

## In the Beginning

### 1879 -1899

One hundred and forty-two years ago, New Zealand had been settled by a sturdy and independent breed of people wanting to establish themselves and seeking to provide for their descendants a better life than the one that they had known in their youth. Most of these settlers had come from Europe, something that set them apart in their search for a better life. The ordeal of setting out on a voyage that could take over six months, in conditions on board that at times bordered on being primitive is hard to imagine in 2021. The spirit of these early settlers was of a very high order. Although being extremely independent, when once they had formed a settlement, the settlers looked for ways of expressing their community as one of closely knit independence. It is not surprising therefore to find throughout New Zealand in the 1870s and 1880s this expression of community identity resulting in the establishment of bodies and social groups that, despite many difficulties, flourished.

Throughout the colony in this period, Friendly Societies developed to care for the welfare of their members; Fire Brigades were formed to protect the safety of the community; Councils to ensure the management of the area's resources were established. All these provided some district unity, but there was a need for something more. This need found its outlet in the establishment of teams to contest inter-district sporting fixtures.

The first team fixture to emerge was football, then a very different game from that played today. There were many versions of the game which catered for varying numbers of players. Indeed, it was not till 1877 that it was decided in England that all Rugby matches should be played between teams of 15 players, rather than the, till then, more usual 20.

Wairarapa was no different from the rest of New Zealand, and the second half of the 1870s saw endeavours being made to form clubs. The main mover in these attempts was Mr T.S.Ronaldson of the Public Trust Office in Greytown. His attempts were met with suspicion, and it was not till 1876 that the Wairarapa (Greytown) and Masterton Clubs were formed. No games were played, and it was not till 1878 that, at Vickerstaff's paddock, to be found in the present Clifton Avenue, a game of Rugby was played. The teams in this encounter were North Wairarapa (Masterton and Carterton) and South Wairarapa (Greytown and Featherston). The "New Zealand Times" of 21st June, 1878 reported the match: 'On Saturday last, a spirited game of football was played at Carterton between combined teams from Greytown and Featherston, and from Masterton and Carterton, The Lower Valley proved victorious, having gained five goals, whilst the Upper Valley were not fortunate enough to gain one, or even a touchdown. There is little activity in this pastime this season in all the townships'.

Little activity there may have been, but only a year later, club enthusiasm began. This took the form of Wairarapa's first club match, Carterton v. Greytown and took place on 5th July 1879.

The Carterton team of:

- J.Snodgrass (capt.)
- G.H.Lister-Kane
- P.F.Tancred
- W.S.Ward
- Shaw
- G.Nicholls
- Sellar
- Henson
- Hooker
- Z.C.Fairbrother
- J.Girdlestone
- R.G.Kemble
- Spatz
- L.Nix
- E.Edmonds

did not appear to be favourites if we can judge from a press preview.

***“I am afraid the team chosen to play against the Greytown Football Club will receive a jolly good thrashing, as they have not had any practice, and from all accounts it will be a difficult matter to get them to face their opponents”.***

Wairarapa’s morning newspaper of 5th July 1879, however was more optimistic and advised its readers,

***“The football match between Greytown and Carterton will come off today in Mr Vickerstaff’s paddock, and from the confidence displayed by each team, there ought to be good sport”.***

Good sport there was with the game being played in four laps (spells), the first three of which were scoreless, while in the fourth, Greytown touched down twice, thus Winning by two points to nil.

The game was controlled by two umpires who brought order by means of waving a flag. It was not till 1881 that a referee appeared on a Wairarapa field. The formation of the team was probably 10 forwards, 2 quarter-backs, 2 half backs and a fullback. The game itself was a far cry from that of today. The ten forwards endeavoured to force their way through the opposition while kicking the ball ahead of them. So successful was this that forwards came from the field with no part of their legs from knee to ankle unmarked. One contemporary player is on record in later years as stating that he often had to get his stockings cut from his legs as they had been kicked so hard and so often that the stockings had become embedded in the skin, and so impossible to remove in the usual fashion. The wearing of shin pads soon became popular. These were often strapped on the outside of the stockings, and continued to be worn like this till about 1908. No one seems to have worried about possible damage from the exposed buckles.

The ball was never heeled from scrimmages as it was thought in those days that anyone in front of the ball was off-side. Forwards did the hard work in the scrimmages, but it was not the accepted thing for them to bend their heads and push. If they did bend their heads, the opposition was permitted to remind them of their mistake by raising the knee to let them know the correct head placement. As it was an offence to fall down while in the scrum, it is hoped that the retaliatory knee was not applied too forcefully. If by chance the ball was somehow kicked clear of the scrum and came to rest on the ground, it still could not be picked up. The only way it could come to hand was if it were gathered on the full or on the bounce, when the ball gatherer proceeded to run for the line. When he was caught, a gigantic tug of war, known as a maul, took place. All were entitled to try to tug the ball out if this took place in the field of play. When the maul took place in goal, only those actually touching the ball were allowed to take part. As players ceased to touch the ball, they retired from the fray until there were so few of one side available that a touchdown was achieved. If this was done by the attacking side, the ball was taken to the goal line and kicked out to waiting teammates. If they caught the ball on the full, they could then 'try at goal' or convert the kick.

When the ball was kicked over the touchline, one of the quarter-backs would stand at the spot where the ball went out and do one of two things. He could throw the ball to one of his team mates or he could 'announce in a clear voice how far he intended to carry the ball then carry it in the announced distance and there put it down'. No doubt after his announced intention, the two forward packs would be waiting like vultures to carry on their kicking game. It is not surprising really that the score in the first game was only two points to nil,

Two weeks later, at Greytown the return match was played. The Wairarapa Daily of 17th July 1879 advised its readers, 'The entrance to the paddock is close to the Immigration Barracks in East Street, which will be easily found as a flag will fly at the gate'.

After the match, the same paper reported

***"The football match at Greytown on Saturday was without doubt one of the best it has been our pleasure to witness, We noticed that Carterton had been materially improved by the addition of a couple of extra good players from other townships, and in all were very much the heavier team, but they found in their lighter opponents no easy victory. On both sides play was much superior to that exhibited in the match that was played at Carterton a fortnight ago. The captains of the teams (Messrs Snodgrass and Ronaldson) tossed for the Choice of ground, which resulted in favour of Greytown. The ball was kicked off at about 3 o'clock, and it was evident that both teams meant to win, but the first time was called without any advantage being gained by either side".***

***"The same may be said of the next twenty minutes, but in the third, J. McMaster made a splendid run in for Greytown which Ronaldson tried for, but through a mistake, the Carterton side thought that the ball had been touched, and although the Greytown side insisted that the ball had not been touched, yet their opponents ran in and the try was lost. The last lap was half an hour and the time was nearly up when Tancred by a lucky kick off the field, scored a goal. Time was immediately after called, and the game resulted in Carterton gaining the victory by two points to one point. After the game was over, the***

***captain of the Greytown team called for three cheers for the Carterton team, which was heartily given and responded to by their opponents”.***

The paper referred to players from other townships (Taratahi or Clareville). In the newspaper reporting the match Andrew McKenzie, Land Agent, offered for sale 40 town sections in Clareville. These two players, coming from that area, were regarded as being from outside Carterton’s district. It should be remembered that Carterton township was then centred round the area of High Street in the Moreton Road to Brooklyn Road area. The school was situated on Brooklyn Road corner, the town’s first shop on Moreton Road corner, with other shops on each side of the present South End School and Opposite the present Brethren Church.

One of the players who had been displaced was Louis Nix. Instead of playing, he was the Carterton umpire. His major role in the history of the Carterton Club was that he was the first secretary, and together with G.W.Deller as President. started the young club on its way. The first known colours of the club were black and white hooped jerseys, striped woollen caps, woollen stockings and white knicker-bockers, but it is doubtful if the early teams were so dressed. The striped caps may appear out of place in a football uniform, yet they were worn by the players in those days. Indeed the wearing of hats on the playing field continued till about 1905.

After the two matches, a Wairarapa representative team was selected to play Wellington. Carterton players in this team were: R.G.Kemble, J.Girdlestone, J.Snodgrass, R.Lee and P.F.Tancred.

An attempt to play a third match in Greytown on 20th September proved fruitless as only 9 Carterton players were available. So ended the first season

In 1880, many more games were played as Masterton Club began to play. Greytown became affiliated to the Wellington Rugby Union in this season, Masterton following in 1881. For some reason, Carterton did not do so till 1885. Perhaps it was felt that the annual affiliated fee of £2/2/0 (\$4.20) was too great! Not being affiliated did not affect the players and Carterton had a greatly extended programme with four matches being played.

The following results were achieved:

- 1st May v. Greytown lost 10-0
- 19th June v. Greytown lost 7-0
- 26th June v. Masterton won 2-0
- 24th July v. Masterton won 9-5

The extended programme placed a strain on the players and 21 were called on, the following taking the field throughout the season:

- *P.F. and S.M. Tancred*

- N.L. and J.Grace
- R. and J.Lee
- W.N.Ward
- H.McMaster
- G.Bennett
- Chas. and Fred Fairbrother
- Rankin
- J.Snodgrass
- R.G.Kemble
- J.Strang
- J.Girdlestone
- Louis Nix
- J.Jagger
- Horne,
- R.W.Muir
- C.J.Jury

Despite the increased numbers, 1881 saw the club in difficulties. Two games were played against Masterton. In both Carterton was short of players and both games were lost, the first by 16-0, the second by 8-0.

New names to appear were:

- R.W.Fairbrother
- J.Oates
- M.Oates
- A.Clifton
- R.Greeks
- G.Beauchamp
- J.Peters
- E.Goodin

There was no further activity till 1885. "The Observer" of 21st April 1885 reports,

***"A meeting of persons favourable to the formation of a Football Club was held at the Marquis of Normanby Hotel on Saturday evening last, which was well attended, especially considering the inclemency of the weather. Mr W.R.Seed was voted to the chair. It was resolved on the motion of Mr Dempsey seconded by Mr C.Fairbrother "That a football club be formed to be called, the Carterton Football Club". 'Mr Dempsey and Mr Rutherford were appointed as match committee'.***

***"It was resolved that the captain and secretary wait upon Mr. Vickerstaff's to obtain leave to play in his paddock, and in the event of obtaining his sanction, that the first practice he held next Wednesday afternoon at four o'clock".***

It was agreed to join the Rugby Union at Wellington and Messrs Dempsey and Seed were appointed delegates.

The following costume and colours were adopted:— Black and white hooped jersey and stockings and blue knickerbockers.

Teams were entered in the Senior, Junior and Boys' grades. Players to appear in the various grades were:

- *A. and E. Mercer*
- *C. Reid*
- *A. Armstrong*
- *T.V., C.E., H. and J. Moore*
- *Chas. and R.W. Fairbrother*
- *F. and J. Peters*
- *C.N. Robinson*
- *W.N. Dempsey*
- *E. Goodin*
- *R. Kemble*
- *E. and P. Rutherford*
- *H.A. Ewen*
- *W. Strang*
- *J. Humphries*
- *J.R. and A. Smith*
- *J. Ginders*
- *H. Tully*
- *A. King*
- *A. and H. Nicholson*
- *W. McKenzie*
- *W. Eagle*
- *G. Eaton*
- *C. Saywell*
- *T. Rathbone*
- *Oakley*
- *J. and H. Hart*
- *R. Darroch*
- *J. Bennett*
- *R. McLaren*
- *Harry Merwood*
- *F. Grantham*
- *J. Udy*
- *J. Catt*
- *S. Broadbent*
- *E. McPartland*
- *Alfred Callister*

From these players later emerged administrators who have served the club on many committees. Two of the names, McKenzie and Reid, have been associated practically without cessation since that year. The senior side played four games, losing three and drawing one. The team lost to Masterton losing 14-0, 16-0 and 14-0 and drew with Greytown 0-0. We obviously lacked scoring players.

1886 brought a new step as the Wairarapa Rugby Union was formed. Carterton's delegates to the inaugural meeting at the Marquis of Normanby on Saturday 27th March 1886, were Messrs Ewen and Dempsey, the latter being elected to the management committee. Although the committee made arrangements for both senior and junior competitions, these arrangements were shelved and friendly games only were played, with Carterton playing three drawn games with Greytown. The junior team played with little success against teams from Masterton, Te Ore Ore and Greytown.

In 1887 the competitions got underway with the first competition match being Carterton v. Masterton at Masterton with Masterton winning by two tries to One. Carterton's first championship try was scored by J. Baumber.

The team later played a scoreless draw with Greytown, and in the play-off for the wooden spoon lost heavily. Carterton was finding difficulty in fielding a team. As another club known as Rivals and playing only friendly matches, had been formed. Subsequently these two clubs united in an uneasy peace, playing as the Carterton Rivals. On 17th September 1887 of this season New Zealand's first junior representative match was played at Masterton between Wairarapa and Wellington. Carterton's representatives were Snodgrass and Nicholson.

The following year brought the first British team to the colony. This team astounded all by heeling the ball from the scrimmages. This led to immediate appeals by the local captains as this practice was looked on as putting the players in front of the ball off-side. The British captain entered the discussion and gave the English interpretation of the rule. This discussion took two or three minutes. Finally the New Zealand teams gave way and a new style of Rugby began to emerge. Wairarapa played against the visitors, Carterton representatives being Jacob Baumber and Charles Reid. The Wairarapa team was picked from the four clubs contesting the championship. 1888 also saw the beginning of contact with the P. and A. Society, as games started to be played on the Showgrounds.

In 1889, two junior clubs, Royal Stars and Pirates formed in Carterton. These two clubs played social rugby only but drew heavily on those available for the Carterton Club. So great was the drain that in 1890 the club was unable to function. Those who wished to continue competition Rugby joined with Greytown to play as Greytown Rivals. Players usually walked to Greytown in order to practise and play. This situation continued in 1891.

In 1892, a meeting of the three clubs resulted in an amalgamation under the name of Carterton Club. The colours decided on were cardinal and blue hooped jerseys and stockings, white knicker-bockers, cardinal and blue cap. Because of this amalgamation, Carterton is listed as one of the four Wairarapa Clubs when the New Zealand Rugby Football Union was

formed in 1892, the others being Masterton, Red Star and Greytown. The Carterton Club entered teams in the junior competition only, with senior players travelling to play for Greytown. Because of this, the club was deprived of its first New Zealand representative as W. (Offside) McKenzie who had first played for Carterton in 1885, was selected in the first New Zealand team to travel to Australia. The junior team played well enough to share the junior championship with United Greytown.

This success was not maintained, and 1894 saw the by now usual decline, and again there was difficulty in fielding teams.

1895 brought about a great boost to Rugby. On 25th March, because of the introduction of the universal half-holiday on Thursdays, a meeting was held in the Marquis of Normanby and the Wairarapa Thursday Union was formed and affiliated with the Wairarapa Rugby Union. More players were able to play and two strong clubs, Parkvale and Rovers were formed in the district. These two clubs shared the Thursday Championship from 1896 (Parkvale) to 1902 (Rovers). Other Thursday clubs to follow were Taratahi and Dalefield.

Competition in the Thursday games was very keen. On one occasion East Taratahi objected to playing West Taratahi if the latter included Charley (Admiral) Blake in the team. As Charley was only 52 years of age at the time, the vigour of his play can be imagined.

Carterton players were keen to have their own grounds, and about 1896 began the stumping and levelling of "The Reserve" the area at the end of Holloway Street now occupied by the School. They also assisted with the building of the 'Drill Hall' which was used for changing and practices. This building has changed names but still stands, having been known as State Theatre and later Municipal Hall.

By 1896, following the changes in thinking brought about by the British team, had come significant changes. The 2-3-2 scrum formation, with two wing forwards, two half-backs, three three-quarters and a fullback, had been introduced. Also in this year, the referee was judged to be capable of making up his own mind on breaches of the law and no longer had to be appealed to by the non-offending captain. This change of rule has had the least effect of any, as ever since, referees have had the assistance of several players in all teams endeavouring to help them make up their minds.

The Carterton Club was weaker still, only one player Clarrie Moore being in the Wairarapa representative team, a team noteworthy in having one representative from both Wellington and Melrose Clubs. Wairarapa had managed to tour to Wellington with only thirteen players.

1896 also saw a further first, whether notable or not is a matter of conjecture. Once again, W. (Offside) McKenzie was a member of the New Zealand team to Australia. His play, at all time vigorous, so incensed the Sydney crowd that they clamoured for his scalp. Finally the referee had enough and ordered him from the field. Before he had left the field, the referee restarted play, not noticing the dismissed forward was now lurking in the backline. New South Wales started a dribbling rush which was stopped by "Ofside" throwing himself on the ball.

The inevitable tangle followed. When the referee finally managed to untangle this, great was his surprise to see the disgraced one at the bottom. "I thought I ordered you off", he roared.

"You did, but if I had gone those b.....s would have lynched me. I'll go off now". (He was serious in his concern of being lynched). With agony written on every line of his limping body, he then hobbled to the touchline where he collapsed in a writhing heap. The crowd, shamed by the pain so evident, was loud in its sympathetic applause. During the remainder of the game. there he stayed, occasionally limping a few paces before collapsing again. At the conclusion of the game the rest of the New Zealand team surrounded him. Their presence provided a miraculous cure and an unrepentant and fully cured player was able to make his way in to change.

1897, 1898 followed the familiar pattern. More players were taking part in Rugby, but nearly all in the Thursday Union. By 1899 the club was unable to field a team in the senior competition, though three senior Thursday teams were playing, Rovers, Dalefield and Parkvale. The Wairarapa representative team contained W.Henry Booth, Charlie Diamond, Loftus Armstrong, Clarrie Moore, Jack McKenzie and Arthur Callister from the town's Thursday Clubs. This was the best representation the town had ever had. Discussions followed throughout the summer. Could the Carterton Club, Saturday, make use of the obvious talent available, six representatives, for Thursday Championships? These summer discussions brought to an end the beginning phase of our history.

### **CARTERTON RUGBY FOOTBALL TEAM— 1896**



Back Row: W.Moore, T.Moore, H.Welch, J.McKenzie, C.Moore, C.Fairbrother, A.Callister, J.Kiddie, W.Eagle, C.Reid.

Middle Row: S. Broadbent, A.Cadwallader, W.Bridge (capt.) H. Cadwallader, H. Moore.  
Front Row: W.Waterson, H.Nicolson, R.Kemble, W.H Booth, H.Booth.