

- 1968 - FORMATION -

The concept of a Merrylands Sub-District Rugby Union Club originated one evening in early 1968 at the local Billabong Hotel when a group of local football enthusiasts, which was comprised basically of former Merrylands Junior Rugby Union Club players, discussed the possibility of forming a senior Club and decided to approach the Metropolitan Sub-District Rugby Union, as it was then known, with a view to entering a side in one of their cup competitions.

Bob Carroll and Paul Hiddlestone were prominent at this stage in organising events and it was through their efforts that an unofficial meeting took place at a local house some weeks later where an inaugural committee was elected including among its newly appointed officials John Slapp as President, Bob Rees as Vice-President, John Krenich as Secretary/Treasurer and Bob Carroll, Paul Hiddlestone, Col Davies and John Murphy as committeemen.

John Slapp subsequently resigned as President and was replaced by Paul Hiddlestone who also resigned some weeks after with Bob Rees serving the remainder of term as President.

Some weeks later the Club's first Annual General Meeting was convened at the local School of Arts building and the Club's application for entry into the Sub-District competition was confirmed and preparations commenced for the Club's introduction into the Sydney wide competition. At this stage the Club was operating loosely along the lines of the Merrylands Junior Rugby Union Club's constitution.

Seeking a Coach and Manager the committee turned its attention to two gentlemen who had long been associated with the Merrylands' Juniors and were successful in persuading Jack Simpson - a former Eastern Suburbs first grade player in the late thirties - to coach the side and Stan Carroll - at that time President of the Merrylands Junior Rugby Club - to assist in the management of the team.

Training commenced with twice a week coaching sessions at nearby Granville Park which Parramatta Council had allocated to the Club as a home ground for the season following representations from the committee.

Finance to operate the Club was the greatest problem confronting the committee in the early stages, who were starting with a bank balance of zero, and to raise immediate funds a barbecue/gambling night was organised just prior to the season. A good attendance at this function raised nearly two hundred dollars for the Club but this was soon to be spent with team registration fees, affiliation fees, ground rental, training lights account, jerseys, socks and various other expenses to be met.

Further funds were raised from the sale of beer and roast chicken raffles at home games, while players paid a three dollar membership fee to supplement this as well as paying twenty cents per match to cover the cost of the half time oranges and laundering of jerseys after matches. Occasional donations from supporters also added to the bank balance, while the success of the initial gambling night saw this type of function conducted regularly throughout the season.

To defray costs the Club acquired a set of second hand jerseys for a nominal fee from the recently disbanded Granville Shamrocks Football Club, and these were a green jumper with a white vee which were subsequently registered as the Club's official colours for the season.

Prior to the competition commencement two trial matches were played by the Club, one against Blakehurst and the other against H.M.A.S. Nirimba, a naval base at Quakers Hill, with both games resulting in narrow defeat.

Undaunted by this initial failure the Club, who were graded in the Judd Cup "D" Division, took the field under the captaincy of John Price for their first competition match on April 6th against C.B.C. Bank at Richmond Air Base, and played fine football that day to run out winners 16 to 3 with the honour of scoring the Club's first ever try in Sub-District competition going to inside-centre John Murphy.

As far as can be established, that first team to represent Merrylands was :-

T. COATES, W. RIDGEWELL, C. DAVIES, J. MURPHY,
R. DONALDSON, J. PRICE, J. WATKINS, R. REES,
R. CARROLL, M. TOLLENS, W. JOHNSON, J. STEWART,
R. KEYES, T. SWAN, F. KELLY.

It should be mentioned that several of this team had been members of Merrylands Junior Rugby Union Club's first premiership winning side - the 1963 under eighteens.

Merrylands continued on from that fine opening performance to register many victories that year including among them a 9-0 victory over Blakehurst, 9-3 win over St. Ives, 6-3 win over Parramatta, 14-6 win over Roseville and two good wins against Colleagues, 17-6 and 37-3, the second of these victories coming only a fortnight before the semi-finals for which Merrylands easily qualified finishing second on the competition table with 25 points.

JUDD CUP - "D" DIVISION - 1968

Blakehurst	31
Merrylands	25
J.C. Murray	22
Colleagues (5)	21
Roseville	18
Parramatta	17
Turrumurra	16
Balmain Teach. College	15
Colleagues (6)	10
St. Ives	7

Meeting J.C. Murray in the semi-final, a team against whom they had drawn once and lost once during the competition rounds, Merrylands were narrowly defeated 11-9 and eliminated from the final.

J.C. Murray went on to defeat Blakehurst the following week before losing to Lane Cove (from the Judd Cup "A" Division) who were ultimately to become Judd Cup Premiers for the season.

Merrylands thus finished their initial season creditably, winning eleven matches, drawing three and losing four to qualify for the semi-finals at their first attempt and scoring 190 points during the season while conceding 102 points.

They were one of forty eight Clubs fielding ninety seven teams in the Sub-District competition during 1968 who competed in nine divisions of four cups - Kentwell, Whiddon, Burke and Judd.

That initial season ended with a Club barbecue/presentation night held at a members home and at the function team five-eighth and goalkicker Terry Coates, who had captained the side for the majority of the season,

had the distinction of receiving the best and fairest award for the season while also topping the individual point scorers. Bob Donaldson and Mick Rames figured among the top try scorers for the year.

In addition to those players mentioned earlier as appearing in the first team, others to represent the Club during the season included:-

W. ARNETT, G. ASHWOOD, D. COLLINS,
B. DALKEITH, R. HENDERSON, W. HILES,
T. MAYBURY, J. NICHOLAS, B. POULTON,
M. RAMES.

MERRYLANDS R.U.F.C. - 1968

Back Row : S. Carroll (Manager), C. Davies, F. Kelly, R. Carroll,
R. Keyes, R. Rees, R. Donaldson, J. Stewart, J. Murphy,
J. Simpson (Coach).

Front Row: T. Coates, T. Swan, J. Watkins, W. Johnson, D. Collins,
J. Price, W. Ridgewell.

