



The Dirty Reds

During a proud history, Drummoyne Rugby Club has not only produced some of Australia's great sporting heroes but has attracted more than its fair share of masons.

In a book by John Mulford titled 'Men in Scarlet – The History of the Balmain, Glebe & Drummoyne Rugby Clubs 1874-2004', he goes on to explain that the origins of the Club go back directly to the very beginnings of the game of rugby in Australia when, in 1874, the Southern Rugby Union was formed to establish the game here. This is of immense historical interest as this Union pre-dates those of New Zealand, Wales, Ireland and South Africa and because its predecessor club, the Balmain RUFC, founded in 1873, took part in the very first competition and won their first premiership in 1875.

In 1889, a rugby club was founded in neighbouring Glebe and courtesy their scarlet jerseys and 'vigorous' style of play, soon became famous as 'The Dirty Reds'. These pioneering clubs of Balmain and Glebe formed the very foundations of what we now know as modern day Drummoyne District Rugby Union Club.

The first Rugby Union team to leave Australian shores for an overseas tour was the historic 1882 NSW team to New Zealand which included three players from the Balmain Club. A young winger, Bill McKell, later to become Australia's Governor General, played in the 1909 and 1910 Balmain teams, and Dr H. Moran, who was Club President in 1911 and 1912, captained the first Wallabies of 1908.

The winning Balmain Rugby Captain of 1875 was W.L. Murdoch, later to

Bro Nathan Landrey in action, ably supported by teammates.





L-R: Bro Nathan Landrey, Bro Joseph Hansell, W Bro John Freedman and Bro Owen Parry

become Australia's test cricket captain and the first player to score a double century in test cricket. Not to be outdone, Glebe produced 'Tibby' Cotter, a member of their first grade rugby premiership team of 1910 and a sensational test cricket fast bowler for Australia.

But the Great War took a huge toll on playing numbers. Over 80% of the Balmain and Glebe players joined up and many were killed at Gallipoli and on the Somme in France. This forced these two famous clubs to merge in 1919, and form the Glebe-Balmain RFC. As a merged club they had enormous success during the twenties, winning four premierships and providing no less than seven players including captain Johnny Wallace for the immortal 1927/28 Waratahs. It is to be noted that the Club boasted three Rhodes Scholars that year including Johnny Wallace himself who went on to captain Scotland.

In 1931, as a Depression project, Drummoyne Oval as we now know it was constructed on the site of a small oval which Glebe and Balmain had used for junior matches since 1892. To ensure longevity of tenure due to the lack of sporting grounds in Sydney, the Glebe-Balmain Club reluctantly decided to change its name to the Drummoyne District Rugby Football Club. It did so without giving up its long-held traditions: the scarlet jumpers of Glebe, its world-famous tag 'The Dirty Reds', and the black and gold of Balmain, colours still worn proudly by today's players in their socks. From that time on the Club has produced a list of Wallaby players and captains too numerous to mention.

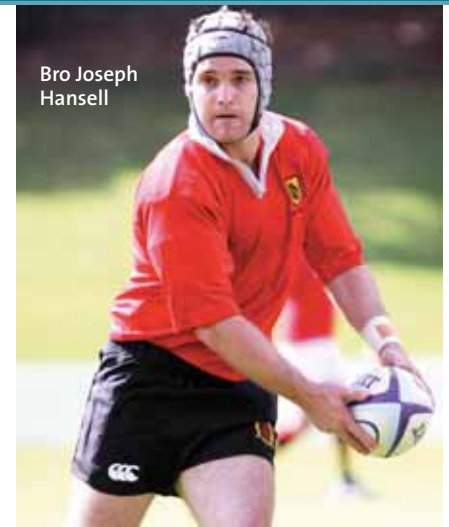
Many Freemasons, past and present, have enjoyed their involvement and participation with Drummoyne Rugby Club.

W Bro John Freedman, Past Master and current Junior Warden of Lodge Vaucluse has had a long association with the Club which he joined in 1955 as a 19 year

old. He played 164 first grade games, captained the team for several years and represented NSW and Australia, touring with the Wallabies as a player in the '60s then as manager in 1973. He is a Past President and Life Member of NSW Rugby Union and has been awarded the Order of Australia for services to rugby.

Current players Nathan Landrey and Joseph Hansell are both members of Lodge Trinitarian and Bro Owen Parry (See *Freemason* Summer 2009) is a former player with Drummoyne and a member of Lodge Chelmsford 261.

All liken their experiences of rugby to the fraternity enjoyed within Freemasonry,



Bro Joseph Hansell



The 4th grade jerseys showing Lodge Chelmsford 261 sponsorship

valuing the bond that develops amongst a group of men from all walks of life joined in a common interest, sharing the responsibilities and rewards of teamwork and common goals. Although the discipline and preparation required within Freemasonry is more mental than physical, each individual, whether a rugby team member or masonic lodge member, can benefit from the support and encouragement of the group and contribute to the combined achievement of the team and the lodge.

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