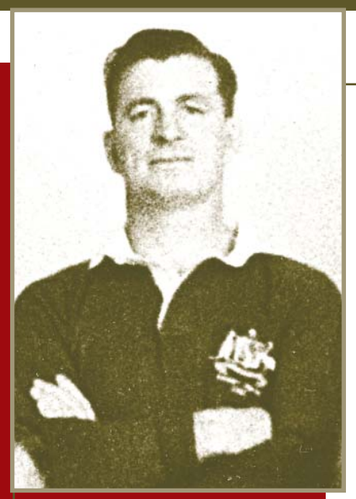


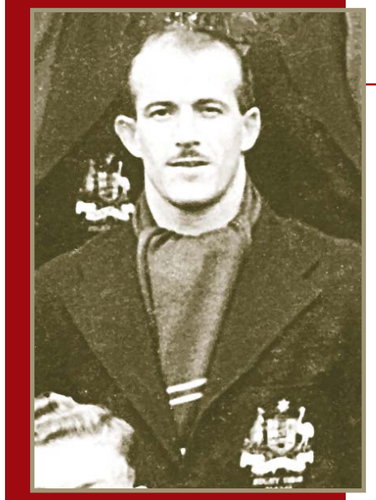
JOHN "Jack" BAXTER 1920 - 2004

One of the bravest men to pull on a Wallaby jersey, John "Jack" Baxter passed away on 27 August 2004, aged 86. Known as "Tarakan Jack", the rugged front rower played nine Tests for Australia between 1949 and 1952 and was a member of the legendary 1949 Wallabies side which became the first to win the Bledisloe Cup on New Zealand soil.

But Baxter's courage on the Rugby field became the stuff of legends after a shocking accident on board the HMAS Tarakan in 1950. An explosion ripped through the ship, which was moored at Garden Island. Baxter was badly injured in the explosion, suffering multiple burns, broken bones and lacerations. His head was seen protruding from a porthole, fire-hoses were directed to save him and he was eventually cut free.

In spite of months in hospital, Baxter recovered to defy the odds, playing for the Wallabies against the All Blacks in 1951 and 1952.

Baxter played Rugby League at school for Kogarah Marist Brothers, then Australian Rules while he was living in Melbourne, before his first encounter with Rugby with Melbourne's Kiwi Club then the Eastern Suburbs club in Sydney.



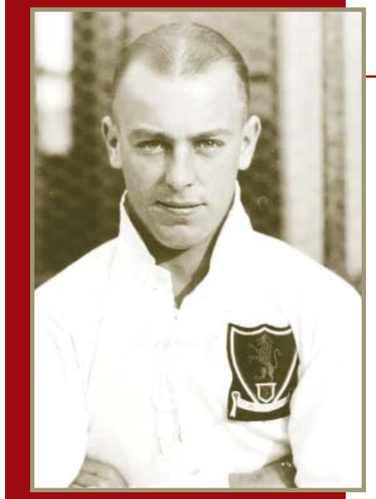
JOHN FULLER 1920 - 2004

John Fuller commenced his Rugby career at Cranbrook School in Sydney. From there, he went straight into Sydney University Firsts, played in the premiership team in 1939 and was awarded a University blue for Rugby in 1939 and 1940, and after the war in 1946 and 1947.

Fuller trialed for the 1939 Wallabies but missed selection and the following year captained the NSW Colts. He joined the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in 1940, where he continued playing Rugby in Services matches, until he was captured by the Japanese and spent three years in a prisoner of war camp.

After the war Fuller returned to the Sydney University First XV and played three representative games for New South Wales between 1946 and 1947. He toured Great Britain, France and Canada with the 1947/48 Wallabies but missed Test selection on the tour, the years spent as a prisoner of war robbing him of his promising prewar form. Fuller did, however, represent Australia in eleven mid-week matches on the nine-month tour.

John Fuller died on 2 December 2003.



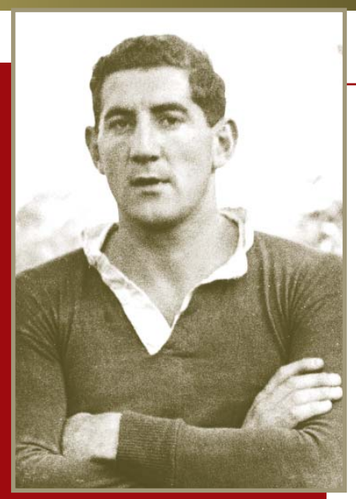
JDC "Bill" HAMMON 1914 - 2004

Born in Invercargill, New Zealand, Bill Hammon first played Rugby as a schoolboy at Auckland Grammar. He played for Auckland in 1934, when they won the Ranfurly Shield for the first time in 20 years, before moving to Australia with his family in 1935 and joining the St Kilda Rugby Club in Melbourne. Hammon played for Victoria and captained the State from 1936 to 1938 at a time when Victoria was strong enough to have substantial representation in the National side and to defeat New South Wales, which it did in 1938 by 23 to 14.

He also played one Test for Australia in 1937 against South Africa at the SCG and until his death was the oldest Wallaby Test player. Stan Bisset is still the oldest surviving Wallaby. The distinction is made because Bisset was a member of the touring 1939 Wallabies whose tour was cancelled without a Test being played when war was declared the day after they arrived in England.

Far removed from the Rugby field, Hammon and Bisset found themselves fighting together in Syria, before Bisset was sent to New Guinea and Hammon to the East, where he was taken prisoner and spent three and a half years in a Japanese prisoner of war camp. Hammon was later awarded an OBE (Military Divison).

Bill Hammon died on 1 January 2004.



DOUG KELLER 1922 - 2004

Dual International Dr Douglas Keller played six Tests for Australia between 1947 and 1948, and seven Tests for Scotland between 1949 and 1950.

An old boy of Sydney Grammar School, Keller played for Sydney University and Drummoyne in Australia and London Scottish and Guy's Hospital in England. He captained the Sydney University premiership team in 1945 and was awarded a University blue for Rugby in 1942, 1944 and 1945.

Keller played six games for New South Wales and made his Australian debut against New Zealand in 1947. On the 1947/48 Wallaby tour of Great Britain, France and North America he played in all six Test matches, remaining in London at the end of the tour to finish his medical studies.

Keller qualified to play for Scotland because of his Scottish grandmother. He made his debut against England in 1949 and captained four of the seven Tests he played for the Scots.

A forward known as a footballer of exceptional intelligence, Keller died in April 2004.

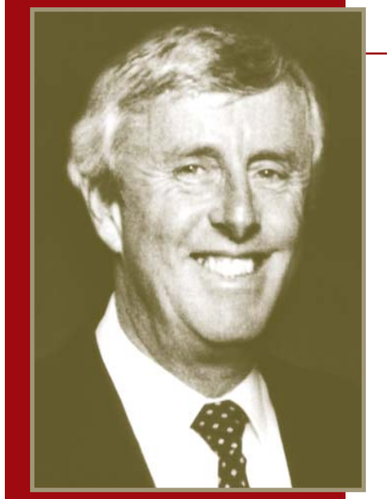
NANCY FOUNTAIN 1923 - 2004

Nancy Fountain, one of the first administrators of the Australian Rugby Union, died on 10 October 2004.

Fountain was introduced to Rugby when she worked in the NSW Rugby Union office after the war. With the inauguration of the Australian Rugby Football Union in 1949, she worked closely with the newly appointed President, Hon. Justice Sir Lesley Herron, filling a variety of roles and became well known and well respected to a generation of Australian and New South Wales representative players and officials.

She also became a supporter of the game in general and through her husband Gordon a supporter of the Gordon Club in particular. Through her involvement in the Ladies Auxiliary, Fountain helped raise many thousands of dollars for the club and fought successfully to have women admitted to full club membership.

Always interested in the history and wellbeing of the Australian Rugby Union, she was ever happy to share her fund of information and anecdotes, which she did with much humour. In recent years, with the presentation of honour caps to all past Test players, Fountain's knowledge of Classic Wallabies and their whereabouts proved invaluable.



ERIC SPILSTED 1933 - 2004

Affectionately known as "Spillo", Eric Spilsted, publisher of 'Rugby News', died on 11 September 2004, after a long and courageous battle with cancer.

Spillo's background was in advertising, but in 1982, realising there was a void to be filled, he revived the old 'Rugby News', publishing it on a shoestring and initially handing it out for free. It soon became the Club Rugby competition "bible" and remains so today.

From 1985 to 1987 Spilsted was President of Warringah Rugby Club and was a driving force in Club fundraising activities. He put the same energy into personal activities, running marathons, flying planes, racing cars and climbing to the base camp of Mount Everest, to name just a few.

Professionally, he was chairman of the Circulation Audit Bureau for 25 years.

Spilsted genuinely loved the game of Rugby and supported it in any way he could, not least in his encouragement of and generosity to the Rugby Archives.

In his memory the New South Wales Colt's club championship will be played for the Eric Spilsted Shield.