



SOAKS Old Boys Newsletter Number 3 2022

Welcome to the 3rd **SOAKS Old Boys** Newsletter for 2022. In this edition, space is given to further acknowledge the 1972 SOAKS Senior Premiership team. There are four new **SOAKS Bloke Profiles** from members of the 1972 Senior team, who played their part in securing SOAKS hat-trick of premierships 1970-1972. In addition to that, Peter Tucker provides an insight into his recent marathon swim. **'From the Vault'** has an interesting collection of items from Tasmania's 1978 Colts interstate clash with WA. **'Heard and Noted'** makes a return and catches up with some SOAKS Old Boys who have been out and about. I hope that you enjoy all the news, humour and nostalgia.



SOAKS Old Boys Calendar of upcoming Events

Friday 1 April (with special guest Steve Colles)
(SOAKS monthly drinks from 5 pm @ Tom McHugo's)

Friday 6 May 2022
(SOAKS monthly drinks from 5 pm @ Tom McHugo's)

SOAKS March Drinks



March 2022

'SOAKS Corner' in Tom McHugo's Hotel was well populated once again with Richard Boulton, Mark Dwyer, Greg O'Keefe, Tim Oxley, Lynton Foster, Nigel Shepherd, Dave Morris, and over the page Rob Luck (down from Launceston to join us), Peter Tucker, Simon Himson, Dave Kilpatrick, Steve Harris, John Gillon and Barry Hamilton



Remembering 1972

The following *Mercury* press items and SOAKS Bloke profiles recall much of the SOAKS 1972 triumph.

Associates loom as title threats

ASSOCIATES returned to the form that has taken them to five premierships since 1965 with a stirring win over Taroona at Rugby Park on Saturday, in a game that either team could have won.

Taroona started well, penning Associates in their 25 for the first 20 minutes, and finally scoring a penalty for a 3-0 lead.

But Associates bounced back almost from the kick-off. They set up a loose maul, slipped the ball out neatly, and set their fast backline moving.

With breakaway Donovan making the extra man, winger Cummins made a strong run round the end of the Taroona backs and crashed through the full-back's last-ditch tackle, to score.

Looked set

Taroona kept up the pressure, however, and were soon rewarded when Scott burst off the end of a close lineout to snap up a dropped Associates' pass and score under the posts. Kearney converted.

A few minutes later he kicked another penalty to put Taroona 12-4 up. They looked set for a good win.

Towards the end of the half, however, Associates gradually forced their way into Taroona's 25. A clear-

Taroona were not beaten, however, and had Associates defending desperately for the rest of the game.

Donaldson played his best game for years, as captain for Associates, always looking dangerous and cover-defending well.

Under pressure

Their next try came from a loose maul within 10 metres of the Taroona line, which developed into a forward rush that culminated in Naser placing the ball centimetres over the line to score.

The second half was hard and tight. Taroona had an edge in the scrums, but were starting to feel the strain of holding Soaks' big pack.

Tall Associates had a clear lead in the lineouts, but this was negated by the bustling, fast breaking Taroona forwards.

Associates were in attack for most of the second half, and scored their winning try after 20 minutes of constant pressure.

Utility hooker Read and massive tight head prop Welch combined to win a scrum, against the head, 20 metres out.

Half-back Lawler fed a fast, long pass to Donaldson, who committed two men to tackling him to let Harris through the gap and put centre Wicks over in the corner.

Under 19 football

University won well, 19-3, at Strahan. West's pack played well, winning a lot of ball, but University half Wong, in a welcome return to form, repeatedly caught his opponent in possession as well as setting his backs moving nicely, and personally scoring a try.

Winger Tomlin scored the other two, making many strong runs through several determined tackles.

17 July
1972

Under 19
football

Easts trounce Harlequins

EASTERN SUBURBS trounced Harlequins in their Southern Tasmania rugby match at North Warrene on Saturday.

They paid the penalty when, after a dropped pass, Wicks soccered the ball up-field and Associates' break-away Donovan scooped up the ball to team-mate Naser who scored between the posts.

Luck was with Associates for when Glenorchy tried the same tactics a few minutes later, the ball landed squarely in Donaldson's arms and was passed to winger Cooper who dived over in the corner.

Associates kept Glenorchy pinned on their line for the first 10 minutes of the second half.

Glenorchy seemed unwilling, or unable, to clear the ball and after an ill-advised passing movement in their in-goal area, Glenorchy gave away a penalty in front of goal and Donaldson brought the score to 13-0.

Associates scored again when Donaldson, at five-eighths, cut through the defence to be tackled on the line, but managed to pass the ball to Harris before going down.

The match between Taroona and West Coast, at Strahan, resulted in a 13-3 win to Taroona.

Rain and wind made the game a tussle between the two forward packs with the ball never reaching the wings.

Hutt and Cody scored tries for Taroona and Kearney kicked a conversion and a penalty.

West Coast's only score was a penalty goal kicked by Stephenson.

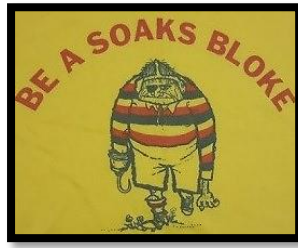
Taroona made rugby history by being the first rugby team to spend the night snow-bound in Queenstown, and in Hobart a personal tally of 400 games of rugby was notched up by front row forward Peter Read, of Associates.

St Virnil's

24 July
1972

record in their Southern Independent schools football game against Hutchins.

A SOAKS Bloke Profile



Name and Nick name (if any)? Mark Lawler but most team mates tended to shorten it to Marcus, except that John Harry went further and always referred to me as just Lawler, and still does to this day.

When did you play for SOAKS? From 1968 to 1975

Why did you decide to play for SOAKS? SOAKS original Dr Dick Buttfield, coached the Hobart Matric college team, for 2 years to two premierships. He introduced me and fellow mates Peter Calvert and Bruce Scott to the SOAKS ethos and we all came to SOAKS. It was a good fit.

Did you play rugby with other clubs? New Town High and Hobart College and a few state sides throughout my dozen or so playing years.

What position/s did you play? Half-back and five-eight

What are your 3 fondest memories of your time with SOAKS?

The hat-trick of premierships and the wonderful and diverse people in those teams, who had the right attitude about winning and losing i.e. play hard and play fair and win or lose have a drink with the other team.

Who was your most respected local rival? (name and club) Ron Winzenburg from Glenorchy

In your time with SOAKS who had the most influence on you and why?

I joined SOAKS as a 17-year-old fresh from school and was immediately surrounded by a playing group 5 to 10 years my senior. The transition to 1st grade rugby was made easy by the way that the senior payers welcomed you, supported you and protected you,

Nice to have the likes of Harry, Doust and Pullen in the forwards as your minders particularly if you are playing half back.

The club was like a family with mum and dad, Julia Cox who would fuss over you off the field and Orrie Cox who would administer to you (cold water for all ailments) on the field and not to forget Brutus who would jump all over you and slobber you to death. Its taught me a simple life lesson, that for success on the field, in business and in life you need to nurture, mentor and protect the new and vulnerable, to achieve the best results which we strive for.



What other non-playing role/s did you take on with SOAKS (if any)? President of the Club in 1976 and coach for one year, when the club most needed it.

What was the funniest thing you remember from your time with SOAKS?

The camaraderie of the entire playing group was such that there was boisterous fun always, but the absolute pure slapstick of the Franklin Hilton weekend, the first club Sydney trip and the unforgettable King Island adventure were unforgettably funny times.

Any other comments?

That a club that played its last game over 45 years ago, still maintains a strong supportive presence in the lives of so many, is testament to the strength of character of the people who have passed through its dressing room doors.



Lack of experience cost Easts berth

EAST'S strong rugby finals bid failed on Saturday at Warrane, foiled by a team that was no better, fitter or fiercer, but merely more experienced.

Easts had the edge in the lineouts, Farrington and Syrett outreaching Associates' big men, and in the scrums, and in the loose for most of the game.

They had Associates defending hard for all except 15 minutes and always looked dangerous with the ball, particularly in the inside backs.

The first half was all Easts.

They kept Associates penned in their 25 for long periods and it only looked a matter of time before the defence cracked.

But it didn't, and just before half time some astute line kicking forced the play into Easts 25 for the first time.

A lineout led to a loose maul that committed all the loose forwards and Associates slipped the ball out smartly.

Kicked goal

Half Lawler fed Donaldson a long pass and he steadied and snapped a field goal.

At the change it was still 3-0.

Easts could have been in front, they certainly looked the winners at that

stage, but had missed four penalties — all were kickable.

Associates lost Donovan with a hamstring injury, but replaced him with the experienced Moane.

Easts attacked for most of the second half. Their inside backs Thornton and Whitney ran hard and straight and only desperate tackling by Donaldson, Nazer and Pullen, saved the day.

The forward play was fierce and hard, with no quarter asked and little given. The loose mauls were no place for the faint-hearted.

Consolidated

Associates made the game a little safer when Wicks broke through the back line half way through the second half, drew the full-back and passed the ball to Donaldson, who had backed up after passing.

He ran hard for the corner and committed most of the corner defence to tackling him before passing to lock Nazer, who scored in the corner.

Soon after that Associates' big second rover Martinyck was sent off for striking.

This roused Associates and they stayed in attack for the final 10 minutes.

Had chances

Easts could have won. They had the opportunities, both to kick penalties and to score tries, and except for the last 10 minutes, they looked the better team.

In the other games Quins just defeated University and Glenorchy decisively won 30-10 from Wests in a hard, fast forward game.

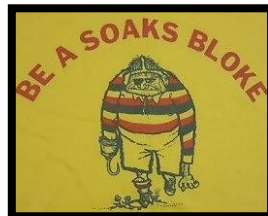
New

22 August
1972

The Eagles' greater weight and power gradually wore down Hobart's main asset — their pace.

New Norfolk answered every Tiger challenge, and streamed away in the final quarter to win by 31 points.

A SOAKS Bloke Profile



Name and Nick name (if any)? Richard (Dick) Hamlyn-Harris



When did you play for SOAKS? 1971-72 and 1986! I made a comeback in the reserves at age 40. Big mistake!

Why did you decide to play for SOAKS? It was the natural feed being ex-Uni and I had several friends at SOAKS such as: Lawler, Calvert, Donaldson, Harry and others.

Did you play rugby with other clubs? (Name of Club/s and Year/s) Sydney University 1964 and University of Tasmania 1966-1970

What position/s did you play? Always hooker except for one game as a winger! I scored the only 2 tries of my career that day!

What are your 3 fondest memories of your time with SOAKS?

1. Well, we won more games than we lost and that was always enjoyable. Some of the centres' crash tackling duels between Mick Logan and Andy Black from Uni were highlights.
2. John Donaldson invited me to lead the team out for the 1972 State Final in Launceston. A very proud moment. I left for 15 years in Vanuatu soon afterwards.

3. At an after-match drinkies at the Town House, a group of us including John Harry were standing around talking bullshit as usual. John was a superb breakaway and a respected team enforcer. With the courage that a few beers can engender, I decided to test him with the only judo throw I knew and Harry ended up on his arse. Most undignified and hilariously funny, I thought. That is until I saw the look on his face. My life flashed before my eyes! However, with a hand up and a fresh beer, all was forgiven. Phew!

Who was your most respected local rival? (name and club) My first game in Tassie was for Uni against Taroona and Dave Warrington was the Taroona hooker. I was told after the match that I had just cleaned up the State hooker. That was the beginning of a fierce seven-year rivalry. We became close mates off the field and used to haunt St Ives Hotel often of a Saturday night, checking out the talent. As you do! Sadly, I have to report that 'Warro' passed away in England nearly two years ago. RIP mate!

In your time with SOAKS who had the most influence on you and why? Well, we had a pretty well organised team in those days and Dick Buttfeld and Alan Welch were two of the best props a hooker could ask for. Scrums were a contest in the good old days.

What other non-playing role/s did you take on with SOAKS (if any)? The odd boat race is all I can remember and that's not very well!

What was the funniest thing you remember from your time with SOAKS? See my earlier Town House recollection.

Any other comments? In 1966 Tas Uni went to Brisbane for the Intervarsity. At the Intervarsity Dinner that followed, Rupert Rosenblum (at the time Sydney Uni and Wallaby five eight) placed a full pint of beer on the stage, retreated 3 or 4 yards to do a handstand. He then walked on his hands to the beer and proceeded to scull it through his teeth... uphill! The crowd roared!

[Editor's Note: Richard represented Tasmania in 1966, 1968, 1970, 1971 and in 1972 against the touring French team.]

18—THE MERCURY, FRIDAY, 15-9-1972

Associates seeking third title straight in Southern rugby

ASSOCIATES will be seeking their third Southern rugby title in a row when they meet Harlequins in the senior grade final at New Town Bay at 3.15 pm tomorrow.

If successful it also will give Associates their fifth premiership in the eight years the club has been in existence. Associates appear to have everything going for them. They have beaten Harlequins on each of the three occasions the teams have met this season. They should be fully recovered from injuries after a fortnight's rest, and will field their strongest side. Harlequins have looked a different side since Montgomery's return.

Tight forwards Bottica and Fraser-Easton are playing well, and are ably supported by Hunniford. Associates appear stronger in the outside backs, with wingers Cooper and Cummins running strongly.

are inclined to ease up when they feel they have an advantage, and Harlequins are the team to capitalise on such lapses. The curtain raiser at 1.15 will be between Sydney team Lindfield and a Southern Tasmanian XV. The southern selectors have chosen several promising young players to give them experience in representative matches. The final of the reserve grade will begin at 11.15 am. Taroona play Associates in what could be the closest match of the day.

Under 19s preliminary

Eagles may topple North

NEW NORFOLK are likely to cause an upset in the TFL under 19 preliminary final on Sunday.

North Hobart should start favourites, but the Eagles — although hit by injuries — should win a close game. New Norfolk have a stronger goal to goal line, and their fierce desire to win the ball should be the deciding factor. Both teams play fast, open football and will be suited to the big King George V ground. New Norfolk should win in the ruck, but both teams have talented rovers. Across the centre the teams are fairly even, but Eagle pivot Leigh McConnell can be dangerous when he breaks loose. Both sides have good half forward lines. New Norfolk's centre — half Tony Adams is a talented player and should give his side plenty of drive. Demon forward flanker Kerry Donovan is an elusive player with a knack of getting team play rolling. North have been more consistent than the Eagles this season, but will be battling to hold off the determined, hard-hitting Eagles. The winner will play Glenorchy in the grand final.

Lawler, at half-back for Associates, is sending long passes to Donaldson, giving him plenty of room to manoeuvre. Many of Associates' attacking moves come from a break by Donaldson followed by a well timed pass to inside centre Harris, who moves very fast with the ball. Opposing Harris will be Rimes, for Harlequins, who is both fast and solid, and will test the defence given a reasonable supply of the ball. On past performances and current form Associates should win, but they

are inclined to ease up when they feel they have an advantage, and Harlequins are the team to capitalise on such lapses. The curtain raiser at 1.15 will be between Sydney team Lindfield and a Southern Tasmanian XV. The southern selectors have chosen several promising young players to give them experience in representative matches. The final of the reserve grade will begin at 11.15 am. Taroona play Associates in what could be the closest match of the day.

Long trip to

15 September 1972

RICKMANSWORTH former... miles... £20,000... ment at Rickmansworth yesterday.

He fell three and two to 20-year-old South African Dale Hayes in three hours of play on the rain-drenched course. Hayes playing in the championship for the first time, set off with two birdies to go two up, and was never caught. Coody, a 35-year-old Texan, specially invited by the sponsors and one of seven seeded players, said afterwards: "I don't like coming all this way and then be beaten in one round." He added: "I had only one practice round. I arrived yesterday and was under the impression that the championship started tomorrow." Coody admitted that Hayes putted better than he did, and that the match was decided on the greens.

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Reve

Associates bring up rugby hat-trick

ASSOCIATES won their third successive Southern rugby premiership on Saturday when they convincingly defeated Harlequins, 24-3.

Harlequins suffered an early setback when their outside centre Ryan was carried off the field with a broken leg.

Associates scored first when Boyles kicked a penalty goal. Harlequins then applied pressure and were rewarded with a try by half-back Bannerman, who nipped around a loose ruck and dived over between two defenders.

Boyle put Associates back in the lead with another penalty.

Associates gained a lot of territory from a brilliant passing move which started from within their own 25 yard line. A line-out followed and Associates' first try came when Lavender was first to the ball after a clever kick over the defence by five-eighth Donaldson.

Harlequins were on the attack at half-time, with Rimes stopped just short of the line after doubling behind his winger.

Under pressure

Associates had the uphill run in the second half, and being only eight points up the game was still wide open.

After 20 minutes Associates found themselves in possession in an attacking position and Donaldson gathered the well-judged kick over the Harlequins backline and winger Cummins scored.

Play stayed around the centre of the field, with neither side having a clear advantage until another kick from Donaldson found breakaway Nazer, who straightened up, eluded two defenders and passed to Cooper, who dived over to score.

At this stage the Harlequins breakaway, Lavinski, came into the backline to put pressure on the Associates' inside backs, but although the move was effective, Associates were content to bottle up the game.

Harlequins came alive when Montgomery broke through and got the ball to Rimes with the Associates defence out of position, but the ball went to ground. Right on the final whistle a high kick upfield bounced awkwardly for two Harlequins defenders and came down into the hands of Cummins, who accepted the try.

Best for Associates were Donaldson and Nazer, while for Harlequins Lavinski and Vollus stood out.

The curtain-raiser between a Sydney sub-district team, Lindfield, and a Southern team was marred by poor ball handling on both sides and never reached the expected standard.

Lindfield ran out winners 13-4, but nine of the visitors' score was from penalty goals kicked by their full-back Ridley.

For the home side, Campbell was easily the best on field. He marked well under pressure and tackled brilliantly.

Southern Tasmania's only score resulted from a fine solo run by Onn, who left the ball when tackled on the line for Scott to pick up and score.

In the reserve grade final, Tarooma proved too strong for Associates, and ran out winners 16-6.

Tygris scored two tries and Jenkins one for Tarooma. Associates only score came from a try by Wicks right on the final whistle.

Manly break through

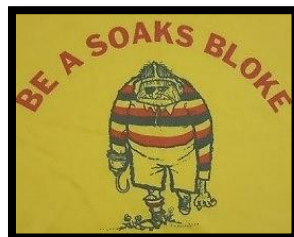
SYDNEY. — Manly stormed to a memorable 19-14 win over Easts to win their first-ever rugby league grand final at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Saturday.

A jubilant Manly secretary, Mr Ken Arthurson, said after a match full of fire and excitement: "It's a dream come true."

22 September
1972

Michael Stanfield clinched shoulder throw against the Kodokwan Club.

A SOAKS Bloke Profile



Name and Nick name (if any) Peter Cooper "Coops"

When did you play for SOAKS? 1968 to 1974

As an aside came to Australia in 1961 and started work with Utah Constructions who were constructing the aluminium plant at Bell Bay so played for **Dalrymple** and then **St George** in Launceston.

Transferred with Utah to Burnie for the construction of the Concrete Breakwater, hence played for **Burnie**.



Transferred to Perth WA with Pioneer Concrete played with **East Perth**, then was transferred back to **Devonport** to set up a quarry for the Mersey Forth Power Scheme, played for Devonport.

Transferred to Hobart with Pioneer Concrete on completion of project and started playing for **Harlequins** and then jumped ship to **Associates**.

Why did you decide to play for SOAKS? Knew John Donaldson and John Pullen

Did you play rugby with other clubs?

Dalrymple 1961-1963
St George 1963-1964
Burnie 1964-1965
Devonport 1965-1967
East Perth WA 1967
Harlequins 1967-1968
Associates 1968-1974

What position/s did you play? Right Wing

What are your 3 fondest memories of your time with SOAKS?

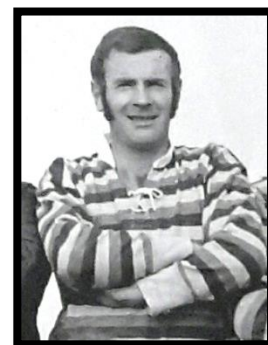
Team Spirit, the competitiveness and desire to win, plus the after game Social Side

Who was your most respected local rival? Richard Onn, Glenorchy

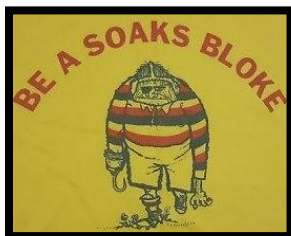
In your time with SOAKS who had the most influence on you and why? Nobody, I knew it all...only joking!!

What other non-playing role/s did you take on with SOAKS (if any)? None

[Editor's note: Peter, a noted try scorer, scored 22 tries for SOAKS in the 1971 season and had a habit of scoring tries in Grand Finals. He scoring two tries in the 1971 Grand Final win over Taroona and a further try in the 24-4 1972 Grand Final victory over Harlequins.]



A SOAKS Bloke Profile



Name and Nick name (if any)? Peter Itchins 'Itchy'

When did you play for SOAKS?

I only played 2 years 1971 and 1972

Why did you decide to play for SOAKS?

The reason I went to SOAKS was to win a premiership and ended up winning 2.

Did you play rugby with other clubs? (Name of Club/s and Year/s)

I played all my other years of rugby with Eastern Suburbs. I would have played over 100 games with them from 1968 through to 1975 excluding '71 and '72.

What position/s did you play?

Loose forward and centre.

What are your 3 fondest memories of your time with SOAKS?

Premiership 1971, premiership 1972 and those great multi coloured jerseys.

Who was your most respected local rival? (name and club)

John Campbell (Glenorchy).

In your time with SOAKS who had the most influence on you and why?

John Donaldson. He was such a great communicator and had a mind for the game and as a 18/19-year-old I learnt a lot from him.

What other non-playing role/s did you take on with SOAKS (if any)?

Unfortunately, none really just helped organise the after-game booze ups.

What was the funniest thing you remember from your time with SOAKS?

Somehow tales about rugby players and sheep were always a source of some amusement.

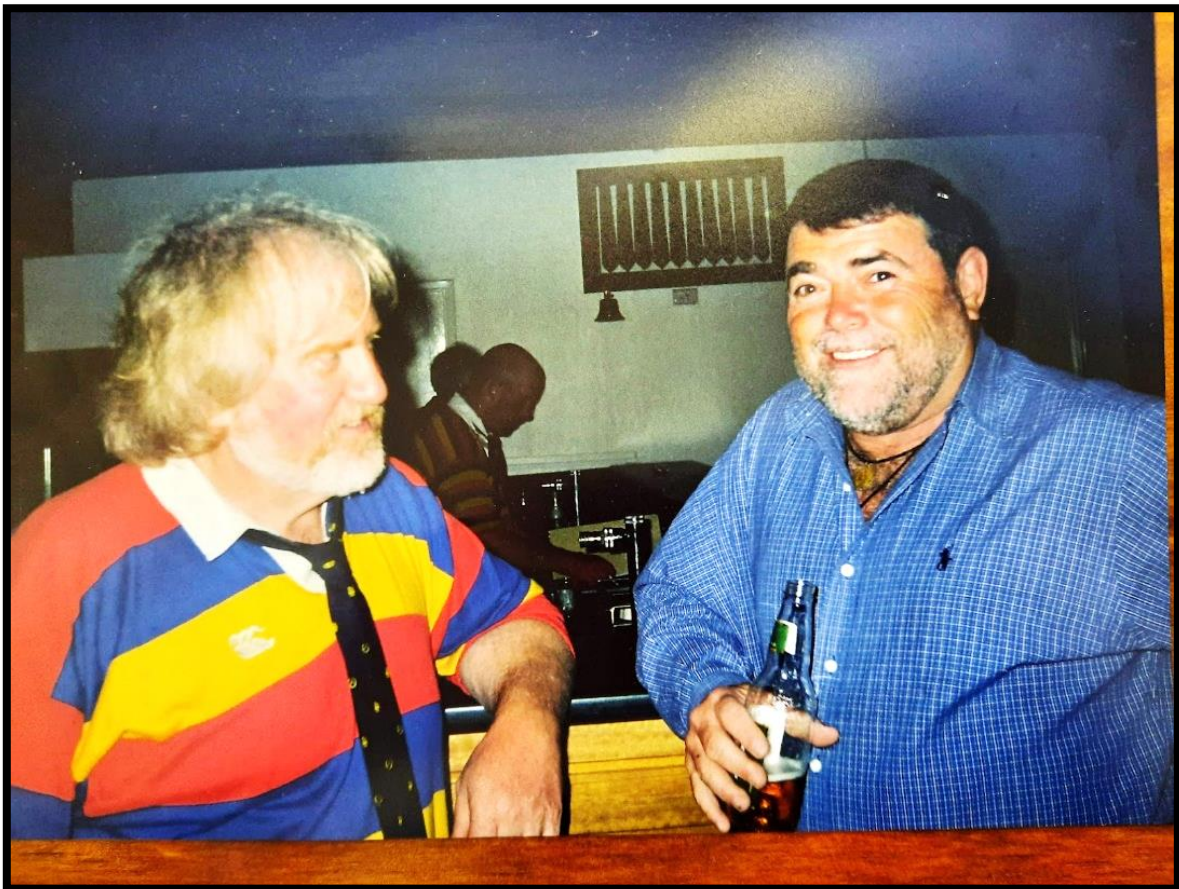
Any other comments?

I have to mention Cliff Wright who was a great fitness coach with Eastern Suburbs.
And Ian Hawkes one of the very best half backs.



From the SOAKS Vault

The year 2005 saw SOAKS celebrate the Club's 40th Anniversary with a function at Rugby Park Clubrooms. Below is a photo of the late Greg Dodd sharing a story or two with appropriately attired Leigh Sealy; two legendary SOAKS props propping up the bar one more time. And who is that in the distance between them? None other than their hooker Andrew Herbert beavering away behind the bar. The entire front row in action once again; their teamwork sublime!



Some notable SOAKS names from 1978 were prominent in the interstate U/20s clash at Rugby Park in July of that year. (Photos courtesy of Tim Nash)

THE MERCURY, FRIDAY, 28-7-1978—19

WA rugby side will be tough test

THE second rugby representative game of the season will take place at Rugby Park tomorrow when a strong West Australian under 20 15 will provide a tough match for the local under 20s.

Although little is known of the strengths and weaknesses of the West Australian side, it has been rumored that many of their players are senior players.

Tasmania also will field players with senior experience. Ian Murrell, the vice-captain, and Paul Cook are regular members of the University senior 15, and can be expected to provide the Tasmanian Colts with a strong thrust on the pack.

At full-back Glen Dhu's Jerry Kreft will use all his excellent judgment and skill to thwart the WA attack, while his teammate, Dave Hortan, will add extra power

to the forwards from the No 8 position.

Of the less experienced forwards, Andrew Bray should turn in his usual solid 80 minutes of untiring support play, while in the loose, breakaway Tim Nash will be hard to stop.

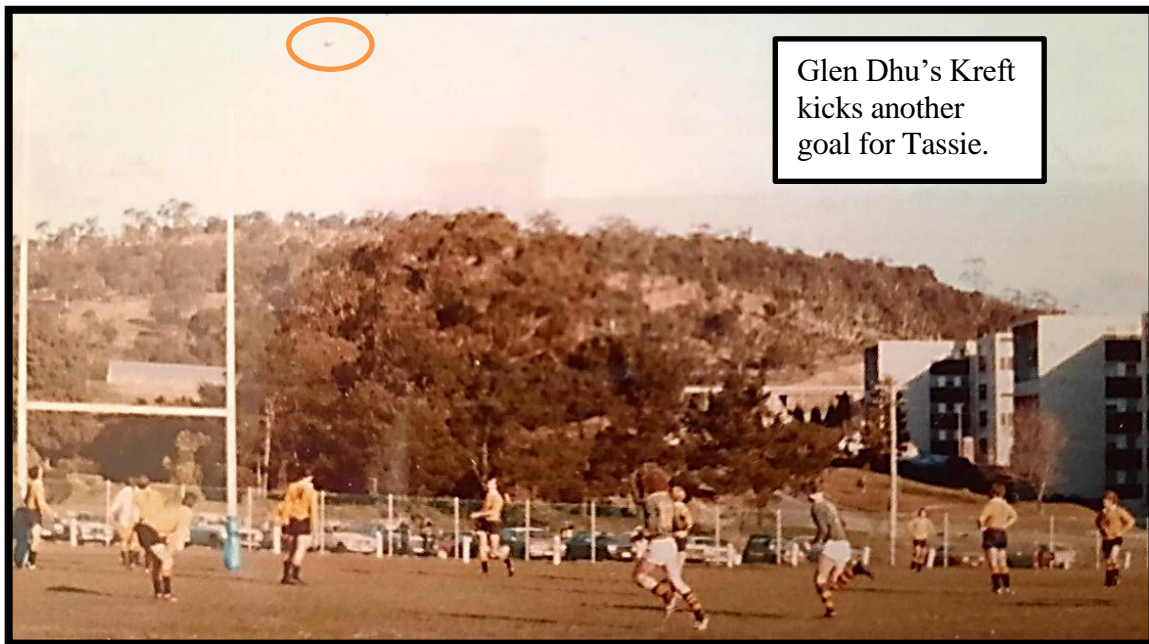
The backline runs smoothly with captain Brian West able to give his five-eighth Kenny enough room to move past the breakaways with a long pass.

The State attack looks quite good with centres Doran and Carrington quite capable of giving their wingers fast ball. The side at training under coach Greg Hill seems to be a little less tight than he would like and West Australia could take full advantage of this.

As in all State games defence will be paramount, tackles will have to be first time and backing up in all phases of play will be necessary if Tasmania wish to enhance their position in interstate competitions.

To enable players to see the future stars at work all senior games have been moved forward.





Glen Dhu's Kreft
kicks another
goal for Tassie.



THE West Australian Colts recovered from a poor start to defeat the Tasmanian under-20 side 22-12 in a skilful rugby union display at Rugby Park on Saturday.

The Tasmanians, although giving away plenty of weight, threw themselves into the match in the first 20 minutes, led by a vigorous Tim Nash.

Two penalty goals by Jeremy Kreft were followed by an exciting back-line break for a try by Roger Carrington, which Kreft converted, and the home side led 12-0.

The heavy West Australian team then began to recover. Their backs began to work rehearsed plays, and by half-time they had drawn level through tries by hooker Robbie Mitchell and skipper David Vaux.

Both were converted by

skilful half-back Tony Swain, a formidable kicker.

The second half belonged to the West. Although the Tasmanians fought it out gamely, they never looked like scoring. The visitors' rucking came good, they won plenty of ball and their handling was impressive. Russell Horton went off injured from the Tasmanian pack and was replaced by Peter Lea, while late in the game Wayne Kenny, who had struggled on after early injury, was replaced by John Gillon.

The Tasmanians played well to restrict the West's second half scoring to tries by Daugy McLay and Paddy Lilburne with one conversion by Swain.

The match was well controlled by referee Dick Baker.

At North Warrane, Eastern Suburbs had a memorable day, deservedly beating Tarooma in both first and second grade matches.

In the senior game, Tarooma scored first with a try on the

You Can Do Anything For 30 Minutes

Derwent River Big Swim – Peter Tucker 12 Feb 2022

Most readers would know that, in my dotage, I've taken up open-water swimming. I'm not fast (still can't show you any pace, Dave Standish) but I can be doggedly determined, which is the major capability required if you're going to swim long distances.

In 2019 I swam the English Channel, completing the 33 kilometres in 15 and a half hours. I think the mean time is about 14 hours with a standard deviation of two hours, so happy with that. I was awarded the Channel Swimming Association trophy for the oldest successful swimmer that year (there were about 150 crossings in 2019) so my name is on a cup somewhere in Dover.

Being very pleased with myself, I decided to do another marathon swim. The COVID pandemic effectively ruled out overseas travel so I settled on the "Derwent River Big Swim", right here on our back door.

For the English Channel I trained 25kms a week for 18 months, in the pool and the ocean. I signed up Chloe McCardel (Queen of the Channel with now 44 crossings) as coach and went to six cold water training camps, completing two six-hour training swims at each. I was five kilos lighter than I am now.

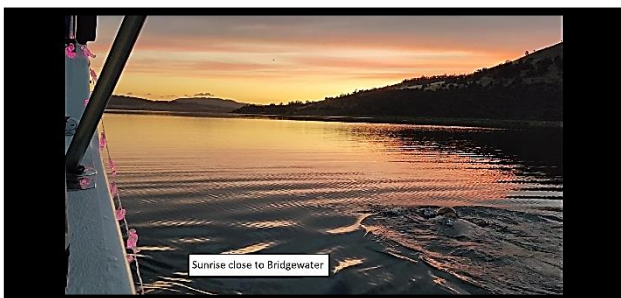
So you would think I'd just replicate that training regime for the 34km Derwent swim? After all, the same distance as the Channel and arguably just as challenging. It's listed as one of the 13 toughest solo swims in the world and also one of three swims that comprise the coveted "Australian Triple Crown" of open-water swimming (the other two being Rottneest in WA and Palm Beach to Shelley Beach in NSW).

You would think so, but I didn't.

I did train, but not as hard as for the Channel. I convinced myself I would be OK as I felt good and was swimming well. I was a wee bit lazy, to understate things.

So, on Saturday 12 February 2022 at 1:04am I jumped in under the New Norfolk Bridge. It had to be that ungodly hour so I could take full advantage of the outgoing tide from Bridgewater.

My escort boat was skippered by Val Kalmikov who runs a business, piloting swimmers for this event. He's the most skilled pilot available and knows all the currents, tides and tricks of the Derwent. Val is now a firm mate and an interesting guy. He swam at two Olympics for Latvia, 1996 and 2000, and if you get a spare moment google him. Also, on board I had two local swimming chums I train with, one as "official observer" and one to feed me drinks every 30 minutes. Also, Chloe came down from Sydney just to be on the boat and support me.



encouragements and reproaches she kept me going, just as she had done across the Channel. Chloe made it clear I wasn't getting out, so I just had to keep going. Someone once told me:



I started well enough. It was pitch black for the first five and half hours which got me past the Boyer paper mill and to about the speedboat facility. By then the gremlins had entered my head and I was convincing myself I wanted to get out. My shoulders were sore and I lacked energy. How I regretted my flimsy training regime, and was angry with myself.

Thank the dear Lord that Chloe was on board. With a mixture of



“You can do anything for 30 minutes” and it's that philosophy I applied. The swim is punctuated by an energy drink (and chocolate!) at (typically) 30-minute intervals. I just focussed on that: get to next feed. It's only 30 minutes.

Once I got through the Bridgewater Bridge and entered the estuary proper, I did start to feel better in my head. The tide kicked in and for parts I was going at 5-6 kilometres an hour, which is twice my unassisted speed. I could tick off landmarks: Old Beach jetty, Mona, the DEC, Bowen Bridge, Zinc Works, oil wharves; in fact, once the Bowen Bridge was passed, I knew I would get to the end no matter what.

So, I finished at 1:23pm under the Tasman Bridge with a total elapsed time of 12hrs 18min. I'm pretty happy with that in the end. I also officially became the oldest to swim the Derwent River Big Swim. The real shock were the number of family and friends who turned out to cheer me on from vantage points along the river, and at the finish. Apparently the biggest welcome ever for any Derwent Swim finisher!

For someone who whinged so much during the event, I felt surprisingly good afterwards. A bit sore, but nothing to stop me getting out and about. I was back at work the next day. No lasting ill-effects.

Although I was extremely lucky with this swim – great support crew, the best pilot, perfect weather – it is Kerry that I have the most to thank for. She has a lot to put up with as I spend my mornings and weekends chasing these swimming dreams. I see the unspoken anxiety in her eyes.



I'm unlikely to do another huge marathon swim. I'll keep swimming of course, but 10 kilometres will be the limit, I think. I've nothing more to prove and much more to get done in life.



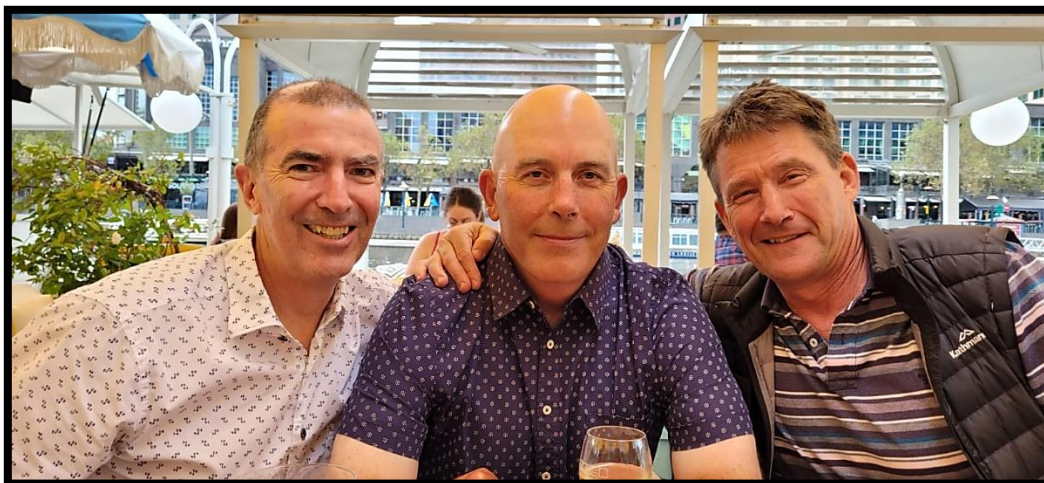
Finally, I thank everyone for the support and

interest. It's been overwhelming.

Heard and Noted:



SOAKS on Tour: Steve Colles attended the England vs Wales Six Nations clash at Twickenham during his recent UK holiday. Whilst Steve couldn't quite make out what Welshman Ross Moriarty was whinging about to the referee (left), it was clear from the Welsh performance that they needed a bit more 'fire' in the forwards. Steve considered joining the fray and help out, but decided to finish his beer first!



SOAKS Old Boys James Henderson, Andrew Herbert and Dave Standish caught up with one another this month in Melbourne. Equally pleased to catch up with one another were their lovely wives: Ann, Sandy and Jo. Clearly, a very fine time was had by all.



Watch out for the monthly drinks email reminders and the periodic **SOAKS Old Boys** email newsletters in future. You can also keep in touch by viewing or joining **Hobart Convicts Rugby and SOAKS** Facebook site at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/68764449606/>

