

1969 saw a small group of rugby enthusiasts get together in the developing suburb of Glenfield to organise rugby games for their boys. Little did they realise at the time what lay ahead of them! Boys rugby was quickly followed by grade and social teams together with all the organisation that goes with running a young Rugby Club.

By 1974 a number of the founding Members together with some newcomers, found themselves in the throes of building a Clubroom on Kaipatiki Park ... and wondering where the money was going to come from!. But success favours the brave and a very presentable headquarters was forthcoming: that original building is now virtually debt free.

Over the years the Junior Boys section of the Club prospered mightily, while the more Senior grades had their playing ups and downs, without ever having anything but an enjoyable season.

During these formative years the Club's Presidents grade team the redoubtable Glenfield Grizzlies provided a maturity to the Club that would otherwise have been missing and a number of team members have since become top class administrators. Also during this time the Club forged strong links with neighbouring Glenfield College, the Club now provides some coaches and assistants for College teams and the College's Community Education Programme makes use of the Clubrooms free of charge. Likewise the Club uses both ground and gymnasium facilities at the College.

And what of the future? Well, the Club feels strongly that the advent of the North Harbour Union will benefit Clubs such as Glenfield quite markedly; no longer will we the cream of our younger players heading for the opportunities and glamour that previously only ARU 1<sup>st</sup> division Clubs could offer. In addition we are planning a staged development of our already too small headquarters with over \$100,000 to be spent this year on a new changing room block. After a successful season last year we feel that our Senior team will be capable of causing some upsets on the field this year, and every effort is being made to see that training and training facilities will be of a very high calibre so as to give our players every incentive.

For us 1985 could well be a vintage year.

Nothing fancy – just spin the ball wide. This simple recipe in 1973 saw Glenfield win the Senior C division of the Auckland rugby competition.

Coach Pine Harrison looks back on those days with great pleasure and fond memories of players who made his choices difficult because he had to decide who to leave out.

Good skills were the basis of the team and basic rugby was the recipe for success. It was an outstanding performance given that Glenfield was only a five year old Club and it had been fielding adult teams for only three seasons before 1973.

Why spin the ball wide? Because on the wings were two nifty speedsters, Kautonga Malei and Wayne Regan (who now lives further North and is a stalwart of Silverdale's Presidents grade).

Our game was just to get the ball to them and see what happened, Harrison recalls. Kevin Leach at centre was good at setting a man up so the wings got lots of runs – and a lot of tries. Besides Kautonga, Glenfield had two other Island boys, loose forwards Arthur Pakalani and Tom Pei. Their tackling was devastating.

Captain was Dixie Thomas still around with the Glenfield Grizzlies, the other prop Gordon Meyer and Terry Gruebner at hooker stayed on to do yeoman service for the Club including the 1984 season as Grizzlies Captain.

Locks were Tony Te Amo and Ron Bruce (now with Northcote as a teenagers coach) and Kevin Erceg.

Behind them were Glenfield stalwarts as player and coach John Solomon, Keith Harper, and Graham Burton as halfbacks, playing turn about. Kevin Leak at first five and big punting Kevin Bruce at full back.

When the Glenfield Club was formed in 1969 the coach of the midgets team was Richie Campbell, still playing basketball but “too old” for rugby.

Persuaded otherwise he became a side row forward of superb durability continuing with his Son, Robbie at half back for Glenfield until just a couple of seasons ago when they moved North.

It was a season which did much to set up the new Glenfield Club giving confidence to administrators who had taken some big gambles in establishing the Club and giving much pleasure to supporters and spectators who delighted in open rugby and the running game.

Ever heard of a champion team without a set move? That was the basis of the 1973 Glenfield 11<sup>th</sup> grade side which was in a competition of 64 teams and at the end of the season walked away from a presentation at Eden Park with the Championship Cup.

It was not that they didn't train. Rather, the skills were so good, the confidence so high and the camaraderie so strong that things just happened on the field. So no single move was ever planned.

The sheer audacity of a side which would put the ball down at half way on a muddy field and run a triple scissors – unrehearsed – was the magic of victory.

Glenfield had been bringing a capable boys' side through the grades since 1969 under Reg Dempster as coach. When he and another foundation coach in Maurice Dick joined forces and their teams, everything came together for the Club and the cheerful 12 year olds in 1973.

Gary Brunson was one of the immediate successes. A superb ball handler, a sprinter and able to move off either foot, he learnt to think rugby, to watch the pattern of play, to read a game and to make the ball do the work. Picked for the Barbarians as a teenager, Brunson also picked up a leg injury which kept him out of first class rugby when he was at his brilliant best.

Dean Kenny had filled in from full back to flanker until these coaches slotted him at half back. Encouraged by his coaches and schooled by his father Merv (a senior player in the Club) Dean went later to Otago and into the representative side at half back and first five.

Brunson and strong running centre Stuart Timmer both notched more than 100 points that season. But the team's most significant achievement was to produce several players who served the Club well and are stalwarts of the senior side in this, North Harbour's inaugural year.

Neil Kennedy looked like a young Wilson Whineray in those days, the good hands, the body lean, the solid shape – and the cool head. Today he is a flanker.

Peter Kelly had been pushed out to the wing, before that, a timid lad and unsure of his play. Encouraged to believe in himself he became a ferocious tackler in 1973 and has never since held back, giving 80 minutes of honest football to every game in which he plays.

Colin Dick was a prop then, mobile, skilled in basic rugby but already able to get off the ground for lineout possession and a brilliant mauler of the ball. As a flanker, he still has those attributes.

Glenfield also got a stalwart in Colin Smith, a shattering tackle, dynamic in his bursts with ball in hand, fast and tireless. Smithie later moved down country for his work and this season is in Thames Valley still giving his heart for his Club.

Perhaps the sad thing about the 1973 side was that the next year several players were overweight for 10<sup>th</sup> grade and moved to other Clubs to get Rugby.

Brunson was the classic loss. A diligent but not yet assertive Neil Bower, now North Harbour's main lineout forward was another. Brett Norris and Scott Rinkin also play elsewhere in the Union while 1973 vice skipper Vincent Dempster is now in Australia.

Coach Dempster turned to marathons whilst his colleague Dick went back to playing as a Glenfield Grizzlie.

But the magic of that season lives with them – I knew at the end of that year I'd never be associated with such a skilled, capable, zestful bunch of footballers, Dick says.

Somehow – even though two consecutive 70 – nil wins – we managed to persuade them that they were the underdogs, that they were just in it for fun and that winning didn't matter.

They developed unbelievable confidence in themselves and the team and the cheek to run from anywhere in the field. They taught me a lot about rugby – except how to play like that when you are older!