

OUR ROOTS #7

by Gary Bartholomeusz



Albany Football Association hierarchy abandoned its 1921 season on Wednesday September 7 after 16 games, two less than intended, when West Albany could not be beaten for the premiership! A flurry of activity filled that month when the AFA played matches against Katanning and Mount Barker associations and Fremantle Football Club but the most significant milestone occurred at a dinner held in Albany's Royal George Hotel following a September 17 game against Katanning. Dignitaries at the head table were AFA president **Leonard 'Len' Barnett**, secretary **W McLean**, treasurer **Richard 'Dick' Merri-field**, delegates **Albert Bruce** and **Harry Davey**, KFA president **William Anderson**, secretary **Frank Mather** and captain / coach **Farrell**; Albany British Football (Soccer) Association representatives **Victor Box** and **Dave Gould** and Mayor of Albany **William Day**. Albert Bruce said during his speech that he hopes both associations would meet annually, similar when they played each other in eight social matches from 1906 to 1912 and that the concept be extended to all associations from Albany to Beverley along the Great Southern Railway line. He stated that "because the aftermath of World War I is behind us, a country carnival next season should be supported." It planted the seed for the birth of an institution!

The inaugural Great Southern Football Council league carnival was held in Albany at the Ulster Road Recreation Reserve (which became Centennial Oval in 1926) on Friday September 22 and Saturday 23, 1922. This year, 2022, the Colts carnival in Lake Grace on the weekend of June 18 / 19 is the Council's Centenary. The initial GSFC organising committee was chairman 'Len' Barnett, secretary **Herbert 'Bert' Rigby**, plus officials **John Angove** and **Ernest Harding**. Albany, Katanning, Mount Barker and Narrogin associations played in the first carnival. Tambellup and Wagin associations joined the Council in 1924. Wickepin and Beverley associations applied to join the following year but were denied because the delegates did not want to extend the Council's boundaries. An attempt by the Pingelly-Brookton association in 1932 also failed but Dumbleyung / Lake Grace association was allowed entry in 1937.

The carnival went into recess from 1940 to 1945 because of World War II. An unofficial round robin was held in Albany in 1945 when the host played against Katanning, Mount Barker and Narrogin teams. Denmark participated in Great Southern carnivals as a stand-alone association from 1946. Albany Member of the Legislative Assembly, **Jack Hall**, was instrumental in starting the Council's colts grade in 1949 as an organiser, umpire and coach. Elimination colts matches were spread throughout Great Southern towns prior to the carnival weekend with the last two qualifying associations playing in the grand final before the league title decider on the last day of the carnival.

Albany and Mount Barker associations amalgamated in 1958 (and included Denmark in 1959) to become the Southern Districts Football League but continued competing at Great Southern carnivals as per its former separate identities until associations changed to leagues in 1962. Narrogin and Wagin dissolved into the Upper Great Southern Football League, Katanning and Tambellup became the Central Great Southern Football League and Dumbleyung / Lake Grace the Eastern Great Southern Football League. The EGSFL later changed to the Lake Grace / Kulin Football League. Even so, the council's colts teams continued using its 'association' tag in carnivals until adopting its 'league' identification as from 1966.

On October 21, 1973, the GSFC suspended its 1974 carnival due to uncertainty of its two-day format. This was the first real sign of cracks appearing in the league grade! At its 1975 February meeting, there was consideration of disbanding after Upper Great Southern Football League withdrew from the Council. A sole game between Great Southern and Ongerup (which joined the GSFC in 1975) was played to decide a carnival winner for 1993 - while the colts competition was conducted over that weekend. The final league carnival was in 2001. In its place was a country challenge match played between Great Southern and Upper Great Southern on June 1, 2002, and, after another four such annual games, this concept was also abandoned. The colts grade continues the Great Southern Football Council carnival tradition.. #

Associations

Albany 1922-1961
Katanning 1922-1961
Mount Barker 1922-1961
Narrogin 1922-1961
Tambellup 1924-1961
Wagin 1924-1961
Dumb/Lake Grace 1937-1970
Denmark 1946-1952
Ongerup 1975-2001
Ravensthorpe & Dist. 1984-1995
Esperance District 1998-2001

Leagues

Upper Great Southern 1962-2001
Central Great Southern 1962-1991
Southern Districts 1962-1991
Eastern Great Southern 1962-1967
Lake Grace/Kulin 1971-1982
Lower South West 1977-1988
South East 1984-1997
Murray Districts 1986-1988
Great Southern 1992-2001
Goldfields 1995-2001

Great Southern 2002-2022
Esperance District 2002-2022
Goldfields 2002-2022
Ongerup 2002-2022
Upper Great Southern 2002-2022
Eastern Districts 2003-2022
Avon 2003-2007
Lower South West 2004-2019
Clontarf 2004-2013
Combined Futures 2008
Wheatbelt Falcons 2009-2013
Peel 2011-2022

Colts from 2002

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