

THE FOUNDING OF THE NORTH SHORE RUGBY CLUB

North Shore was founded in 1873 and is the oldest Club in the Northern part of New Zealand. Some say the Club was formed as early as 1870 but 3 May 1873 seems to be the accepted date.

A meeting was held in the Masonic Hotel in Devonport (still a favourite spot to Club Members) and a match was arranged with a neighbouring Auckland Club for 20 July. This game was 12 a-side and ended in 0-0.

The first 15 a-side game to be played in Auckland received the following notice in the New Zealand Herald on Monday 18 August.

“The football match between North Shore and Auckland took place in the Albert barracks on Saturday. After a great amount of scrimmaging, during which several falls occurred, Mr Rees kicked a goal. The majority of the Auckland team thinking they had had enough play, walked off the field leaving North Shore victorious. A return match on 30 August was also won by Shore, by a touchdown to nil.”

The first North Shore 15 a-side team was: RH Duder ©, EW Burgess, H Burgess, C Dacre, L Dacre, F Duder, D Fraser, J Nolan, H Niccol, R Niccol, WL Rees, G Thorne, F Wells, R Wynyard and AE Whitaker.

It will be seen that the name of Wynyard appears in this side and it still does to this day. It all began when Robert H Wynyard arrived in New Zealand in 1845 and was engaged in the Maori Wars, he later became Governor of New Zealand and still later Governor of Cape Colony, South Africa.

His descendants have played a large part in the history of Shore so it was fitting that when a new Club crest was adopted in 1967 a part of the Wynyard coat of arms (dating back to 1596, when on John Wynyard was keeper of the Kings Robes) was incorporated. Three of the family WT, HJ and G Wynyard along with R Maynard gave the Club 4 representatives in the 1884-88 native team to Britain.

Although a founder member of the ARU only one Senior Championship was recorded, that being 1899 but there were several near misses.

During and after the 1st World War saw a decline in membership and from 1917 to 1921 only Junior teams were fielded.

Then under Coach PJ (Paddy) Sheehan, Shore was back in the Senior Competition, Paddy was a real personality who in his time was Committeeman, Chairman, President, Delegate, Coach, Auckland Selector and Sports Journalist.

Another to play a large part in the evolution of the Club was Bill Elworth, who from 1926 to 1955 was involved to some degree with Junior Boys. A trophy in his honour was competed for by Junior teams under the ARU for Sportsmanship and will be similarly contested.

The most successful era would have to be the last 12 years. From 1973 to 1984 on only two occasions did Shore fail to qualify for the Gallagher Shield play off, but the Jubilee Trophy was some consolation.

Three players have played for the All Blacks, the first being DW McKay, 1961-1963. A Three quarter of exceptional pace and a big swerve he had 12 games in all, including 5 tests. He played for North Island in 1960-61 & 1965 and had 86 games for Auckland from 1958 to 1966.

BR Johnstone – 1976-1980 played 45 games including 13 tests. For North Island 1975-1979 and 122 games for Auckland from 1971-1981 with 5 seasons as captain. Brad was a prop forward of the highest order, who led from the front and gave 100% in every class of football he played.

GR Cunningham a three quarter with speed, strength and a bone crushing tackle played 17 games for New Zealand including 5 tests in 1979-80. North Island in 1979 and 83 games for Auckland from 1978 to 1984.

JC Webster, 1884 and JP Gerrard 1904 were selected but had to withdraw for business reasons and injury respectively.

Several other players for New Zealand after shifting to different areas include D Gage 1893-96, TB O'Connor 1884, WT Wynyard 1893, F Solomon 1931-32, MG Jone 1973, and KJ Tanner 1974-76. A total of 75 players represented Auckland in the 101 years North Shore was affiliated to that Union.

And so to a new era. North Shore known for their open style of rugby and playing for enjoyment first and winning second hope that all Clubs have their enthusiasm and endeavour to make North Harbour the success that it must be for the sake of the players of the future. Let's get out and support the game at all levels and put North Harbour in the top bracket as soon as possible.



Brad Johnstone Auckland vs Nth Auckland 1974.



A youthful Garry Cunningham in full flight against Grammar in 1976. Doug Weir is in support.