

Coming of Age: Part One

1900-1909

1900 brought in the change of centuries, and with it a stocktaking of the Carterton Football Club. It could look back on twenty years of spasmodic growth. Under the leadership of G.W.Deller, R.Downard, Rev.W.T.Western and W.R.Seed, with Secretaries L.Nix, A.Ramsay, C.Allan, W.McKenzie, H.Nicolson, R.Downard and R.Fairbrother, the club had grown, declined, flourished and declined again. The Thursday Rugby Union had been born, but unlike the Carterton Football Club, had flourished. The talks during the summer between representatives of Rovers, Parkvale, Dalefield Thursday Clubs and Carterton Football Club bore fruit.

A meeting was held in the Assembly Rooms on 11th April, 1900. E.McKenzie moved, L.Armstrong seconded: "That a Saturday Senior Club be formed and called the Carterton Football Club". Carried E.McKenzie moved and H.Nicolson seconded: "That the registered colours be all maroon". Carried C.Diamond moved and L.Armstrong seconded: "That the subscription be 3 shillings" (30c).

The Officers elected were: Patron, W.C.Buchanan; President, A.T.M.Hornsby; Captain, E.McKenzie; Vice Captain, C.Diamond; Secretary and Treasurer, W.H.Whyte; Committee, W.Bairstow; J.McKenzie; L.Armstrong; C.Moore; H.Nicolson. Delegates to Wairarapa Rugby Union, E.McKenzie and W.Bairstow. It will be seen that few of those elected were not playing members. The election of captain carried a great deal of responsibility. He was, beside captaining the team, coach, decider of tactics and also chairman of the Management Committee.

At a later meeting, the Committee received a quote of 7 shillings (70 cents) for jerseys, fifteen jerseys were ordered. Permission was sought from the Borough Council to erect a temporary fence on the Reserve. It was also decided to hire the Assembly Rooms (formerly Drill Hall) for practices at a price of 17 shillings and 6 pence (\$1.75) a month. By 7th May, practices were being held and endeavours were being made to arrange matches. Although practices were being held in the hall, individual members were keen enough to spend much extra time on individual skills. One who was to be seen nearly every morning at about 6 o'clock was A.McMinn who spent hours at practicing, it was no surprise to see him in 1903, along with L.Armstrong, make the 1903 New Zealand team to Australia. A schoolboy who went out to help Arch McMinn's practices was N.A.McKenzie who a few years later was to show the benefits of his early morning tuition by being a member of the North Island Country Team.

Finally, the senior championship for the season begun, with teams from Masterton, Carterton and Greytown. Carterton played reasonably well, and with two matches to go in the competition, was in 3rd position. Although they had lost only one game, they had not won any. Greytown and Masterton had each had a win over the other. The scene was set for a keen finish.

On the 20th August the "Wairarapa Star" reported: "The third round of the championship started on Saturday when the Masterton team, for the first time this season, sustained a defeat by the Carterton team. Carterton forwards were stronger and heavier than their opponents, and several times came close to scoring. Carterton got a mark, and E.McKenzie kicked a goal. (In those days, any member of the team could take the kick once a mark was awarded). Masterton had the best of the second spell, though Carterton managed to put up the greater number of points and won by 10 points to 7".

Carterton did not win lightly, as Masterton entered a protest to the Wairarapa Rugby Union over one of the Carterton scores. This was a common occurrence in those days; Carterton had already had an appeal against one of its games with Greytown dismissed. This appeal was subsequently withdrawn by Masterton, and the final game of the championship came with Carterton half a point behind Greytown.

The "Wairarapa Star" had this report on 3rd September: "The all absorbing topic in football circles last week was how would Saturday's match go. On it hung the Senior Championship, and the evenness that existed between the two teams made it seem certain that it would be a close go.

"The rain that had fallen during the week had made the ground heavy, though the ball was not greasy. The Governor of New Zealand was present for the first half. The teams on lining up in front of the Governor, gave three cheers.

"Directly the game started, the tactics of both sides became apparent. Carterton tried to make it a close game. while Greytown were doing their best to make it open so as to give their backs a chance. The superiority of the Carterton wing forwards enabled them to get on to the Greytown backs before they really got going. Greytown started well and their forwards carried play well into Carterton territory. D.Udy and Ahipene got near the line, but Armstrong and Bairstow were chiefly responsible for carrying the play back. A lot of forward play followed in Carterton territory. The Carterton forwards, with a series of strong rushes, reversed things. Carterton from now on had the upper hand. Mulling by Greytown backs gave J.McKenzie an opening and he and Armstrong took 3 dribbling rush down the field, from which Armstrong scored, E.McKenzie sent the ball Over the bar. Until half time Carterton were mostly attacking.

"The second spell opened with slow play between the forwards. Good play by the Greytown backs, but Armstrong and Callister took play well into Greytown territory. A long kick by McKenzie striking a Greytown player put Carterton on side, and Bridge snapping up the ball, raced down the field and scored another try. McKenzie's kick was unsuccessful. Greytown began to realise that if they were to win, they would have to work, and they made repeated incursions on the Carterton line. Backs and forwards were playing all they knew, and but for strong defence of the Carterton backs must have scored. At last from a loose rush. Johnston scored for Greytown. Ahipene could not convert, but a few minutes later, burst through the opposing ranks securing another try which was not converted.

“Greytown came close to scoring again, but Armstrong headed a dash which carried play to the Greytown twenty-five. Soon after, the whistle went leaving Carterton the winners by 8 points to 6. The Carterton players were rushed by their supporters, and cheered loudly”. Further on, the paper in a leading article stated: “Carterton is to be congratulated on at last securing the championship. For many years they have unsuccessfully competed and have, despite many drawbacks, stuck to their task with a persistence which merited success. Their win will not be begrudged them by any footballers in the district”.

The results of the championships were:

Teams	Played	Won	Lost	Drew	Points
Carterton	6	2	1	3	5.5pts
Greytown	6	2	2	2	5pts
Masterton	6	1	2	3	3.5pts

The Club thus became the first holder of a banner presented by the Club’s Patron to the Wairarapa Rugby Union. This banner was to be won two years in succession before becoming the property of any club. Members were also presented by the president with maroon caps.

To mark the occasion, the Committee decided on 8th September to hold a social in the Agricultural Hall, (Kings Theatre). 200 invitations were printed to be sold at 3 shillings and 6 pence (35c) each. The Social was subsequently held and at it Mr Buchanan presented the banner.

The following year 1901, saw the banner leave the Club, as in this year, Greytown reversed the Championship result. There appears to have been little activity a Committee apart from the Annual Meeting, met on only one occasion, this being to make arrangements for a friendly match with Hukanui.

1902 brought more sustained activity. More meetings were held and again a successful Social was held. More important, the Championship was again won, and with it, the banner. However, Greytown, believing in the adage ‘What we have we hold’, did just that. The action that took place to regain the banner took place in the main street of Greytown and was much fiercer than the action on the playing field. J.McKenzie received a bleeding nose. and this resulted in the bloodstains that a careful search can still discover at the time of the Centennial. What headlines such action would create in 2021!

In 1903, the Club again won the Senior Championship, and in doing so, won outright the banner. Four years had passed since the Club's re-birth, but what progress. Three Championships out of four. An even greater event was the selection of Loftus Armstrong and Arch McMinn in the Zealand team to tour Australia. These two along with Ted McKenzie were members of the North Island Rugby Team. This represented quite an achievement, but the Club was not satisfied. A sub-committee consisting of E.McKenzie, L.Armstrong, J.Nichol, G.Hart, G.Whiteman and Secretary L.Smart was set up 'to work up a Junior Team'.

Their efforts bore fruit as in 1904, the Club's annual meeting, W.Campbell moved and E.McKenzie seconded: "That a Senior and Junior Team be entered in the Championships'. Carried, Subscriptions were set at 4 shillings (40 cents). It was decided that although the annual meeting appointed the senior captain, the junior team should elect its own captain at its first game. The meeting also dealt with the important issue of 'drays for the season', which calls for a look at the early transport arrangements.

Shaw and Cole and R.J.Wadham hired drays (large 4 wheeled carts usually drawn by two horses). This would convey the team to away matches. The return trip was always after hotel closing time, from Greytown at 10 o'clock, from Masterton 11 o'clock. It is easy to imagine the homeward trip from Masterton where games finished at 4.30 p.m. if we allow half-an-hour for changing, 6 hours were still left before transport left. A three course meal was a necessity, but as team members paid one shilling (10c) for this they would still have money left for other refreshments. Beer in those days was much stronger (it was reduced in strength during the second world war) so the players must have been well fortified against the long trip home. On one occasion, the team dray had a mishap —it ran into a fish cart travelling in the opposite direction. One of the Carterton horses was killed but no other casualty occurred. No one faced a summons for 'Drunk in Charge'.

The 1904 Juniors travelled in Wadham's drays, and in their first season, won the championship, The team was: J.Thomson, E.Hall, D.Gustofsen, J.Crawley, F.Groube, J.Spora, F.Johnson, F.Lindop, T.Eaton, H.Davis, C.Groube, G.Whiteman (captain), A.Wadham, H.Rawlings, H.Merwood, with J.Nicholls as coach and G.Wadham as line umpire. The Seniors also won the championship. Again, a Social Evening was held to celebrate the occasion. Indeed in these seasons, preparing for the Social took up nearly all the committees time.

About this time, Players insurance was introduced.

The Club paid One Guinea (\$2.10) into the fund. For this, the injured player was entitled to doctor's fees and also One Pound (\$2) per week while off injured.

1905 was an important year, though not successful in the playing fields, where both championships were lost. However a meeting of Carterton and Rovers Football Clubs decided that the Assembly Hall needed extending and the two clubs worked towards this end with an extended building being provided. This was nearly the size of the present Municipal Hall. The annual meeting also recommended to the Union that it should make an effort to form a referees' association.

The ending of the 1906 season saw the end of the presidency of Mr J. T. M. Hornsby. He had been president for 7 years, but does not appear to have attended a meeting. His place was taken by Chas. Reid who became the first active president. The transition was made easier as L.H. Smart who had been secretary since 1901 had worked with the new secretary J.Nicholls on the committee.

Spectators in those days were intensely loyal to their chosen. It is recorded that while Carterton was was playing Masterton at the reserve, a Masterton spectator sitting on the 'temporary fence' erected each winter, became annoyed at the performance of one or all of the McKenzie boys, of whom three were playing. In the age old manner, the spectator gave tongue. Behind him there soon ranged up the mother of the abused boys. Being filled with anger at what he was saying, she used her umbrella to good purpose, hooking him under the chin and jerked him ofl to the ground where he sprawled in the mud. He was then assailed by Chas. Jensen snr. who, the report concludes, 'gave him a jolly good hiding for having insulted a lady'.

1906 also saw a change in social activities. instead of a Ladies' Social being held, a Smoke Concert was substituted. At this, gold medals were presented to A.Cadwallader (best forward) and R. Crawley (best back). The recipients were decided by a ballot of members.

This Smoke Concert could not have been over successful as in 1907 the club reverted to a Ball to complete the season. The Patron was invited to attend and address those at the ball, the address to be limited to a few words. However, as he was unable to attend, the President, Mr Chas. Reid took his place.



1907-SEnc

In 1908, we read that the Senior team was to be encouraged to take an interest in the Junior teams. By now there were both Junior and Third grade teams.

CARTERTON FOOTBALL TEAM-1900



Winners W.R.U. Senior Championship Banner

Back Row: H.Welch (umpire), P.Fairhrothcr, A.Callister, C.Moore, J.McKenzie, L.Armstrong, W.J.Armstrong, P.Ross, J.T.M.Hornsby (president).

Middle Row: W.Bairstow, W.Bridge, E.McKenzie (captain), W.H.Booth, W.H.Whyte (secretary/treasurer), H.Nicolson.

Front Row: W.Watson, H.Moore, C. Zilwood, C.Diamond, A. Booth. Absent: P.Armstrong.