

One Hundred Years of St Patrick's Football Club

Greg Ryan

The *Albury Banner* reported on March 28, 1919 that "A meeting was held a few days since for the purpose of forming a St Patrick's Football Club." Elected by the meeting were Patrons Father Slattery and Tom Ryan, president Father R O'Dea, vice-presidents Messrs G C Reis, C C Reis, T A Horan, R Avery, R C Hamilton, F W Tietyens, J S Adams, W H Whyte, W J Mangan, G W Daniel and Brother Doyle (Principal of the Christian Brothers' College); secretary, Mr A Duffy; treasurer, Mr F S Sandys; working committee, Messrs W Delaney, R C Hamilton, J S Adams, C Foley and R Rixon.



St Patrick's Football Team – Premiers 1919

Back Row: Ray Gilson, 'Corbo' Anderson, Fred Fielder, Jim Delaney, Bert Hornsby, Dan Watson, 'Angie' Ryan, 'Joker' Byrnes, Arthur Duffy, 'Gig' Hoysted

Middle Row: Len McInerney, Rube Rixon, Bill McInerney (Captain), Fr O'Dea (President), Joe Hoysted, 'Sonny' McManus, Cyril Foley

Front Row: 'Barney' Shannon, Harry Jones, Fred Jacobs (mascot), Bill Muller, Joe Peach, George Griffith*

* Others to represent the club in 1919 included Percy, Seymour, Dallinger, Kennedy, Connole, Shanahan, Mitsch, Carroll, Jennett, Clark, Delany, Frauenfelder, Manns, O'Brien and Egan

The new club became a part of the recently formed Albury Border Association along with teams from North Albury and South Albury ("to be divided by Dean Street") and Wodonga. St

Patrick's, led by Bill McInerney, won the inaugural Cannon Cup, defeating South Albury 5.13 (43) to 3.11 (29).

In 1920 the competition was joined by 'Diggers' and Mitta Dam, with St Patrick's again taking the honours in the grand final against Diggers, winning by 11 points.

The Ovens & Murray League had been in recess during World War I but reformed in 1921, with St Patrick's joining Rutherglen, Springhurst, Wahgunyah, Corowa and Lake Rovers. St Patrick's defeated Corowa in the grand final, 7.19 (61) to 2.3 (15) and so starting a dominant reign in the competition.

In the following six years, St Patrick's were O&M premiers five times, defeating Wangaratta in 1922, 1923, 1924 and 1926 and Albury in 1927.

After Albury defeated St Patrick's for the 1928 premiership, O&M administrators decided it was time to change the League structure. Of issue was the uneven nature of the competition with Albury, St Patrick's and Wangaratta being dominant over some struggling clubs.

Within Albury there was a further problem, with sectarian divides (Catholics and Protestants) causing much bitterness between St Patrick's and Albury Clubs. Cleaver Bunton, champion Albury player and later Albury Mayor, wrote in his autobiography that "there was keen rivalry between the players of both clubs, but it was civil war between so called supporters ... citizens being verbally and physically assaulted."

Bunton went on to say that a solution to the bigotry had to be found. It was agreed that both Albury Football Club and St Patrick's Football Club should disband. Two new clubs were formed, West Albury and East Albury with Olive Street being "the line of demarcation."

The following year West Albury were premiers, defeating East Albury 17.16 (118) to 15.14 (104).

FIGHTING on the football field is nothing new, but an interesting case occurred on May 26, 1928 when St Patrick's met arch rivals Albury at the Albury Sportsground. Two players came to blows and rolled about the ground fighting. Uniformed police ran on to separate them. The umpire promptly ordered the officers off the field. Inspector Constantine took the players and umpire to court, declaring: "The object of this prosecution is to prove that the law is supreme, and that police can and will enter a football ground to maintain good order."

Players Neil Mau (Albury) and John McInerney (St Patrick's) were each fined £1 for behaving in a riotous manner. The umpire John Smith, of Melbourne was fined £2 for hindering an officer in the execution of his duty. Smith told Magistrate A G Hardwicke that in Victoria, umpires had complete charge of the ground. The police could not interfere unless called upon to do so. When the police came on the ground at Albury the unusual uniform confused him, and he thought they were tramway men.

In 1935, St Patrick's Football Club was reformed to compete in the Albury & District Association. However, the *Albury Banner* reported that at the club's annual meeting in April 1937, "it was unanimously decided to disband the club."

In 1945 St Patrick's joined the Albury & Border Junior Football League, then an under 21 competition. In 1955 the 'Juniors' became an under 18 competition, a 'Midgets' (under 15) competition added in 1960 and 'Sub-Midgets' (under 13) in 1962.