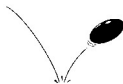


## OUR ROOTS #2



by Gary Bartholomeusz



Despite World War 2 becoming officially over by September 2, 1945, the then-named Albany Wartime Football Association restarted its competition on Sunday April 29 that year with three teams - being Air Training Corps, Scriven and Towns. Scriven (an occupational name for scribe or clerk) did not reappear in 1946 when new clubs Railways and Woollen Mills joined the Association. Railways remains active but, alas, Woollen Mills only lasted three seasons. Air Training Corps (or ATC) became Royals in 1953 and, that same year, Denmark fielded a league side in the AFA but departed after two seasons. Towns reverted back to its previous title of North Albany in 1957. Ever since the town of Mount Barker entered a colts team in the Albany Football Association in 1907, discussions for both local centres to play in the same senior competition arose many times in the ensuing 51 years.

Officials of both associations met at the Mount Barker Hotel on February 26, 1958, and agreed to an amalgamation to become the Southern Districts National Football League. It copied the South West National Football League's change from an association to a league the previous season. A competition known as the Southern Districts National Football Association ran from 1923 to World War 2. Its teams were Alexandra Bridge, Augusta, Forest Grove and Karridale. Margaret River / Cowaramup joined that Association in 1931.

At the SDNFL launch were **John 'Jack' Hutchinson** (the president of the Albany Football Association, who instigated the meeting), **Hugh Hardiman**, **Tom Rudinger** and **Jim Sarre** from the AFA and MBFA president **Henry Kleemann**, **Bill Backshall**, **Alfred 'Fred' Cummings**, **Terrence 'Turk' Kelly**, **Bill Lathwell**, **Harry Reeves**, **Kim Sounness**, **Ron Sounness**, **Percy Stubber** and **Barry Williamson**. Hutchinson was elected president and Kleemann vice president. Hardiman became secretary at the League's following meeting.

The seven clubs in its first season were AFA's North Albany, Railways and Royals along with Cranbrook, North Mount Barker, South Mount Barker and Rocky Gully-based Western Districts (MBFA). Denmark missed Southern Districts' inaugural year but was accepted on February 23, 1959. Albany and Mount Barker associations competed as separate identities in Great Southern Football Council's annual carnivals until 1962. SDFL's first constitution was produced in 1963. The Colts competition, then called 'C' Grade, operated with an independent committee (co-ordinated by AFA's **Bill Morrell** and MBFA's 'Turk' Kelly) from the beginning of the League until 1966.

Southern Districts hierarchy disallowed entry to fans after 10.30am when an unprecedented crowd of an estimated 3000 people was deemed as over-loaded for the League's first Mount Barker derby grand final between North and South at Sounness Park on Sunday October 3, 1965. The queue of cars outside the venue was reportedly "at least a mile long" when the gates were closed. North Mount Barker beat its town rivals by 28 points in the League and Denmark by 15 points in the Reserves.

The meetings of delegates were held in Mount Barker from the beginning of the League until 1971 when it rotated around Albany, Denmark and Mount Barker. That same year, Southern Districts (led by captain / coach **Richard Walker**) competed at the Mobil Petroleum-sponsored Annual Country Championships in Perth for the first time. The SDFL became zone-aligned to West Australian Football League club Claremont in 1972 and used WAFL field umpires for League games only between 1964 and 1973.

Cranbrook left Southern Districts in the 1970 pre-season and transferred to the Katanning-based Central Great Southern Football League. This lasted until 1974 when the Club went into recess, until the following season, because it lacked ample players. The CGSFL allowed 'The Blues' to compete in 1976 with only a league team but, despite playing 14 games that season, went into recess again for 1977 and 1978. The Club managed to field a side for the first three rounds of 1979 yet, after hosting Kojonup at home on April 30, was again forced into recess. It officially disbanded on August 23 that year. Western Districts (which started as Rocky Gully / Frankland in 1954) also struggled to maintain enough players and informed the SDFL on January 13, 1971, it too was in recess. The 'Cardinals' committee stayed active until 1976 before becoming extinct! Denmark also had a stint in recess during seasons 1985 and 1986. #

*\*When initials are used and you know the christian name, please notify me on 0428 514 605 or [gj.bartholomeusz@westnet.com.au](mailto:gj.bartholomeusz@westnet.com.au)*

Albany Football Association 1897 - 1941

Recess 1914 - 1918 and 1942 - 1944 due to War



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Southern Districts Football League 1945 - 1990

Great Southern Football League 1991 - current