



## **ST GEORGE AFC HISTORY**

**Taken from a document prepared for the 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner Celebrations**

Football Clubs come and go, but those which survive and prosper are the clubs which honor their tradition. The St George Australian Football Club is rich in history, rich in tradition and rich in the quality of the people who have passed through its doors. Presidents, Committee members, trainers, canteen workers and all the other dedicated workers who have made this club what it is today?

In 1928, at a meeting convened by the NSW league secretary, **Mr. A McWinney**, the St George Australian Rules Football Club was born.

Our club has moved several times over the last 75 years. The most significant change has been to the Crows colours, a move necessitated by an AFL decision that all Sydney SFL clubs have an affiliation with a non-Sydney AFL club.

This journal is designed to give present and future players and supporters a glimpse of the passage of the Saints over time over the intervening years. Past champion players and captains have been invited to pen their impressions of St George through each decade as follows:

<b>THIRTIES:</b>	<b>Stan Powditch</b>
<b>FORTIES:</b>	<b>John Trotman</b>
<b>FIFTIES:</b>	<b>Patrick McGrane</b>
<b>SIXTIES:</b>	<b>Patrick McCourt</b>
<b>SEVENTIES:</b>	<b>Dale Dalton</b>
<b>EIGHTIES:</b>	<b>Mark McGrath</b>
<b>NINETIES &amp; BEYOND:</b>	<b>Tony Quinn</b>

Each of these authors has, in his own style, written about champion players, good and bad times but always with an underlying pride of the baby of 1928 to the mature and proud heritage of the present.

We want today's young players to have an understanding of our history, and an appreciation that they are the custodians of the club's tradition.

## THE THIRTIES

In the recess following the 1928 season, **Mr. A McWhinney** (secretary of the NSW league), convinced a meeting in Rockdale to form a District Football Club. Present were: **Messrs A Glass, W Ryan, W McKenny, A Stoneham** and they became the founders. The club played in white jerseys with a red dragon up until 1931 and the club played in black jerseys with gold stripe from 1932 on.

After representing NSW in the Australian Football Carnival in 1933, I was refused a clearance to change clubs for 12 weeks, but finally played with St George on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1934.

The club played for the first time in a semi-final on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1934 versus the Sydney Club and won 8:11 (59) to 5:10 (40). In the preliminary final we were beaten by Newtown Club 9:15 (69) to 11:13 (79). **It is worth noting that St George were wooden spooners in 1933.**

The Club won three premierships in **1937, 1938 and 1943** and I was lucky enough to be a playing member of all three.

**1937:** The captain of the team was **Fred (Snowy) Davies**, who came from the Eastern Suburbs Club originally and then played for years with Fitzroy Club as captain. We beat South Sydney in the grand final – 11:16 (82) to 6:9 (45).

**1938:** The captain of the team was **Fred (Hoops) Pendergast** who played in the backs and in the ruck (he was a local product). We beat Newtown in the grand final – 6:20 (56) to 9:10 (64) on a fine day.

**1943:** The captain of the team was **A (Phonse) Kyne**, who was in the army and was previously captain of Collingwood Club and a ruckman. We beat South Sydney in the grand final – 12:19 (91) to 9:10 (64).

We received team photos for 1934 and 1937, and the 1937 team received blazers, but nothing for 1938. We received wallets for the 1943 Premiership win.

I found St George an excellent club and the officials who made it a happy club should not be forgotten: **Andy Glass (President), Bill Ryan (Treasurer), Bob Ross (Secretary), Eric Herman & Ted Shells (Delegates), H Williamson & Jack Ford (Committee)**, and last but not least **Tom Ryan** (Bill's brother) who was blind and did the rub down of the players. Amounting to eight gentlemen who held the club together. In conclusion, may St George have a very successful season in 2003 and beyond.

1931 saw St George produce our first Phelan Medallist in George Jenner. George received this honour playing in a side that has 1 win from 19 games. Not a bad effort!

Not to be outdone, Len Harris repeated George's effort by winning the Medal in 1932. Len played in a team which won 3 from 17 games.

**Stan Powditch**

### **PLAYING RECORD – Stan Powditch**

- Played 8 years – 1<sup>st</sup> grade with St George – 1934 to 1943
- Leading goal kicker for 4 years – 1932, 1935, 1937, 1939

- Broke the NSW goal kicking record with 114 goals – 1937
- Represented NSW 11 times, including the 1938 Amateur Carnival
- Played 8 seasons with St George, playing 106 matches and kicking 534 goals, an average of 5 goals per game
- Full Forward for three St George premierships winning teams – 1937, 1938, 1943

## THE FORTIES

Local players, who joined the forces and survived, came back to the game and servicemen from the southern states waiting to go home raised the standard considerably. Each team had a sprinkling of top class footballers well known in their own states. The great Collingwood player **Phonse Kyne** (who played for Victoria) was captain coach of Saints at the end of the war. **Campbell** was another Magpie who played with the Saints.

In that era St George were known as the Tigers, as they wore Richmond colours and their home ground was Erskineville Oval, sharing with Newtown. They moved to Jubilee Oval, Carlton around 1948 and shared the ground with Saints Rugby Union, and then secured the lease of Hurstville Oval in the early fifties.

When **Phonse Kyne** went back to Collingwood, a local player – **Harry Mallet** – was captain coach and built a good attacking team around him. **Jack “Bomber” Brown** was discharged from the air force and took up his career again with Saints. He was one of the best known players in Sydney, and had the skills to equal his southern counterparts and went on to rep for NSW and was captain coach in the early fifties.

1946 was the glory year for Saints when **Harry Mallet** captained the team and took out the flag, beating Eastern Suburbs in the grand final.

Saints lost quite a few players in the formation of the Western Suburbs club, which was formed in 1949, and their home ground was Croydon Park before shifting to Picken Oval. Even in those days our juniors were very strong, and didn't take long to fill these gaps. Teams in the competition in the 40's were Saints, Air Force (dropped out in '45), Wollongong (took Air Force's place), Easts, Souths, Norths, Sydney Naval, Newtown, University (took Wollongong's place), Balmain and Wests.

Some of the other grounds where we played in Sydney were the Sports Ground, Waverly Oval, Trumper Park, North Sydney Oval, and Henson Park.

One game of football will never be forgotten by those who played this one in 1949. Just ask the **“Bomber”, Jack Trotman, Col Harris** or **“Macca” McDonald** and they will tell you it wasn't the skill of the game, but the conditions that they remembered. We traveled to Wollongong Oval beside the sea to play the 'Gong in the worst storm ever. In torrential rain and gale force winds we battled for a draw. It had to be a draw as the goal umpires couldn't write in their books, so wrote the scores on the goal posts which were then wiped out by the rain. Inside the oval was the dog track, and three of the Saints Forwards spent the game in the starting boxes each end of the track. Saints made the six o'clock news in Sydney as every sport in the metropolitan area was cancelled. I wonder if the present day players would be as dedicated for a game of footy as the old timers.

## **THE FIFTIES**

During the fifties the club had the use of Hurstville Oval as their home ground, which they shared with the St George Rugby Union for the majority of those ten years. The club played in black with yellow sash and did not change to the red and white until the move to the current home ground at Olds Park.

Over those ten years there were numerous talented players and coaches associated with the club, but space does not permit listing of those prominent people on and off the field. However, during that period there seems to have been more misfortunes than good fortunes on the playing field due, no doubt, to some very good teams competing in the SFL. The strongest opposition came from Western Suburbs, Newtown, Eastern Suburbs and Sydney.

With that, there were a few years when the club went close to top honours in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. The social atmosphere was always enjoyable, with many good after match parties held at various private homes with the ladies excelling in the culinary endeavours and the men gathered around the keg, holding a post mortem. There was a strong feeling that some players were a little dedicated in their pursuit of social activities at the expense of personal fitness.

A gathering of old players at any football match always reinforces the old adage that “conditions make a footballer and tradition makes a club”, and also proves that all footballers improve with age. It is surprising that these old footballers ever lost a match when one hears of their prowess on the field, and how easily they could solve a losing sequence or halt the inevitable opposition win.

In conclusion, congratulation must be offered to the current club administration for their endeavours to maintain the tradition of the club and ensure St George will always be a force for Sydney competition.

**Pat McGrane**

## THE SIXTIES

During this decade St George Club underwent dramatic changes on and off the field. Probably the most dramatic the Club was to witness was the changing of the guard. The great stalwarts who had carried the Club on the playing fields for the past two decades were retiring, with the baby boomers taking over.

Great players, all characters in their own way – **Col Harris**; **Peter Taylor** (301 games); **Percy Symons** (235); **Aulay "Macca" MacDonald** (255); **Patrick McGrane** (240); **Jack Trotman** (264); **Brian "Stuffa" Townley** (154); **Bill "Goose" Bolitho** (150), and others retired, but not before they imparted their knowledge on to their successors.

In 1957 the U19's competition was formed with Saints joining in 1958. Saints had an investment in its juniors which resulted in the clubs feeding the senior ranks, a tradition which still exists today.

The new breed from the junior ranks included players who became legends of that era – **Geoff Green** (328 games); **Dave Green** (143); **Graham Kemp** (176); **Colin MacDonald** (277); **Vince McCourt** (92); **"Little" John Mayne** (211); **Bob Sterling** (175); **Bill Willats** (273). Many of the old and new breed played in the First Grade Premiership side in 1964, coached by ex-Richmond player **Ken Ward**. Grand Final appearances followed in '65 and '66, without success.

When **Col Harris** retired in 1965 he had played a record 347 games since joining the Club in 1946 – a record which will possibly never be broken. His son, **Greg** (he was small then), subsequently played with the Club before gaining success in other codes in the 1970's. In the 1960's football in Sydney was undergoing changes. The art of dropkicking, perfected by **Peter Taylor** (a sight to behold), was to be a thing of the past, replaced by the drop punt.

### SEASON 1960

In 1960 St George replaced its black and gold Richmond colours for the traditional red and white of St George – a jumper containing a red body with white shoulders. This jumper was to serve the Club until the late 70's. Football socks were red and white hoops, black shorts were worn at home games, white shorts for away games.

Shorts were thigh length with buttons in the fly. **Col Harris** and **Peter Taylor** were joint winner of First Grade B & F. **Aulay MacDonald** coached Reserves, **Rod Wales** U19's and **Col Harris** the Firsts. **Wally Wallis** was Club Treasurer – what a character.

First won the minor premierships, finally crashing out in the Preliminary Final. In 1960, a young **Bob McConnell** arrived at the Club and in the following decades became known as **"Mr. Football"** in NSW.

### SEASON 1961

The Club again won the Club Championship, a winning streak for consecutive years from 1958 to 1962 inclusive. **Geoff Green** won First Grade B & F and **Bob Sterling** the U19's. The U19's premierships team was coached by **Val Green**, father of Geoff & David. **John Bourke** was Club Secretary.

### SEASON 1962

**John Preston** was the first player in the Club's history to win the **Kealey Medal**, a year when the U19's won successive premierships with **Wally Wallis** the successful coach.

**Ken Ward** won First B & F, with Little John Mayne winning Reserves. Reserve Grade were beaten in the Grand Final, with First coached by Col Harris losing the Preliminary Final.

### **SEASON 1963**

Season 1963 saw **Ken Ward** appointed captain/coach of First with “**Doctor**” **Bob Serich** the B & F winner. A young **Neville “Nifty – Pie Man” Shaw** won Thirds and “**The Goose**” **Bill Bolitho** the Reserves. All grades made the finals without success, which provided the foundation for the Club for the following years. The Club won the pre-season Knockout competition.

### **SEASON 1964**

The 1964 season started on a bad note with Saints losing its first two matches against Sydney Naval and Wests, after which it went through undefeated – defeating Wests in the Grand Final. On 4/4/64 in the first round at Hurstville Oval v Naval, saw **Col MacDonald** and **Vince McCourt** become the first players from Miranda junior club play a senior game with Saints. Both 19 year olds, Col and Vince played in three First Grade grand finals.

**Bob Sterling** won First B & F in the 1964 Premiership year, with further B & F successes in '65, '67, '69 and '70 – a feat which will possibly never be equaled. **Percy Symons** was captain/coach of Reserves who finished third, the same as the thirds who were coached by **Rod Wales** – what an old stalwart.

### **SEASON 1965**

Saints started season 1965 as Premiership favourites, retaining all players except **Ken Ward** who left Sydney on business, replaced by **Col Harris** as coach. Against University at Hurstville Oval on 17/4/65, **Col MacDonald** kicked 13 goals 6 – his best effort at full forward for the Club. The opening match of the season 17/4/65 saw **Patrick McCourt** at 17 years old become the first player from St Patricks (now Ramsgate) to play a senior game with Saints. In the 1965 Grand Final v Wests at Trumper ruckman **V McCourt** was punched out cold at the first centre bounce by the opposition ruckmen taking no further part. This certainly affected the result as he was Saints big gun. The Club attracted talented players who were to make their mark on Sydney football: **Noel Reading** 1965 and **Dale Dalton** 1977 Phehlan medal winners. They, together with **Danny Dwyer, Rex Elvish, John Bolton** and **Don McKenna** - a beautiful kick of the ball who - became First Grade leading goal kicker (77 goals) and again in 1966 (71 goals).

### **SEASON 1966**

**Dale Dalton** won the first of his three First Grade B & F awards, with further successes in '68 and '74. Against Uni at Olds Park on 12/6/66 **Don McKenna** kicked 15 in a score of 29:14 (188) to 6:1 (37). **Dale Dalton** kicked 5. **Herbie Stringer** in Reserves on 7/8/66 kicked 9 when Saints beat Balmain 20:9 to 2:7; **J Mayne, P Symons** and **W Walis** all had 3 each. Against Uni at Picken on 20/8/66 **Don McKenna** kicked 18 goals, still a club record (is this a Club record?), **Dwyer** 6, **G Green & D Dalton** 1 each, winning 31:18 to 6:2.

Hurstville Oval was Saints home ground until 1966, when the Club moved to Olds Park. This was an old brick pit converted to a park, which in the early days was like playing on stones. The goals ran across the field in an east/west direction. The club rooms were an old derelict house that is now the car park. Players and spectators parked cars round the perimeter of the oval on ground now occupied by the club rooms, park area and bike track.

While at Hurstville Oval, the Club shared the round with St George Rugby Union. Training nights were an event to witness – the Rules players training around the perimeter with the Union in the centre. The odd word and fist were exchanged in anger between players but generally there was mutual respect between the two codes. St George Soccer Club also shared the ground in winter. Thursday nights after training players, officials and supporters headed to Shanneys Pub, Hurstville for ale or two, a long held tradition in those days.

### **SEASON 1967**

During the season, the U19's on 13/4/67 beat North Shore 25:16 (166) to 1:4 (10). In the Preliminary Final, Wests beat Saints Firsts and Reserves. **Danny Dwyer** was coach of Firsts, with **Morrie Northey** in charge of Reserves and **Val Green** the Thirds.

### **SEASON 1968**

Former sports writer for the Daily Telegraph, **John Hoggett**, played with Saints in 1968. Playing First Grade against Souths on 21/7/68 at Olds, **John** kicked 14 goals in a winning score of 26:14 to 4:9. **Kevin Eibbons** 3; **Shane Tyndale** 2; **D Dalton** 2; **Geoff Green** 1, also shared in the goals. In Reserves that day, **Bob Serich** kicked 7; **Les Onions** 2; **Col MacDonald** 3; **Col Fitzpatrick** (father of Sean) 1, when Saints defeated Souths 23:30 (168) to 2:0 (12).

Against Sydney Naval in Firsts on 4/8/68, Saints scored 33:16 (214) to 4:4 (28). **Dale Dalton** as rover kicked 13.; **John Hoggett** 5; **Bill Stein, Kevin Gibbons, Alan Newman, Bill Willats** each kicked 2. Coach of Firsts was **Geoff Green**, with **Brian "Stuffa" Townly** in charge of Reserves and **Ken Craig** Thirds. Ken started the run of nine Third Grade premierships the Club was to win in the subsequent years to 1977.

**Garry Watkins** was ruck when making his debut for Thirds on 21/4/68., kicking one goal in Saints demolition on Southern Districts 20:27 (147) to Nil – **Gary Baglin** kicked three. Other members of the 1968 Third Grade premiership side which beat Wests 20:20 (140) to 7:5 (47), coached by **Ken Craig**, included **Ken Hughes, Laurie Moaghan** ('68 Kealy Medal), **Kerry Cook, Geoff Argus, Bobby Brown, Ken Rosevear, Ian Spiers, Manny Kerinana** and **Bruce Machlachlan**. **Gary Baglin** became the Club's first Third Grade player to win the goal kicking award with 49 goals.

A unique thing happened in 1968 when some Bathurst Islanders started playing with the Club. They were colourful, could play football and entertain. Sometimes they went walkabout which caused a few headaches for the coaches. They came to the Club as a result of doing Tech courses at St George College. One player, "**Manny**" **Keirinana** was one of the most spectacular full forwards ever seen in Sydney and won the First Grade goal kicking (93 goals) in 1969.

## **SEASON 1969**

In 1969 **Graham Cornes** (Adelaide AFL coach) played for the Club and was a sensational player to watch. Sydney Uni beat Saints in the Reserve grand final (Uni of NSW were in First Grade). First Grade failed to make the final four, but won the pre-season comp. Third Grade were Premiers.

First Grade side on 3/8/69 which beat Easts 21:21 (147) to 10:14 (74) at Trumper:  
Backline – W Willats, J Hoggett, G Dotta, R Elvish, D McKenna, A Murray; Centre Line – B Ward, R Sterling, A Newman, K Gibbons, E Kerianana, Col MacDonald, Col Fitzpatrick, Kym Smith, G Green; Rucks – V McCourt, G Cornes, D Dalton; Reserves - **J McMahon, J Tipauri**; Goal Kickers – **Kerinana 10, Dalton 4, MacDonald 2, Newman, Green, Cornes, Smith and Gibbons**, 1 each.

Personalities from all walks of life have always been associated with and played for Saints – **Steve Rixon** (test cricket); **Laurie Monaghan** (test rugby); **Mark Roberts** (ex-Swans and North Melbourne premiership player); **Larry Pickering** (famous cartoonist, and others – even former President and MP, **Brian (Stalky) Langton**, played his first senior game on 7/5/67 against Easts and kicked one goal. Some of the long established clubs of the pre and post war eras – Sydney Naval, Newton, South Sydney, Southern Districts and Balmain were always tough opposition. Unlike St George during the 1960s, these clubs did not establish a sound junior base and this was their downfall. They subsequently ceased to exist and were relegated to a lower division. Southern Districts in the 1960s relied on the army for its players.

When national service ceased in the 1970s, Districts struggled. In a game against Districts at Rosedale Oval on 23/7/72, Saints kicked a record score, 49:44 (338) to nil.

Members of that side included **Rex Elvish, Ken Gibson, Garry Watkins, Patrick McCourt, Russell Skuse, Ken Hughes** and **Tony Fairclough** – Coach **Bill Stein**.

The 1960s was certainly the decade that established the then modern era for the Club. It was presided over by long serving President, **Syd Felstead**, when the red and white tradition was born that led this great club into the 1970's and beyond. Eras have their memories; players have come and gone; games have since been won and lost – but the memory of a First Grade premiership lingers on for those who played in it, were part of it, or witnessed it.

**Patrick McCourt**

## THE SEVENTIES

The Club had two presidents in the 70's, **Sid Felstead** from 1970 to 1974 and **Ron McKenzie** from 1975 to 1979. Both men did excellent jobs for the club with one aim of a First Grade Premiership. During the same period the club had 7 First Grade coaches: **Col Harris** (1970); **Ken Craig** (1971); **Bill Stein** (1972-73); **Kevin Pearson** (1974-75); **Dale Dalton** (1976); **Robert Bell** (1977-78) and **Bruce Lucas** (1979).

The First Grade team played in every Final series except 1979, however were not able to reach a Grand Final. The Reserves won the Premiership in 1975 and 1978. The Third Grade teams had the best record in the Club for success in the 70's when they were Premiers, in 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977 and 1978.

Medal winners in that era were:

1 <sup>st</sup> Graders	<b>Phelan Medal</b>	<b>Dale Dalton</b> (1977)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Graders	<b>Sanders Medal</b>	<b>Geoff Green</b> (1973-74) <b>Colin McDonald</b> (1977-78)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Graders	<b>Kealey Medal</b>	<b>T Timeaputa</b> (1970), <b>G McKenzie</b> (1972), <b>D McVey</b> (1973), <b>D Fletcher</b> (1975), <b>M Brown</b> (1979)

As you can see the Club had one of their most successful decades in the 70s without obtaining the ultimate – a First Grade Premiership.

In 1970 the Club unsuccessfully applied to the Licensing Board for a licensed club with poker machines. This was a great setback to the Club as it had to compete against clubs like Western Suburbs who were the power team of the 70s due to their financial support from their licensed club. Raising funds to cover the cost of running a football club was always hard work and the treasurer at the time did a magnificent job to cover all costs. Socially the facilities at Olds Park were quite barbaric when you compare them to today's clubhouse. Early in the 70s the ladies committee ran the canteen in a tent as the clubhouse consisted of change rooms only. After games when the players had all cleaned up, the change rooms were quickly converted to a more social atmosphere with tables & chairs brought in for the ladies and supporters to have a drink of two. In 1976 the main change room was extended by 20 feet to give extra room for the canteen, a storeroom and at last a powder room for the ladies.

Members and supporters opened their homes for barbecues and social functions which helped player morale and team spirit. One presentation night was held at the Bexley Masonic Hall and over 300 people attended. The Mortdale RSL Club & Peakhurst Bowling Club were other venues used for socials. The Penshurst Hotel was a popular meeting place and meat raffles were run by the players and committee to raise funds for the Club.

A significant factor of the success of the Club in the 70s was the excellent work done by the ladies committee. They ran the canteen, arranged all the socials and presentation nights, sold raffle tickets and were a great support to the players on match days.

It was a great period of my life and I look back on the 70s with great memories of the people I met and the spirit of St George.

**Dale Dalton**

## THE EIGHTIES

During this decade the Club produced some outstanding footballers, some of whom went on to more significant careers in the VFL. Great numbers of players were attracted to the Club and very few left to play with other Sydney clubs. The Club developed mainly through experienced players/coaches who had degrees of success. These included **John Bester, John Tuckwell, Ian Rainbird, Chris Foster** and **Steve Taubert**, the First Grade coaches during the 80s. They were well supported by the Reserve Grade coaches, **Alan Taylor, Wayne Rogers, Bob Bardenega, Eric Taylor, Carl Fail** and **Steve Harper**, with **Eric's** 1986 team taking the flag. The Third Grade or U19s was an outstanding nursery for the senior teams. Under the guidance of **Patrick McCourt, Chris Foster, Kevin Pearson, Noel Hopkins** and **Paul Lindsay** during the 80s the Club was successful in bringing home the flag in 1983, 1985 and 1989.

In looking back at the Club's modest facilities it was in 1980 that oval lights at Olds Park were erected. This enabled the players to develop their skills under J.B. and fitness was paramount. The players sure did enjoy carrying the sandbags around the oval on their shoulders and running with bricks in each hand. The team started like rockets each week but faltered in the latter stages of games due to inexperience. The U19s were runners-up in '81 and a young **Matthew Ansell** was rewarded for his fine efforts in winning the **Kealey Medal** in '82. This year saw all three grades in the finals, setting the scene for the next five years as finalists. In the following year the Club won the last three games to reach the semis, scrapping in on percentages by 0.18. In those days games were played at the Sydney Cricket Ground as a curtain raiser to the Swan's games. It was all in vain as the Club bowed out in the semi-finals, but a highlight was the U19s success and **Bob Cooper** winning the Sanders Medal.

1984 was a milestone in the Club's history as we saw the completion of the clubhouse due to the dedication of "**Nifty**" **Neville Shaw**. St George was now the measuring stick for the other clubs and even envied by some. Entertainment took on a new meaning in the coming years, with players performing on stage in various forms of dress. It was a pity that some players took this to the field on the following weekend

The First Grade team registered a record score in '85 of 57:29 (371) to 1:1 (7) against Newtown. At the time it was an Australian senior grade record and could still be that. The Swans were drawing on players continually and the '86 Reserve Grade triumph was a great effort.

This takes us to the first year under the new coach **Steve Taubert**. The Bomber and Swan great led the Club to the Grand Final in '87 only to be belted, literally, out of it. The achievements during the year were obscured by the media attention of the game. With the first quarter lasting 42 minutes it was as though the game was already played. The game attracted plenty of publicity mainly for the wrong reasons. The subsequent let down on missing the semi-finals in '88 for the first time in 6 years possibly saw the players still shell shocked from the previous year. The U19s continued on their winning way only to falter in the big one. They made sure of it next year, winning in grand style. The Seconds, under big **Steven Harper**, were runners up, losing by a solitary point in the grand final. It was also a successful year for **Dave Costigan**, who won the **Kealy Medal**.

The tradition of an end of season trip away continued with many fine performances on tour, usually at Surfers Paradise. “**Noddy**” **Hopkins** and “**Critter**” **Ryan** being standouts on tour with many fine stories to relate.

During the 80s many champions wore the red and white with pride. The continued support and off field guidance from many who served on the committees over the years encouraged these players. To mention all these would be a monumental task, but **Bob** “**Apples**” **McConnell** has to be singled out for his loyalty and outstanding dedication to the Club.

**Mark McGrath**

## THE NINETIES & BEYOND

During the Nineties St George has had its share of highs and lows. As the decade started **Bob McConnell** was still running the Club with the rest of us just bit players ! After appearing in the finals in all three grades in 1989, high expectations were held for 1990. Unfortunately the last minute withdrawal of ex-Swan/South Melbourne player and St George First Grade coach, **Steve Taubert**, due to business commitments, threw the Club into disarray. The end result was the appointment of local Under19s coach, **Paul Lindsay**, to First Grade coach.

These interruptions, as well as player change, proved a disappointing season for St George. First Grade failed to make the finals, while the Reserve Grade were beaten in the finals and U19s were defeated in the grand final.

The 1991 season saw a change in the Club's executive committee, as well as coaching staff. An enthusiastic committee led by President **Bill Lawler** appointed ex-St George player and coach, **Chris Foster**, as First Grade coach, **Rod Burdon** as Reserve Grade coach and **Paul Lindsay** once again took up the U19s coaching position. Along with the change of personnel, St George was also to change its playing strip from the red and white vertical stripes to the white jumper and red "V". A good pre-season was unfortunately left unrewarded during the season in our senior games. Although the Club song was sung on too few occasions, The Saints managed to push the leading teams but could not finish off the good work. Our U19s once again found themselves in the grand final and once again were disappointed to finish runners-up.

There were a couple of outstanding individual efforts during the 1991 season. **David West** picked up the trifecta. He represented Sydney, collected the Club's First Grade B&F and capped it off with the prestigious Phelan Medal. **Peter Thiris** made it a magnificent double by collecting the Kealy Medal.

After breaking the Campbelltown hoodoo (a legacy of the 1987 Grand Final) at the end of the 1991 season, St George headed into the 1992 season confidently. The coaching staff was retained and on paper the player strength improved. Unfortunately, First Grade failed to live up to expectations, as did Reserve Grade. The Club's shining light was our U19s who once again collected the Premiership, coached by **Paul Lindsay**. Sparked by the return to the red and white vertical striped jumper the highlight of the First Grade team performance was the 8 match winning streak which, although not leading to the finals, instilled a lot of confidence within the Club. Included in the winning streak was the defeat of North Shore away from home for the first time in over a decade.

The outstanding individual performance came from **Darren Oates** who won the Phelan Medal for 1992. Two years - two Phelan Medals!

## **1993**

After taking out the Trumper Cup Pre-Season competition, there was excitement and anticipation around the Club. After a strong home and away series St George finished in second position. The second semi-final saw us blow away Minor Premiers Western Suburbs by 80 points and make our way straight to the Grand Final.

August 1993 saw a packed Gore Hill Oval play host to the 1993 First Grade Grand Final between St George and North Shore. After a miserable first half, which saw St George down, but not out, coach Barts laid down the law at half-time. St George came out breathing fire, piling on 15 second half goals to gain that elusive First Grade Premiership.

This St George Grand Final winning team comprised 16 local juniors out of 20. No-one, well maybe Bob McConnell, was as proud as I to stand on the podium holding the cup aloft, which was appropriately handed over by Bob himself.

- Club Championship (Bob McConnell trophy)
- First Grade Premiership
- Phelan Medallist - Tony Quinn
- Leading Goal Kicker - Michael Clift (119)
- Second Grade Leading Goal Kicker - Greg Baxter
- Third Grade Runners Up
- Kealy Medallist - David "Wombat" Stewart

The coaching reign of Barts was 1993-1997 and with the able assistance of lower grade coaches Rod Burdon, Mick Clift, Mark Siely, Andy Lindfield and Minnie Demir was able to produce one of the most successful eras in the Club's history.

## **1994**

- First Grade Semi Finalists
- First Grade Leading Goal Kicker - Michael Clift
- Second Grade Minor Premiers/Runners Up
- Sanders Medal - Stephen Nash
- Second Grade Leading Goal Kicker - Andy Hillas

## **1995**

- First Grade Pre-Season Premiers
- Third Grade Premiers

## **1996**

- First Grade Preliminary Finalists
- Sanders Medal - Andrew "Ghost" Lindfield (aged 40 at the time)

## **1997**

- First Grade Club Championship
- First Grade Minor Premiers/Runners Up
- Phelan Medal - Simon Wilson
- Second Grade Minor Premiers/Premiers

The 1997 Grand Final loss was hard to take, in fact I know several people still hurting. Saints went into the Grand Final as favorites but were blown away by a Balmain outfit that just scraped into the Top 4. This game also saw the retirement of two club veterans and great mates in Michael Clift and Tony Quinn. A highlight was the Phelan Medal win by Simon Wilson, a creative rover who never stopped running (despite a liking for the cigarettes !).

Simon took over the coaching role in 1998 and led Saints to two finals series with a best effort being the 2000 Preliminary Final. Club veteran Matthew Gibson claimed back to back First Grade B & F's in 1998 & 1999.

A major coup for St George was ex-Swan Craig O'Brien joining the playing list mid way through the 2000 season. Craig took over the First Grade coaching in 2001 and took Saints to the 2001 & 2002 Preliminary Finals, but was unable to get a crack at the big one.

Other notable achievements during this time were:

### **300 Club Games**

David Fletcher – during his time at the club Fletch won the 1975 Kealy Medal, played 63 U/19 games, coached Reserve Grade and is now the star for the NSW Super Rules team. A true club legend.

### **200 Club Games**

Michael Clift, Ken Smith and Matt Gibson

### **New South Wales Representatives**

David West, Tony Quinn, Grant Bartholomaeus, Matthew Brewer and Craig O'Brien.

## **2003**

It would be remiss of me not to mention the Presidents who resided over the club during this time. Bill Lawler and Chris Raper were two of the hardest working and dedicated men I have met and continually put the club first. Without the efforts of these men and hard working executive I doubt whether we would be celebrating tonight.

I have been fortunate to play alongside many great players but more importantly many great people. Some of those I met and played with 20 years ago, are now my good mates. When you get together on a night such as tonight you are able to talk to any person from any era and have something in common and that is what Footy is all about .

Carn the Saints !!!

**Tony Quinn**