ron Kain, Arthur Fogg and Paul Lumby. Kevin Cooney rendered a few musical treats.

Coach for 1978 was former Kangaroo forward Kevin Goldspink. Lionel Wheatley had Reserves and "Canvas" McLean was the coach of Thirds. It was a bleak year for the Butchers. We failed for the first time in many years to reach the finals in all grades. It was also farewell to our great second rower Peter Wynn, who had three big seasons with the Butchers during his time as a student teacher. He was to have a great career with Parramatta and play for Australia.

Goldie, a detective with the Wollongong Demons, was back as coach in '79 with a strong team of youth aiming to improve on the previous season. Some of his players were Tim McLaren, Ron Wall, Terry Westblade, Kevin Cooney, Rod Henderson, Wayne Shiels, Mark Nolan, David Banks, Ron Chilby and a likely lad from Lismore - Brian Battese. The Butchers grabbed third place in a traffic jam at the top and thrashed Corrimal in the minor semi 36-5. Alan Stenning scored two tries, while Cooney, Battese, Wall and David Tuxford scored one a piece.

Garry Wheatley borrowed his Dad's boots on and kicked six goals. Alas, Thirroul was eliminated in the final by Wests. The first grade side in the final: J. Air, D. Braithwaite, K. Patrick, Stenning, Wall, Cooney, R. Patrick, Battese, Wheatley, Tuxford, W. Shiels, G. Lattimer, T. McLaren.

Reserves had a fine season in '79 thumping Port in the final, but losing to Dapto in the grand final. The Butchers team was: R. Henderson, L. Strogny, R. Chilby, M. Priddis, T. Steep, T. Westblade. P. Daws, J. Dransfield, S. Cochrane, M. Nolan, R. Moffatt. J. Traynor, R. Visalli, D. Banks, P. Lumby. The Thirds reached a semi and the all up efforts of our grades gave us the Club championship again.

It was also a good representative year for Thirroul with four players in the Illawarra side to play Great Britain - Terry Westblade, brothers Kim and Rick Patrick and Tim McLaren. ■



Referee Wynn cautions a young Alan McBride

PLAYER PROFILE **Brian Battese**

A South Lismore junior and a NSW schoolboy representative, Brian came to Wollongong Teachers College at 18 in 1979 and joined Thirroul. He had three seasons with the Butchers, playing in the 1980 final. He represented NSW Country Seconds in 1980, while in 1981 he was in the NSW Country touring side. On Wednesday 8 July 1981, Brian represented Illawarra in their 26-7 win over France at the Wollongong Showground. He was also selected for Country Firsts to play City in 1981, but had to withdraw because of a thigh injury. In 1982, he moved to Wynnum-Manly in the Brisbane competition and played in the club's winning first grade Grand Final team (beat Souths 17-3). In 1983 he played with the Wests Magpies, before moving to the Bulldogs for two years. Brian partnered Steve Folkes in the Canterbury second row for both the winning 1984 and 1985 Grand Finals. He finished his NRL career with Easts and Canberra. Altogether, Brian played 90 first grade NRL games.





Peter Wynn proves a handful for the Collies defence, with Ron Chilby in the background.

PLAYER PROFILE

Peter Wynn

Peter was born in Maitland on 23 December 1957. In 1976, after finishing High School, he won a scholarship to Wollongong Teachers College and soon joined Thirroul, because of his mother Grace's family friendship with Keith Nolan. In his first season at Thirroul, Peter played around eight games with the firsts and then was a member of the reserve grade Grand Final winning team, who were coached by John O'Dwyer. In his three seasons with Thirroul, Peter played around 30 first grade games and also represented Illawarra on 10 occasions. His first representative match was for Illawarra in the 19-10 loss to Brisbane Valleys at Lang Park on 4 May 1977 and this side included another future Test player, Steve 'Slippery' Morris. That same year, he won the award for best Illawarra player under 21 and also the radio 2WL Player of the Year award. The next year Peter was a permanent member of a very strong and successful Illawarra team, who were coached by former great Britain Test half, Tommy Bishop. They won the 1978 Country Championship, defeating Newcastle in the final, with Peter's brother Graeme in the Newcastle side. Peter was then selected for the NSW Country tour of Queensland. On 20 May, 1978, Peter and his brother Graeme, were the second row pairing for Country Firsts in the clash with City at the SCG. The next year, he joined Parramatta and in 12 seasons with



A young Peter Wynn and Tim McLaren

the club, played 175 top grade games (43 tries), including three winning Grand Finals, 1982, 1983 and 1986. In 1979, Peter played the first of his six games for NSW. He made his Test debut against New Zealand in a night match at Lang Park on Tuesday 18 June 1985. This was the match when Australia's Greg Dowling and Kiwi, Kevin Tamati, brawled off the field after they had been sent to the sin-bin. Wally Lewis captained the Australians and they won this Test 26-20. The game at Carlaw Park on 7 July 1985 was the last of Peter's three Tests. Peter won the 1987 Parramatta clubman of the year award and was selected in the Eels Legends team, as a second rower. He was also given Life Membership of Parramatta in 1988 while still playing.

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Some Tough Years

We had John McCarthy back as coach in 1980 and again plenty of talent, but we did not click as a team and missed the semi-finals. Four Butchers were selected in Country week - Ron Wall, Kevin Cooney, Terry Westblade and Brian Battese, who also made Country the following year. Newcomers for the season included hooker Michael Bolt, who would in later years become a legend with the Steelers, and utility back (or forward) Bruce Percy. Bruce would go on to play for more than 20 years with Thirroul, with a career that included more than 100 first grade games and if we check this year's programs he might still be on the paddock.

Our Reserves were again in fine form but were eliminated in the major semi by Dapto. Third grade provided our glory that year, led by young Phil Ostwald as captain-coach they won the premiership. We suffered a major loss at the end of the season when Ron Wall accepted a job as coach of the Ryan's Pub team in Second Division. A few years later this brilliant player would find his way back to the Butchers. Ron later went on to international fame in touch football.

1981 arrived and there were to be large changes on the horizon for our local competition. It was to be the final year of Illawarra League as we had known due to the creation of the Illawarra Steelers. This was terrific news for rugby league in the area as Illawarra was soon to be in the big time. The local comp would be known as Carlton Illawarra League.



These four Butchers played for Country in 1980. Ron Wall, Kevin Cooney, Terry Westblade and Brian Battese.



A team from the early 80's in front of a Greens bus - coached by Kevin Cooney.

Our first grade again fell down a hole and won only four games. Reserves again showed plenty of courage and reached the final only to lose to Corrimal. But HOORAY we picked up another premiership in a newly created grade - the Under 23s led by that man again – Phil “Ossie” Ostwald. The inspired Thirroul whizz kids walloped Dapto 29-8 in the grand final, even with the placid Butchy Banks spending 10 in the sin bin following a disagreement with a Dapto prop. The team was G. Pritchard, B. Percy, M. Fitzgerald, G. Collins, R. Wong, N. Loughlan, D. Banks, P. Ostwald, S. Rowe, P. Doran, D. O’Grady. Manager “Tarp” McLean. Best and Fairest that year were Brian Battese (first grade), Glen Hunt (Reserves) and David Banks (Under 23s).

Unfortunately in 1982 we were unable to field any teams. The Illawarra League which had been running footy for some 60 years was transferring its affiliations to a new group - Carlton Illawarra League. This all came about with the creation of the Steelers which would now be Illawarra’s showpiece. Some of our guys from ‘81 were invited to talks with the Steelers, including Kevin Cooney, Tim McLaren, Peter Dawes, Brian Battese and Ron Wall from that famous Ryans pub team.

We did field teams in 1983 without much success, but the players who took the field in these years deserve a heap of credit. Many a local boy was pulled out of the pub on a Friday night to make up the numbers the next day. If it wasn’t for these proud Butchers who knows where our club would be today. Sure we weren’t competitive at times but there was always a ‘never give up’ attitude and this was enough to carry us through week after week.

The Butchers climbed a little higher in ‘84 and we went within a whisker of making the semis when we lost a crucial game to Corrimal in mid-August. The Cougars beat us 30-16 after we had led 10-8 at half time. The Butchers ran out of puff with the loss of versatile second rower Greg Feltis (knee injury) and Gary Pritchard (severe groin injury) Mark Oliver scored a try and Mark Davies kicked four goals. In the final game Dapto thumped us 36-22.

Again in 1985 the results did not tell the full story. We were producing some fine talent, but lacked enough depth to challenge for the semi’s. Representatives for the successful Steelers President Cup side in ‘84 were Mark Taylor, Darren Gray, David Fitzgerald Garry Barrett and David Roach. We had five players rep in the Illawarra team - David Fitzgerald, Roger McLeod, Greg Feltis, Paul Bonfield and Mark Davies. Kevin Cooney had the side in ‘84 and shared the coaching chores in ‘85 with Barry Jackson, who also had the role of Club Secretary for four years.

In what has been a fine Butchers tradition, the off field comradery remained strong. It didn’t matter which grade you played (sometimes all three), we were ‘one club’ when it came to partying (I mean team bonding).

If things could get worse they sure did in 1986. We had won one game late in the season when we met Wests. The Devils won first grade 74-6; Reserves 60-6 and Thirds 62-0. Funny the things you can forget! Thirroul ended up with six points (two byes) and the wooden spoon. And we lost young Mark Taylor with a broken leg.



An 18 year old Keith Cole on the charge. Cole represented City and NSW U18's in 1983 and went on to play First Grade for the Steelers and South Sydney, finishing back where it all began as a part of the '95 premiership side.



The end of another tough game versus Dapto with Gary Barrett, Shane Holland and Mark Sharp and David Fitzgerald.



Long serving strapper of the 80's Kenny Martin.



Peter 'Nobby' Jeffries carts the ball up at Gibson Park while Garth Pritchard watches on.



Keith Cole receives an award from Graeme Wynne in front of the stand.



Mark Oliver, Paul Bonfield, David Banks and David Fitzgerald cheer on Illawarras' first female strappers.

A better season ahead in '87 with Olympic rowing champ Tim McLaren captain-coach and the re-appearance of Terry Westblade in the pivot position. By mid-June the Butchers were emerging as premiership material after a strong win over Corrimal 16-0, but it was a costly triumph. Dashing centre Mark Taylor was down again with a broken left leg....*"a dreadful blow,"* said Barry Jackson. Still we had Westblade and John Wheatley back from injury, following a loss to Wests. In July Thirroul advanced to second place on the ladder with an exciting 22-17 win over Dapto. Darren Gray's sparkling game at half gave the Butchers inspiration. Skipper McLaren was happy with a 34-12 win over Port the next week, but he was still critical over his sides squandering of too many opportunities. David (Butchy) Banks had a big game against the old enemy.

Soon after Thirroul won a vital game against Collegians 22-20. Top supporter Bill Seery snapped three cigarette holders as the drama unfolded. Colliers raced to a 16-0 lead after only 20 minutes. Thirroul came back into the game with two super individualist tries from full back Ron Wall. Sean Minogue converted and the Dogs lead was trimmed back to 16-10 at half time. Further tries to Feltis and Wheatley set up a tight finish with Minogue booting a penalty only 10 minutes from full time to give us the lead and victory.

Tim was fortunate to have a team stacked with talent including Westblade, Feltis, Minogue, Bruce Percy, David banks, Wall, running riot from fullback, Phil Steep, Wheatley, K.Chard, P. Brown, young Brett Jones and Darren Gray. We won the minor premiership which was a magnificent effort after the previous year's slump. Collegians got their own back by beating Thirroul in the major semi and the Butchers were tossed out of the title race in a cliff hanger with Wests in the final. Minogue was top scorer for the season with 40 goals, six tries and four field goals, Wall scored nine tries and Feltis eight.

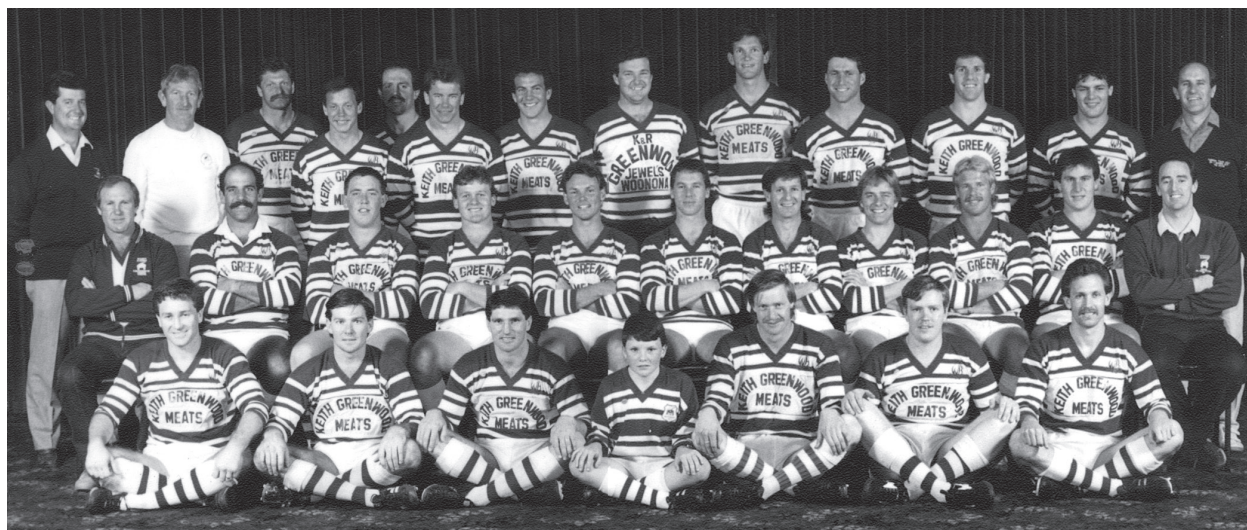
In 1988 we started well winning the pre-season knockout competition. That was about as good as it would get as we missed the semi's winning won only nine of the 18 comp games



David 'Butchy' Banks is pursued by Berkeley's Michael Wicks.

Our Reserves in '88 did much better with Terry Gilogley coach, winning 14 from 18 games to take out the minor premiership. The Butchers won the major semi final 27-12 over Collegians, but the Dogs flogged us 38-8 in the grand final. Best and Fairest awards in '88 – Darren Gray (1sts), Rob Hynds (Reserves) and Evan Stray (3rds). Big scorers that year were Paul Amatto with 116 points in 1st grade and Wayne Baker in Reserves 115 (6 tries, 45 goals and 1 field goal). Thirds with Mark Oliver won only 5 games.

Phil Ostwald had a year as coach of 1st grade in 1989, but details are sparse for that year. ■



Minor Premiers 1987. Back: G.Smith (president), K. Martin (strapper), D. Banks, B. Percy, P. Ostwald, W. Markham, G. Toohey, G. Smith (strapper), T. McLaren (capt/coach), G. Feltis, S. Minogue, R. Hynds, B. Jackson (secretary). Centre: J. Stanford (selector), R. Cook, P. Brown, B. Jones, J. Wheatley, M. Taylor, R. Wall, D. Gray, S. Holland, B. Blay, T. Gilogley (2nd grade coach). Front: P. Jeffries, J. Markwort, T. Westblade, K. Hindle (ball boy), P. Steep, P. May, K. Chard.

PLAYER PROFILE

Ron Wall

A try scoring outside back with blinding speed, Ron could score from anywhere on the field. In 1973, Ron collected 26 tries, two in first grade, 18 with the reserves and six for the thirds. In 1974, Ron was a member of Thirroul's reserve grade Grand Final winning team, who defeated Corrimal 15-5 in the Grand Final. In his 11 or so seasons with Thirroul, he played over 80 first grade matches and represented Illawarra in 1979 and 1980. In 1979 he visited Lismore with Illawarra for the 13-4 win in the Tooheys Centenary Challenge with Group One. Ron also played for Illawarra in the 1980 Country Championship games, under coach Graeme Langlands, scoring three tries in two games. He was then selected to tour Tweed Heads, Wagga and Queanbeyan with the NSW Country team. He also played for Country Seconds against City Seconds in 1980. He was top try scorer in Illawarra football for the 1980 season with 12 tries. On 17 February 1980 in a Saturday night game at Dapto Showground, Ron landed three penalty goals in Illawarra's 6-3 win over the Cronulla Sharks. In 1987, Ron played a major role in the sides march to the first grade minor premiership and was sorely missed in the sides narrow final loss that year. Ron was Mark Taylor's assistant coach with the first grade Premiership winning 1995 team. He represented Australia in Touch Football and is a member of the Australian Touch Football Hall of Fame.



Tough forward Shane Holland makes another solid hit. Shane was Illawarra Player of the Year runner up in 1988.

Some key players from the 1987 minor premiership team. Darren Gray, David Banks, Paul Brown, Brett Jones, Terry Westblade and coach Tim McLaren.



Bruce Percy makes a typical burst while Terry Westblade looks on.

PLAYER PROFILE

Bruce Percy

Bruce Percy began playing under 18s with Thirroul in 1980 and came into grade that same year. He played a vital role in the 1980 third grade Premiership win, scoring the only try in the Grand Final at Wollongong Showground in the 5-4 victory over Wests. The next year, he collected another Premiership when Phil Oswald's under 23s won the Grand Final 29-8 over Dapto. After entering no teams in the 1982 competition, Thirroul returned in 1983 and Bruce was to be a regular first grader during the 1980s and early 1990s. When the firsts took out the 1995 Premiership, Bruce sat on the bench in the Grand Final. In 1998 and 2001 he picked up two more Premierships when the reserves won the Grand Final in both seasons. He continued to play until 2003 when he was almost 40 years of age. When Bruce retired after 23 seasons, he had tallied more than 220 matches for the club, including more than 100 in first grade. On 8 August 1998, Bruce achieved a memorable milestone, playing in all three grades against Port Kembla. He may have began his grade career as a winger, but when he finished had played in most positions on the field, including hooker in the 1995 reserve grade Grand Final. In 1993, Bruce was a popular winner of the George Laughlin Memorial trophy as the Clubman of the Year. During his long career, Bruce never took any money for his services, preferring to donate his playing fee back to the club each season. Bruce has run the water bottle for Thirroul during the past 10 years or so and intends to do this job again in 2013. Bruce's son, Robert, played under 18s with Thirroul in 2012 and will come into grade this year.



PLAYER PROFILE

Darren Gray

An unsung hero of the eighties was our champion little halfback Darren Gray. Son of former 60's halfback, Lionel, Darren was certainly a player punching above his weight. He made an early impression in the 1981 under 18's premiership winning team along side Keith Cole, Darryl Crosland, David Fitzgerald and Mark "Tizzy" Taylor. Darren and Tizzy formed a trustworthy half combination which carried through into grade in the coming years. Darren played during a time when Thirroul often struggled to put a decent team on the paddock, but he was always willing to put his head where no one else would and could also create opportunities with his skill and knowledge of the game. He is widely regarded as one of the most courageous players to don the blue and white jersey. Darren's skill and commitment saw him named First Grade Best and Fairest three times (1983, '87 & '88) and he was a major contributor in Thirroul winning the minor premiership in 1987. He also represented the Illawarra Steelers in the 1984 Presidents cup and starred in some of the great Ryans Roos clashes of the eighties.



Darren Gray is chaired from the field by Keith Cole and Darryl Crosland after a victorious U18 Grand Final. Coach Greg Latimer.

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Rebuilding



1990 Butchers. Back: Paul MacLean, Ken Martin, Terry Gilogely, (unknown), Bill Scott, Darren Martin, Jimmy Bennett, Jason Byrne, Michael Crosland, Kingsley Baker, Paul Air, Gary Launt, Michael Scard, Mick Martin, Kevin Anderson, Joe Pullen. Middle: Paul Jones, Trent Morgan, Phil Steep, Darryl Crosland, Greg Hopper, Paul Jones, Phil Kipp, Mark Taylor. Front: Jim Hill, Greg Sunderland, Steven Raile, Robbie Hyndes, Greg Toohey, (unknown).



Daryl Crosland - Tough as teak front rower who has served the Butchers as player and coach over many years, also represented the Steelers in the 80's.

Tough representative prop forward Daryl Crosland took over in 1990 with Phil Steep coaching Reserves and Gary Launt the thirsty Thirds. Unfortunately the Butchers struggled winning only three of its 16 games in First grade, two in Reserves and only one in Third grade. It was a hard year for Crosso, in charge of a relatively inexperienced side. As one of the only big names in the team he was often targeted by opposition teams.

Thirroul made some progress in 1991. The club was definitely in a rebuilding phase with many young local juniors getting their first taste of grade during this season. The Butchers first grade won five games, reserves won only four, but the thirds, led by Terry Gilogley, reached the minor semi final against Corrimal. It was 6-all at half time, but the Cougars slipped away to win 16-14.

A highlight of the season was the Illawarra Player of the Year award, won by Mark Taylor. Two interesting recruits this season were Greg Mackey and Dean Carney. Mackey had played with Souths and the Steelers before going to England for a number of seasons. Carney played with Wollongong before seasons with Cronulla, the Steelers and Newcastle. These guys provided invaluable experience to what was a very young first grade side.

In 1992 Thirroul again provided the Illawarra Player of the Year - Paul Air. Phil Ostwald, as coach of first grade, Frank Nowlan shared reserves with his son-in-law Greg Mackey, while former first grader Rod Henderson coached thirds. Both firsts and reserves each had four wins, while "Rockets" lads lost a semi playoff to Wests. Utility back Evan Stray and Mackey won representative selection that year. The club hosted a fundraising dinner during the year featuring Wally Lewis, but where was Wally?

A first grade team that met University in August was as follows: G. Mackey, S. Raile, A. Sargent-Wilson, E. Stray, G. Davidson, D. Jones, P. Air (c), C. Patch, B. Percy, M. Sedgwick, S. Pearse, M. Scard and D. Dolton.

Reserves: D. Pickthall, S. Boyle, J. Sargent-Wilson, G. Toohey, B. Scard, D. Carney, R. Whitefield, T. Grose, T. Scard, G. Rutledge, S. Rutledge (c), T. Jones and T. Paniora.

Thirds: T. Morgan, D. Franklin, B. Scott, D. Hoare, G. Aitken, A. Whitton, T. Gilgley (c), M. Crosland, A. Cartwright, M. Carden, M. Oliver, G. Sunderland and B. Heir.

Our 80th anniversary celebrations in 1993 were a great success thanks to the organisation of our Club committee members spearheaded by President John Air, Secretary Arthur Osborne and Treasurer Kevin Anderson. However our footy

results did not match up, First grade won five games and the Reserves and Thirds each won three. Mind you, we had Mark Taylor, Paul and Glen Air, Craig Patch, Dean Jones, Scott England and Adam Sargent-Wilson with the Steelers that season, which left limited talent for coaches Phil Ostwald, Aiden Beath and Rod Henderson.

At last 1994 brought supporters some joy with both Firsts and Reserves into the semis. Thirroul captain-coached by Brett Jones came out of the wilderness and had its best season in years. University tipped us out of the Firsts grade minor semi, a pity as we flogged the Students 34-6 in Round 10. Colliers upset our Reserves 15-10 in their semi and the thirsty lads missed a berth in the semis losing a play-off. These results provided evidence our rebuilding program was beginning to pay off. ■



1991 Team. Back: Craig Patch, Phil Ostwald, Scard, Dean Dolton, Darryl Crosland, Geoff Rutledge, Dean Carney, Greg Stokoe. Front: Trent Morgan, Greg Hopper, John Sargeant-Wilson, Mark Taylor, Greg Toohey, Evan Stray, Troy Jones.



1993 Team. Back: Michael Hobson, Tony Scard, Glen Cahill, Grant Davidson, Phil Ostwald, Darryl Crosland, Nathan Hodgson, Greg MacLean. Front: Clinton Quinn, Greg Toohey, John Sargeant Wilson, Craig Patch, Bruce Percy, Steven Raile, Rob Sheeley, Mark Pickles.

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Champions Again



We had to wait 22 years for our next First Grade Premiership, the club had struggled through much of the 80's and early 90's, but 1995 was to be the year of the Butchers. The following season summary was provided by inspirational 1995 Captain/Coach Mark Taylor:

Undoubtedly a special year in our clubs history was our 1995 premiership season. There were quite a few positive factors that contributed to the success of our club in 1995 and these would be the foundations of our phenomenal success of years to come.

First of all there was some brilliant leadership shown by our committee of 1994 led by John Air and Arthur Osborne, including securing some major sponsorship for the club. We subsequently started our long term and invaluable affiliation with the likes of K & R Fabrications and Glennos Constructions. Secondly, our junior ranks were emerging with some fantastic talent that would provide a stable of local players for the next decade and beyond.

Under the guidance of Brett Jones in 1994, our first and reserve grade teams made the playoffs for the first time since 1987. No doubt this was a fantastic boost to our momentum going in to the 1995 season.



A jubilant undefeated 1995 Team celebrate with the Butchers Victory song.

The convergence of experienced coaches, players and committee was nothing short of ideal for me as the incumbent head coach. A new executive committee comprised of Aiden Beath, Mike Andrews and Kevin Anderson were to carry on the great work, layed down by John and Arthur. Reserve grade coach Ian Russell (My old mate from our 1984 Steelers President Cup winning side) and third grade coach Darryl Crosland (My even older mate and legend Thirroul Butcher and Steeler) were two confidants I was more than pleased to have on board. I was also thrilled to score the services of one of my childhood idols in Ron Wall as my assistant coach who proved invaluable for me, not only as the off field coach but Ronny was a perfect fit for the style of football we were about to promote. Another priceless asset was old mate Terry Gilogely, who did an absolutely fantastic job in skills, conditioning and strapping throughout the year. Steve 'Chalkie' Rutledge added some great value as manager to complete my team. All of these guys were not only bringing their vast experience to their respective positions, they were passionate about our club and making something of our opportunity that year.

Recruitment had started simply by word of mouth. I don't actually recall having to make too many phone calls in the pre season - people are coming to me and telling me rumours of people who were keen to play in the upcoming season and I couldn't wait to bring back the learning's of my previous three years with the Illawarra Steelers.

I was also excited to get back to my home club knowing we had plenty of keen, talented local lads, primed to improve

on the previous year's achievements. Brett Jones had handed the coaching reigns over to me after his successful year in 1994 and he confirmed he was to be a player in 1995. Brett had plenty of NRL experience with the Steelers and had later played in France. Brett and I hadn't played together since Tim McLarens' 1987 minor premiership team, so I couldn't wait to be running off Homer again that year. He had a solid year and would probably be the first one picked, week in week out. I had made a statement back in the times when the Butchers were doing it tough, that I couldn't wait until the likes of the young Air and Jones boys would come through the Junior ranks into grade - *that time had come*. Paul Air had shown his talent as a twenty year old by winning the Illawarra Player of the year in 1992. Paul was on board in 1995 and had further matured after some experience in previous years with Illawarra. Paul would go on to be one of the greatest Butchers for years to come (who knows, you still may see him out there today). Other local juniors we welcomed back were big Keith Cole (who had a ton of Sydney football experience with the Steelers and Souths). Keith would later play a major role in our Grand final win. Talented ball player Adam Sargeant-Wilson was the perfect five eight to fit our style - Adam had a favourite call of "Broncos", which meant throw it around (didn't matter what tackle or where you were on the field). Todd Grose (son of legend front rower, Ian) would terrorise the opposition with his Eric Grothe style of play (and loved playing on the wing.... NOT). Other local juniors who made faultless contributions to the side throughout the year were reliable hooker Troy Jones and the ultra versatile Mark Wilkinson.



Speedster Dave McElhone is upended by a Devils Backrower while Mark Pickles looks on.



A super determined Blake Eager was a key contributor to the 1995 success scoring two tries in both the Major Semi and Grand Final.

It's important to recognise the contribution the local boys provide to our clubs' spirit, the loyalty to our colours and our town, a resolve to never give up and although we will always invite talent from afar, they would always need to fit in with these values to be a true Thirroul Butcher.

Apart from the local boys, we had a convergence of other players from the area jumping on board. I had just started working with Blake Eager, who had shown some interest in coming over – Blake had plenty of experience in the Illawarra League and would prove himself to be one of our most valuable players of the year and of years to come. Blake's commitment to training, our team and our club was second to none. He found his home at Thirroul and went on to become a great player and clubman for the Butchers. Some of our other key signings included New Zealand born Tamaiti Aмоса – a fleet footed centre who topped the Illawarra League try scoring tally for the season. Tamaiti's center partner was big Sean Taylor – a local Helensburgh product and our reliable goalkicker (size 17 boots) Sean combined a treat with Tamaiti creating havoc out wide. Colliers junior and Surf Club Champ, Michael Locke, came to us as a hooker and made it his position with weekly faultless performances. Lockie was possibly the fittest player in our side and his reliability around the ruck and support play was second to none. Former Metropolitan player Roger Hill was also a new signing and his contribution as a tough and tireless worker was more than welcomed. Two of our other players that had come down from the local Norths side the previous year were speedster Glen Cahill and the pocket Rocket Mark 'Piston' Pickles. Glen's pace surprised many as he left defenders in his wake on his way to another touchdown. Unfortunately Glen was sidelined later in the year with a serious elbow injury and missed starting in the GF. Former Australian beach sprint champion, Dave McElhone would take Glen's place in the run on side for the remainder of the season. Dave had speed to burn and could score from any position on the field. Mark 'Piston' Pickles was the ultimate tackling machine and had energy to burn (probably one of our smallest yet toughest players) Piston did a lot of the clean-up work at lock and muscled his way forward at every opportunity – another invaluable asset to our side. Two other local Norths boys to join the ranks for 1995 were Len Barton (returning from grade with Cronulla) and former Illawarra Junior Rep Glen Sellers. Lenny was a colourful front rower with freakish ball skills and plenty of speed for a big man. He also provided plenty of off field antics for the boys and sometimes headaches for the coach. Lenny was to take out the Illawarra Player of the year award for 1995 which just about says it all about his fantastic season. Lenny's good mate, Glen Sellers was a tireless backrower whose work ethic on the field was unsurpassed. I do remember one rare game vs the Cougars during the season that things weren't quite going to plan. Most of us were feeling the frustration of not being at our best and this just led to making more mistakes and wrong decisions. Glen stood out from the crowd, simply because nothing ever fazed him. He would come up with the goods, week after week as he did in that game. He would later take out a well-deserved Best and Fairest Award for 1995.

The regular season had started as well as we could have hoped. We took out the Illawarra Seven's Comp undefeated and later the pre-season knockout also undefeated, smashing the Devils in the Final 49-20. Some further pre-season trials had us fine tuning our skills and the team just clicked like a well-oiled machine. I remember the buzz in the dressing shed after one of the early home games and the guys were already talking up an undefeated season (I liked the aspiration but knew we still had a lot of work to do to achieve this goal).

The competition was upon us and in general we played some great attacking football. We had no shortage of 'go forward' with a pack like ours and plenty of speed to play off the back of it. We would attack from any position on the field, including from a kick-off (one of our favourite plays). I don't think the opposing sides knew what hit them at times. Defensively we were not as efficient and looking back on our season we clocked up a record amount of points but didn't win any games to nil.



Glen Cellars - Thirroul Best & Fairest 1995.



Brett Jones



Lenny Barton had a brilliant season in 1995 and was rewarded with Illawarra Player of the Year.



Todd Grose terrorises the Collies defence during the 1995 season.

PLAYER PROFILE Mark Taylor

Born and bred in Thirroul, Mark first pulled on the blue and white jersey at the age of five and in his second season of minor league, scored an incredible 77 tries. In 1981, Mark played halfback in important member of the Thirroul under 18 Premiership winning side. In 1984, he was a member of the Illawarra Steelers Presidents Cup winning team. He also played Presidents Cup in 1985, as well as some games with the Rex Roos, coached by Phil Ostwald, reaching the second division Grand Final. Back with Thirroul in 1986, he had some terrible luck when he broke his leg and did this again in 1987. Many players would retire after such major setbacks but Mark came back better than ever. In 1991, after Coach Phil Ostwald moved him back to fullback, he had an amazing year in a struggling side and was awarded the Carlton League Player of the Year. The Steelers offered him a contract in 1992 and he played with them for three seasons, making his first grade debut on 10 July 1994 at Tweed Heads against the Gold Coast. Illawarra won this game 30-14 and Mark landed five goals from seven attempts.

In 1995, Mark returned as captain/coach of the Thirroul team who were undefeated first grade Premiers. On 20 August 1995, Mark was captain/coach, scored a try, kicked the winning field goal, won man of the match and turned 31. Certainly a day to remember! He also did the captain/coach job for the next two seasons, guiding the side to the 1996 Grand Final and the 1997 final. He played three more years, retiring in 2000 when the team reached the Grand Final. Mark finished with more than 100 first grade games with the club. In 2002, he was the club secretary and to this day continues an active involvement with the club.



Mark Taylor takes on Corrimal player and former Butcher Paul Lumby.



Mark Taylor

Later in the season we received another quality player to the ranks. Thirroul junior Martin Sedgewick had returned from stints with Souths and Illawarra Presidents Cup squads and added yet some more grunt to our side. This was no doubt a dilemma for the selectors as we were cruising along just fine at the time. Martin got his start when Glen Sellers was ruled out of the second last comp game and he took his opportunity having a massive game versus Dapto at Dapto Showground. The next week Glen was made available and after some serious contemplating among the selectors, Martin was to be in the run on side (Glen back to Reserves) The decision was not unanimous and it was not easy for me to break the news considering Glen's season thus far. The final game of the regular competition Glen would then suffer a serious arm injury and miss the finals.

We had won the minor Premiership and broke plenty of records along the way. All four grades made the final series. The semi finals comprised only four teams and we were due to play Dapto in the major.

The First Grade major semi final vs Dapto was definitely a step up, and for some of us, including myself, it was uncharted territory (I had played briefly in our 1987 final and before that was our U18's premiership in 1981) The semi final was no walkover, although I did feel we were well in control. Dapto had grown a leg and threw plenty at us coming within a converted try. Blake Eager had a blinder, providing two gutsy solo tries at crucial stages of the game. Martin Sedgewick was great up front and Mick Locke busy as usual. Overall it was good win and we ran out winners 36-24. Wests went on to smash Dapto in the final and so we were to meet them in the Grand Final.



The 1995 Thirroul team which went through the Carlton League undefeated: (back row): Roger Hill, Tamaiti Aмоса, Martin Sedgewick, Sean Taylor, Len Barton, Keith Cole; (middle row): Ron Wall (coach), Glen Sellers, Todd Grose, Mark Taylor (captain), Paul Air, Brett Jones, Steve Rutledge; (front row): Dave McElhone, Mark Pickles, Michael Locke, Adam Sargent-Wilson, Blake Eager, Glen Cahill, Ryan Jackson (ball boy).

The 20th August was an unusually hot winter's day and this heat may have played a major role in our substandard effort in the first half. After an early try by Blake off a Lenny Barton special we seemed to fall in a big hole.

Our usual 'go forward' had gone missing and there was a severe lack of urgency in defence. Two tries by Wests captain Matt Reh and another to follow put Wests in front at halftime by 16-6. This was the first time we had been behind at the break all season and I was distraught. I had seen the Butchers last premiership win in 1973 as a nine year old and knew these opportunities didn't come round too often. There were 8 thousand spectators in the ground that day and more than 7 thousand would have been our supporters. Our town wanted a premiership and we had to deliver. My halftime talk was full of emotion and we knew we had to get back to basics to gain some momentum.

It took some time to regain our mojo. Sean Taylor crossed over out wide and soon after, converted a penalty goal. The machine had just restarted. A typical Martin Sedgewick burst and offload to ...yes that man Blake Eager who crossed over out wide to level the score 16-16. Soon after another typical combination between big Sean and Tamaiti put me into a hole and with just a winger to beat we were under the posts to go ahead 22-16. Our forward pack had plenty of momentum now with big Keith Cole leading the way. Another attacking raid on Wests line and on an early tackle, Adam Sargeant Wilson gave me the ball just outside the 25m for a shot at a 1 pointer and it was good. I guess we were all somewhat relieved at this point, now having that buffer after being behind most of the match.

Wests came back at us with a dodgy try under the posts and it was game on for the final minutes with the score at 23-22. Anxious moments as the Devils made their way back within meters of our tryline until back rower Steve Bosse tapped the ball forward in the ruck and was subsequently penalised by referee Alan Sercombe as Mark Pickles had slipped himself into marker just in time. The siren sounded, Sean Taylor locked up the ball for one last run and the premiership was ours.

I can't describe the feeling – our first premiership in 22 years, our third in the history of the club and an undefeated season in front of our town. I was so proud and so happy, not only for our players and club but also for the supporters who had stuck with us throughout the years.

Thirroul Reserves won 11 games and lost three in their march to the Grand Final. They knocked off minor premiers Wests in an exciting major semi. The Devils led 18-15 five minutes from full time, but a slick try by five eighth Steven Richards snatched a likely win from Wests and Stuart Boyle converted for our 21-18 win. Sadly, Dapto beat us in the Grand Final.

Thirds coached by Darryl Crosland, a former fearless prop, reached the minor semi after a tough mid-week playoff with Wests, a game in which we flogged the Devils 22-2. However, this left the young lads a bit weary and University beat us in the semi 22-6.

Our 18s beat Corrimal 26-20 in their minor semi with Jade Air in a starring role. However, Dapto beat them in the final. ■



Back Rower Martin Sedgewick gives the Butchers the spark they needed in the 1995 Grand Final

A somewhat relieved Captain Coach Mark Taylor is chaired from the field by Adam Sargeant-Wilson. Tizzy celebrated his 31st birthday on the day and was named man of the match.



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Still in the Mix



The Butchers were defending Premiers in 1996 with Mark Taylor still our first grade leader and our target was back-to-back Premiership honours. However, it was not to be. Close, but we ran second to a red hot Collegians side. In Round 2 Thirroul lost its first game since 1994 in first grade to Corrimal. The following week Collies beat us 44-22 and after round 6 we had won only one game. Not the start we expected. So this is when the tough get going and Thirroul won its next nine games including a 20-10 triumph over Collies and we flogged Corrimal 58-8. The Butchers met Collegians in the major semi-final and beat the hot Dogs 16-14 (Todd Grose, Troy Jones tries, Mark Taylor four goals). However, Collegians showed just how hot they were on the paddock, beating us 11-2 in the grand final.

Reserve grade won its premiership against the odds. Thirroul struggled into third spot over Wests but were too good for the

Devils, beating them 12-0 in the minor semi. We defeated Dapto 16-12 in the final for a shot against the crack Collies team, which had won 16 games on the trot.

In a grim, take-no-prisoners game, Thirroul won 9-8. The Butchers were without regular stars Paul Air and Mark Pickles, both called up to first grade on grand final day. Thirroul scorers were Craig Buchan try, Jeff Smith two goals and a field goal. The team on that memorable day was: Coach Ian Russell, Manager Ian Jones. Ray Bannister, Troy Keiffer, Bill Scott, Troy Morgan, Gavin Aitken, Steve Richards, Jeff Smith, Trent Morgan (c), Craig Buchan, Clinton Quinn, Stewart Quinn, Darren Brown, Greg Bromwich. On the bench - Tony Paniora, Rob Sheeley, Craig Curtin, Brett Cleaves, Nick Grose and Steve Sweeney. Our 18s won their way into the final but Dapto beat the lads 12-10.



1996 Reserve Grade Premiers. Back: Mark Wilkinson, Stephen Sweeney, Ray Bannister, Brett Cleaves, Paul Air, Steven Richards, Jeff Smith, Troy Kiefer. Middle: Trevor Avnell (strapper), Greg Bromwich, Bill Scott, Robert Sheeley, Gavin Aitken, Troy Morgan, Darren Brown, Tony Paniora, Sten Fletcher, Ian Russell (coach). Front: Craig Curtin, Corey Oliver, Michael Grose, Clinton Quinn, Trent Morgan (captain), Mark Pickles, Craig Buchan, Stewart Quinn.



Classy center Jason Bulgarelli escapes the Collies defence with Glen Cahill and Dean Jones in support.



Greg Bromwich was a true Butcher and played a blinder in the 1996 reserve Grand Final win. Greg was tragically taken from us in a car accident 1998.



Trent Morgan. Another great clubman and captain of the 1996 reserve grade Premiers.

Our 1997 challenge showed promise in all grades with Firsts reaching the final, Reserves the minor semi and the 18s into their grand final. The League had dropped Third grade after 1995. First grade, with Tizzy again at the helm, shared the lead into July, but Port gave us a hiding 43-10 and a loss to Corrimal left us in third place. We met Wests in the minor semi and crushed the Devils 56-4 with top games from Matt Reh, Blake Eager, Martin Sedgwick and a big effort also from block busting winger Todd Grose. Dapto, minor premiers, beat Thirroul 32-28 in an exciting final. Our scorers were M. Reh two, Brett Jones and Jason Bulgarelli tries, Mark Taylor a try and four goals. Sedgwick was rewarded for his top form with selection in Country Firsts. Hopes for Thirroul to retain the Reserves premiership faded mid-season as the side slipped from leading to third spot and Corrimal bundled us out 26-22 in a minor semi. The Under 18s (coach Don Fletcher) beat Corrimal 22-14 in their semi and defeated Dapto 22-16 in the final to line up against Wests in the grand final - their first appearance since 1990. The Devils won a tight game 20-16. Scorers for the young Butchers were Brett Hazelgrove and Damon Brown tries, Mark Knell four goals. A sad note for '97 was the deaths of two tireless, esteemed club members, Bruce Cambridge and Arthur Osborne.

The 1998 season started solidly with first grade under new coach Phil Ostwald winning the pre-season competition in a hard fought game over Dapto. Daryl Crosland took over second grade coaching and Craig Worthington looked after the CUB cup players. First grade still contained high calibre players such as Tizzy Taylor, Trevor Kissel, Brett Jones and Country Firsts rep Todd Grose and Seconds rep Martin Sedgwick. In July the Butchers club was saddened by the tragic death in a car accident of its most hard working and enthusiastic ex-players Greg Bromwich. A memorial trophy is now awarded each year in his memory. On August 8 we had an unusual trifecta - the great veteran stalwart Bruce Percy backed up and played in all three winning grades. Our first grade finished fourth at the end of the season, but were tossed out in the minor semi-final in a nail biting contest by Collegians 6-4. Thirroul's mighty second grade side kept our flag flying and took out the premiership in a strong win over arch rivals Dapto. This team was a hard working, "no thrills" machine and our champions of the day were: S. Scibberas, G. Aitken, M. Wilkinson, J. Boersma, S. Boyle, J. Bell, T. Hill, D. Taylor, J. Costello, D. Dalton, J. Shelton, S. Quinn, B. Lowrie, D. Amatto, B. Jarvis, B. Hazelgrove and B. Percy. Manager Ian Jones. ■



One of our great Clubmen, Mark Wilkinson lines up another shot during the 1998 reserve grade Grand final victory. Mark was highest pointscorer of the season and has donned the blue and white jersey more times than he can remember.



1998 Reserve Grade Premiers. Back: Shane Sciberras, Nathan Hodson, Bruce Percy, Stewart Quinn, Jason Boersma, Stewart Boyle, Ben Jarvis. Middle: Danny Mason Glen Sellars, Bryce Lowrie, Dean Dalton, Darryl Taylor, Brett Hazelgrove, Gavin Aitken, Bill Scott. Front: Darryl Crosland (coach), Craig Bell, Clinton Quinn, Josh Shelton, Mark Wilkinson (capt), Jarrod Costello, Trent Hill, Trent Morgan, Ian Jones (manager).

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Another Premiership



In 1999 there were a few changes within the club. Phil Ostwald and Daryl Crosland still coached first and reserves, but we had Rod Henderson and Paul Scibberas appointed as coaches of the Under 18s. As an innovation, the 18s competition would be run in line with first and second grades. We started the year with modest aspirations after losing a large number of first graders from the previous year. The task was made more difficult when Berkeley withdrew from the competition early in the season, forcing the league to modify the draw. Thirroul ended up having to play league heavyweights Collegians, Wests & Dapto three times, were one of only three teams not to have a bye and had one less home game than the other teams.

In our first competition game footy legend Changa Langlands kicked off for his old club Wollongong and the Bulls were all over us, leading 20-nil at half time. But in the second half we turned on the power and ran out winners 24-20 in a great come from behind victory. After this great win the team fell into a heap. We

lost a lot of games and with half the season over we had only three wins and were coming third last. Surprisingly the team was growing in confidence and when things clicked we went on an unbelievable streak, winning 9 consecutive games until we were defeated by Dapto 24-20 in the last competition game of the season. During this time we received a boost with the return in late June of one of the club's favourite sons, Brett Jones who was back after a few months with Tugan. After the slow start, the Butchers had done enough to fall into fourth place, while the 18s were also into the semi-finals.

The minor semi final was a very tight affair again against Dapto, but this time we won 13-6, with Ben Couchman and winger Lee Fowler outstanding. Meanwhile our 18s were into the major semi against Corrimal and the Cougars led 8-6 at half time. The young Butchers stepped up a gear in the second half, running in six tries to win 40-8, Tony Leadbitter scored four excellent tries and the lads were into the grand final.





Hard running and tough tackling centre or five-eighth Evan Stray.



Classy pivot Dean Jones takes on a Devils defender.



Todd Grose on a typical carry.

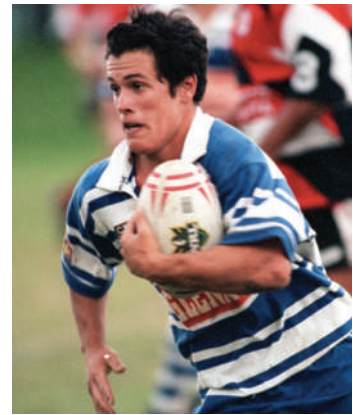
Our Firsts then played the final against a strong West side and we led the Devils 14-8 at half time after an inspirational speech from Mark Nolan before the game. In the second half Thirroul played magic football, scoring five tries and keeping Wests scoreless. Shane Sciberras landed seven goals in the 42 – 8 win. With two teams in the grand finals the village of Thirroul provided great support for the Butchers with most shops decorated in blue and white steamers and posters “Butchers To Win”.

Our under 18s kicked off the day with a magnificent 44-16 win over Collegians. Player of the match was Tony Leadbitter. Shannon Jarvis and Ben Morgan both had outstanding games. The premiership side was: T. Hart, J. Gunning, B. Morgan, T. Leadbitter, G. Woods, D. Brown, J. Millington, S. Jarvis, J. Storer, B. Kennedy, T. Sewalt, R. Powell, L. Turner, B. Gava, S. Grose, D. Perkiss, L. Scard, J. Jarvis, H. Oliver, S. Johnson, L. Mitchell, B. Leadbitter. Coaches were Paul Sciberras and Rod Henderson. Manager - Ray Millington.

The first grade team enjoyed a good lead up week and were relaxed and confident even though inspirational captain Blake Eager had been told his knee cap had been fractured in the final against Wests. Blake would still lead the side onto the field in the Grand Final and would go on to have a fine game. Collegians were favourites, but the opening set in defence set the scene for what was to come. Firstly Brett Jones attacked big Collies prop Adam Canavan straight from the kick off. Then Paul Air shot out of the line to crash tackle the next runner, who lost the ball, forcing a scrum. Soon after Blake Eager crashed over near the posts for a try in the second minute of play. By half time Paul Air had scored and so too had flying winger Lee Fowler after collecting a bomb. The Butchers now held a 20 to 4 lead over their opposition.

Collies came back in the second half and reduced our lead to 10 points, but once again the Butchers played brilliant open football and Todd Grose scored after good lead up work by Fowler and Dean Jones. Another try came from Evan Stray and Luke McDonald displayed his individual brilliance to set Ben Couchman up for the final try. Once again Shane Sciberras kicked successfully under pressure and contributed six goals in Thirroul's magnificent 40-12 thrashing of Collegians. Ben Couchman was named player of the match. The team played exactly like a good team should, with every player contributing and doing their best for one another. Celebrations at the Thirroul Leagues Club went on till the late hours and a few players still had enough energy for a few laps of Gibson Park early Monday morning in the full monty. The season had many stars, but Cronulla junior Luke McDonald, in his first year with the club was the find of the season. The classy fullback was among our best every week. His combination with wingers Lee Fowler and Craig McLean meant we always started our attacking sets on the front foot. Club Juniors Ben Couchman and Aaron Beath had returned from the Steelers and added a balance of skill, enthusiasm and competitive attitude that would see them become the backbone of our team for many years to come. The premiership side was: L. McDonald, L. Fowler, S. Sciberras, T. Grose, C. McLean, E. Stray, P. Air, B. Couchman, D. Jones, B. Jones, B. Maguire, B. Eager (c), A. Beath, D. Dalton, J. Costello, B. Morgan, S. Jarvis and M. Roodenrys. Coach P. Ostwald, Manager I. Jones. ■

Diminutive fullback Luke McDonald, whose kick returns always put the Butchers on the front foot.



Great Clubman Blake Eager kisses the trophy after captaining the grand final team to a win.



Todd Grose, Shane Sciberras, Aaron Beath, Lee Fowler and Luke McDonald celebrate after Todd Grose scores a try.



Another Butchers premiership in 1999.

PLAYER PROFILE Phil Oswald

Like Danny O'Connell 20 years before him, Phil played minor, junior and senior football with the Northern Suburbs club. He came to Thirroul in 1980, as captain/coach of the third grade side who went on to win the Premiership, defeating Wests 5-4 in the Grand Final. The next year third grade changed to an under 23 competition and with Phil again captain/coach, they won the first and last Illawarra under 23 title when they outclassed Dapto 29-8 in the Grand Final. The rugged forward joined Rex Roos as captain/coach in 1983 for three seasons and won two more Premierships. He came back to Thirroul as a player in 1986 for four years, playing around 30 top grade matches. From 1990 to 1993, Phil coached the Thirroul first grade team and in 1995 began three seasons with the Steelers, firstly as Harold Mathews coach, then the Jersey Flegg coach and finally, the under 20s mentor. The Mathews and Flegg teams reached the final, while the under 20s played in the semi finals. Back at Thirroul in 1998, he guided the side to the semi finals and in 1999, they took the first grade title, after thrashing Collegians 40-12 in the Grand Final. In both 2000 and 2001, Phil took the firsts to the Grand Final and was subsequently appointed Illawarra Divisional coach for 2002. He achieved instant success at this higher level, when Illawarra won the NSW Country Championship Final. He was also Illawarra coach from 2003 to 2005 and each of these three seasons, the team reached the semi finals. Returning to Thirroul in 2006 for the next three seasons, the team were Grand Finalists in 2006, semi finalists in 2007 and Premiers in 2008, after beating Collegians 16-12 in the Grand Final. Phil was re-appointed first grade coach in 2011 and the team made the final. In 2012, he won his fifth Premiership for Thirroul, when the firsts beat the more credentialed Wests, 20-16 in the Grand Final. The straight talking mentor will be at the helm again in 2013.



Evergreen coach Phil Oswald with President and brother in law Aiden Beath. The two have formed a partnership that has made a major contribution to the success of the club over the last twenty years.

16

A New Era



Our Football Club split with the Thirroul Leagues Club after an association of 47 years. The Leagues Club was in a state of financial stress and the football club had little option but to part ways as sponsorship dollars are crucial for every clubs survival. It was a sad split with so much nostalgia of joyful, fun nights over previous years, many friendships and such a great community link. Ironically, the Leagues Club folded a few months later, closing its doors in June. Sad indeed, for it had promoted rugby league in the district for more than 40 years and had donated thousands of dollars into senior and junior clubs. Our Football Club received a lifeline from Barry and Colleen Gilbert at the refurbished Beaches Hotel and we settled thankfully into a new base, one which we enjoyed for the following two seasons. Our other loyal sponsors, Glennos Constructions, K & R Fabrications and local businesses also dug deep and the Club remained competitive and financially viable.

The Butchers entered four sides in the 2000 competitions. "Ossie" had the firsts. Brett Jones the seconds, "Rocket" Henderson the under 18s and Billy Scott the CUB cup side. From the previous year's premiership side we lost Evan Stray,

Brett Maguire, Brett Jones and Craig McLean, but an unknown guy from Port Kembla turned up - Fuad Suljkanovic, who said "he wanted a run with a solid club." Faud turned out to be a great club man, a top centre and a headache for ground announcers.

Once again the Butchers started the season slowly - we lost in all grades in our first meeting with Dapto, however Ben Couchman, Luke McDonald, Aaron Beath and Jay van Meegan (U18s) all made the Illawarra rep side, Luke also made Country Seconds.

As the season progressed first grade once again played good football. They had an outstanding day against Wests defeating the Devils in all grades, and then had a great draw with Collies. Other grades were also on a roll. The CUB cup boys had a good win over Avondale and in this match A. Gamhone, J. David and R. Sheeley had top games.

In the last competition game first grade had a most convincing win over Dapto with top games from skipper Blake Eager and Dean Jones. Now it was time for the final series. We had come third in first grade, minor premiers in Reserves, second in the 18s and fourth in CUB.



*Trent Morgan, Rob Sheeley,
Dane Attenborough and
Blake Eager.*



2000 Reserve Grade Team. Back: (coach) Brett Jones, Ben Jarvis, Mark Wilkinson, Brendon Choice, Liam Wilson, Tristan Hart, Bryce Lowrie, Josh Gunning, (Manager) Robert Whitefield. Seated: Travis Down, Gavin Aitken, Phill Todd, Trent Morgan (Captain), Troy Morgan, Brett Hazelgrove, Geoff Rutledge.

After defeating Wollongong and Collegians in first grade we went into the grand finals with all our other grades. This was a magnificent, historic achievement to have all four sides there.

Grand finals venue was Brandon Park, as work was being done on upgrading WIN Stadium. We led Dapto 12-nil early in the 18s game, but the Canaries came back to level the score. The Butchers tried everything to break away, but our rivals were still there 18-all at full time. Dapto won 25-18 in extra time. James Storer was a stand out for Thirroul.

In the CUB game, the Butchers again took an early lead against Avondale, but our opponents came back too strong and ran out easy winners. Our best included C. Buchan and A. Gammone.

The “no thrills” second grade side met Dapto in their grand final and got off to a poor start with our opponents leading 12-nil, but the Butchers bounced back with tries from S. Boyle and J. Storer. It was a hard, fast match and with a minute to go Dapto led 18-14, but from a Thirroul scrum win the ball spun out to Gavin Aitken who dived over to make it 18-all and the conversion

gave us another second grade premiership. The victorious side: T. Hart, B. Lowrie, G. Aitken, B. Hazelgrove, S. Boyle, L. Wilson, T. Down, P. Todd, B. Jarvis, G. Rutledge, T. Morgan, M. Roodenrys, Trent Morgan (c), B. Choice and J. Storer. Coach-Brett Jones. Manager Rob Whitefield. T. Down was the leading try scorer in all Illawarra grades.

The scene was set for the first grade grand final encounter with Dapto. An early set back for Thirroul was the absence of two top attacking players L. McDonald and M. Taylor, who were out with injuries. To make matters worse several players were struck down by the flu in grand final week severely affecting team preparations. Despite this the brave Butchers led 8-2 at half time. However these factors together with hard encounters in the semi-final and final caught up with them and they were unable to hold out Dapto's big forwards. Finally the Canaries ran out winners 30-14, with Dean Jones the pick of the Thirroul side. In spite of their defeat a big crowd assembled at the Beaches pub to celebrate the Butchers achievements - the second grade premiership and the Illawarra club championship.



Thirroul 2nd Grade 2001 Premiers. Back Row (L to R): Brett Jones (coach), Anthony Sheeley, Glen Porzuczek, Tristan Hart, Danny Murrill, Brendon Choice, Troy Morgan, Bryce Lowrie, Phil Todd. Front: Marc Fursey, Bruce Percy, Ben Jarvis, Dane Attenborough, Travis Down, Trent Morgan (c), Jarrod Costello, Anthony Meades, Brett Pincham, Josh Gunning.



1st Grade 2001.

The only change in the coaching panel in 2001 was Ben Couchman and Jarrod Costello coaching the U18s. Thirroul started the season with good wins over Dapto, Wollongong and Corrimal in first grade.

L. McDonald, B. Ridley, B. Couchman, Aaron Beath, M. Sedgwick and D. Gunning all made the Illawarra side and B. Hart, S. McCartney and D. Attenborough made the U18s Illawarra rep side. Brett Ridley also made the NSW Country side and the NSW Residential side to play before the State of Origin. While first grade was having its fair share of wins, the slow and steady second grade side was winning its share of games also, with T. Down and P. Todd starring. In the second round the Butchers were defeated by Helensburgh, Collegians and Dapto, so we had to enter the final series the hard way.

In our first grade semi-final the Butchers had an outstanding win over the "burgh 38-nil, with big games from S. Sciberras and

B. Couchman. In the final Thirroul played a hard, bruising game to defeat Collies 11-4; an interesting aspect of this game was a stoppage for 10 minutes late in the first half because of an electrical storm. Once again the mighty Butchers were through to grand finals in first and second grades.

Our Reserves completely outplayed a very strong Wests side to win another premiership 26-4. T. Hart, T. Down and B. Lowrie all had top games. The squad was: S. Grose, D. Attenborough, B. Lowrie, A. Sheely, B. Percy, T. Hart, T. Down, B. Choice, B. Jarvis, D. Murrill, J. Costello, Glen Porzuczek, Trent Morgan (c), A. Samways, Troy Morgan, M. Fursey, P. Todd, A. Meades, T. Carter, B. Pincham and J. Storer. Brett Jones was coach and Rob Whitefield manager. Good effort from evergreen Bruce Percy who turned 40 during the season.

Thirroul first grade met arch rivals Dapto before a crowd 6000 in its grand final. Dapto kicked away to an early lead and was ahead 12-2 at half time. The Butchers racked with injuries fought back with typical true spirit and tries from Sciberras and Sulkjanovic levelled the scores 12-all. Unfortunately Dapto scored a try and conversion six minutes from full time and they beat us 18-12. Nevertheless it was a great achievement for the club, especially for retiring coach Phil Oswald, who in his four years took first grade in the 1998 semis, won the premiership in 1999 and made grand finals in 2000 and 2001 - truly a remarkable record. Phil's brother-in-law Aiden Beath also stood down as President, a role he held for seven seasons. He had a mighty successful time in leading the club to such heights during his term. It was also farewell to Frank Nowlan who held the hot spot Secretary's job for four seasons.



We had four Thirroul players in the 2002 Illawarra rep. side which won the Country Championship trophy. Left to right: Ben Couchman, Faud Suljkanovic, Aaron Beath and Shane Sciberras.

The sale of the Beaches Hotel late in 2001 left our Football Club in limbo again. Our officials had talks with the new owners - the Western Suburbs leagues Club - but these failed to reach a satisfactory settlement. Another lifeline, this time from Ryan's Hotel, renewed the clubs security. Special thanks to Mark Stead, his partners and staff for their assistance and support in welcoming the Club and its supporters to Ryan's Hotel. Club president Mike Andrews said although the Ryan's had always supported the Butchers in some way for many years, the 2002 season support exceeded our club's expectations. "In our 90th year we thank the Ryan's management and staff for their continued support and encouragement."

The 2002 season started with considerable changes both on and off the field. Brett Jones, a most successful premierships reserve grade coach, stepped up to take over first grade, great clubman Trent Morgan coached second grade, Jimmy Bennett coached the U18s and Mike Andrews became the new president of the club.

In the first competition game for 2002 the Butchers had a convincing 24-10 win over Helensburgh. Ben Couchman, Shane Sciberras, Faud Suljkanovic and Aaron Beath were selected in the Illawarra rep side and Phil Ostwald was appointed coach. Thirroul had fine early victories over premiers Dapto, Wests and Corrimal, but were beaten by a revitalized Port Kembla. Meanwhile, much to the delight of all local footy

supporters, the Illawarra divisional side kept winning and finally defeated Newcastle to win the Country championship, its first in 24 years. Large contributions were made by our four reps and also top coach Ossie. Sciberras and Suljkanovic were selected in the Country side to tour northern NSW and later in the NSW Country team to tour France in October. It had been many a year since any Thirroul player had been selected in any touring party. We gave them congratulations and a financial kick along at a special show at Ryan's. Guest speaker was St George Illawarra coach Andrew Farrar.

Mid season came and the Butchers once again fell into a slump going down narrowly to both Collegians and Dapto and then they were beaten by the Wollongong Bulls for the first time since Wollongong had re-entered the competition. Victories by Port Kembla and the lowly placed Corrimal continued first grade's slump, but in the last comp game the boys had a fine win over Collegians and the outlook for the semi-finals was promising. But here we met a renewal of black fever and Port Kembla kicked us out of the first semi.

In the 18s the eventually premiers Berkeley tipped out of the first semi, while our Reserves made it to the final only to lose to Collies. This was the first time in many seasons that there was no Thirroul side in any of the grand finals. On a closing positive aspect to the season champion centre Faud Suljkanovic was named the Illawarra Carlton League "Back of the Year". ■

PLAYER PROFILE

Martin Sedgwick

A crowd favourite, Marty played around 20 seasons with our club after beginning with the under 10s in 1984. The hard running forward was regularly selected for representative football during his junior days, playing for Illawarra each year up to Presidents Cup in 1994. He came into the Thirroul first grade side as an 18 year old in 1992. From that time until 2006, Marty was a regular Thirroul first grader in his 11 seasons. He didn't play in 1999 because of an injury he suffered in a surf boat accident. He had a season with Guildford in the 2002 Sydney Metropolitan Cup where he became a Sydney Metropolitan Cup representative. In 2003, he played with Wollongong and in 2004 had another season in the Metropolitan Cup, this time with Cabramatta. Marty played in five Grand Finals with Thirroul and was a member of the all conquering 1995 team. He finished with 111 first grade games with our club and represented Illawarra, NSW Country Firsts, NSW Country Seconds and NSW Residents in 1998. The contribution Marty made at club level is confirmed by the fact that he was awarded the Noel Hill Trophy for our First Grade Best and Fairest on 3 occasions (1993, 1994 & 2000), a special achievement.



17

We Win Everything



Our 90th year was celebrated in an amazing fashion. Not only did our first graders win the major and minor Premierships, they also took out the NSW Country Rugby League Club Challenge Cup, the Club Championship and the University of Wollongong Fraternity Cup Sevens.

The pre-season started slowly with several players not returning from the previous year. We were looking short in several positions but just before the season started we were able to sign some new faces from the Cronulla area. These guys together with Glen Air, back from the Wests Magpies and Nigel Daniels, a former Colliers junior more than filled the holes. The season started with the Sevens in February, where in the final Thirroul 20 (John Bailey 2, Ben Morgan, Shane English tries; Glen Air 2 goals) beat Italy 8. John Bailey was the man of the match. The sevens showed that we had the attacking talent to score tries from anywhere on the field.



Butchers skipper Glen Air shows the Country Challenge Cup won by Thirroul on a sunny day at Mudgee.

Then it was on to the Country Challenge Cup. To win the cup Thirroul had to win six successive matches in the state wide knockout series. These six wins were Queanbeyan Blues 32-18, at Seiffert Oval, Queanbeyan, Woden Valley 48-4 at home, Tuggeranong 40-14, at Canberra, Cobar 52-8 at home, Gungahen Bulls (Canberra) 26-20 in the semi final at West Belconnen and Mudgee Dragons 42-26 in the Final at Jubilee Oval, Mudgee. The following is how the final was described by Mercury sports writer Mike Gandon:

Thirroul scored a comprehensive 42-26 win over Mudgee in the Final of the NSW Country Rugby League Challenge competition at Jubilee Oval, Mudgee on Saturday.

The Butchers led 20-0 at quarter time, 24-0 at the main break and 30-14 at three-quarter time

The return from injury of captain and five-eight Glen Air added composure and experience to the Butchers' back line which was instrumental in their success.

Air set up a couple of tries and scored one himself, it was Air and his half-back partner, Aaron Beath, who controlled the play well on the back of hard work from their forward pack.

Playing in front of a big parochial Dragons crowd, Thirroul turned this disadvantage into an advantage by getting away to a dream start.

"Our timing was spot-on and we controlled the play in the first quarter" Thirroul coach Brett Jones said.

The Dragons were able to slow the game down in the second stanza as they struggled to get back in the contest.

And while Mudgee outscored the Butchers 10-4 in this period, Thirroul still held the advantage.

"We got in a bit of trouble when they got a roll on and when the big crowd got behind them", Jones Said

But we scrambled well when they were attacking us.

"Once we regained control and got our kicking game in order, we rolled over the top of them".

Back rower Mykel Hema had a big game for a strong Butchers Pack, while Chris Potter shone in the back line.

The Butchers celebrations continued yesterday but from today they will put the Challenge cup success behind them to concentrate on their Illawarra Tooheys League Campaign starting against Wests at Gibson Park on Saturday.



All conquering 2003 Butchers side celebrating the Grand Final win.



Power house prop Jay Van Meegan on the charge.



Ben Couchman and Ben Linde, Grand Final.



Prolific point scoring winger Trent Bryan on the attack.

Coach Brett Jones listed 24 players for these six matches. These were Chris Potter, Trent Bryan, Fuad Suljkanovic, Todd Grose, Glen Air, Aaron Beath, Ben Couchman, Shane McCartney, Brett Pincham, Mykel Hema, John Bailey, Ben Linde, Phil Todd, Ben Morgan, Pat Ginti, Jarrod Costello, Paul Air, Jay van Meegan, Dane Attenborough, Brett Hazelgrove, Mark Wilkinson, Chris Timmins, Luke McDonald, Dale Jenkinson. Jones contributes much of the seasons success to the way the team came together during the Country Cup. The trips to the country covered many Kilometres, but it helped the team grow together and learn to enjoy each others company. All the guys involved will remember those trips forever.

After Mudgee, we returned to the Illawarra Tooheys League, which for the previous 20 years or so, was known as the Illawarra Carlton League. Because of the Country Cup we had deferred matches to play with Helensburgh and Dapto, so the round three clash with Wests was our first game. Wests went to an early 10-0 lead, but Thirroul came home strongly, to win 22-14. One of the most memorable games of the season was against Port at home in late July. Before the biggest crowd for a comp game in around 30 years at Gibson Park, we beat Port Kembla in all three grades. This enabled the club to secure the first grade Minor Premiership and the Club Championship with two rounds remaining. In first grade, Thirroul 32 (Nigel Daniels 2, Paul Air, Chris Potter, Aaron Beath tries; Trent Bryan 6 goals) beat Port Kembla 12. The final first grade points table was Thirroul 32, Dapto 26, Port Kembla 26, Wollongong 26, University 20, Collegians 20, Wests 14, Helensburgh 10, Corrimall 6.

In the major semi on 24 August, Dapto upset Thirroul with their 34-22 victory. But a week later, the Butchers were impressive in their 42-12 win over Wollongong in the final. This set up an interesting Grand Final at WIN Stadium on Sunday 7 September. The same run on team was used in the final and Grand Final except Nigel Daniels had to be replaced in the Grand

Final after breaking his hand in the final. We started the grand final well and led 12-0 with tries to Potter & Bryan. Dapto fought back and eventually broke through the Butchers defence to reduce the lead to 12-10 at half time. Just before the interval big winger Chris Timmins unfortunately suffered a broken leg in trying to stop a Dapto try. Straight after half time Glen Air scored from his own short kick to extend the lead to 18-10. Dapto then stepped up the pressure and two tries gave the canaries their first lead of the match at 22-18. The Butchers bounced straight back when they moved the ball wide for Ben Morgan to put Grose over in the corner. Bryan's conversion from near touch put the butchers back in front 24-22. With five minutes remaining three of Thirroul's favourite sons combined when brothers Paul and Glen Air provided the lead up work for Beath to score for a winning 28-22 lead. The canaries threw the kitchen sink at Thirroul in the final few minutes but the defence held and the premiership was heading north. Ben Linde was named as the Grand Final man of the match. Thirroul 28 (Chris Potter, Trent Bryan, Aaron Beath, Glen Air, Todd Grose tries; Trent Bryan 4 goals) beat Dapto 22. The Grand Final team was Chris Potter, Trent Bryan, Fuad Suljkanovic, Todd Grose, Chris Timmins, Aaron Beath (c), Paul Air, Pat Ginti, Mykel Hema, Dale Jenkinson, Jay Van Meegan, Ben Linde, Ben Couchman. On the interchange bench were Glen Air, Ben Morgan, Shannon Jarvis, Phil Todd, Jarrod Costello, Brett Pincham. This must go down as one of the most successful years in Butchers history and the side was unlucky not to be awarded the Claytons Cup for the best team in NSW country.

The reserves reached the final this year. It is interesting to note that Ty McCarthy scored 114 points (18 tries, 21 goals) for the under 18s who finished near the bottom of their competition in 2003. Joel Ruskin and Mark Sheppard were also prominent players in this under 18 side. Down the track all three are still with the club and played major roles in our 2012 first grade Grand Final win. ■



Talented hole running custodian Chris Potter, one of our best in 2003.



2003 NSW Country Championship 1st Grade Minor Premiers - Premiers. Back: Ben McNally, Shane McCartney, Jarrod Costello, Trent Bryan, Mark Wilkinson, Pat Ginty, Todd Grose, Chris Potter. Middle: Tristan Hart, Brett Pincham, Phil Todd, Jay Van Meegan, Chris Timmins, Ben Morgan, Dale Jenkins, Faud Suljkanovic, Nigel Daniels, Ben Linde. Front: Paul Air, Rob Whitefield (manager), Aaron Beath (capt.), Glen Air, Brett Jones (coach), Ben Couchman. Absent: Shannon Jarvis, Mykel Hema.

PLAYER PROFILE Brett Jones

Now one of the best coaches in Australian Country Rugby League, Brett Jones is very much a Thirroul man. Born in the district, he began playing juniors with the under 7s around 1976 and made first grade in 1987. The Steelers were quick to realise his talent and he had been in the junior program for many years before being graded in 1988. He played the first of his 23 first grade matches on 18 March 1990, in the tight 11-10 win over the Roosters at WIN Stadium. At the end of the 1991 season, Brett flew to France to help the Carcassonne club win the French championship in 1991/92. Back in Australia in 1994, Brett captain/coached Thirroul to their first semi final appearance since 1987. In the next year under captain/coach, Mark Taylor, Brett was a member of Thirroul's unbeaten first grade Grand Final winning team. He continued in the Thirroul firsts before a brief stint with Tugun early in 1999. He answered the Butchers SOS and returned mid season to provide an invaluable contribution to the 1999 premiership side that thrashed Collegians 40-12 in the Grand Final. As a player Brett was a hard working prop with superior ball skills and a great feel for the game.

As reserve grade non playing coach in 2000 and 2001, Brett guided the team to two Grand Final wins. The next year, 2002, he became the first grade coach. The 2003 season will always be remembered by the club and Brett. With Brett at the helm the Butchers won the Country Championship Cup and took out the Grand Final with an impressive 28-22 win over Dapto. Brett continued as first grade coach for the next two years, taking the team to the 2004 Grand Final and the semis in 2005. In 2006, he began coaching the Illawarra representative side and also the Steelers SG Ball team. Under Brett's leadership, Illawarra won four successive Country Championships from 2007. He was appointed NSW Country coach in 2010 and has done this job for the past three seasons.



Durable ball playing front rower Brett Jones carting the ball forward.

18

Always in the Mix



In 2004, we again took out the Sevens title, defeating Wests, Cook Islands, Collegians, Wellington New Zealand and University on the way to our triumph. We again did well in the Country Challenge Cup, reaching the final, where we were beaten 18-14 by Queanbeyan in a tight result at Gibson Park. Ty McCarthy was establishing himself as a top class player in the firsts, while Stuart Boyle scored more than 100 points for the seconds. On 18 July, 2004, at Helensburgh, Stuart finished with 22 points (2 tries, 7 goals) in the reserves 54-8 win. Trent Bryan gave an indication of what was to follow, when he picked up 18 points (try and 7 goals) in the firsts early season 46-24 win over Wests at Parrish Park on 3 April. Trent finished the season with 168 points from 14 tries and 56 goals. The seconds were unluckily beaten 24-22 by Dapto in the minor semi final, while the under 18s came in sixth.

All three grades were beaten in the opening round of the 2005 competition against Port Kembla, while things weren't much better in the second round against Wests. The first and under 18s were well beaten, while the seconds drew 26-all. Things picked up in round three, with the firsts and reserves winning well against University, while the 18s went down narrowly to Helensburgh. The 18s reversed this result on 28 May at Helensburgh with an excellent 20-8 victory. The coaches and players knew they could improve and they did. Both the firsts and seconds reaching the semi finals, while the 18s picked up six wins. Several tight losses could have cost them a semi final place, but the 18s finished the season with a classy 26-12 win over Berkeley. For the firsts, Aaron Beath collected exactly 100 points (7 tries, 36 goals), while in the seconds, Ali Karouche 82 points (9 tries, 23 goals) and Brad Smith 72 points (6 tries, 24 goals), kept the scoreboards ticking.

What a way to begin a new season for Aaron Beath. The captain and five eighth landed 10 goals and crossed for two tries to finish with 28 points in the firsts 68-4 smashing of Corrimal in the opening round of the 2006 season at Ziems Park. Ty McCarthy raced in for three tries in the same game. At the end of the season, Aaron finished as the top individual scorer in all grades with 172 (10 tries, 66 goals) before the semi finals. The firsts scored an excellent 24-22 major semi final victory over Dapto, but the Canaries reversed this result in the Grand Final taking the Premiership with a 36-14 win. The seconds reached the minor semi where they went down 28-16 to Wollongong/University. Half, Eamon Hillen, scored 4 tries and 32 goals (80 Points) in the regular season for the seconds.

All three grades lost their first games in 2007 on 17 March against Collegians in firsts and seconds, along with Helensburgh in the 18s. While the second round games with Dapto were deferred, Thirroul won both the first and reserve grade matches with Wollongong/University on 1 April at Gibson Park. The firsts put on more than 50 points twice in this season. At Helensburgh on 5 May, they raced to a 56-10 win, while at Gibson Park on 4 August they finished with a 52-16 win over Port Kembla. Having their first seasons in the top grade, the Borg brothers, Scott and Ryan, made big impressions in 2007. Ryan finished with 102 points for the year with 8 tries and 35 goals. Finishing third on the competition ladder, the firsts were beaten 20-14 Wests in the minor semi. The seconds did well reaching the final with Wests. Winger Brad Smith collected 88 points for the seconds from 3 tries and 38 goals. Although they only managed one win during the season, the under 18s never gave up. Their win came at University Oval on Sunday morning 17 June. They scored 18 unanswered second half points to defeat Wollongong/University 24-22. ■



Dynamic representative half back Scott Borg, together with brother Ryan, formed a classy halves combination.



Clint Hill looking to off load.



Pat Ginti.



Ben Couchman, Ben Linde and Clint Hill.

PLAYER PROFILE

Faud Suljkanovic

Fuad had an excellent career and not only did he give great service to Thirroul, but he did the same for Illawarra and NSW Country. A Port Kembla junior, Fuad came into grade with the Blacks in 1995, winning a third grade Premiership in his first season. Wanting to play with a competitive club and because the ground was close to the train station, Fuad tried his luck out north and joined Thirroul for the 2000 season. Fuad eventually made his way into first grade in 2000 and then became a permanent member for the rest of his career. Mainly a centre, Fuad did play occasional matches at fullback and on the wing. He was a player who continually worked on his game and at his peak was a player who demanded the ball with the game on the line. He definitely had a knack for putting a try on when needed. Fuad retired at the end of the 2006 season but came back for two more years in 2009 and 2010. When he finished, the strong running centre had played 114 first grade games and 20 odd reserve grade matches. He scored 72 tries with the firsts and 16 for the reserves. An Illawarra representative in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005, Fuad collected five tries in his nine matches and won a Country Championship title in 2002. He impressed the NSW Country selectors during his Illawarra games and represented NSW Country in nine games, in which he crossed for six tries. In 2002 he played strongly on the NSW Country tour of France.



Grand Final scrum 2006.



Jay 'The Wrecking Ball' Van Meegan.



Blake Dunn - Skilful premiership back rower who went on to represent NSW Country in 2009.

PLAYER PROFILE Ben Couchman

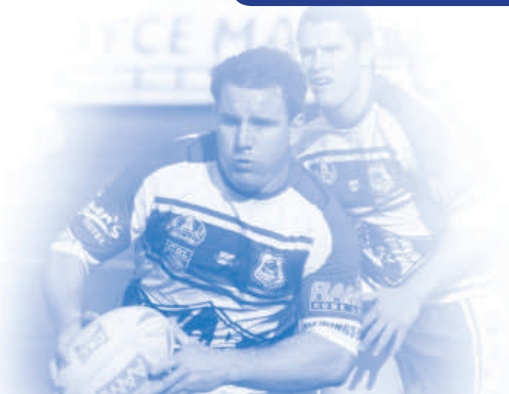
After beginning in the under 7s during the 1984 season, Ben is a Thirroul man to the core. Even when the family moved to Balgownie around 1988, he rode a bike to and from training for three seasons so he could play with the Butchers from under 12s to under 14s. His ability was recognised by the Steelers where he played junior reps and lower grades from 1993 to 1997. His distinguished career with Thirroul first grade began in 1998. He was a key member of the first grade premiership winning teams of 1999 and 2003, winning the Man of the Match award in the 1999 Grand Final. Always the team man, Ben stressed that he was privileged to play with such talented players and first class men during his time at Thirroul when asked about his career. In reality it was Ben's determination and unwaivering commitment to the team that provided inspiration to all that played with him. To paraphrase coach Ostwald, you would definitely go to war with Couchy. Ben ended up playing 138 first grade games in his nine seasons until the end of 2006, played in six grand finals winning two. He won the clubs Best and Fairest award in 2000 and 2002. The selectors recognised Ben's ability and chose him for the Illawarra representative side every

season from 1998 to 2006, which meant he probably played for Illawarra more than 30 times. In 2001, Ben was a member of the Illawarra Country Championship winning team and in 2002 and 2003, he was the Illawarra captain. In 2006, he was called up by the Dragons for a five game stint in their Premier League team, under coach, Steve Price and alongside such talented players as Josh Morris, Beau Ryan, Jason Nightingale and Dan Hunt. Continuing to help out at Thirroul whenever he could, Ben worked as assistant first grade coach from 2007 until the present. He also coaches his twin sons, Toby and Ryan, in the club's juniors.



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Premiership No. 6



The Butchers headed into the 2008 season full of confidence. The team performed solidly the season before until some crucial injuries led to a premature end in the minor semi. During the off season we were able to bolster our forward strength by enticing front rowers Willie Macdonald and Derek Short to the club. We also welcomed back local juniors Ryan Powell & Rhett Cochrane. After playing first grade as a teenager, Ryan was back, this time with a heap of NRL experience under his belt. These new faces together with those backing up enabled the Butchers to get off to a flying start, winning the first nine games. The team was playing some really good football which was built around solid defence. In attack the combination of backrower Blake Dunn and half Scott Borg on the right edge provided the opposition with many headaches. Mark Corrigan was always dangerous with the ball and safe in defence. The rep season was a challenging time as we lost 5 players to Illawarra rep and country commitments, during which time we lost 2 games. However with everyone back on deck the boys responded well. Thirroul won the first grade minor premiership by six competition points and also the club championship. The final table was Thirroul 26 (Won 13, lost 3), Dapto 20, Wests 19, Collegians 17, Corrimal 16, Wollongong/University 14, Berkeley 13, Helensburgh 3. The seconds missed out on a semi final place, winning seven and drawing one of their 16 games. In a very pleasing effort the under 18s had their best season for several years, reaching the semi finals.

We started the semi's with a crushing 29-4 win over Dapto.

However while the scoreline looked impressive this game took definitely took its toll. We finished the game with no replacements and several players were worse for wear. This is probably why we started the Grand Final slowly and were a bit off the pace, but we stayed in the match through our defence. Collegians led 12-6 with five minutes to play and were well on track to cause an upset and take the Premiership, however captain Ben Linde scored close to the posts with four minutes to play. We looked certain to tie the match. However the conversion drifted wide and it looked like the premiership sailed away with it. But then we were awarded a penalty nearing the end of our first set following the restart and worked our way down to attack their line. With 17 seconds to go Ryan Powell who had been in doubt all week with a serious knee injury ran off a Ryan Borg Pass to crash over for the premiership winning try. Thirroul 16 (Joel Ruskin, Ben Linde, Ryan Powell tries; Ryan Borg 2 goals) beat Collegians 12. The Thirroul Grand Final winning team was Chris Potter, Joel Ruskin, Ty McCarthy, Jade Air, Shane Younger, Ryan Borg, Scott Borg, Derek Short, Ben Linde (c), Willie McDonald, Aaron Beath, Blake Dunn, Mark Corrigan. Interchange Jay van Meegan, Rhett Cochrane, Paul Air, Ryan Powell, Rob Whitfield (manager), Ian Cook (trainer), Bryce Peard, Peter Mac & Trever Averal (Strappers). During the season Ty McCarthy, Scott Borg and Blake Dunn were chosen in the Country Firsts squad for the Quad series against the Jim Beam Cup, Queensland Country and English communities. Blake Dunn was awarded first grade's best & fairest player. ■



2008 Premiership winning team.



Blake Dunn, take it up supported by Mark Corrigan, Chris Potter and Ryan Borg.



Derek Short - Timeless front rower making the hard yards.



Ryan Powell barges over to claim the 2008 Grand Final.

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So Close



2009 First Grade Grand Final Lineup. (L to R): Ben Linde, Ryan Powell, Bryce Forrest, Steve Lyons, Aaron Beath, Brent Grose, Jay Van Meegan, Warrick Carter, Scott Borg, Ty McCarthy, Blake Dunn, Sean Jenkins, Shannon Jarvis, Mitchell Bate, Shane Millard, Faud Suljkanovic.

Ryan Powell was the first grade captain/coach in 2009 and 2010. He guided his team to the Grand Final each year, both times going down to Wests. In 2009, Thirroul were much too good for Corrimal in the qualifying final, winning 46-8. They then met Wests in the major semi and were unlucky to lose 18-16. The seconds meanwhile were going about their business in their march to Premiership honours. They beat Collegians 14-12 in the qualifying final and accounted for minor premiers Wests, by 16-12 in the major semi. It wasn't a contest in the reserve grade Grand Final, as Thirroul piled on seven tries to two in their 42-12 win. Popular centre, Faud Suljkanovic scored one of the tries and picked up his second premiership with the club following his 2003 first grade title. The under 18s sealed a great year for the club when they made the Grand Final. The youngsters were defeated but they proved themselves as one of their competition's best sides. Kurt Brinkworth was the fourth best point scorer in the 18s competition with 102 from a try and 49 goals. Again Thirroul were recognised as one of the leading clubs with four men being selected for the NSW Country squad. These four were Brent Grose, Scott Borg, Blake Dunn and Jay van Meegan.



Shane Millard - Now calling Thirroul home.
An invaluable member of the Club.



Hard running wing / centre Joel Ruskin, who represented NSW Country in 2010/11.



Local Juniors Michael Dengate & Matt Gallagher at Gibson Park

PLAYER PROFILE Ben Linde

A tough and talented forward, Ben began playing first grade in Wagga when he was still eligible for the under 18s. A Wagga Kangaroos junior, Ben played five seasons in the Riverina Group 9 first grade competition from 1997 with the Kangaroos, winning three successive Premierships from 1999. In the last two of these Grand Final successes, he won two John Hill Medals as the Man of the Match.

He joined Thirroul in 2002 and in his nine seasons at Gibson Park, finished with 145 first grade games and won Premierships in 2003 and 2008. From 2006, Ben captained the Butchers top grade team, including the 2008 Grand Final success. He won the club's Best and Fairest award in 2007. In 2003, Ben was one of the most dominating players in the Illawarra competition. He won the Man of the Match award in the Grand Final success over Dapto and in early July, he was called up to the St. George/Illawarra Dragons Premier League team. From 2004, Ben represented Illawarra for three successive seasons and played around 12 games including the 2004 Country Championship Final, against Newcastle. "Probably the proudest moment of my career, was to walk into the Bowling Club in front of our family and supporters, holding the 2008 Grand Final trophy," Ben said. "We had a great coach and a great team and all of these men will always be close friends."





2009 Reserve Grade Grand Final winners. Thirroul 42 (Will Grant 3, Joel Willoughby 2, Fuad Suljkanovic, Rhys James tries; Joel Willoughby 6, Brad Smith goals). The man of the match was five eighth Joel Willoughby. The Grand Final winning team was Brad Smith, Jack Whites, Brett Southam, Rhys James, Will Grant, Joel Willoughby, Shane Farralley, Adam Betts, Ellis Hurworth, Rhett Cochrane, Brett Pincham, Matt Gallagher, Jarrod Costello (c). Interchange- Steve Duggan, Nathan Potter, Mitchell McLean, Chris Potter, Kane Sanders.

In 2010, our firsts finished third on the ladder, but way behind the top two. They did well to reach the Grand Final but Wests were too good in this game. They played well to beat Helensburgh 16-10 in the qualifying final and were again impressive when they defeated Shellharbour 36-22 in the final. The seconds came in fifth on the ladder but couldn't make it past the semi finals. The 18s continued their good form of the previous year, again making the Grand Final. To become a successful first grade coach at such a young age is a credit to Ryan Powell and he won the Best and Fairest first grade award for 2010 and scored 124 points. Aaron Beath played his 200th first grade match during 2010 and is now the club record holder for most first grade games. Another pleasing feature of the 2010 season was that six players from the under 18s enjoyed first grade selection. Joel Ruskin and Derek Short were members of the Illawarra team who won the Country Championship. These two men won further honours when they were selected to tour Queensland with the NSW Country team. Nathan Potter was the seconds best point scorer with 84, while Kurt Brinkworth continued on from 2009 with 106 points for the 18s.

Two teams in the 2011 Grand Final and one in the final finished off another great season by Thirroul. The firsts came in third on the ladder and were beaten in the qualifying final by Helensburgh. But they regrouped by defeating Shellharbour 30-10 in the minor semi, before losing a contentious final to the Burg. The Burg we awarded a late try that came from an obvious knock on. They then landed a field goal to snatch the Grand Final spot with a 23-22 win. Ty McCarthy 94, scored plenty of points in first grade. Ty was the leading try scorer in Illawarra football with 14. The seconds also finished third on their table and then had good wins in the qualifying final, 10-6 over

Shellharbour and the major semi, 18-16 against Helensburgh. In the Grand Final they were beaten by Wests. Nathan Potter picked up 104 points for the seconds. The under 18s came from fourth to the Grand Final. They defeated Dapto 20-16 in the elimination final, Helensburgh 32-6 in the minor semi and Shellharbour 22-16 in the final. Wests were the Grand Final victors. Jack Croman completed a great under 18 season with 174 points (9 tries, 69 goals). Joseph McDevitt also had a good year with the 18s.

Brent Grose, Ty McCarthy, Joel Ruskin and Derek Short were selected in the 2011 senior Illawarra representative team, while Nik Ranguira was chosen for the Greater Southern Regions under 18s. Joel, Ty and Derek were also selected for NSW Country. During the 2011 season, Ty brought up his 100 first grade games for the club. ■



Ellis Hurworth and Brett Pincham celebrate the 2009 reserve grade grand final win.



A tough and muddy day at Gibson Park



Nathan Potter tough and hardworking hooker and five-eighth



Tensions boil over in the Northern Derby.

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An Unbelievable Turnaround



The 2012 season provided the club with the perfect end to its first 100 years. Another premiership that provided a perfect example of a unique “Butchers Spirit” that has enabled us to fight back against adversity so many times. The following season summary is provided by Butchers winger Mitchell Bate with the help of his father in law and coach Phil Ostwald.

“2012 started in very familiar circumstances”, says coach Phil Ostwald. After Back to back 40-point drubbings by last years grand finalists many people in and around the club didn’t give the season much hope. But Ossie had been in this position before and after some reassuring words and distilling some belief in the boys the season took a turn for the better. “We had a similar start in 99 when I was coach, the first 5 games resulted in losses then we went on undefeated to win the comp”. Little did he know 99 was showed an amazing resemblance to season 2012. After some repositioning of players including Joel Johnson to hooker, a new halving pair of Ty MCarthy and Michael Dengate the First grade team started to gel together slowly. The two Poms, Shane Grady and Ewan Doves started to find their feet and show really good signs. A move from the centres to the front row saw Grady really dominate mid way through the year, which led to his selection in the Illawarra and country teams. Between Ossies mumbled orders and the poms thick northern accents all the other players were at sixes and sevens as to what was going at times. By mid way through the second half of the year the team, led by Captain and prop Bryce Forrest, had gone through and beaten all the sides in the competition. All combinations were working, players had great trust in each other and things were looking great.



2012 Season Launch. Left to right: Ian Grose, Kevin Anderson, Aiden Beath, Paul Air, John Air, Aaron Beath and Phil Ostwald. All life members of the club.



Life member 'Rocker' Bob Sheeley at his post as ground announcer "The voice of Gibson Park", with Darryl Crosland.



Mitchell Bate on the fly - a true clubman, Bateo has 100 first grade games and is the current Club Secretary.



Butchers work horse Matt Gallagher breaking the Wests line in the grand final.



Daniel Perkins, Joel Ruskin and Ty McCarthy celebrate a try in the Grand Final.



Captain Bryce Forrest punches the air after the full time siren sounds.



Hooker Joel Johnson, player of the year and man of the match in the 2012 grand final.

It was a weekly tussle who would lead the tackle and hit ups category, Lock Matt Galagher, back rower Mark Sherdard featured heavily in the weekly stats as did outside backs, Daniel Perkins and Daniel Rauicava. Not to go unmentioned on the stats board were wingers Mitchell Bate and Brett Southam on the try scoring side things but were only in the shadows of Joel Johnson as week after week he got over the white line.

Through the turnaround in the season evergreen back rower Aaron Beath and full back Brent Grose provided great leadership for the younger guys and solid all round football. They provided a good steady foundation and a level head when needed.

As the Semi final football approaches the team had a wake up call with a loss to Shellharbour, but it was just what the doctor ordered as the side re focused on the bigger picture ahead.

After being unlucky in the first Semi Final against Helensburgh where the side went down on the full time siren, the guys bounced back with wins against Collies the following week and beating the burgh to set up the grand final against West's.

Hard working forwards Adam Goode, Jacob Ling and Duncan Reilly got the nod to be on the bench for the GF, whilst Joel Ruskin got a call up to replace Brett Southam in the grand final after Brett unfortunately suffered a season ending Knee injury the previous week.

So all was set and preparation was done, nerves where throughout the dressing room and all was going to script. Well that was until west's scored inside the first two minutes of the game and team realized they were up against it. But in true butchers spirit and never say die attitude the boys came out after half time and blew west off the park through attack, defense and fitness. Running out winners 20 to 16.

Hooker Joel Johnson was named Man of the match for an outstanding performance and a week later named player of the year, for the Illawarra Coal league, a huge achievement from the classy hooker. Needless to say he cleaned up at the clubs presentation evening.





2012 Grand Final team celebrating their win.

So not only did Ossie coach the side to the premiership he somehow along the way took the role as a mentor, mind reader, translator, interpreter, listener and joke teller. These qualities were crucial in dealing with the likes of Sheppo who was able to push every button possible, Ty who avoided training at all costs (some of the best excuses known to man) and Bateo who questioned every decision and direction, not to mention every other player who used excuses each week to not train because it was too wet, too cold or too windy!

The Grand Final winning team was Brent Grose, Mitchell Bate, Daniel Perkins, Daniel Raucava, Joel Ruskin, Ty McCarthy, Michael Dengate, Matt Gallagher, Mark Sheppard, Aaron Beath, Bryce Forrest (c), Joel Johnson, Shane Grady. The interchange men were Duncan Reilly, Ewan Dowes, Jacob Ling, Adam Goode.

2012 was the 19th successive season that Thirroul firsts had reached the semi finals. Ty McCarthy and Shane Grady were selected in the Illawarra Divisional team and both were then selected to represent NSW Country. When you consider the financial situations of both Grand Final sides, it becomes clear that Thirroul's achievement was outstanding. The seconds finished third on the ladder. They were beaten by Helensburgh in the qualifying final and by Corrimal in the minor semi. Despite the under 18s finishing seventh, Jack Croman showed what a point scoring wizard he is. In 2011, he totalled 174 points and in 2012, he crossed for 19 tries and kicked 53 goals to give him 184 points. Ty McCarthy, Brent Grose, Joel Ruskin and Derek Short were selected in both the 2012 Illawarra Divisional team and the NSW Country squad. Aaron Beath and Paul Air became Life Members of the club. ■



Phil Oswald & Iain Cook



Coach Phil Oswald salutes to the crowd.

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Recent Developments



Rugby League has gone through many changes over the years. A recent development is the commencement of a local Women's Rugby League competition. 2012 marked the first year that Thirroul entered a side in this Illawarra based competition. Our girls had limited success but showed commitment to see the season out with a small squad put under more pressure by several key injuries. The best and fairest award for the season went to Adrianna Wassen and the Players Player to Sheree Gallagher. Hopefully the girls can regroup and continue on for years to come.



Another recent addition to the Butchers ranks has been the formation of the Butchers Old Boys. The old boys was established by a group of former players and officials and was modelled on the Men of League organisation. The aim was to help out those that have been a part of the club and have fallen on hard times. A few people that have received donations so far are Amelia Wilkinson (Former player Mark Wilkinson's daughter), Bryce Lowrie (former player) and Wyatt Roodenrys (former player Matt Roodenrys' son). The Butchers Old Boys have also competed in the annual NRL Masters competition held in Runaway Bay for the past 5 years. Whilst the focus is on friendly competition, our boys are proud of the fact that they remain undefeated in all the 25 games they have played in the over 35's competition. ■



Thirroul Old Boys on the Gold Coast in 2012.

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Our Future



As the Butchers first century draws to a close the Butchers start the next hundred years as defending First Grade Premiers. We also start with our juniors in great shape as junior champions in 2012. Rugby League in Thirroul has exploded in recent years, with the Butchers now fielding over 20 junior teams. Many of these sides are expected to feature heavily come semi final time. This together with a strong representation in the junior representative teams means the future certainly looks bright. ■

Matt Prior with Thirroul Juniors. Matt has gone on to play over 100 NRL games and is one of Thirroul's most coveted players.



2012 Grand Final Line up for the National Anthem.



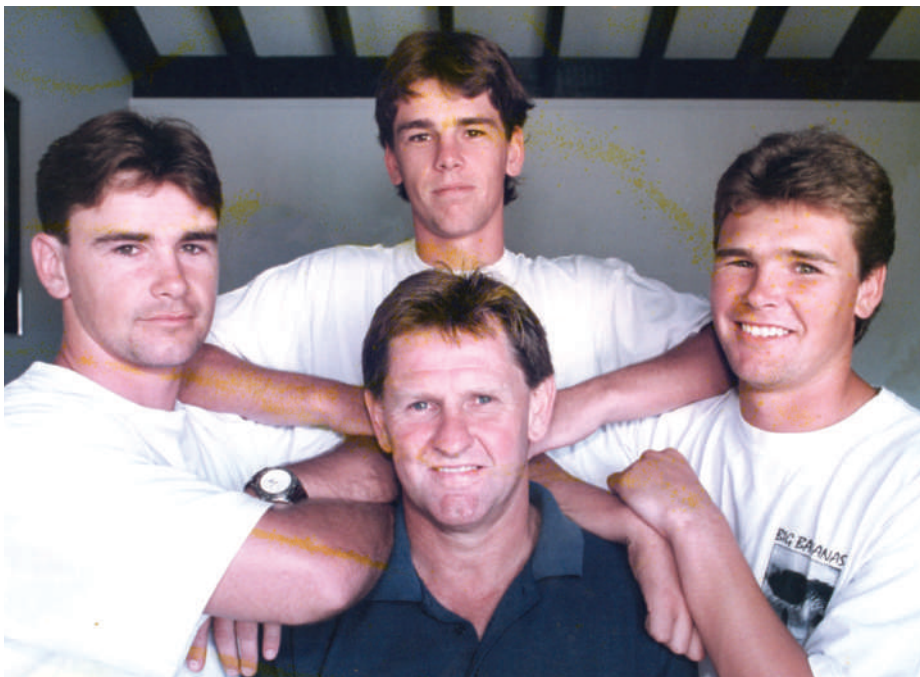


One of the unique features of the Thirroul is that so many players come to the club and stay for life. This has led to some families within the area having two, three and even four generations providing service to the club. Here are some of the footballing dynasties that have become synonymous with Thirroul over the years:

THE AIRS

Jack "Slappy" Air joined the club as a 20 year old in 1940. Growing up in Newcastle, Jack was a good boxer, having a few pro fights and thus got the nickname, "Slappy". He played in the two winning reserve grade Grand Finals in 1942 and 1943, scoring a good try in the 1942 decider. Thirroul didn't play in the first grade competitions of those years, so the reserve grade teams were the club's best sides. He was awarded Life Membership for his service to the club over many years. Later in life, Jack worked as assistant secretary/manager of the Leagues club.

Born in 1947, Jack's son, John, began playing under 13 with the Butchers when he was just 10 years of age. Selected for NSW Schools 9 stone team in 1962, he played against Queensland as an early game to the second Australia-Great Britain Test match at a packed Lang Park. He made his first grade debut with Thirroul, as a 19 year old in 1966, and played nine seasons with the club. In between he had a season with Griffith in 1969, did not play in 1974 as a result of an injury, moved to Brisbane in 1975 for work and coached Norths in 1977. In his Butchers career John finished with well over 100 first grade matches to his credit. In 1971 and 1972, he was a member of Thirroul's first grade Grand Final teams. In 1973 John began the season as a member of the first grade side but suffered a serious injury and so missed the march to the winning Grand Final. During his career, John was rightly rated as one of the best backs in Illawarra football. He was selected in the Southern NSW team to play Great Britain at the Wollongong Showground on 5 July 1970. Many regard this match as the most vicious ever played on the Showground. Playing fullback, John suffered a broken jaw. John worked for the club after retiring, serving on several committees. He was club President for four years from 1991 and was also awarded Life Membership.



Father John Air with sons (L to R) Paul, Jade and Glen Air.



Jade Air.



Glen Air



Paul Air

The next generation of Airs was brilliant. John's eldest son, Paul, played 204 first grade games for Thirroul and played in 9 First Grade Grand Finals. He played from 1990 to 2008 and was a key member of the 1995, 1999 & 2003 first grade Grand Final winning teams. The 1995 side was undefeated and Paul, at halfback, scored nine tries, while in 1999, he raced over for a four pointer in the 40-12 Grand Final victory over Collegians. In 2003, Paul played in both the final of the Country Cup and the first grade Grand Final with brother Glen. Paul also played in the winning 2008 first grade Grand Final team off the bench this time alongside his other brother Jade. He was named Illawarra Player of the Year in 1992 and was subsequently graded with the Steelers in 1993. He was also awarded the Noel Hill Trophy for the first grade Best and Fairest in 1992, 1998 and 2004. Working under coach and cousin Brett Jones, Paul was assistant coach of the successful 2008, 2009 & 2010 Illawarra rep teams. He coached Thirroul Reserve grade twice and served as Secretary for 3 years. He was awarded Life Membership in 2012, becoming the third generation of Airs to enjoy this honour.

Middle brother, Glen, represented the 1991 Australian Schools team on their 1991 tour of England. He was snapped up by the Steelers in 1992 and played 44 first grade games (12 tries) in his six seasons. He made his first grade debut from the bench, against St. George, on 1 May 1994 at Wollongong Showground, scoring a try in the solid 24-0 win. At the Showground on 14 April 1996, Glen picked up three tries in the Steelers 56-14 win over South Sydney. Altogether, Glen played 119 games in all grades with the Steelers and scored 186 points. At the end of 1997, Glen joined the London Broncos for the next four English Super League seasons. He played 71 games for the Broncos,

collecting 21 tries. Returning home, he had a season with Sydney's Western Suburbs Magpies in 2002 and came back to Thirroul in 2003, playing in the Country Cup triumph and scored a try in the 28-22 Grand Final win over Dapto.

The youngest brother Jade, like his two brothers, began his football with the Thirroul juniors. He joined the Steelers for two seasons in 1997 and then played with Souths Mackay in 1998, winning the competition. He then moved to the Gold Coast in 1999, where he played five seasons with Tugun. Back at Thirroul in 2004 for the next six seasons, he played strongly in the 2008 winning first grade Grand Final team.

Both Paul and Glen are still actively involved with the club and have pulled the boots on now and then over the past few years. With the fourth generation already playing with the juniors, who knows what the Air family will give the Butchers in the coming years.

This family tree extends further with Jack's daughter Glenn providing two more of Thirroul's favourite sons, Brett and Dean Jones. Brett's career has been highlighted throughout the book but brother Dean's contribution to the club is just as impressive. As with Brett, Dean was regarded as an emerging talent and was a fixture in Illawarra junior rep teams from an early age. Having represented the Illawarra Steelers throughout the early 90's (including one first grade appearance) Dean returned to the Butchers and was a member of the 1999 Premiership winning side at Hooker. Throughout his playing days, Dean was a clever half, five eight or hooker who used his strength and acceleration to terrorise opposition defences. He finished his career early due to injury but managed to play over 100 first grade games and win the Noel Hill Trophy in 1997 and 2001.

THE GROSES

Harry Grose was a tough forward who played with the club in the early 1940s. He had four sons, Col, Phil, David and Ian and each one played some football with Thirroul. Col played from the early 1950s to the mid 1960s played some first grade games Phil played with the juniors and then became a leading journalist with the Mercury. David was with the club for about eight seasons from 1965 and played 40 or so first grade matches. Despite some good offers to change clubs over the years, Ian played 162 first grades games with Thirroul in 14 seasons. A tough, non-nonsense forward, Ian held the record for most first grade games for many years until it was broken by his son Todd. He was a key member of the 1973 first grade Grand Final winning team and also picked up a reserve grade Premiership in 1969. Ian also represented Illawarra and played in the 1971 and 1972 Grand Finals.



Ian Grose



Brent Grose in the 2012 Grand Final.

Ian's son Todd also had a stellar career in the blue and white. He was a member of the 1995, 1999 and 2003 first grade Grand Final winning sides, as well as the 2003 Country Cup. Todd was chosen to represent NSW Country Firsts in 1998. Football longevity certainly runs in the family, with Todd also playing well over 100 first grade games for Thirroul. Todd started out as a speedy winger or centre but eventually worked his way into the back row. Todd was a powerful runner whose speed and low running style made him extremely difficult to tackle. His strength also made him a great low defender, something missed in the modern game. Along with Bill Scott, Todd coached the 2009 reserve grade team to the Premiership.

Col's son, Tim played the first of his nine seasons with the club in 1994. David's two sons Brent and Trad both played with our juniors. Brent went on to play NRL football with Cronulla, Souths and the Roosters, as well as spending five years with English club, Warrington. He finished with 54 NRL first grade games to his credit (17 tries) and with Warrington, he played 145 matches, scoring 65 tries. A versatile player, Brent successfully handled any backline position. In 2012 he was a key member of Thirroul's first grade Grand Final winning team. To cement the club's family ties, Brent married Aiden Beath's daughter, Kylie and everyone is waiting to see what good athletes their children will be.

Shane Grose is a grandson of Col and was involved in the 1999 Under 18 Premiership win and also the 2001 reserve grade Premiership success. Mick Grose, who is Col's adopted son, played in the 1996 winning reserve grade Grand Final. The next generation of Groses promises plenty.



Todd Grose

THE BEATHS

Aidan Beath and his son, Aaron, have given a tremendous amount of time and effort to our club. Aidan, brother to legendary dragon Barry Beath, grew up in Gooloogong. Barry signed with St. George in 1966 and Aidan joined his brother at the Dragons for the 1971 and 1972 seasons. Although Aidan played mostly in reserve and third grades while at Kogarah, the Dragons were Sydney's strongest club in those days and Aidan was in the 1971 third grade Grand Final side and the 1972 reserve grade Grand Final team. He did play one first grade game as well. In 1973, he came south to Thirroul and played a major role in the first grade Grand Final winning team. He won the Noel Hill trophy as the club's Best and Fairest player in 1973. Aidan played with Thirroul in 1974 and 1975 and also represented Illawarra in 1975. In 1974 he was a member of Thirroul's reserve grade Premiership winning team, who beat Corrimal 15-5 in the Grand Final. He then moved to Adelong as captain/coach in 1976, coming back to the South Coast the next year, playing with Corrimal from 1977 to 1981. He then joined his brother-in-law, Phil Ostwald, at Rex Roos for three seasons, winning a couple of second division Premierships and finishing his playing career in 1984. As a coach, Aidan was in charge of the Steelers SG Ball side for three seasons and also some Thirroul lower grade teams. In 1994, he was elected as a club Vice-President and the next year he served the first of seven successive years as club President. In 2003, he again took on this important position and 2012, was his 17th year as club President.

Aidan's son, Aaron began playing with Thirroul in under 8s and quickly became one of the club's best juniors. He represented the Steelers in the Matthews Cup (under 15), SG Ball (under 17) and Jersey Flegg (under 19 and then under 20). Back with Thirroul, Aaron played in the winning 1999 first grade Grand Final and played a major part in the hugely successful 2003 season, leading the side as captain in the successful Grand Final. Aaron played the 2002/03 English season with Leigh and had one season with the Dragons in 2004. Aaron returned to Thirroul in 2005 and has continued to play with the club ever since.



Aaron Beath

At the end of 2012, he had a club record of 249 first grade games to his credit and intends to play in 2013. He was a member of the 2008 first grade Grand Final team and collected his fourth first grade Premiership in 2012, when Thirroul defeated Wests, 20-16. The first week in September 2012 was a hectic time for Aaron, as he played in the Grand Final on the 2nd, enjoyed Mad Monday on the 3rd and then on the 5th, his wife Chantelle, gave birth to their son, Zaine, who joins two year old sister, Torah, in the family. Extremely versatile, Aaron could play as a hard running back rower or a creative five eight with a clever passing and kicking game. During his successful career, Aaron has won four First Grade Premierships, two First Grade Best & Fairest awards (2000 & 2003) represented Illawarra on numerous occasions and was Illawarra Player of the Year in 2003.

The Thirroul family connection certainly does not end there. Aidan is married to legendary Butchers hard man Ted Curran's daughter, Sandra, while Sandra's sister, Toni, is married to Phil Ostwald. Aidan's daughter and Aaron's sister, Kylie, is married to Brent Grose, another of the names steeped in Butchers history.



Brent Grose, Aidan Beath, Phil Ostwald, Mitch Bate and Aaron Beath.

THE WHEATLEYS

When Lionel Wheatley joined Thirroul as captain/coach for the 1958 season, he came with an outstanding record and reputation. He was 28 years of age when he came to the Illawarra district and had a season in Sydney first grade behind him, as well as representing Southern NSW against France in 1957 at Wagga. Born in Cootamundra in 1930, Lionel began playing first grade with the local club, as a 16 year old in 1946. They were a strong club and won the Group 9 competition in 1947, 1948 and 1950 with Lionel playing a part in all three Premiership wins. Moving to the Big Smoke for the 1951 season, Lionel joined the Newtown club under the legendary Frank "Bumper" Farrell as captain/coach. Making his first grade debut against Parramatta at Erskineville Oval on 14 April, he played nine first grade matches, mostly at lock. After the inner city life at Newtown, Lionel moved to the Queensland outback town of Longreach as captain/coach in 1952. There were three teams in Longreach, the Reds, the Blues and the Railway and Lionel coached all three teams. Back at Cootamundra in 1953 and 1954, Lionel won another Group 9 Premiership in 1954. This team also held the famous Maher Cup trophy in nine winning challenge matches. Altogether, Lionel probably played in 25 or more successful Maher Cup games with Cootamundra and another 15 or so with West Wyalong. In 1955, he was Cootamundra captain/coach, while in 1956 he joined West Wyalong and became their captain/coach in 1957. He won the award as Group 9's best player for the 1957 season.

After joining the Butchers in 1958, Lionel played five seasons with the club, before moving to Collegians for two seasons in 1963. Back at Thirroul in 1965, he played until 1970, finishing with 435 first grade points (25 tries 179 goals and 1 field goal)



Gary Wheatley



Lionel and Gary Wheatley

in his 11 seasons with the club. In 1962 and 1967, he was rewarded with the George Laughlin Memorial Trophy as the Thirroul clubman of the year, while in 1969, approaching 40 years of age, he captain/coached the reserve grade side to an 18-3 Grand Final win over Port Kembla. In 1981, he coached the Corrimal reserve grade team. Still highly regarded at Thirroul, a group of club identities, including Ian Grose and John Kelly, organised the Lionel Wheatley Testimonial night at Thirroul Leagues club on Saturday 1 November 1997. Lionel passed away in 2000.

Lionel's older son, Gary, began playing in the Thirroul juniors as a 5 year old in the under 7s. He played each season until the under 18s and in 1977 was Illawarra under 18 representative team captain. He came into Thirroul's first grade side in 1978 and 1979. He joined Collegians in 1980 and then Corrimal in 1981. After that he stopped playing, as he spent some time travelling, including two years working in the Solomon Islands. Now living in the Tweed Heads area, Gary teaches at a local high school. The younger of the two sons, John, began running around occasionally in the under 7s at 3 years of age. He started in grade as a 16 year old in 1978, playing mostly with the reserve grade team that year, although he did play one match in the top grade. In 1979, he moved to Collegians for two seasons where he won the inaugural Illawarra junior player of the year award in 1979. John then joined Corrimal in 1981, playing in the Grand Final that season, against Dapto. The travelling bug also bit John and he went overseas for a couple of years before returning home for one more season with Collegians in 1985. Back with Thirroul in 1987, John played an important part in the team's minor premiership success. He also played strongly in the 1987 semi final against Collegians and the final with Wests. Still living in Thirroul, John is a high school teacher like his older brother.

THE COONEYS

Ben Cooney was the Thirroul under 19 halfback when they won the competition on 6 October 1944, defeating Tech OBU, 21-16 in the Grand Final. He came into grade the next year, and played in the first grade side from 1946 to 1948. He was the first team half on that fateful day, 16 May 1948, when Thirroul's 25 year old hooker, Charlie Batchelor, collapsed and died during a match with Port Kembla at Gibson Park. Like several of his team-mates, Ben didn't play much after that game.

Ben's three sons, Kevin, Brian (Sam) and Paul, were outstanding Thirroul juniors, with Paul, often captaining his teams. Brian went to Rugby Union with the Shamrocks soon after his junior days and Kevin did the same after he finished in under 14s. He returned to Thirroul grade football as an 18 year old in 1977, becoming a first grader the next year. In 1979, Kevin had an outstanding season and along with his youthful team-mates, took Thirroul to the first grade final. In 1980, Kevin represented Illawarra and also Country on their tour of Tweed Heads, Wagga and Queanbeyan. He also played for Country Seconds against City Seconds that same year. Kevin's last season with the club was 1981 and he finished with close to 60 games, the majority in the top grade. In 1982, he had a season with the Steelers, in their first year, playing 10 reserve grade and five third grade matches, before suffering a career ending injury at Wollongong Showground on 25 July against Manly. Kevin suffered a broken neck in this match and didn't play football again. He suffers no major problems from the injury and enjoys a very active life. Paul is a Marist Father and while teaching at St. Pauls in 1981, had a season with Thirroul, mainly in the first team's backrow.



Kevin Cooney

THE STANFORD BROTHERS

Barrie Stanford joined Thirroul in 1958 from the very strong West Wyalong Maher Cup team. It didn't take Barrie long to make an impression at Thirroul, after he joined captain/coach Lionel Wheatley on the coast and he starred in a 17-3 trial win over Collegians at Thirroul on 16 March 1958. He played with Thirroul from 1958 to 1964, before moving to Milton/Ulladulla for the 1965 season. He had one more year with Thirroul in 1966 and finished his playing career in 1970, at 35 years of age, with four seasons for the Wagga Kangaroos. Mainly a second rower, Barrie played close to 150 games for Thirroul in his eight seasons, well over half in first grade. Barrie played in the 1959 first grade semi final against Wests and was a member of the 1960 reserve grade Grand Final winning team, who beat Norths 17-3. Still very active, Barrie has been a member of Thirroul Surf Club, for more than 50 years. He is currently the surf club's historian.



John Stanford

Younger brother, John, came to Thirroul from Condobolin, when his father became greenkeeper of Woonona Bowling club. He played under 16s and under 18s with Thirroul and came into grade in 1964. Like his brother, John played over 150 games with Thirroul, with more than 100 in the firsts. A versatile player, John played lock, second row, five eighth and centre as a first grader. He played in the 1972 and 1975 first grade Grand Finals, while in 1973, he was having a great season until June when he injured a cruciate ligament. This resulted in him missing the first grade Grand Final triumph, but although he had missed about half of the games in 1973, he was pipped by just one point, as Thirroul's Best and Fairest Player. John was a member of the 1974 Thirroul reserve grade Grand Final winning team who beat Corrimal 15-5. His last game before retiring was the 1975 first grade Grand Final with Dapto. John still lives at Thirroul, while Barrie is at Woonona.





THE McCARTHYS

Thirroul point scoring record holder, John McCarthy, played junior football in the South Sydney competition and went into grade with the Balmain club in 1966. He played four seasons with the Tigers captaining the 1968 third grade Grand Final winners. While at Balmain, John played 7 first grade matches, but only scored two points and they came from a field goal against Penrith, at Penrith on 11 August 1968. Although he was a top class goalkicker, Balmain had Len Killeen and Keith Barnes (17 Tests) and they were two of the best ever kickers.

Joining Thirroul in 1970 as captain/coach, John soon had things clicking. That first season he led the side to the final, while in 1971 and 1972 they reached the Grand Final. The big prize came in 1973, when John's four goals gave Thirroul a tight 8-6 win over Wests in the first grade Grand Final. That was John's final first grade game and he finished with 776 points for Thirroul with 10 tries, 362 goals and 14 field goals. John also coached the under 18s to the Premiership in 1973. The next year, he began as non-playing reserve grade coach, but half way through the season, put on the boots again. This resulted in another Premiership when Thirroul won the Grand Final, beating Corrimal 15-5. In 1975 as non-playing coach, John guided the firsts to the Grand Final and the next year, he took them to the semi finals. John had two more seasons as non-playing coach in 1980 and 1981. He won the George Laughlin Memorial trophy in 1971, 1972 and 1973, as Thirroul club person of the year. He was entitled to keep this trophy after the three successive wins but donated it back to the club.

One of John's five sons, Ty, began playing with Thirroul under 7s around 1992 and continued all the way through juniors with the club. The clever five eighth/centre/fullback was a member of the Thirroul 2008 and 2012 winning first grade Grand Final teams. Ty definitely inherited his fathers' ability to read play and together with great footwork makes him a unique attacking threat. This has been instrumental in the Butchers recent on field successes. In 2008, 2009 and 2010, Ty was also a key member of the Illawarra teams who went on to win the Country Championship. He was subsequently selected to represent Country three times.



John McCarthy receives the 1973 premiership Cup from League President Norm Reed.

Ty McCarthy, 2006

THE NOLANS

Born at Morpeth in the Newcastle area, Keith Nolan came to Thirroul as a telephone technician and linesman in the early 1950s. A keen sports lover, Keith became secretary of Thirroul Rugby League club in 1953 and did this job for three successive seasons, including 1954, when the club won its first top grade Premiership. The Leagues Club was first established above the dance studio in the Main road premises, but on 22 June 1956, it opened at the new premises near Gibson Park. Keith began working with the Leagues club around this time and became the secretary/manager for many years. In 1968, he also held the position of football club treasurer. Keith was made a Life Member of the Football club and was also a Life Member of CMAA (Club Managers Association of Australia). He was also a member of the Steelers steering committee, whose hard work behind the scenes saw the club admitted to the Sydney first grade competition in 1982, while he was also a member of the Steelers first Board of Management. He was founding Chairman of the Illawarra Turf club. He passed away in November 2005, aged 76.

Keith and his wife Jill had four children, two sons and two daughters, Cathy and Julie. Keith's two sons were gifted sportsmen and both gave plenty of service to Thirroul Rugby League club. Peter is the oldest and he played around 50 first grade games for Thirroul, after playing in the juniors from under 7s to under 16s. As a schoolboy at St. Pauls College he toured New Zealand with the NSW Catholic Schools under 15 team in June 1968. He represented Illawarra under 16s against South Sydney in July 1969 and for the next two years, was a student of the famous Rugby Union nursery, St. Josephs College, Hunters Hill, where he was a first XV member. Returning from Sydney in 1972, Peter played one year of local Rugby Union with the Vikings then rejoined Thirroul in 1973. He played on the wing in the winning first Grade Grand Final team and played 23 of the 25 first grade matches in 1973. Peter scored a try in the play-off for fourth place against Corrimal, the semi final with Port Kembla and the final against Dapto. Peter also played some matches with the 1975 third grade Premiership winning side. Like his older brother, Mark also began his football as an under 7 Thirroul junior. In 1973 he was a key member of the under 18 Premiership winning team, playing second row and kicking two goals in the 10-7 Grand Final win over Corrimal. The under 18 Grand Final was played on Saturday 22 September and the next day, Mark came on at half-time in the first Grade Grand Final, substituting at fullback for the injured Jon Sutherland. Only 17 at the time, Mark was not overawed and diffused everything that Wests sent his way. Mark was in the second row for the 1976 reserve grade Grand Final winning team. He played grade with Thirroul for about nine seasons from 1973, finishing with over 70 first grade games. He could handle any position in the backline and in 1981, played a few first grade games as a second rower. In that 1981 season, he was also captain/coach of the reserve grade team, taking them to the final. Mark also played some first grade football with the Brisbane Brothers club in 1978. Mark was selected to play an Amco Cup game for Illawarra in 1975 but had to withdraw because of injury. A cousin of Peter and Mark, Pat Nolan, won the 1984 Joe Latini trophy as the Best Thirroul Junior into grade football. Pat played some first grade games in his first year in grade.



Keith Nolan



Mark Nolan

THE MILLINGTONS

William "Bibby" Millington began playing with Thirroul in the early 1940s. He played strongly in both reserve grade Grand Final wins in 1942 and 1943, when the club did not play in the first grade competition. After Thirroul returned to first grade in 1944, Bibby quickly established himself as one of the best forwards in the competition. He represented Illawarra and was a member of Thirroul's 1944 Grand Final team against Port Kembla. He was sent off in this torrid match, along with Port's Frank Beazley, after a disagreement. In 1945, Bibby was in the team who won the early season KO and scored a try in the 22-8 semi final win over Wollongong. Thirroul were prominent throughout the forties and in 1947, when the firsts reached the final, Bibby scored eight tries. Several Sydney clubs were interested in his services but he stayed with the Butchers, tallying well over 100 first grade games when he finished in 1952.

Bibby's son, Ray, began playing football with Thirroul juniors and in 1967, was a member of the under 18 Premiership winning team. He came into grade the next year and in 1969, was a member of the Grand Final winning reserve grade side for whom Lionel Wheatley, then nearing 40, was the captain/coach. Ray scored two tries in the 34-2 thrashing of Collegians in the Grand Final on 28 September. For the next six seasons, Ray played mostly in the firsts and finished with 95 games in the top grade. An extremely versatile footballer, Ray played first grade at fullback, wing, centre, five eighth, lock and second row. He played several first grade matches during the 1973 first grade Premiership winning team and was on the bench for the Grand Final. He retired in 1974 after breaking his leg. In 1999, Ray was the manager of Thirroul's first grade Grand Final winning team.

Ray's three sons, Ben, Joshua and Luke, all played with the Thirroul juniors and won several Premierships between them. Ben turned to refereeing and has controlled two Group 11 Grand Finals at Dubbo, some first grade games in the Illawarra League, along with Jersey Flegg and Premier League football. Joshua represented NSW Combined High Schools at Rugby Union and also played some grade with Thirroul.



Ray and William 'Bibby' Millington



Joshua Millington

THE JEFFRIES

Don Jeffries was a tough, hard tackling five eighth, who joined Thirroul in 1956 from the Temora club. He had grown up and began playing Rugby League in Junee, moving to Temora around 1952 as a 21 year old. Don played in several successful Maher Cup games with Temora in 1953, 54 and 55. He played six seasons with Thirroul from 1956 and finished with close to 60 first grade matches to his credit. In 1957, Don finished third in the South Coast Times Illawarra Player of the Year running. After leaving Thirroul, Don played with Shellharbour for a couple of years and then Orange. His three sons, Barry, Don and Jack all played several seasons with Thirroul juniors. Don had a couple of years in grade with Thirroul, while Barry joined Shellharbour after the juniors. Both Don and Barry won Australian Wrestling Titles. Jack began playing with Thirroul in the under 7s as a five year old and went on to finish with a very successful career. In 1972, while still playing with Thirroul juniors and attending Keira Boys High, he was selected for the Australian Schools team, coached by Roy Masters, to tour England. In 1973 and 1974 he was an important member of the Thirroul under 18 Premiership winning teams. He also played some first grade in 1974 and again early in 1975. After a dispute with the club midway through 1975, because he took time off to go on a cruise, Jack completed the season in third grade. But it finished on the right note, as he was a member of the third grade Grand Final winning side who beat Port Kembla 20-7. In 1976, he joined Corrimal for two years and in 1978 moved to St George, where he played eight first grade games and represented City Seconds against Country Seconds. He then played three seasons with the Wests Magpies, who were coached by Roy Masters. Popular long term Wests secretary of those times, Ray Bernasconi, fondly remembers an incident involving Jack. "We were playing at Lidcombe Oval," Ray laughed, "and Jack had just reached the sideline on a stretcher after a head knock. Fifty metres downfield, an opposition player had just made a break and on seeing this, Jack jumped off the stretcher and tackled the player into touch. I have never seen this done before or since and the referee wasn't impressed, as he gave the visitors a penalty, but Jack saved a try. ■



The football club would not have survived 100 years without the generous support of our sponsors. Over the years numerous local businesses have provided the club with much needed financial assistance. These funds have ensured that our club has not only survived but prospered. The Butchers have attained a high standing in the community and I am sure these sponsors value their association with such a successful club.

Long term sponsors include Greenwood Meats, Coastline Printing, Glennos Constructions, Greens Northern Coaches, Barry Navins Pharmacy and the Ryans & Beaches Hotels. However two sponsors stand out above the rest and their continued support is crucial to the survival of the Butchers.



**Thirroul Bowling Leagues
& Recreation Club**

THIRROUL LEAGUES CLUB / THIRROUL BOWLING LEAGUES & REC. CLUB

The Thirroul Leagues Club opened in late 1953 in a building on the Princes Highway, above the old dance club. The long term premises, near Gibson Park, were officially opened on 22 June 1956. Keith Nolan became Secretary/Manager soon after and held the position for more than 30 years. Greg Anderson was another long time Leagues club employee, working as Treasurer from 1961 to 1993. Both Keith & Greg provided plenty of assistance for the football club, both financial and otherwise. Once the new location was well established, it soon became one of the district's leading social venues and it remained so for most of its existence. After home games at Gibson Park players, their wives, girlfriends and friends, enjoyed the happy atmosphere at popular after game functions. A key aspect of the Butchers success is the friendships established both on and off the field. The Leagues Club provided the place where all supporters could get together and celebrate rugby league in Thirroul. The club remained a key sponsor and the emotional home for the football club right up until it closed in 2000 due to financial difficulties. With a few years in between the relationship between the football club and a licensed sporting club has been reborn. With new premises the Thirroul Bowling Leagues & Recreation Club has carried on where the Leagues Club left off as a major sponsor of the football club. In recent years the financial assistance has continued to grow and so has the feel that the Butchers now have a new home base.



**K&R
FABRICATIONS**

K & R FABRICATIONS

K & R first sponsored the club in 1994 and have been major sponsors ever since. This period of unbroken sponsorship corresponds with the unbroken record of our first grade team making the semi finals, which also started in 1994. The K & R black & gold diamond has been a lucky charm for the club and has taken pride of place on the front of the jumpers throughout this time. K & R directors Michael Andrews and Nick Mandranis have both been rewarded for their service to the club with life memberships. Mick also served as Club Secretary for two years and Club President for three years. ■



**K&R
FABRICATIONS**

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Congratulations and
Best Wishes to the
Thirroul Butchers
for 100 years of
footballing tradition

26

Thomas Gibson Park

Thirroul's home ground - Thomas Gibson Park - was named after a courageous guy who served with the Australian Army in World War One. Thomas Gibson served on the Western Front in France and lost his eyesight in action. Before the war he was a school teacher but on his return he trained as a physiotherapist. His skill, attitude and confidence created a fine reputation in his new role throughout the region. Russell Gibson says his grandfather was elected to Bulli Shire Council. His dedication and work for the community as a councillor led to the naming of our home ground, the Thomas Gibson Park. He died in 1970. An uncovered stand with dressing rooms and a canteen was built at the ground more than 30 years ago and has served us well. However upgraded facilities are desperately needed for our next 100 years. ■



27

Centenary Year Team



First Grade 2013



28

Our Life Members



Life Membership of our football club has been given to a number of former players and officials, starting in 1942. An indication as to the contribution of these individuals is the fact that it has only been bestowed on 32 people in 100 years of the club. Our Life Members are:

| | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Pop Lanyon* | Gil Squires* | Bob Fitzgerald* | Kevin Anderson | Ian Grose |
| George Laughlin* | Paul Hampton* | Albert Nicholls | Bruce Percy | Robert Sheeley |
| Ern Loughrey* | Jack Air* | Greg Anderson | Phil Ostwald | Ken Evans |
| Ralph Bell* | Bruce Cambridge* | Dennis Harrington | Aidan Beath | Aaron Beath |
| Bibby Millington* | Keith Nolan* | John Stanford | Gail Anderson | Paul Air |
| Joe Fitzgerald* | John Hobbs* | John Air | Michael Andrews | Nick Mandranis |
| John Kerr* | George Sorell* | | | |

29

Long Serving Officials



Some of our Executive members gave us many years of service. Records show that many players continued to serve the club long after their playing days had ceased. Much research has gone into players throughout the years, but it might be time to reflect on Thirroul Football Club officials who guided us through the good and bad times. Unfortunately a lack of records from our early years means we have failed to recognise the work of our pioneers. However the available list does show the valuable work of various individuals, some with over 20 years service to our club.

Unfortunately we do not have lists of the many members of our various hard-working committees associated with these executives over the years, but they can be assured theirs has not been a thankless job. The club was also blessed with a team of associates - physiotherapists, trainers, strappers, who kept our boys on the paddock - guys like Les "Magic Fingers" Griffin, Ross Thomas, George Bywater, managers and ball boys. With regards to longevity the following two names stand out.



One of our great strappers, Peter McIntyre - Peter has given his professional services to our club for over 18 years (and doesn't look a year older).

ERN LOUGHERY

Ern gave more than 40 years of continuous service to the club. He began playing juniors from 1934 to 1938 and came into grade in 1939. In 1940 he played a couple of competition games with the firsts who went on to beat Corrimal 4-3 in the Grand Final. A bad leg injury caused him to give up his playing career in 1941, so the next year he became the club treasurer, a position he held for 17 consecutive years. A selector and committeeman in 1959, he was secretary in 1960, while in 1961 he again became treasurer for the next six seasons until 1966. Still not finished, Ern worked as a general committee man for the next eight years or so and was the ground announcer at Gibson Park for many years. Ern was elected as a Life Member of the Football club in 1948 and in later years also held the positions of President, Treasurer and Director of the Leagues club.



KEVIN ANDERSON

Although he was born in Dapto, Kevin Anderson has given 30 years of service to Thirroul RLFC. A good friend of 1983 club President, Geoff Smith, Kevin joined the board in 1983. He remembered selling the beer in those days but soon became more involved. In 1986, he assisted Helen Watters with her work as Treasurer and the next year was appointed as the club's Treasurer. In 2012, Kevin was still our hard working Treasurer, his 26th successive year in the job. Kevin moved to Thirroul as a 17 year around 1960 to work for the railways. Always a Rugby League fan, he began to follow the local club and when the chance came to help Thirroul in a small way, he jumped at the opportunity. "We have a solid club in all respects," Kevin said. "There are a lot of hard workers throughout the club, both on and off the field. Like most clubs, we have had our moments financially, but we only promise what we can afford." He is proud to help Thirroul RLFC in any way he can and will continue as Treasurer for "as long as the club wants me." Kevin was Treasurer of Illawarra Carlton League in 1995 and was given Life Membership of Thirroul RLFC in 1996. In 2008, he was honoured with an ARL Centenary Medal, along with several others, including former Thirroul fullback and leading referee, Kevin Riolo. ■

Club Executives

During our history we have had some great, dedicated members of the executive who through their efforts have lifted the club to high levels. Here is a list of club executives since 1942:

| YEAR | PRESIDENT | SECRETARY | TREASURER | YEAR | PRESIDENT | SECRETARY | TREASURER |
|------|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------|------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1942 | R. Armstrong | J. Darcy | E. Loughrey | 1978 | D. Harrington | D. Cuell | G. Anderson |
| 1943 | R. Armstrong | R. Healey | E. Loughrey | 1979 | D. Harrington | J. Hobbs | G. Anderson |
| 1944 | R. Armstrong | R. Healey | E. Loughrey | 1980 | D. Harrington | J. Hobbs | G. Anderson |
| 1945 | C. Smith | E. Smart | E. Loughrey | 1981 | D. Harrington | J. Hobbs | G. Anderson |
| 1946 | E. Smart | J. Bourke | E. Loughrey | 1982 | J. Hobbs | L. Rutledge | P. McKenzie |
| 1947 | E. Smart | J. Bourke | E. Loughrey | 1983 | G. Smith | P. Wilden | B. Starr |
| 1948 | E. Smart | H. Roberts | E. Loughrey | 1984 | G. Smith | P. Wilden | B. Starr |
| 1949 | P. Hampton | H. Roberts & R. Bell | E. Loughrey | 1985 | G. Smith | B. Jackson | G. Smith |
| 1950 | P. Hampton | R. Bell | E. Loughrey | 1986 | G. Smith | B. Jackson | Helen Watters |
| 1951 | P. Hampton | R. Bell | E. Loughrey | 1987 | G. Smith | B. Jackson | K. Anderson |
| 1952 | P. Hampton | R. Bell | E. Loughrey | 1988 | G. Smith | B. Jackson | K. Anderson |
| 1953 | J. Fitzgerald | K. Nolan | E. Loughrey | 1989 | J. Hobbs | P. McLean | K. Anderson |
| 1954 | J. Fitzgerald | K. Nolan | E. Loughrey | 1990 | J. Hobbs | P. McLean | K. Anderson |
| 1955 | J. Fitzgerald & A. Nicholls | K. Nolan | E. Loughrey | 1991 | J. Air | A. Osborne | K. Anderson |
| 1956 | T. Johnson | A. Nicholls | E. Loughrey | 1992 | J. Air | A. Osborne | K. Anderson |
| 1957 | T. Johnson | A. Nicholls | E. Loughrey | 1993 | J. Air | A. Osborne | K. Anderson |
| 1958 | B. Cambridge | A. Nicholls | E. Loughrey | 1994 | J. Air | A. Osborne | K. Anderson |
| 1959 | B. Cambridge | A. Nicholls | S. Halstead | 1995 | A. Beath | J. Todd | K. Anderson |
| 1960 | B. Cambridge | E. Loughrey | S. Halstead | 1996 | A. Beath | M. Andrews | K. Anderson |
| 1961 | A. Birch | G. Anderson | E. Loughrey | 1997 | A. Beath | M. Andrews | K. Anderson |
| 1962 | A. Birch | G. Anderson | E. Loughrey | 1998 | A. Beath | F. Nowlan | K. Anderson |
| 1963 | A. Birch | A. Whitby & R. Nunn | E. Loughrey | 1999 | A. Beath | F. Nowlan | K. Anderson |
| 1964 | R. Lawson | R. Nunn | E. Loughrey | 2000 | A. Beath | F. Nowlan | K. Anderson |
| 1965 | A. Birch | R. Nunn | E. Loughrey | 2001 | A. Beath | F. Nowlan | K. Anderson |
| 1966 | A. Birch | R. Nunn | E. Loughrey | 2002 | M. Andrews | M. Taylor | K. Anderson |
| 1967 | R. Nunn | B. Hume | T. Doyle | 2003 | M. Andrews | S. Finn | K. Anderson |
| 1968 | B. Cambridge | R. Sheedy | K. Nolan | 2004 | M. Andrews | S. Finn | K. Anderson |
| 1969 | B. Cambridge | R. Sheedy | D. O'Connell | 2005 | A. Beath | J. Hart | K. Anderson |
| 1970 | B. Cambridge | D. O'Connell | J. Sweeny | 2006 | A. Beath | J. Hart | K. Anderson |
| 1971 | B. Cambridge | R. Nunn | J. Sweeny | 2007 | A. Beath | J. Hart | K. Anderson |
| 1972 | B. Cambridge | J. Sweeny | S. Hatton | 2008 | A. Beath | G. Rutledge | K. Anderson |
| 1973 | B. Cambridge | J. Armstrong | G. Anderson | 2009 | A. Beath | P. Air | K. Anderson |
| 1974 | B. Cambridge | I. Lane | G. Anderson | 2010 | A. Beath | P. Air | K. Anderson |
| 1975 | B. Cambridge | J. Hobbs | G. Anderson | 2011 | A. Beath | P. Air | K. Anderson |
| 1976 | D. Harrington | J. Hobbs | G. Anderson | 2012 | A. Beath | M. Bate | K. Anderson |
| 1977 | D. Harrington | J. Hobbs | G. Anderson | | | | |



Thirroul has been blessed with some quality coaches over the years. Those that have been able to deliver a first grade premiership (Arthur Collinson, John McCarthy, Mark Taylor, Phil Ostwald (3) and Brett Jones) are part of Butchers folklore and are well covered in this book. So too have some other Butchers legends such as Bill Faulkner, Albert Nicholls, Bruce Smith, Jim Redfern, Noel Hill, Lionel Wheatley and Bob Smith. However there have been numerous other Butchers coaches who have served the club well. Some of these include:

JERRY SUTHERLAND - A talented half or five eighth, mostly with the Corrimal club, from the mid 1930s to after World War Two. Represented Illawarra on several occasions.

CHARLIE WRENCH - Born in Port Kembla, Charlie was a tough forward, who played 15 first grade games with Sydney club, Western Suburbs, from 1929 to 1933. Charlie was a member of the City Firsts team who drew 17-all with Country Firsts at the SCG on 5 June 1933. He went back to Port Kembla in 1934 and was captain/coach of their 1937 Premiership winning side.

SID GOODWIN - Played three Tests for Australia in 1935 as a winger and also played six games for NSW between 1938 and 1940. Played 159 first grade matches, 118 with Balmain and 41 for Newtown. Captained Balmain to their 1939 Grand Final win and in 1943 was in the Newtown team who beat Balmain in the 1943 Grand Final.

BARRY RYDER - A hard tackling lock forward and captain of South Sydney third grade team in 1949. A Maroubra club junior, Barry played four reserve grade games and 26 third grade matches in 1948 and 1949 with Souths. He also played with Thirroul in 1951.

JOE THOMAS - A five eighth from the Albury Blues club.

ATHOL HALPIN - A strong running centre, Athol represented Queensland against NSW in 1952 from the Toowoomba All Whites club. A Canterbury junior, Athol played 17 first grade games for the Bulldogs in 1949 and 1950.

JOHN SEYMOUR - A quality centre, John played four Sydney first grade games during two seasons with the Newtown club in 1948 and 1949. He represented Southern Division against France in 1951 and scored the local team's only try. Was captain/coach in 1959 and guided the team to the semi finals.

JOHN HOBBS - Another talented centre, John played 76 first grade games for Manly from 1952 to 1956. He represented City Firsts in 1954, scoring two tries in the 50-9 win over Country Firsts at the SCG. In 1957 he represented Country Firsts in their loss to City. John captained Southern Division against the 1958 Great Britain tourists and in 1959 was captain/coach of Southern Division against New Zealand. As captain/coach, John took the 1960 side to the semi finals.

JACK RAYNER - One of South Sydney's legends, Jack played 194 games for this club, all in first grade. A long striding second rower, he played in five Premiership winning teams, all as captain/coach. He played five Tests for Australia, was a 1948 Kangaroo and also toured New Zealand in 1949. He also played 12 games for NSW and six games for City Firsts. He was Thirroul's non playing coach in 1961.

DANNY O'CONNELL - Danny joined the club in 1961. As captain/coach he took the 1964 side to the semi finals. Danny was born and grew up in the Illawarra district and began grade football with Northern Suburbs. He was a member of Norths 1952 Illawarra Premiership winning team. Danny played 231 first grade matches in Illawarra football - 101 with Norths, 95 for Thirroul and 35 with Collegians. He represented Illawarra against Group 6 and 7.

COL GEELAN - Col played eight Tests and was a 1952 Kangaroo to England and France. He played in the top grade games at Newtown and for the Bulldogs. He captain/coached Newtown to the Grand Final in 1954 but missed the game because of injury. He played three matches for both NSW and City Firsts as a five eighth or centre.

ALAN HARRIS - Alan was a good forward for several seasons with the club, finishing in 1970.

LES HUTCHINGS - Played 39 first grade games for the Bulldogs from 1970 to 1973. He represented NSW twice in 1970 and also Country Firsts in three matches from 1968.

PETER DICKINSON - Played one first grade match with St. George in 1960 and then in three seasons with the Roosters, played 33 top grade games. A hard running centre, Peter was non playing coach and took the team to the semi finals. Peter coached the St. George Reserves to a Premiership win in 1976 and took Thirroul to the semi finals. As a player, he was a member of our 1973 Premiership winning side and played more than 60 first grade games with our club.

KEVIN GOLDSPINK- A 1967 Kangaroo tourist to England and France, Kevin played 106 first grade matches for the Bulldogs and 26 with the Roosters. He represented City Seconds and Country Firsts. **KEVIN COONEY**- A local junior, Kevin gave a lot of good service to the club. Kevin represented Country Seconds and toured with the Country squad in 1980. He also played with the Steelers in their inaugural year.

BARRY JACKSON- Barry Jackson came to Thirroul from Corrimal. Before that, he had played Presidents Cup with St. George.

DAVID BANKS - David Banks had a couple of seasons with the Steelers from 1982. He played three first grade games and many more in reserves and thirds. His first grade debut was at North Sydney Oval on 24 April 1983 in the loss to the Bears. David won the Steelers third grade player of the year in 1982. He was a member of two Thirroul Premiership winning teams, 1980 third grade and 1981 under 23.

IAN KEDWARD - Ian Kedward was a Parramatta junior with the Fairfield club, who played three seasons with the Eels from 1971 to 1973, playing six first grade games. He took up coaching with Fairfield, then Thirroul in 1986. He subsequently coached the Steelers Jersey Flegg team.

TIM MCLAREN - A local junior, Tim was not only an excellent Rugby League player, but also won an Olympic Rowing Silver Medal and an Australian Surf Boat Rowing title with the Bulli club. In 1973 and 1974, Tim was a member of the under 18 Grand Final winning teams, then in 1975 he won another Premiership with the Third grade team. In 1976 he made it four in succession when he was a member of the reserve grade Premiership side. Tim represented Illawarra against Great Britain in July 1979. Tim returned to Thirroul as captain/coach for the 1987 and 1988 seasons. He guided the team to the 1987 minor premiership and won the 1988 pre-season title.

DARRYL CROSLAND - Darryl began playing under 11s with Thirroul around 1975 and continued in the juniors until being selected with the Steelers Jersey Flegg team in 1982 and the Presidents Cup team the next year. Also in 1983, Darryl played eight reserve grade matches and seven third grade games with the Steelers, as well as making his first grade debut from the bench at Wollongong Showground on 14 August 1983 in the 50-14 win over Western Suburbs. The tough forward stayed with the Steelers until 1988. He then had a season with Albion Park, returning to Thirroul in 1990 as captain/coach and finishing his playing career in 1993. In 1998 Darryl coached Thirroul to the reserve grade Premiership win.

RYAN POWELL - Ryan began playing juniors with the club in his early teens. At 19, he signed with St. George/Illawarra, making his NRL first grade debut in 2004 at Mt. Smart Stadium in Auckland. Ryan also played first grade in 2005, but then joined Sydney Western Suburbs for a season in 2006. Back with St. George/Illawarra in 2007, he was captain of the Premier league team. He returned to Thirroul in 2008 but in April snapped a cruciate ligament. Hard work and courage saw him return to the team late in the season. His commitment was rewarded with the match winning, last minute try in the Grand Final. The next year, at just 27, he became first grade captain/coach, taking the team to the Grand Final, which he also did in 2010. In 2011 Ryan coached Mittagong in Group 6 and Shellharbour in 2012. ■

First Grade Coaches from 1940

| | | | |
|------|--------------------------|------|------------------------|
| 1940 | B. Faulkner | 1977 | P. Dickenson |
| 1941 | B. Faulkner | 1978 | K. Goldspink |
| 1942 | B. Faulkner | 1979 | K. Goldspink |
| 1943 | B. Faulkner | 1980 | J. McCarthy |
| 1944 | J. Sutherland | 1981 | J. McCarthy |
| 1945 | C. Wrench | 1982 | N/A |
| 1946 | J. Goodwin | 1983 | K. Cooney |
| 1947 | A. Nicholls | 1984 | K. Cooney & B. Jackson |
| 1948 | A. Nicholls | 1985 | D. Banks |
| 1949 | J. Redfern | 1986 | I. Kedward |
| 1950 | B. Ryder | 1987 | T. McLaren |
| 1951 | B. Smith | 1988 | T. McLaren |
| 1952 | N. Hill | 1989 | P. Ostwald |
| 1953 | A. Nicholls | 1990 | D. Crosland |
| 1954 | A. Collinson | 1991 | P. Ostwald |
| 1955 | N. Hill | 1992 | P. Ostwald |
| 1956 | K. Thomas | 1993 | P. Ostwald |
| 1957 | A. Halpin | 1994 | B. Jones |
| 1958 | L. Wheatley | 1995 | M. Taylor |
| 1959 | J. Seymour | 1996 | M. Taylor |
| 1960 | J. Hobbs | 1997 | M. Taylor |
| 1961 | J. Raynor | 1998 | P. Ostwald |
| 1962 | R. Smith | 1999 | P. Ostwald |
| 1963 | R. Smith | 2000 | P. Ostwald |
| 1964 | D. O'Connell | 2001 | P. Ostwald |
| 1965 | D. O'Connell | 2002 | B. Jones |
| 1966 | C. Geelan | 2003 | B. Jones |
| 1967 | R. Smith | 2004 | B. Jones |
| 1968 | D. O'Connell & A. Harris | 2005 | P. Ostwald |
| 1969 | A. Harris | 2006 | P. Ostwald |
| 1970 | J. McCarthy | 2007 | P. Ostwald |
| 1971 | J. McCarthy | 2008 | P. Ostwald |
| 1972 | J. McCarthy | 2009 | R. Powell |
| 1973 | J. McCarthy | 2010 | R. Powell |
| 1974 | L. Hutchings | 2011 | P. Ostwald |
| 1975 | J. McCarthy | 2012 | P. Ostwald |
| 1976 | J. McCarthy | | |

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First Grade Centurions



Players with over 100 First Grade Games

According to our records players with over 90 First Grade games include Ray Millington, John McCarthy and John Floyd. Available figures for players listed with 100 first grade games only go back to the 1940's, but we do not have lists of guys who played over 100 games in all grades with Thirroul, although we do know Barrie Stanford, Greg McLean, Terry Gilogley, Trent Morgan, Troy Morgan and Bill Scott exceeded this figure. It's likely some Butchers from the 50s, 60s and 70s could have played over 100 all grade games, but we had limitations in our research.

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Bibby Millington | Ian Grose | Bob Smith | Brett Jones | Ben Couchman |
| Jim Redfern | John Stanford | Bruce Percy | Mark Taylor | Ben Linde |
| Bruce Smith | Gerry Gelovan | Paul Air (200) | Blake Eager | Fuad Suljkanovic |
| Ted Curran | John Air | Todd Grose | Martin Sedgwick | Ty McCarthy |
| Lionel Wheatley | Arthur Fogg | Dean Jones | Aaron Beath (200) | Mitchell Bate |
| Gordon Abercrombie | | | | |



Albert Nichols presents Paul Air with his Jersey for his 200th First Grade game.

Players with over 200 First Grade Games



AARON BEATH

250 first Grade Games (at time of Print) Debut year 1998
1st grade Premierships 1999, 2003, 2008, 2012
1st grade Player of the year 2000, 2003
Illawarra Player of the year 2003
Clubman of the year 2007
Life Member Thirroul RLFC

“Aaron’s commitment to our club is unsurpassed and truly deserves his title of our most successful player.”

Mark Taylor

“Great Clubmen who held teams together over a lot of years. Aaron – Strong, Skilful, Versatile and got the Butchers over the line with big plays many times. Paul – Great competitor, who gave 100% each game, would play any position in any grade for the butchers and do whatever it took to get the win.”

Brett Jones

“It’s a rare feat to play 200 games for one club both Paul and Aaron are great clubman who deserve all the accolades they get.”

Ian Grose



PAUL AIR

204 First Grade Games Debut year 1990
1st grade Premierships 1995, 1999, 2003, 2008
1st grade Player of the year 1992, 1998, 2004
Illawarra player of the year 1992
Clubman of the Year 2008
Life Member Thirroul RLFC

“A true Butcher, Paul always gave his best for our club and has been one of the pillars of our success over the past twenty years”.

Mark Taylor

“Great Achievement. Loved playing the game and do what they could to get a win for the team. Very competitive in character and gave their best every week. Great Clubman and a pleasure to coach.”

Phil Ostwald

“Paul and Aaron are a massive reason the club has been so successful over the last 15 - 20 years. I’ve have been lucky enough to have played my entire career with the two greatest Butchers”

Todd Grose



George Laughlin Trophy – Clubman of the Year

George Laughlin was one of the club's great supporters for many years and donated the trophy to the Butchers in 1961. John McCarthy won it for keeps, as was the custom, after three wins in a row

(1971-72-73), but donated it back to the club. John Stanford and Aidan Beath have also been awarded the trophy three times. Below is a complete list of winners:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------|------|-----------------|------|-----------------|------|------------------|
| 1961 | Bob Smith | 1974 | Ray Millington | 1987 | Tim McLaren | 2000 | Phil Ostwald |
| 1962 | Lionel Wheatley | 1975 | Greg McLean | 1988 | Kevin Anderson | 2001 | Aidan Beath |
| 1963 | Bob Smith | 1976 | Greg Anderson | 1989 | Ken Martin | 2002 | Michael Andrews |
| 1964 | Dan O'Connell | 1977 | John Hobbs | 1990 | Gail Anderson | 2003 | Graham Smith |
| 1965 | Neil Smithard | 1978 | John Stanford | 1991 | Mark Taylor | 2004 | Glen Air |
| 1966 | Bob Fitzgerald | 1979 | Reg Moffatt | 1992 | Arthur Osborne | 2005 | Jarrold Costello |
| 1967 | Lionel Wheatley | 1980 | Greg Latimer | 1993 | Bruce Percy | 2006 | Kevin Anderson |
| 1968 | Fred Smith | 1981 | David Banks | 1994 | Aidan Beath | 2007 | Aaron Beath |
| 1969 | Ross Thomas | 1982 | N/A | 1995 | Mark Taylor | 2008 | Paul Air |
| 1970 | John Stanford | 1983 | Bev Starr | 1996 | Peter Gasseling | 2009 | Wayne Shiels |
| 1971 | John McCarthy | 1984 | Garth Pritchard | 1997 | Aidan Beath | 2010 | Bryce Peard |
| 1972 | John McCarthy | 1985 | Geoff Smith | 1998 | Brett Jones | 2011 | Shane Millard |
| 1973 | John McCarthy | 1986 | John Stanford | 1999 | Blake Eager | 2012 | Peter McIntyre |

The Noel Hill Trophy – First Grade Best and Fairest Player

The Noel Hill Trophy, named after one of our great players of the past was awarded to the Best and Fairest player of the season. It was won three times by Darren Gray, Paul Air and Martin Sedgwick. Winners since its introduction 36 years ago were:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|--------------------|------|---------------|------|-----------------------------|------|----------------|
| 1966 | Gordon Abercrombie | 1978 | Peter Wynn | 1990 | Mark Taylor | 2002 | Ben Couchman |
| 1967 | Dan O'Connell | 1979 | Rick Patrick | 1991 | Mark Taylor | 2003 | Aaron Beath |
| 1968 | John Stanford | 1980 | Peter Dawes | 1992 | Paul Air | 2004 | Paul Air |
| 1969 | John Stanford | 1981 | Brian Battese | 1993 | Martin Sedgwick | 2005 | Jay Van Meegan |
| 1970 | Gerry Geloven | 1982 | N/A | 1994 | Martin Sedgwick | 2006 | Clint Hill |
| 1971 | John Air | 1983 | Darren Gray | 1995 | Glen Sellers | 2007 | Ben Linde |
| 1972 | Allan McRitchie | 1984 | Roger McLeod | 1996 | Martin Sedgwick/Brett Jones | 2008 | Blake Dunn |
| 1973 | Aidan Beath | 1985 | Paul Bonfield | 1997 | Dean Jones | 2009 | Mark Corrigan |
| 1974 | Charlie Bennett | 1986 | N/A | 1998 | Paul Air | 2010 | Ryan Powell |
| 1975 | Arthur Fogg | 1987 | Darren Gray | 1999 | Luke MacDonald | 2011 | Matt Gallagher |
| 1976 | Rod Patison | 1988 | Darren Gray | 2000 | Aaron Beath/Ben Couchman | 2012 | Joel Johnsons |
| 1977 | Peter Wynn | 1989 | Paul Jones | 2001 | Dean Jones | | |

The George Sorrell Trophy – Best Back Under 21

Another top award, this one for the Best Back Under 21, was donated by George Sorrell. He was one of our patrons over the years, and a Life Member of the club. Here's the list:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|------|------------------|------|--|
| 1968 | Kevin Squires | 1976 | N/A | 1990 | Paul Air | 1997 | Jason Bulgarelli |
| 1969 | Garry Bland | 1977 | Kim Patrick | 1991 | Evan Stray | 1998 | Shane Sciberras |
| 1970 | N/A | 1978 | Terry Westblade | 1992 | Paul Air | 1999 | Shane Sciberras |
| 1971 | Ray Millington | 1979 | Terry Westblade | 1993 | Todd Grose | 2000 | Travis Down |
| 1972 | Bob Lulham | 1980-1986 | : No records | 1994 | Todd Grose | 2001 | Liam Wilson |
| 1973 | Les Mara | 1987 | Greg Toohey | 1995 | Steve Richards | 2002 | Shane McCartney |
| 1974 | Mark Nolan | 1988 | Paul Amatto | 1996 | Steve Richards | | This award was not awarded after 2002. |
| 1975 | Mark Nolan | 1989 | Evan Stray | 1997 | Jason Bulgarelli | | |

The Stan Murphy Trophy for the Best Forward Under 21

This award was named after Stan Murphy, who was a first grade player at the time of his death in an industrial accident over 50 years ago. The list is:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|----------------|------|-----------------|------|----------------|------|------------------|
| 1954 | John Dryden | 1967 | John Nicholls | 1980 | Brian Battese | 1993 | Martin Sedgwick |
| 1955 | George Jordan | 1968 | Kevin Bannerman | 1981 | Brian Battese | 1994 | Martin Sedgwick |
| 1956 | Greg Anderson | 1969 | Gerry Gelovan | 1982 | N/A | 1995 | Glenn Sellers |
| 1957 | Peter O'Hanlon | 1970 | Charlie Bennett | 1983 | Peter Jeffries | 1996 | Clinton Quinn |
| 1958 | Peter O'Hanlon | 1971 | Allan Davie | 1984 | Peter May | 1997 | Josh Shelton |
| 1959 | Kevin Jones | 1972 | Allan Davie | 1985 | Paul Brown | 1998 | Aaron Beath |
| 1960 | Rex Allen | 1973 | Rod Patison | 1986 | N/A | 1999 | Aaron Beath |
| 1961 | Rex Allen | 1974 | Peter McLaren | 1987 | Brett Jones | 2000 | Shannon Jarvis |
| 1962 | Ross Smart | 1975 | Rod Patison | 1988 | Paul Wilkinson | 2001 | Jarrold Costello |
| 1963 | John Mercer | 1976 | Peter Wynn | 1989 | Paul Jones | 2002 | Jay Van Meegan |
| 1964 | Ross Thomas | 1977 | Peter Wynn | 1990 | Paul Jones | | |
| 1965 | John Stanford | 1978 | Peter Wynn | 1991 | Matthew Scard | | |
| 1966 | John Stanford | 1979 | Brian Battese | 1992 | Sam Dawson | | |

The Joe Latini Trophy – Best Junior into Grade

A trophy donated by our long term sponsor, the Joe Latini trophy was awarded to the Best Junior into Grade:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|--------------|------|----------------|------|-------------------|------|--|
| 1977 | Wayne Shiels | 1985 | Paul Brown | 1993 | Mark Wilkinson | 2001 | Josh Gunning |
| 1978 | Ron Wall | 1986 | Jeff Jordan | 1994 | Mark Wilkinson | 2002 | Chris Potter |
| 1979 | Rick | 1987 | Brett Jones | 1995 | Craig Buchan | 2003 | Kain Mason |
| 1980 | David Banks | 1988 | Greg Bromwich | 1996 | Stuart Quinn | 2004 | Ty McCarthy |
| 1981 | David Banks | 1989 | Trent Morgan | 1997 | Josh Shelton | 2005 | Matt Prior |
| 1982 | N/A | 1990 | Paul Air | 1998 | Trent Hill | 2006 | Mitchell Roberts |
| 1983 | Keith Cole | 1991 | Geoff Rutledge | 1999 | Russell Gasseling | | This award was not awarded after 2006. |
| 1984 | Paddy Nolan | 1992 | Todd Grose | 2000 | Liam Wilson | | |

OLD VICTORY SONG

This song was on the hit parade back in the 70's. The Carlton League has a few new teams nowadays like Uni and the 'Burgh', the Tigers and the Books, so no doubt we'd serve them up as headless chooks!

Once more we'll raise our glasses and we'll drink another toast
To a mighty football team, the best team on the coast,
And when the game is over, a man would be a fool
If he didn't say the greatest team is right here in Thirroul.

CHORUS

So it's up the Butcher! Up the Butchers! the mighty white and blue.
Up the Butchers! Up the Butchers! the mighty white and blue.

They clipped the poor Canaries wings, now they can't even fly,
They gave the Devils' tails a twist and scored the winning try,
They easily ran the Cougars down, then ate a Cougar stew,
And then they crushed Port Kembla, now the blacks are feeling blue.

CHORUS

They then knocked over Wollongong and then just for a lark
They tied the poor old Bulldogs up, now they can't even bark,
The Collies were like lollies, they were mighty good to eat,
And when you even up the score, there's nothing left to beat.

CHORUS





“Just outside the railway station was a football field and Mullumbimby (Thirroul) was playing Wollondindy (Wollongong). Mullumbimby was in royal blue and Wollondindy in a rather faded red. Alongside the roadside buggies and motor cars were pulled up...on the field the blues and reds darted madly about like strange bird creatures rather than men. They were mostly blond, with hefty legs, and with prominent round buttocks that worked madly inside the little white cotton shorts”.

D.H. Lawrence

