

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

weak Mosman team washed out altogether. Ross Webb and Bill North, both to become long-serving grade players for ND, were members of the team.

The two City and Suburban teams performed to about the same standard, the A team winning 12 matches and the Vets 10. Two centuries were scored, one by Lynn Marks in his only match for the Vets team, the other by Ron Wadham for the A team, in his debut match for the club. 15-year-old leg spinner Garry Weinert showed outstanding potential, taking 52 wickets for the As and even troubling ex-New Zealand Test batsman, Martin Donnelly, in the course of taking 5-33 against the I.Zingari team.

At the end of the season, over the Easter long weekend, the club made the long trek out to Narromine for two social matches against a local representative team. On the Saturday match, John Kershaw scored 107 not out in just 60 minutes, following up with 60 not out the following day in 30 minutes, hitting a total of 13 sixes in the course of the two innings.

1964/65

The 1964/65 season saw Jim Burke move back to the Manly area and consequently re-join the Manly club. In ten seasons with Northern District he had made a huge contribution, not only as a batsman but also as a premiership-winning captain and a coach of junior players. In all first grade matches he scored 4386 runs at the outstanding average of 54.8, mostly when opening the batting, and including ten centuries. With the ball, his controversial spinners captured 297 wickets for him at 14.9. He had won the Sydney grade batting averages twice (1953/54 and 1960/61)



Neil Harvey was the outstanding batsman of his era and Australia's best left-hander of all time. He retired from cricket following the 1962/63 Australia vs England Test series, but made a comeback to grade cricket with Northern District in 1964/65.

and the bowling averages three times (1952/53, with Manly, 1955/56 and 1958/59). With Manly he continued to score heavily for the remainder of the decade, amassing almost 2500 runs in three seasons between 1965/66 and 1968/69 before dropping down to second grade in the early 1970s. By the time of his retirement at the end of the 1971/72 season he had scored a total of 11,231 runs at an average of 52.2, the fourth highest aggregate in the history of the Sydney grade competition behind Warren Bardsley, Tommy Andrews and Sid Carroll. Only Bob Simpson, of the 12 batsman to have scored in excess of 10,000 runs, has a better average (61.6).

Burke's departure coincided with the arrival at the club of Neil Harvey. **One of Australia's greatest** ever left-hand batsmen, Harvey was one of six cricketing brothers, all of whom played Melbourne district first grade cricket, four going on to play for Victoria, and two (Mervyn and Neil) for Australia. Born in Melbourne in 1928, Neil Harvey made his first grade

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

debut for Fitzroy in the Melbourne district competition in 1942 at the age of 14. In his second match for Victoria he scored 69 against the touring English team, and made his Test debut against the 1947/48 Indian touring team in the Fourth Test at Adelaide. Although he scored only 13 in that match he was again selected for the Fifth Test in Melbourne where he top-scored with a brilliant 153, becoming (at 19 years and 121 days) the youngest ever Australian to score a Test century. From then until his retirement from first class cricket, aged 34, at the end of the 1962/63 season Harvey was a permanent member of the Australian team, scoring 6149 runs at an average of 48.4 with 21 centuries, second only to Bradman on both counts.

In addition to his batting Harvey was a sensational fieldsman, due in no small part to his prowess as a baseballer, where he was also an Australian representative. Considered unlucky to have been overlooked on several occasions for the Test captaincy he proved a loyal deputy to his close friend Richie Benaud, and when the latter was injured during the 1961 tour of England Harvey led Australia to victory in the Second Test at Lords – his only match as Australian captain.

At the start of the 1958/59 cricket season Harvey had moved to Sydney where he played grade cricket for the Gordon club and State cricket for NSW. After a full season away from cricket he was approached by Neil Marks, a colleague in the insurance business, and came out of retirement after the fourth round of the 1964/65 grade competition to play with Northern District.

There was another alteration to the competition format for the 1964/65 season with semi-finals being abolished. Instead, after 12 rounds of matches the top team in each grade was declared minor premiers. All teams then played a 13th round, based on their positions after round 12: 1 vs 4, 2 vs 3, 5 vs 6, 7 vs 8, 9 vs 10, 11 vs 12, 13 vs 14 and 15 vs 16. The minor premiers, regardless of the result of their round 13 match then played a final against the team with the highest points among the remaining 15. A 14th round was then played among the 14 other teams with points gained in these matches, and in the final, counting towards the club championship.

Despite the arrival of Harvey, who lived up to expectations by scoring 516 runs at 51.6, the Northern District first grade team, after one premiership and four successive years in the semi-final collapsed to finish in 14th place. Indeed the team **did not win a match prior to Harvey's arrival in round 5, then later losing four** successive matches between rounds 8 and 11. Although the talent was still there, rarely did the best eleven play together. John Blazey and Graham Southwell both joined the team late in the season, Southwell after an extended stay in the United States, and Blazey after playing a season in England.

Apart from Harvey there were good batting performances from team captain, Neil Marks (520 runs at 40.0) and Mark Hope (379 at 34.5), although Lynn Marks, omitted from the NSW team until the last two matches of the season, had a disappointing season with 299 runs at 21.4. The younger Marks brother did however make the most of his recall to the State team, scoring 185 against South Australia at Adelaide Oval, adding a **record 378 runs for the second wicket with Australia's latest** batting sensation, Doug Walters (253). At the time it was the second highest partnership for any wicket in Sheffield Shield history (behind the 397 added by Warren Bardsley and Charlie Kelleway in 1920/21) and remains the highest second wicket partnership for any State. It added yet another chapter to the remarkable cricketing story of the Marks family, with both Neil and Lynn still sharing Australian partnership records. In the final Shield match against Western Australia at the WACA **Ground in Perth, Marks's top**-score of 75 spearheaded NSW to an outright win and an unlikely winning of the Shield.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

The Northern District first grade bowling was clearly weakened by the loss of Ross Taylor, while the three new ball bowlers, Bill Jocelyn, Alf Hodges and Mike Willard all struggled to adapt to the experimental front foot no-ball rule which had been introduced prior to the start of the 1964/65 season. As it was, none of the pace bowlers were able to take more than 18 wickets, with the bulk of the bowling again being done by John Phillips (40 wickets at 28.6) who won the club first grade bowling aggregate for the third successive season.

Like the first grade team, Northern District's seconds began the season poorly, not winning a game until the sixth round. In total they were able to win just four matches to finish near the bottom of the table. Bill Dixon (382 runs at 31.8) was the leading run-scorer while John Kershaw showed touches of his brilliance in scoring 332 runs at 27.7. Of the bowlers, **'Toot' Byron** with 25 wickets at 22.6 was the leading wicket-taker, ahead of John Cumming (20 at 21.2).



Lynn Marks

John Jagoe took over the captaincy of the third grade team, and led them to a sixth placed finish, the best of the four grade teams in 1964/65. Three batsmen scored centuries, the best being Colin Millard's **165 against Bankstown at Belmore Oval – chasing 286 to win, Northern District was 6 for 34 until Millard's innings saw them get home with two wickets to spare.** The other centuries came from Ian Fraser, whose **104 against Randwick was the first hundred scored at the club's new lower grade ground at Somerville Park, Eastwood;** and Mike McCarthy who scored 109 against Waverley on the same ground. The other major batting achievement came from Don Carr, who carried his bat for 60 against Manly at Waitara Oval.

After six seasons of top-five finishes, the fourth grade team, plagued by inconsistent batting, slipped to ninth place in 1964/65. With a highest team total for **the season of just 185 the team's bowlers rarely had a target to defend. Only one batsman, a promising schoolboy named David North, topped 200 runs for the season, scoring 209 at the good average of 39.3 with 50s in three of his six innings against Manly, St George and Paddington. North, better known as 'Bill', also played in both** the Northern District Green Shield and Poidevin-Gray teams. Of the bowlers, captain Ken Tulk (38 wickets at 15.3), John Brauer (26 at 14.4 – including 7-41 against Bankstown-Canterbury at Storey Park) and Chris Makeig (25 at 15.4) were the best.

Yet again the Poidevin-Gray team disappointed, winning just two of their five **matches. While the team's batting was reasonably strong, the bowling lacked penetration and the ground fielding and catching were both below standard.** Despite having four seasons of first grade cricket behind him, all-rounder John Phillips was still eligible for the U/21 team and he again carried the bowling attack, taking 21 of the 35 wickets which fell to bowlers.

Likewise, the Green Shield team struggled, winning four and losing three of its seven matches. One player stood out, in 15-year-old Kerry Mackay, destined to **become one of the club's greatest ever all-round cricketers.** In nine innings he scored 348 runs (average 49.7) with a top score of 95 not out against Glebe, and took 12 wickets at 13.8.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

The two City and Suburban teams had reasonable seasons with the As winning 16 wins from 26 matches, and the Vets 13 from 25. Five batsmen scored more than 300 runs: Phil Christmas (324) and Ron Wadham (321) for the As; Robert Dalrymple (348), Paul Brauer (328) and Max Lloyd (317) for the Vets. The only century, a brilliant 107 for the A team against Parramatta, was scored by Ian Southwell. Two bowlers stood out: Geoff Weir, whose 51 wickets at 11.7 for the As included a double hat-trick, and five wickets in six balls, against Yaralla, and Paul Fisher who took a total of 48 wickets (40 for the Vets and 8 for the As) – a further two wickets in fourth grade gave him an even 50 for the season.

At the end of the 1964/65 season another of Northern District's best, and most popular players announced his retirement. Jim Mathers had first played for the club in the 1943/44 season as a 16-year-old, reaching first grade in 1947/48 and being a **member of the Northern District team which won the club's initial first grade premiership in 1948/49.** A school teacher, he moved to Western Australia during the early-1950s to study for a post-graduate degree in physical education with the University of WA. While there he played first grade for the Subiaco club in the Perth district competition and was a member of the WA State squad for three years. He returned to Sydney, and Northern District, midway through the 1956/57 season and **retained the first grade keeping spot from then until his retirement. In 1962/63 he played in the premiership-winning first grade team under Jim Burke and so had the distinction of being the only player to have been a member of both of the club's winning teams.** After retiring from grade cricket he continued to play for many years with the Nondescripts Cricket Club in the City and Suburban competition.

A fine rugby union player, Mathers played for many years for the Eastwood club, where his son, Mick Mathers, also played on his way to becoming an Australian Test rugby player.

At the 1965 club AGM, after six years as secretary Austen Hughes stepped down and was replaced by Geoff Weir, **although Hughes remained as one of the club's two delegates (with Tim Caldwell) to the NSWCA.**

1965/66

In May 1965 the Executive Committee of the NSW Cricket Association recommended that a merger take place between the Paddington and Glebe-South Sydney Cricket Clubs to form the Sydney Cricket Club, with the vacant 16th position being taken by the newly formed Sutherland Cricket Club. Despite a legal challenge by the president of the Paddington club, the recommendation was passed. As part of the merger agreement the new Sydney club was exempted from the residential rules which applied to the other 15 clubs, and could sign up players from anywhere in Sydney.

The other change to the competition structure occurred in the Municipal and **Shire competition where an influx of new players (the 'Baby Boomers' had arrived) led to a push for a third, 'C' grade, competition.** The NSWCA, which still controlled the Shires competition, agreed in principle to the extra grade, but left it to those M&S clubs wishing to participate to organise it amongst themselves. This they did, and although hampered by a shortage of suitable grounds the **'C' grade competition** proved a success and was subsequently sanctioned by the Association in 1965/66. matter raised. Many of the grade clubs, including Northern District, immediately entered teams, anxious to provide potential grade players with more competitive, two-day cricket rather than the essentially social, one-day City and Suburban matches.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

The addition of this new team meant that the club entered a record nine teams in the 1965/66 season: four in the grade competition, two in the City and Suburban Association, and one each in Municipal and Shire, Poidevin-Gray and Green Shield.

In another mediocre year, all four of Northern District's grade teams finished in the middle of their competition tables – first and second grades each in seventh place, third and fourth grades each in eighth place. Not surprisingly the club finished in the middle (seventh) of the club championship.

Neil Harvey took over the captaincy of the first grade team and expressed his feelings in his end-of-season **captain's report**: *"I don't think I've ever enjoyed a season so much – it's the first full club season I've played in a long time – and my sincere thanks go to all the members of this team for making the season so pleasant."*⁴⁰ Despite his status as Australia's greatest post-war batsmen, Harvey was co-operative and approachable, and still retained his passion for the game of cricket. Again from his captain's report, he addressed the young players in the club: *"I have never seen a club with so much opportunity for the talented young cricketer. There is absolutely nothing to hold you back – we have plenty of experience at the top of the club, and if any of you wish any advice, please ask. We have some very competent men to help you through the grades and the way to the top isn't really hard. A little application, practice and concentration will see you in First Grade in no time."*⁴¹

He took over a team with almost half of its players from the previous season gone. On top of the retirement of Jim Mathers, there had been an unprecedented exodus of players, all work-related, with Lynn Marks moving to Adelaide (where he won a place in the South Australian Sheffield Shield team, scoring 555 runs for the season); Phil Blazey and Mark Hope going to Western Australia; and John Blazey to Melbourne.



Hartley Anderson

Despite this, the team's batting was as strong as at any time in the club's history with four batsmen scoring in excess of 450 runs. Although two seasons had passed since his retirement from first class cricket, Harvey was clearly still one of **Australia's premier batsmen. His total of 710 runs at an average of 50.7 was the** highest in a season for Northern District (excluding the WWII one-day match seasons) in first grade since Roy Loder **amassed 754 in the club's first season. Harvey,** as Loder had also done, scored three centuries – only Les Fallowfield's famous five-in-a-row in 1941/42 was better. Neil Marks (525 runs at 32.8), Ken Longley (507 at 29.7) and Graham Southwell (488 at 28.6) completed a powerful top order batting line-up.

The team's new wicket-keeper was the bespectacled Cec Hughes (although Randwick's West Indian bowler, **Wes Hall,** appeared determined to dislodge them frequently during Hughes's plucky innings of 46 at Waitara Oval) who prove an able replacement for Mathers. Another new player to the club was fast-medium bowler named Hartley Anderson. Well over six foot in height, Anderson had played for the Lane Cove Cricket Club in the Municipal and Shire competition before joining North Sydney in 1960/61. After a slow start Anderson improved steadily throughout the year, taking 23 wickets at 25.7 including 8-21 from 12.3 overs against Bankstown-**Canterbury at Bankstown Oval. Anderson's opening partner, Bill Jocelyn,** topped the wicket takers with 30 at 19.3, his best being 7-40 in the final match of the season against Western Suburbs at Pratten Park.

The second grade team, captained by Colin Millard, had a number of tightly contested matches including a rare first innings tie against Bankstown-Canterbury at

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Waitara Oval, a three-run loss to Sydney University, also at Waitara, and a three-run win over Sutherland at Caringbah Oval. Millard batted consistently throughout the season to win both batting aggregate and averages with 458 runs at 32.7 while Alf Hodges (35 wickets at 13.8, including five in an innings on five occasions) won both bowling awards before his promotion back to first grade. Graham Doherty (33 at 19.0) and Doug Blazey (23 at 18.3), provided support - these three bowlers taking 91 of the 122 wickets which fell.

After a good start, the third grade team slipped down the ladder, eventually finishing with six wins, five losses and four draws from their 14 matches. In his first season in grade cricket Kerry Mackay began in third grade, where he scored 299 runs at 42.7 before being promoted, eventually playing several matches in first grade. Opening batsman, Mike McCarthy (318 runs at 28.9) and another young player, Peter Bennett (336 at 19.8) also batted well, while Alan Vinter **scored the team's only century**: 102 against University at University Oval No 2.

Despite winning eight and losing only five of their 14 matches, the Northern District fourth grade team could only finish in eighth place. Although two batsmen, Kevin Mackay (126 not out against Randwick) and Nigel Westgarth (100 not out against North Sydney), scored centuries, the team otherwise suffered from the inability of most batsmen to capitalise on good starts.

The club's first Municipal and Shire team since the 1947/48 season was captained by John Meredith-Jones. Although there were several weaker teams, the standard of the competition was reasonably good with a number of other grade clubs fielding teams. From 14 matches they won two outright, eight on the first innings, drew two and lost two on the first innings. Terry Hargraves, with 382 runs at 34.7, **was easily the best of the team's permanent batsmen (David Elbourne** scored 102 not out and 50 in two innings and went up the grades) while Len Sargent (32 wickets at 14.2) and John Meredith-Jones (31 at 10.5) were the best of the bowlers.

Despite the entry of the Shires 'C' grade team, Northern District continued with its two City and Suburban teams captained again by Rae Richmond and Max Lloyd. As in the two previous seasons the standard of the two teams was about the same, with the A team winning 15 matches and the Vets team 13. Stand-out players were Ross Clark (579 runs and 18 wickets) and Warwick Bailey (35 wickets) for the As; and Max Lloyd (324 runs and 16 wickets) and Steve Allars (48 wickets) for the Vets.

The club's frustrating run in the Poidevin-Gray Shield continued with an admittedly very young team losing all four matches played, Peter Lang's **105 against** Sydney and Alan Lamb's **5-48** against Mosman being rare highlights. The Green Shield team also disappointed with two wins and four losses from seven matches. Phil Wotton, with 294 runs at 45.3 including a century against Mosman, was the best batsman, while Bob Frost with 20 wickets was the leading wicket taker.

At the end of the season one of Northern District's longest-serving players announced his retirement. Apart from a three-year period during the Second World War, when he served in New Guinea with the AIF, Ken Griffith had played continuously since joining the club in the 1931/32 season. A fine attacking batsman, he had played in every Northern District team from first grade through to City and Suburban, topping either the batting aggregate or averages on twelve occasions on his way to scoring a total of 9000 runs (at 23.3), at the time the most career runs by any Northern District player. He scored seven centuries, with a highest score of 170 in a third grade match against Glebe at Erskineville Oval in 1954/55 and was a more than useful bowler who took a total of 136 wickets, including a second grade hat-trick against Cumberland in 1938/39. From the late 1940s through until the early 1960s he served on the club committee and was elected as a life member in 1960. After his

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

retirement Griffith remained closely associated with the club right through until the time of his death.

The June 1966 NDCC Committee meeting the decision was made to adopt the **blue gum as the club's new official emblem. Prior to that time the emblem had been the letters NDCC intertwined.** Discussion on the matter had been underway for at least a year prior to the meeting, following an earlier decision to have club ties **produced with a "Royal Blue background with diagonal stripes (maroon and gold) with scattered blue gums".**⁴² The first tie to be given out went to outgoing NSWCA president Sydney Smith.

1966/67

The 1966/67 cricket season began on a sad note with the death, on 9 September 1966, of NDCC stalwart Sid Storey at the age of 70. Born Sydney Albert Dawson Storey at Rozelle in 1896, he played first and second grade cricket with the Balmain Cricket Club prior to joining Northern District when it was formed in 1925. Although he only played until the 1928/29 season (during which time he gained the dubious distinction of being the first ND batsman to be dismissed for 99) he was to devote himself to the club as an administrator and supporter for over 40 years. From 1927 to 1941 he was secretary and from 1945 to 1963 was president – a total of 33 years on the club executive. Between 1927/28 and **1955/56 he was also one of Northern District's delegates** to the NSW Cricket Association where served on both the Grade and Executive Committees. He was a life member of both the NDCC and the NSWCA.



*Sydney Albert Dawson
Storey
(1896-1966)*

Outside of cricket Storey had wide and diverse interests. In his youth he had been a first grade soccer player and for 39 years was Chairman of the Australian Soccer Association. He was also the Organising Secretary of the committee responsible for the building of Hornsby District Hospital and, from 1928, was a member of the Board of that hospital. He later accepted the position of secretary of the Ryde District Soldiers Memorial Hospital, resigning from his former position with the NSW Railways to take up this appointment.

He also had a close interest in politics. His father, Thomas Storey, was an ALP member of the NSW Upper House between 1921 and 1934 while his uncle, John Storey, was MLA for Balmain North and Balmain between 1904 and 1921, State ALP leader from 1917 to 1921 and Premier of NSW from April 1920 until his death in office in October 1921. From 1941 until 1962 Sid Storey was the State Member of the Legislative Assembly for Hornsby. He was a member of the Hornsby Shire Council for 32 years and in 1932 became the ninth Shire President, a position he was to hold on six occasions between then and 1950.

Although they had finished in seventh place in 1965/66, under captain Neil Harvey the foundations had been laid to make the Northern District first grade team a serious premiership threat in 1966/67. An already powerful team was strengthened significantly by the return of all four of the players (Lynn Marks, Mark Hope, John and Phil Blazey) who had been interstate in the previous season and by the arrival of ex-North Sydney player Roger Mulready. With no international team touring Australia the competition format was expanded to allow the playing of 15 rounds (ie. every team played each other) with the top two teams meeting in a final at the SCG.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

The season began badly with Northern District, **chasing Balmain's total of 211**, dismissed for just 112 and so losing on the first innings. It was to be one of only four occasions where the team was all out and easily their lowest score of the season. The next four matches all resulted in first innings wins before a comprehensive loss to North Sydney. From there they regrouped, this time stringing together six straight first innings wins, before a washed-out draw against Manly. A closely fought first innings win against Randwick in round 14 sealed the minor premiership, despite a tense final round draw with Waverley. The Sutherland club, in only its second season **in the grade competition finished second and so were Northern District's opponents.**

Despite having won two premierships this was to be Northern District's **first** final, the 1948/49 title having been decided on a first-past-the-post basis and the 1962/63 SCG final being washed out without a ball being bowled. Ironically the team was again denied the opportunity of playing at the Cricket Ground when it was decided that the recently re-laid pitch was not ready. Under the competition rules **in such a situation the final was to be played on the minor premiers' ground and so the game was transferred to Waitara Oval.**

Although the game, held over the 1967 Easter long weekend, was played under perfect weather conditions there had been some rain in the days leading up to the match and the, with a little dampness still in the pitch Neil Harvey won the toss and sent Sutherland in to bat. **The first wicket didn't fall until the score had reached 39** when Hartley Anderson made the initial breakthrough. Bill Jocelyn then picked up two quick wickets, one to a brilliant catch in the gully by Mark Hope. Sutherland never recovered and John Phillips tore through the middle and lower order, taking 5-29 as the visitors were bowled out for 119.

Under the pressure of finals cricket such small targets often take on a different dimension, with batsmen changing their normal approach and consequently getting **into trouble. The experienced Harvey made sure that this didn't happen and the two** openers Graham Southwell and Lynn Marks played their normal, aggressive style right from the start. When Southwell was dismissed for 24, 52 runs were on the board after just 41 minutes, as Harvey joined Marks at the crease.



The 1966/67 ND team that won the first grade premiership for the second time in 5 years. Rear (l to r): Geoff Weir (Club Sec.), Roger Mulready, Bill Jocelyn, Hartley Anderson, Ken Longley, Graham Doherty, John Blazey and Tim Caldwell (President). Front: Cec Hughes, John Phillips, Neil Marks, Neil Harvey (C), Graham Southwell, Lynn Marks and Mark Hope.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Earlier in the week the team had got together at a barbecue where everything was discussed except for the match until fairly late in the evening. Harvey's team talk was brief and to the point: "OK, I'm going to score a century, who else is going to do the same?". And he was true to his word, treating the large crowd to a delightful display of batting as he rattled up 136 runs in just 122 minutes with 25 fours. By the time he was dismissed the Northern District score stood at 3 for 257, but the onslaught was far from over with Neil Marks, although not having responded to his captain's challenge of the previous evening, scoring 125 and Mark Hope 43. By stumps on Saturday the score had reached 7 for 384 and the club's third first grade title was secure. Not surprisingly the remainder of the match, played on Easter Monday, was something of an anti-climax with Harvey declaring overnight and Sutherland eventually dismissed in their second innings for 203. John Phillips' four second innings wickets gave him match figures of 9-92.

The members of the winning team, and significantly only 15 players had been used, were presented with blazer pockets and team photographs at the 1967 Annual General Meeting held at the SCC Auditorium in Hornsby. Making the presentations was NSWCA President, EG McMillan, with special guests including ND's first captain, Frank Buckle, and former player Bill Englefield.

The individual performances for the 1966/67 first grade team were most impressive with the top four batsmen, all left handers, passing 500 runs: Neil Marks (694 at 53.4), Neil Harvey (673 at 51.8), Lynn Marks (622 at 41.5) and Graham Southwell (543 at 33.9). All four scored centuries. The bowling was dominated by the two spinners John Phillips (61 wickets at 14.9) and John Blazey (45 at 19.5) who bowled over 500 overs between them.

Four of the players played in representative matches with Lynn Marks regaining his place in the strong NSW Sheffield Shield team; John Phillips making the NSW Colts squad; and Neil Marks and Hartley Anderson both playing matches (Marks as captain) for NSWCA teams.

In contrast to the outstanding effort by the first grade team, Colin Millard's second grade had a poor season, winning five and losing eight of their 16 matches. Two batsmen stood out: Kevin Butler who scored 534 runs at 31.4 and 17-year-old Kerry Mackay with 504 at 28.0. Graham Doherty was the best of the bowlers, taking 45 wickets at 13.5 before being promoted to first grade for the last few matches, including the final.

In their first match of the season the third grade team got to christen the club's newest ground, Asquith Oval which it was to share with fourth grade. Captained by Ian Fraser the team was competitive throughout the season winning games against many of the strongest sides but losing easier ones, and eventually finishing in seventh place. John Jagoe had a tremendous season, achieving a rare 400-run/40-wicket double (453 runs and 42 wickets). Mike McCarthy with 322 runs and Ian Fraser, 27 wickets, were next best.

Fourth grade was again led by Harold Griffin and had a



Asquith Oval.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

reasonable season, winning eight matches (four of them outright) and finishing in sixth place. Four batsmen scored in excess of 300 runs, although only two, Ian Black (440 at 29.3) and Phil Harris (402 at 25.1) averaged above 20.0, while three bowlers passed 40 wickets: Geoff Weir (54 at 11.4), John Meredith-Jones (47 at 12.5) and Harold Griffin (44 at 16.3).

The 'C' Shires competition blossomed in 1966/67 with 22 teams entered. The Northern District team, led by Geoff Brown, did extremely well to finish in fifth place with nine wins, five losses and a draw. No individual player stood out with Julian Hailes (260 runs at 14.4) the top run scorer and Len Sargent and Allan May sharing the bowling aggregate with 32 wickets at 10.8 and 11.7 respectively.

The City and Suburban A team regained its status as one of the stronger teams in the Association with 19 wins from its 28 matches, including five on several country trips which took in Goulburn, Canberra, Cowra and Crookwell. The match at Crookwell, against the Kookaburra Cricket Club, was played on a private ground at Gundowringa, the property of a local grazier and businessman named Jeff Prell. The two teams played for a new trophy, donated by Prell, called the Gundowringa Cup, the beginning of an annual match which would be played right up until the ND City and Suburban team was disbanded in 1993/94.

Of the 57 players who played with the C&S A team during the season, a number of the younger ones impressed, none more so than Ross Clark who topped the batting averages for the third season in a row, scoring 239 runs at 34.2 as well as picking up 13 wickets. Another, destined for a long and distinguished first grade career was 18-year-old wicket-keeper, Denis Lynch, **a son of the club's great off spin** bowler Greg Lynch. Moving in the opposite direction, former first grade bowler Alf Hodges returned to City and Suburban where he proved invaluable, not only as the leading wicket-taker (42 at 9.6) but also in the assistance he gave to the many young bowlers who went through the side.

The City and Suburban Vets team had an even season, winning ten and tying one of their 22 matches. The batting invariably was poor and on only four occasions did the team score in excess of 140 runs. Of the bowlers, Wally Hamilton (37 wickets at 13.1) and Ted Duck (35 at 13.3) were the best.

Although they finished fifth in a tightly fought northern division of the Poidevin-Gray competition the Northern District team showed considerable promise with most players still in their mid to late-teens. Kerry Mackay again impressed, his 248 runs at 62.0 including innings of 104 against Manly and 69 against North Sydney. Bill North **was desperately unlucky not to be the team's second centurion, dismissed** for 99 against Sydney University, while Phil Wotton played fine innings against North Sydney (51) and Manly (87), adding 174 in 141 minutes with Mackay.

Despite having contested the AW Green Shield competition since its inception in the mid-**1930s, Northern District's name had yet to be** inscribed on the Shield. Until the 1965/66 season the team had generally been managed on a season-by-season basis either by a parent of a player in the team or by a club committee member. In that season responsibility for the team was taken on by a 25-year-old high school teacher from Normanhurst Boys High named Tom Richmond.

No relation to the club's City and Suburban supremo, Rae Richmond, Tom had been born in Hornsby and educated at Barker College where his schoolmates had included a number of future NDCC cricketers in Lynn Marks, Phil and Doug Blazey. A right-arm pace bowler he played junior cricket for several clubs in the Hornsby Kuring-gai Association, including Thornleigh and Berowra,



Tom Richmond.

and later played inter-district cricket while training and later teaching on the Far North Coast. In 1964 he returned to Sydney and by the following year was coaching both the Normanhurst High First XI and the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Watson Shield team, as well as being the local high school cricket convenor.

It was in these various capacities that Richmond came to watch a Green Shield match during the 1965/66 season where he was disappointed to see one of the most promising young bats in the district, Peter Keene, batting at number seven. When he pointed this, and several other apparent anomalies to Neil Marks, the latter seized the opportunity to suggest that Richmond, with his knowledge of so many of the local players, was an ideal person to take over the management of the team. The choice was to prove extremely successful, with the team reaching the Green Shield final on seven occasions during the following 15 seasons and winning it four times. **There is no doubt that Richmond's ability to identify, coach and encourage the district's talented young cricketers was a major factor in this success and in the development of emerging players over the next three decades.**

The 1966/67 Green Shield team had a strong batting line-up, being dismissed just twice in their seven matches, and with six players averaging over 30 for the season. Two, Peter Dernikowitsch (100 not out against the PSAAA team) and John Iredale (101 not out against Mosman) scored centuries with Iredale, the team captain later being selected as vice captain of the Combined Green Shield which played **Newcastle Schoolboys later in the season. The team's bowling however lacked penetration and their inability to bowl out other teams led to four of the team's seven matches being drawn, thus losing any chance of reaching the final.** One bowler to show potential was 13-year-old slow left armer Alan White, who in two years time would become the club's first Green Shield winning captain.

In May 1967 club president, Tim Caldwell, was promoted to a senior executive position with the ES&A bank in Brisbane and consequently resigned from his cricket administrative positions at all levels: club, state and national. Senior Vice President, Ron Ewington, replaced him temporarily for the remainder of the season, subsequently being confirmed in the position at the 1967 Annual General Meeting.

1967/68

Although Neil Harvey was again elected as Northern District's first grade captain he was subsequently appointed to both the NSW and Australian selection panels. Although the norm nowadays, the appointment of someone as young (Harvey was still only 39) and so recently retired from first class cricket as a state or national selector was quite a radical step in 1967 but clearly a progressive one. Unfortunately the time required to select both state and national teams made it virtually impossible for him to continue playing and after a handful of matches, he handed over the first grade captaincy to Neil Marks, later announcing his retirement as a player. The last playing member of Don Bradman's great 1948 Invincibles team, Harvey in just three and a half seasons, like Jim Burke before him, had made a significant contribution to the long term stability and strength of the Northern District Cricket Club.

There was a minor modification to the competition format for the 1967/68 season with each team playing each other over 15 rounds. A 16th round was then played with the teams being matched according to their positions in the competition, and following this round the top two teams would then meet in a final. All others teams would play a 17th match on the same weekend as the final, with points gained in all these matches (including the final) counting towards the club championship. The visits of teams from both India and New Zealand meant that, for the 17 rounds to

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

be played, ten of the rounds had to be reduced to one-day matches. Prior to 1967/68 all one-day matches had commenced at 10am, however as such early starts inconvenienced the many players who were required to work on Saturday mornings the Association experimented with noon starts for five of the ten matches.

Although Harvey was obviously going to be missed (he still topped the batting averages with 264 runs from 7 innings at 52.8), such was the strength of the first grade team that they remained the favourites to retain the pennant in 1967/68. The season proved to be one of the most exciting in years, with a number of tense finishes in matches against St George, Petersham and Sydney University. The latter match, played just before Christmas 1967 at Waitara Oval, was one of the most memorable. With the last pair at the crease the Students needed eight runs from the last two balls of the match to convert a narrow first innings lead into an outright win. The number 11 batsman hit the second last ball for what appeared to all at the ground to be a six only to see John Blazey, fielding on the boundary, leap about three feet up and backwards, to pluck a catch which is still talked about more than 30 years on.

After 15 rounds Balmain had wrapped up the minor premiership while **Northern District's 16th round win over St George saw them claim the other final place.** After the washed out final of 1962/63 and the transferred one of 1966/67, the team finally got to play a final at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Unfortunately they saved their worst batting performance in years for the big match being dismissed for just 75 **in the first innings in reply to Balmain's score of 257. Following on, ND scored 196** leaving Balmain needing just 15 for an outright win which they scored with the loss of two wickets. The match was a triumph for a player who would, two decades later would join Northern District as club coach, Ross Collins. **In Balmain's first innings he** top-scored with 83 and then, despite having previously taken only three wickets all season, he picked up 7-37 from 11.6 overs, overshadowing his more illustrious opening partner, state bowler Dave Renneberg, who took 3-33. The win gave Balmain its first premiership in first grade since 1936/37.

Despite the loss in the final it had been another excellent season for Northern District with the top four batsmen all scoring in excess of 400 runs, Neil Marks having the best aggregate (662 at 38.9), ahead of Graham Southwell (557 at 30.9), Lynn Marks (430 at 30.7) and Mark Hope (416 at 24.5). And again the two spinners, John Phillips and John Blazey, dominated with Phillips (47 at 23.8) the top wicket taker and Blazey (34 at 21.0) having the best average.

During the 1967/68 season, for the first time, a Sunday one-day knockout competition, sponsored by Rothmans, was played between Sydney first grade teams. The brainchild of Jim Burke, the Sunday competition differed from the normal grade one-day matches in that it was played under limited-over rules. Despite some minor problems the competition proved popular with both players and spectators alike and in the following season it received the official sanction of the NSWCA who were to subsequently organise it. The Northern District team had only a brief campaign, beaten in its first round match by Sydney University at Somerville Park.

Another important new feature of Sydney grade cricket in 1967/68 was the **introduction of the 'Sydney Morning Herald' Player of the Year and Club of the Year** awards. The individual award was based on an allocation of points on a 3-2-1 basis by umpires on each playing day where more than 90 minutes of play took place. The player with the most points at the end of the competition rounds took the Player of the Year award (later re-named the **O'Reilly Medal**) **while an accumulation of all individual points determined the winner of the Club of the Year. ND's leading players in the inaugural season of the award, won by Wests' Bob Simpson,** were Neil Marks (16 points), John Phillips (13) and Graham Southwell (11). The club finished in fifth place behind St George in the Club of the Year award.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

After its disappointing, near-last performance of the previous season, the second grade team rallied somewhat to finish in ninth place despite a mid-season run of eight matches without a win. The team's batting was patchy with four batsmen scoring centuries (Terry Hargraves, Ken Longley, Kerry Mackay and Ross Clark) but only one, captain Kevin Butler (328 at 36.4) able to pass 300 runs for the season. **Mackay's century clearly established the teenager as an outstanding prospect and by the early part of the season he had established himself as a permanent first grader.** The best of the second grade bowlers was another young player, slow left-armed Bob Piper, who took 30 wickets at 26.6.

Ian Fraser led a well-balanced third grade team, with a good blend of experience and youth, to a most impressive sixth place with just three losses, all on the first innings. John Jagoe had another excellent season, scoring 363 runs (at 33.0) including a career-best 134 against Randwick at Asquith Oval, and taking 21 wickets at 25.3. Bill Dixon was the leading run-scorer with 378 at 29.1) while 16-year-old John Iredale, in his first season of grade cricket, marked himself as a future first grader with an outstanding all-round effort of 55 and 9-58 against Petersham-Marrickville at Petersham Oval, his bowling figures surpassing Kevin Miller's 1958/59 analysis of 9-71 as the best in a third grade innings. Another teenager, Peter Bennett, **scored the team's second century, an unbeaten 103, also against Randwick.**

The fourth grade team, again captained by Ian Black, continued the lower grade improvement – moving up from sixth place in 1966/67 to fourth in 1967/68. Unfortunately, there being no semi-finals, they did not have the opportunity to win the premiership from that position. There were no stand-out batsmen with Peter Dernikowitsch having the best aggregate (279 at 31.0) narrowly ahead of Harold Griffin (276 at 16.2). With the ball two players dominated, Geoff Weir setting a new club fourth grade record in taking 58 wickets at 12.4 and John Meredith-Jones taking 41 wickets at 16.8.

The Shires team once again performed well to finish as runners-up in the northern division of the C grade competition. Two batsmen scored centuries with Geoff Brown's **brilliant 183 not out (in just 200 minutes) against Lindfield** breaking Ken Griffith's 1933/34 record of 166 for the highest club innings in a Shires match. Peter Keene was the second century-maker with 141 not out against Manly. These two batsmen won the batting aggregate and averages respectively, while Ken Tulk (29 wickets at 10.2) and Warwick Bailey (15 at 9.0) won the bowling awards.

For the first time since the club had entered two City and Suburban teams the number two (Vets) team outperformed the A team. Overall the standard of C&S cricket was improving with more and more players opting for the one-day format. A total of seven batsmen 300 runs for the season: Gary Olsen (359 runs at 27.6), Trevor Brown (341 at 17.0) and Ray Badger (302 at 17.8) for the Vets; and John Grant (457 at 41.5), Bill Jones (354 at 22.2), Tony Billingsley (344 at 21.5) and Dick Naylor (310 at 31.0) for the As. Of the bowlers, the best was Tony Horsley who took 33 at 15.5 for the Vets and 13 at 5.5 for the As. Bill Jones (45 at 14.8) and Steve Allars (32 at 16.2) did best for the A team while Wally Hamilton (32 at 13.5) was next best behind Horsley for the Vets.

A gradual improvement in the performances of the club's two age teams began in 1967/68 with the Poidevin-Gray team finishing in fourth place on 24 points in their division behind Manly (29), University (28) and North Sydney (28), having beaten Manly and had a washed out draw against North Sydney. Kerry Mackay was again the **leading player as well as captaining the team. Mackay's total of 322 runs at 53.6** included an unbeaten 101 against Balmain in just 109 minutes and 93 against Manly.

The Green Shield team did even better finishing second in their division their highest place finish in many years and a clear reflection on the influence of team manager, Tom Richmond. Alan Coutts, Dennis Kimberley and Robert Lidbetter were

the best of the batsmen; Geoff Bailey and Peter Gordon both bowled consistently well while Cameron McDonald prove a capable wicket-keeper/batsman.

The 1967/68 season saw the deaths of two former players. Phil Christmas, a lower grade and City and Suburban player in the early 1960s, was killed in a road accident in August 1967. Just three months later Owen Cotter, a first grade bowler during the 1940s, also died. Cotter, who was then the manager of the Bank of NSW branch at Samarai in New Guinea, was travelling to Mission Island on board a coastal vessel which foundered and began to sink during a cyclone. A former surf life saver and still a strong swimmer, Cotter heroically assisted a number of people to shore before becoming exhausted and drowning before he could make it back to the shore.

Also passing away in 1967, aged 83, was Charles Somerville, the former Hornsby Shire president of the early 1920s who had been a major promoter of the formation of the NDCC and who had bowled the first ball at the opening of Waitara **Oval in December 1922**. The club's newest ground, Somerville Park, at Eastwood had been named in his honour.

The 1968 NDCC Annual General Meeting saw Rae Richmond's **outstanding** contribution recognised when he was elected as the 17th life member of the club.

1968/69

After a number of successful seasons, Northern District fared very poorly in 1968/69 with all four grade teams dropping at least four places in their respective competition ladders. Although still fielding one of the strongest teams in the first grade competition Northern District slipped to 12th position – a major disappointment after appearing in the final in each of the two previous seasons.

Just as Jim Burke's **departure in 1964/65** had coincided with the arrival of Neil Harvey, **so Harvey's loss was offset** by the arrival of Barry Rothwell at the start of the 1968/69 season. Although to date he had played all his grade cricket with the Manly club, Rothwell had an impeccable Northern District cricketing pedigree being the younger of two sons of Ellis Rothwell Junior and a grandson of that great club stalwart, Wally Rothwell. Born at Ryde in **1939 Barry's family had moved to Manly** in the late 1940s where he progressed through the Manly Green Shield and Poidevin-Gray teams. By the 1955/56 season, at the age of 16, he had won a place in the Manly first grade team, topping the batting aggregate in his first season with 210 runs at 42.0. In 1957/58 he was **a member of the Manly team which won that season's first grade premiership**, scoring 502 runs at 35.8.

Although he played for the NSW Colts team against Victoria in 1956/57 it **wasn't until 1963/64 that Rothwell was able to win a place in the NSW Sheffield**



When Barry Rothwell joined ND in 1968/69 he became the third generation of his family to represent the club.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Shield team. He was to remain a permanent member of the team for the next six seasons, captaining the team in 1964/65 and 1965/66. Although only about 5 feet 4 inches (1.63 metres) in height he was a tough and tenacious batsman who could bat anywhere from one to six as the situation required. An occasional bowler at best, he gained fame when he took the wicket of English Test opener Bob Barber with the first ball he bowled in a first class match when NSW played England at the SCG in 1965/66.

Apart from the absence of Harvey, the club had lost Mark Hope, who had **moved into North Sydney's area and would subsequently play for that club, and** Graham Southwell who retired after the third round. A professional architect, **Southwell had suffered a hand injury in the previous year's final against Balmain, and** this together with the demands of a growing successful business combined to push him into retirement at the age of 29. In addition to the loss of these leading batsmen, both Lynn Marks and Barry Rothwell missed a number of matches through Sheffield **Shield commitments although Marks's representative season was cut short when he** sustained a broken cheek bone while batting against Western Australia in the second match of the season.

The highlight of the 1968/69 season was undoubtedly the outstanding performance by Kerry Mackay who, in his first full season in first grade, scored 623 runs at an average of 36.6 including a century against Central Cumberland at Waitara Oval late in the season. The 19-year-old **didn't escape the notice of the State selectors** and he was chosen to play for the NSW Colts team against Queensland Colts where he scored an unbeaten 44.

A total of 20 players took the field for first grade during the season, seven making their debuts in the top grade. Among them were wicket-keeper, Denis Lynch, and pace bowler David West, who had joined ND from the Epping Shires club during the previous season, won a first grade spot for the round 12 match against St George at Hurstville Oval where his 4-50 included the wickets of ex-Test batsmen Brian Booth and Bill Watson, and ex-NSW player Warren Saunders.

Barry Rothwell, with 520 runs at 40.0 and Neil Marks (529 at 27.8) both batted consistently throughout the season whilst John Phillips (41 wickets at 24.9) was the leading first grade wicket-taker for the third year in a row, and the sixth time in seven seasons.



*Kerry Mackay was one of
Northern District's greatest ever
all-rounders.*

The second grade also slipped, from ninth place in 1967/68 to 14th in 1968/69. Captain, Kevin Butler pinpointed lack of concentration from batsmen and poor catching as the two major causes of the poor effort from what was a very young and inexperienced side. The captain certainly set the example scoring 636 runs at 48.9, the highest second grade aggregate in almost 40 years, and secondly only to Carl Brennan's **record of 742 runs, set in** 1929/30. Lindsay Bellhouse, who had joined the club that year from North Sydney, was next best with 424 runs at 26.5. The bowling aggregate was shared by Robert Piper and Graham Doherty who each took 24 wickets, while Bill Jocelyn, who played the first five matches of the season in second grade, had the best figures for the year: 7-28 against Mosman at Mosman Oval.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Led again by Ian Fraser the third grade dropped from sixth to tenth position, suffering by the success of the many young players who passed through the team on their way to higher grade – two players (Ross Webb and David West) reaching first grade and five others being promoted to seconds. Despite their low position the team had a number of highlights: Alan Lamb's **remarkable performance against Cumberland** where he scored 102 not out and 42 not out and took 6-13; Green Shield tearaway Alan Haynes' **hat-trick** against Sutherland in his grade debut – all three bowled middle stump; and wicket-keeper **Andrew Faulks' record 41 dismissals**.

After finishing fourth in the previous season the Northern District fourth grade team could only finish in eighth place in 1968/69. Captain Ian Black, with 407 runs at 40.7, David Sheppard (328 at 23.4) and Peter Terrey (314 at 26.2) were the only bats to pass 300 runs for the season, while Jack Meredith-Jones was the only bowler to pass 30 wickets, taking 32 at 14.7.

Since re-entering the **Municipal and Shire 'C' Division** competition in 1965/66 the Northern District team had never finished any lower than fifth place. In what was **destined to be the club's last season in the competition Harold Griffin** and his 1968/69 team went with one match of claiming what would have been only the second Shires premiership. A place in the final looked most unlikely after the first few matches however a string of six outright wins in the last eight matches saw them take out the Northern Division of the split-competition. The final, against Southern Districts, was played at Somerville Park and proved to be a thriller. Spearheaded by Ron Wadham (5-19) and wicket-keeper Steve Sinclair (one catch and three stumpings) ND was able to dismiss Southern Districts for just 139. In reply they slumped to 8-53 before a great partnership between Wadham and Robert Lidbetter saw them inch towards the target, only to fall just nine runs short, Lidbetter out for 42 and Wadham left not out on 22. Northern District again fought back, dismissing Southern Districts for just 97 with Wadham taking 4-20 and Alan Cash 4-21. But it **wasn't to be - set 105 to win ND couldn't recover from a second top order** collapse and were all out for just 50.

The City and Suburban A team had a busy season, playing a total of 31 matches including a number on the now traditional trips away to Canberra, Cowra, Goulburn and Richmond. In total they won 19, lost 10 and drew two – one called off at 4.15pm in perfect weather but with nil visibility due to the timber mill across the road from the oval being on fire. Other memorable moments included an innings of 65 in twelve minutes by Arthur Webster against Knox, caught on the fence going for a fourth successive six; and centuries to three batsmen, John Grant (100 not out), Peter Terrey (102 not out) and John Mazlin (100 not out) – no easy task in one-afternoon matches. For the fourth time in nine seasons, left arm medium pacer Bill Jones was **the team's leading wicket-taker** with 47 wickets at 14.9, ahead of Steve Allars (33 at 16.5) and Allan May (26 at 11.0).

The City and Suburban Vets were as consistent as ever, winning 11 matches from 26 – **a good effort given that they were always the last of the club's seven teams** to be picked. The team was again captained by Max Lloyd, who, exactly 30 years after he had first played for the club, was awarded life membership. Apart from his contributions on the field, which would continue for another ten seasons, Lloyd had served on the club committee for many years as assistant secretary and as a selector. Wicket-keeper/batsman, Steve Sinclair, who did so well in the Shires final had a great season with the bat scoring 434 runs at an average of nearly 40, while Wally Hamilton became the first bowler since the formation of the second City and Suburban team to take in excess of 50 wickets, finishing with 62 wickets at 9.8.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000



The Northern District team which won the U/16 AW Green Shield for the first time in 1968/69. Rear (l to r): Ron Halse, Peter Mackay, Cam McDonald, Alan White, Phillip Sheppard, Kevin Shepherd and Alan Haynes. Front (l to r): John Jessup, Barry Piper, Kevin Read, Paul Vallis, Bruce Jessup (12th Man).

Although the Poidevin-Gray team lost just one of its five matches an inability to bowl opposition teams which resulted in them playing three draws, saw them finish in the middle of the competition table. Kerry Mackay, with 139 runs at 27.4 and 13 wickets at 10.0, was again the leading player, and received good support from Alan Lamb (207 runs at 69.0), John Iredale (145 runs at 36.3) and Robert Piper (16 wickets at 16.1).

The highlight of the 1968/69 season was provided by the club's youngest team, which for the first time, won the AW Green Shield. Captained by Alan White and managed by Tom Richmond the team went through the competition undefeated, starting with a washed-out draw against Sydney, then first innings wins over Manly, North Sydney, Balmain, Gordon and Combined High Schools, and an outright win over Mosman to win the Northern Division of the competition by 13 points.

The Green Shield final, a two-day match against the winners of the Southern Division, Petersham-Marrickville, was held at University Oval No 1. The Petersham side was managed by Bill Anderson, later to become a leading Sydney rugby league coach, and went into the game as firm favourites. Batting first, Northern District recovered from the loss of three early wickets to post a moderate score of 158 with Alan White (30), John Jessup (31) and Peter Mackay (34) all making valuable contributions. Although the team had a capable batting line-up its strength lay in its bowling attack, spearheaded by two genuinely fast bowlers in Alan Haynes and Kevin Shepherd. Batting at number eleven Haynes was on the receiving end of a barrage of abuse from at least one of the Petersham players and had to be dragged away by manager Richmond as the two teams left the field. Ten minutes later Haynes was back on the field, calmed but focussed and with the new ball in his hand. He and Shepherd then proceeded to tear through the strong Petersham batting line-up and had them reeling at 8 for 88 (Haynes 4-27, Shepherd 3-19) when Anderson surprisingly

declared the innings closed with the intention of pushing for an outright win. Batting a second time Northern District were all out for 171 with Kevin Read scoring 56 and Phil Sheppard 40, leaving Petersham a target of 241 in 180 minutes. Although handicapped by a foot injury, Shepherd and Haynes, again dominated eventually dismissing their opponents for just 137.

A dinner to honour the team was held in late February at the Cricketers Club in Sydney where the guest speakers included Test players Brian Taber and Ian Chappell.

1969/70

The 1969/70 saw a marked improvement in the performances of all Northern District teams, indeed the end result of two premierships and one joint premiership, albeit in lower grade and age competitions, made it one of the best seasons in the club's history.

There were several revisions to the competition structure and rules, including the introduction of a fifth grade competition and a change to the method of calculating club championship points, with first grade points being multiplied by six instead of four, second grade by five (previously three), third grade by four (two) and fourth grade by three (one). Points scored in fifth grade did not contribute towards the club championship in that inaugural season.

The Northern District first grade team had a number of changes in personnel. Lynn Marks was again required to move interstate, this time to Western Australia, while wicket-keeper, Cec Hughes, retired from grade cricket. **Hughes's place was taken by David Falkenmire, a promising young keeper from Tamworth who had impressed Austen Hughes and Neil Marks when they took an ND in an end-of-season social match. Remarkably, Falkenmire travelled from Tamworth to Sydney each weekend to play and subsequently won a place in the NSW Colts team against Queensland Colts later in the season. The continual travelling however told, and Falkenmire dropped out midway through the season, replaced by Denis Lynch.**

The club's major acquisition for 1969/70 was ex-Test spin bowler, David Sincock. A left-arm wrist spinner who could extract prodigious spin but often lacked control, Sincock came from Adelaide and first attracted attention when, as a 19-year-old university student, he was invited to bowl in the nets to the 1960/61 touring West Indies team, and then proceeded to clean bowl Gary Sobers, Rohan Kanhai, Conrad Hunte and Frank Worrell. He was immediately picked for South Australia where he took 6-52 and 3-143 in his first Sheffield Shield match against NSW, including the wickets of Test players Brian Booth, Richie Benaud and Grahame Thomas. Although considered for the 1961 Australian tour to England he missed out, and it wasn't until the 1964/65 one-off Test against Pakistan in Melbourne that he made his debut,



Brilliant former South Australian and Australian Test left-arm wrist spinner David Sincock joined Northern District in the 1969/70 season.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

taking 3-67 and 1-102. He toured the West Indies with Bob Simpson's team in 1965 but only played in one Test, and the following season made his third and final Test appearance against England in Sydney where Bob Barber and John Edrich took 98 runs off his 20 overs. Sincock later moved to Sydney where he played for the Randwick club, but was unable to force his way into the strong NSW team. By the time joined Northern District in 1969 he had retired from first-class cricket to concentrate on his business career.

Another new signing was a stylish, young, blond haired batsman from Nowra named Ian Davis, who joined Northern District after a two seasons with the Bankstown-Canterbury club. Such was the 18-year-old's obvious potential that he went straight into the first grade team where captain Barry Rothwell, in his end of season report, summed him up: *"His technique and temperament are of the highest order and I have no doubt that he has the ability to reach the ultimate honours of the game."*⁴³ He was right – by the age of 20, Davis was playing Test cricket.

Despite the loss of so many senior players in the previous two seasons the junior development programme which had begun in the mid-1950s had become such an integral part of the club that the first grade team, after just one poor season, was able to bounce back to fifth place.

Three batsmen topped 500 runs for the season: Barry Rothwell (550 at 34.4), Kerry Mackay (538 at 33.6) and Neil Marks (505 at 28.1). For Marks it was the sixth consecutive season that he had passed the 500-run mark. With the ball, Sincock and John Phillips took 30 wickets each, and formed a spin attack as potent as any in Sydney at the time. David West, with 27 wickets at 18.9 topped the bowling averages.

Although they improved marginally (from 14th to 12th place) the second grade team again had a disappointing year, poor catching and a fragile middle-order being the two major contributors as identified by captain Ken Longley. Young all-rounder Dennis Kimberley had a fine season winning both the batting aggregate (385 runs at 32.1) and the bowling averages (22 wickets at 14.1). His century (108 against Randwick) was the only one scored during the second grade season and eventually saw him rewarded with several matches in first grade. John Cumming, with 348 runs



*Northern District won the inaugural Sydney fifth grade competition in 1969/70.
Rear (l to r): Lindsay Foster, Ron Halse, Bob Lidbetter, Ron Wadham, Phil Sheppard, Tony Horsley
and Neil Hardy. Front (l to r): Alan Terrey, Phil Harris, Harold Griffin (C), Ken Tulk, Doug Blazey and
Geoff Weir. Inset: W Webster.*

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

at 49.7 won the batting average, while ex-first grader pace bowler, Bill Jocelyn (35 wickets at 18.8) was the leading wicket-taker.

The third grade team, captained for the fourth consecutive season by Ian Fraser, did well to finish in fourth place, just four points behind the minor premiers, Manly with a one-run loss to St George in the 13th round costing them a place in the **final. The team's strength lay in a** reliable and accurate attack, headed by former first grade pace bowler Hartley Anderson who topped both the bowling aggregate and averages with 39 wickets at 10.9, conceding just over 2.5 runs per over. He was well supported by young spinners, Gary Best (28 at 17.1) and Ian Radford (21 at 19.2), medium-pacer, Jack Meredith-Jones (26 at 19.5), and a promising young fast bowler in Jeff Stevens who took 11 wickets from just 56 overs. Of the third grade batsmen only John Iredale (319 at 22.8) topped 300 runs for the season with Phil Wotton (228 at 32.6) having the best average.

With that great club stalwart, John Jagoe in charge, the Northern District fourth grade team had an excellent 1969/70 season, finishing with 11 wins (one outright) and just two losses in the 17-match season. Unfortunately they just missed a final spot, finishing in third place. No single batsman dominated although plenty of young players scored well en route to higher grades. There was a stand-out bowler however, in leg spinner Barry Piper, **a member of the previous season's Green Shield winning team and captain in 1969/70. Piper took 41 wickets at 14.2, which added to the three he took in third grade and 28 in Green Shield, gave him a season's tally of 72.** Four times he took five or more wickets in an innings, two of them (5-28 and 5-42) in the same match, against Randwick at Kensington Oval.

The 1969/70 season saw the expansion of the grade competition with a fifth grade being contested for the first time although its results were not including in club championship calculations. Prior to the decision being made Northern District had been granted permission to enter a second team in the Municipal and Shire C division. With the introduction of fifth grade it was decided that grade clubs should be excluded from the Shires competition and so as a consequence Northern District entered two fifth grade teams. In its four seasons in the Shires C competition the Northern District team had consistently finished in the top few places without being able to win the premiership.

Despite the fact that two teams would have been expected to spread rather than concentrate the playing standard, and despite 32 players taking the field at different stages, the A team was able to win the competition, defeating Gordon in a hard fought final at Chatswood Oval. With Harold Griffin in charge, the team had a healthy blend of youth and experience, with most players either well into their 30s or else under 20. Of the younger brigade Tony Horsley impressed most, taking 46 wickets at just 9.4 each, before being promoted to third grade midway through the season. Veterans Ken Tulk and Geoff Weir made significant contributions, Tulk taking 7-19 in a crucial win over Cumberland and Weir 4-7 from his first four overs in the final against Gordon. In total the team won 11 of its 17 matches, including five outright, drew four and lost just two, both on the first innings - one of the two losses being to the Northern District B team.

The fifth grade B team, in spite of their status as the last grade team to be selected, did well to finish in eighth place in the new competition with eight wins, eight losses and one draw from their 17 matches. Captained by a new player in Wes Oke, they had wins over five of the seven teams which finished ahead of them. Ron Halse, **a member of the previous year's Green Shield, won both batting and bowling averages with 191 runs at 63.7 and 14 wickets at 11.0** before being promoted to the A team. Another newcomer, right-arm medium pacer Chris Haviland, was the leading wicket-taker with 32 wickets at 14.2 including a match-winning 7-31 in the inter-club match against the As at Somerville Park.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

A constant headache for selectors and captains, especially in lower grade cricket, is the inability to take a settled team of eleven players onto the field each week. Through unavailabilities it was not unusual, in bad seasons, for teams to have between 30 and 40 different players. Rae Richmond, captain of the City and Suburban A team, certainly knew how it felt in 1969/70 – he had a total of 77 different players, including a number of ex-first graders in Jim Mathers, John Dower, Doug Cameron and Warwick Dunn, as well as best-selling author Jon Cleary (one innings for one run). Not surprisingly the team performed below expectations, winning just **nine of their 25 matches. There were some highlights, including Bob Stone's innings** of 113 not out against the Wanderers, where he had the previous of stays in the 'nervous nineties' - going from 88 to 108 in four balls: 4,6,6,4.

In comparison the City and Suburban Vets team had a tight and compact 34-man squad ... or rather, **33 men and one woman. They had** their worst season on record, winning just two matches all year, one with the help of an innings of 93 by guest player Barry Rothwell.

For the first time in 36 years and only the second time in its history, the Northern District club won the Poidevin-Gray Shield. Led by Kerry Mackay, the team included a number of players with first grade experience (Ian Davis, Denis Lynch, Dennis Kimberley and Robert Piper). After winning the northern division of the competition they met Sutherland at the traditional home of the P-G final, Waverley Oval. Winning the toss, Mackay elected to bat. After losing a wicket in the first over Bill North (52) and Mackay (30) took the score to 1-65. From there wickets fell steadily with only Phil Wotton (33) offering much resistance as the team was



ND's successful Poidevin-Gray Shield team of 1969/70.
Rear (l to r): Denis Lynch, Alan Lamb, John Iredale, Kerry Mackay (Captain), Dennis Kimberley, Alan Haynes and Ian Radford. Front (l to r): George Mills (Manager), Bob Piper, Phil Wotton, Ian Davis, Barry Piper and Gary Best.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

dismissed for just 159. Then in a crucial 45 minute session they took the wickets of both Sutherland opening batsman to have them in trouble at 2-17. On the following Sunday ND pressed home their advantage to dismiss Sutherland for 108, with Mackay (5-32) and Alan Haynes (4-37) both bowling superbly. Batting a second time ND closed Sutherland out, scoring 7-177 with Denis Lynch (54 not out) and Barry Piper (21 not out) adding 63 for the seventh wicket.

Although he had been used principally as a batsman to date in Saturday matches, Kerry Mackay showed the bowling ability which would eventually see him play for NSW as an all-rounder. From just 84 overs he picked up 24 wickets at an average of 11.0, supported by fast bowler Alan Haynes (14 at 17.1) who had helped the club win each of the two junior grade Shields in successive seasons.

The manager of the P-G team was a wonderful character named George Mills. Born in Dover, England in the early years of the century, he shared his sporting interests between rugby union and cricket, and as a member of the Reading Cricket Club he was involved in the development of future England Test captain Peter May. In 1948 Mills emigrated to Australia where he became a member of the newly-formed Eastwood District Rugby Club and later helped set up the Rugby Union Cricket Club. Along with Colonel Millner he was heavily involved in the construction of the Vimiera ground, later re-named TG Millner Field where ND lower grades were based for a number of years. Although rugby remained his principal sporting love he managed the Northern District P-G team in 1964/65 and again between 1967/68 and 1969/70. He remained a **popular figure around the district's rugby and cricket fields** through until shortly before his death in June 1986.



George Mills

In recognition of the Poidevin-Gray team's achievement the NSWCA nominated them to attend a Young Peoples Reception for Queen Elizabeth II, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Prince of Wales and Princess Anne at the Trocadero Theatre in George Street, Sydney on 1 April 1970.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000



The Northern District Under 16 AW Green Shield team who were joint premiers with Bankstown-Canterbury after a washed-out draw in the 1969/70 final. Rear (l to r): David Bruce, Alan McLaughlin, Dave Bennett, Bruce Virtue, Rod Rayner and Tom Richmond (Manager). Front (l to r): John Moran, John Jessup, Barry Piper (C), Phil Sheppard, Kevin Read and Ernie Glass.

Capping off a great season, the club was able to successfully defend the AW Green Shield, although the success was tempered slightly by having to share the Shield jointly with the Bankstown-Canterbury club after the scheduled two-day final between the two teams at the Sydney Cricket Ground No 2 was washed out. By the end of the season the team, again managed by Tom Richmond and now captained by Barry Piper, had gone 18 matches without defeat. Piper had a terrific season, scoring **the team's only century (102 not out against Balmain at Asquith Oval) and taking 28 wickets** at just 8.9 to lead both club and P-G aggregate. He was well supported by fellow leg spinner, Ernie Glass, who captured 24 wickets at 9.9. The leading run scorer, with 304 runs at 38.0, was 16-year-old John Moran, destined almost 30 years later to become the club's leading run scorer in all grades.

During the previous season Northern District had been given access to a new turf wicket at TG Millner Field, the home of the Eastwood Rugby Club. The two clubs had long shared a close relationship. Colonel Tom Millner, after whom the ground had been named, having been an NDCC Vice President for many years and his son, Tom Millner, had played with the club from the late 1930s through to the mid 1950s, including a number of first grade matches. Millner Field had been used primarily by the City and Suburban teams in 1968/69, but was used for grade matches in 1969/70 with third, fourth and fifth grade. The first round of the Sunday Knockout Competition, now conducted by the NSWCA, was also scheduled to be played on the new ground, but unfortunately due to recent top-dressing, the match had to be

transferred to Asquith Oval. The Western Suburbs team, more particularly Bob Simpson with 98 not out, ensured that the option of playing a match later in the season on the ground. It was the third time in the three seasons of the competition that Northern District had been knocked out in the first round.

After a poor Shield season in 1968/69 Barry Rothwell, although still a member of the NSW squad, was unable to regain his place in the NSW team. It was the first time in a number of seasons that the club had no representative in the senior State team, although there were a number of lower level representatives with Kerry Mackay and David Falkenmire both playing for NSW Colts; Kerry Mackay and Ian Davis in the Metropolitan Colts team, .

1970/71

The club was unable to sustain the higher grade improvements seen in the 1969/70 season and after finishing fourth in the club championship dropped back to 12th place in 1970/71. Likewise, although the lower grade and age teams again performed well, none were able to defend their premierships. The wettest summer in **15 years didn't help, especially as the rain did seem to centre on Sydney's northern region**, causing the loss of a total of eight playing days throughout the season.

As usual there were a number of player movements, the most significant loss **being that the club's leading spin bowler of the 1960s, John Phillips**, who was transferred interstate with his job initially, to Adelaide and later to Melbourne. Phillips, a product of the jointly organised junior coaching clinics which began in the mid-1950s, had first played for Northern District as a 13-year-old with the 1956/57 Green Shield, and dominated many Green Shield and Poidevin-Gray seasons with his ability to bat, bowl medium pace, then switch to leg spin. By the time he was 17 he had reached first grade as a leg spinning all-rounder, and from 1962/63 to 1969/70 was a permanent member of the first grade team, winning caps in both of the premiership winning teams of that era. In ten seasons Phillips had taken 316 first grade wickets at the excellent average of 24.1 and in the eight full seasons he played in the top grade he had been the leading wicket-taker on no less than seven occasions (once jointly) and had won the bowling averages twice. Considered by many to be the second best leg spinner ever to play for Northern District, behind Hugh Chilvers, Phillips shared that **player's lack of luck with representative selection, and although he played one Colts match for NSW against Queensland in 1967/68** (he took 1-97 from 28 overs and scored 60 while batting at number nine) and was a member of the NSW squad, Phillips never played Sheffield Shield cricket. While in Adelaide he played alongside former Test wicket-keeper, Barry Jarman, at the Woodville club and was selected in the South Australian squad. Returning to Sydney in the mid-1970s he played regularly in Northern District lower grade teams during the 1976/77 and 1977/78 season. A talented all-round sportsman, Phillips also played first grade rugby for Eastwood in the early to mid 1960s.

The club also lost former first grade bowler, Hartley Anderson, another member of Neil Harvey's **1966/67 premiership**-winning team. Like Phillips he was **transferred interstate with his work, while Anderson's bowling partner of 1966/67, Bill Jocelyn**, moved to Oatley where he joined up with St George and played in that **club's premiership**-winning team in his first season. Jocelyn later became a leading Australian business figure, firstly with AMP and later with the NSW Government Insurance Office (GIO) where, from 1983 to 1998 he was Group Managing Director. In March 1991, he accepted an appointment to the NSW Cricket Board and later took on a similar position on the Australian Cricket Board.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

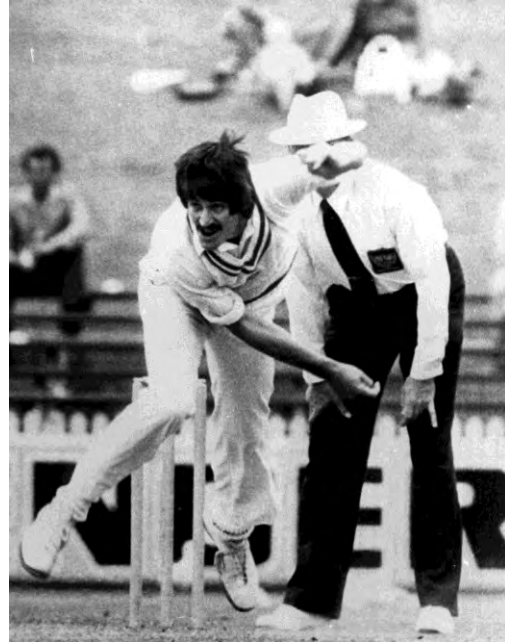
Kevin Butler, a second and third grade player since the early 1960s and the club's second grade captain in 1969/70, was transferred to the country, while lower grade captain Harold Griffin, who had led the fifth grade team to a premiership in the previous season announced his retirement.

The club's major acquisition was a raw-boned 20-year-old tearaway fast bowler from Orange named Steve Bernard who had built a big reputation in country cricket prior to coming to Sydney. Bernard, predictably nicknamed 'Brute' after the well-known wrestler of that era, had come to Sydney to trial with the Western Suburbs club but eventually was offered a job by club supporter, David North (the father of Bill North) and came to Northern District instead. He went straight into first grade team and impressed to such an extent that by the end of the season he was in the NSW Sheffield Shield side, alongside his new club team-mate Kerry Mackay who also made his debut in 1970/71.

The first grade team was again captained by Barry Rothwell and after finishing fourth in 1969/70 they had another disappointing season to finish in 12th place with six wins (all on the first innings) from 16 matches. The playing talent was there, with over half the team being either past or future first class players (including one past and one future Test player) but for some reason the team just **didn't fire. For only the second time in 14 seasons no batsman passed 500 runs** – Neil Marks, who had personally done it in each of the previous six seasons, missed a number of matches through illness and scored just 274 runs (at 27.4). Barry Rothwell topped both batting aggregate and averages with 475 runs at 39.6, ahead of David Sincock, a genuine all-rounder at club level, who scored 438 runs at 33.7 although his bowling was restricted by the recurrence of a back injury. After making his name as a batsman, Kerry Mackay was also now a genuine all-rounder, taking 24 wickets (at 14.4) and scoring 347 runs at 28.9. Steve Bernard was the leading wicket-taker, with 31 at 22.6.

The second grade team's disappointing run continued, finishing in second last place with just two wins from 16 matches. Captained initially by Ken Longley and later by Alan Lamb, the team was continually let down by the instability of its middle order batsmen. One exception was Phil Wotton who scored 363 runs at 33.0, including the only century of the season, an unbeaten 101 against Mosman at Waitara Oval. By contrast the opening batsman generally gave the team a good start, with Ross Webb topping the batting aggregate with 407 runs at 27.1. Although the bowling was generally consistent, a large number of bowlers went through the team and the same line-up rarely bowled for more than one or two matches in a row. Bob Piper with the surprisingly low total of 14 wickets at 12.6 won both bowling aggregate and averages.

After a promising start the Northern District third grade team's season was badly affected by the wet weather, losing five of their ten playing days completely and having some of the others curtailed. Their comfortable win over the eventual



Northern District's new fast bowling recruit Steve Bernard won selection the NSW Sheffield Shield team during his first season in the Sydney grade

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

premiers, **St George, (217 vs 129)** was a better indication of the team's ability than their final competition placing of 12th.

The NDCC fourth grade team finished in fifth place with eight wins (two of them outright), four draws and four first innings losses. Captain John Jagoe had another fine season, leading the batting aggregate with 325 runs at 32.5 and coming second in the bowling aggregate with 25 wickets at 15.7. A new player, John Fitzgerald, topped the bowling averages, taking 18 wickets at 13.3, before being promoted - eventually to first grade. Other young players to go through the fourth grade team on their way to higher grades including John Moran, Peter Burnett and John Jessup.

The two fifth grade teams, captained by Ken Tulk and Wes Oke, proved to be very close to each other in playing strength, the A team finishing in fifth place and the B team sixth. The A team won eight of their 16 matches (two outright), lost three and had 5 drawn, most due to the wet weather which plagued the latter half of the season. The batting highlights included a rare double by twin brothers Peter and Alan Terrey, **who scored the only two centuries of the season, Peter making 119 in the 'derby' match against the B team at Somerville Park, and Alan 110 not out against Bankstown at Bland Oval.** With the ball, veteran Geoff Weir dominated, taking 42 wickets at 12.6, more than twice as many as any other bowler in the team. In the 12th round match against the Manly B team at Turramurra Oval Weir took a hat-trick on his way to a career-best **9-22 as Manly collapsed to be all out for 32. Weir's return was the third best in any grade in the club's history, behind Dick Walker's 10-18 in 1953/54 (third grade) and Frank Gilmore's 10-41 in 1936/37 (second grade).**

Sharing the new ball with Weir in the team's round nine match against Sydney University was a tall 20-year-old left-arm medium pacer named Stephen Whitfield. In his grade debut he showed evidence of the ability which would eventually take him to the NSW Sheffield Shield almost 20 years later with figures of 9-4-8-4 in the first innings and 9-4-17-2 in the second.

Like the A team, the fifth grade Bs had a brief glimpse of a number of promising young players prior to them moving up the grades, Peter Burnett's **innings** of 90 being the highest score of the season while John Jessup scored 141 runs and took 12 wickets in just four matches. Burnett finished the season in second grade, **Jessup in thirds. The highlight of the B's season was an outright win over the eventual fifth grade premiers, Gordon, at Castle Cove.** Played during a brief lull in the long spell of wet weather, the game only proceeded because the two teams got together to mow, roll and mark the pitch. Gordon declared twice (9-72 and 0-44) in a chase for maximum points but after trailing in the first innings (63 all out) ND were able to win outright with an all-run four by G Gillies from the second last ball of the match.

Once again the two City and Suburban teams went around, led as usual by Rae Richmond and Max Lloyd. The convenience of having a match decided in one day, together with a growing preference among many players for that style of cricket had led to an increase in the standard of play in City and Suburban matches. After having 77 different players in 1969/70, the A team fielded 68 in 1970/71, the youngest of whom was 12-year-old Brian Crawford. The outstanding bowler was Steve Whitfield who took 3-26 against Scots Old Boys and 5-27 against Hunters Hill. Although 32 matches had been arranged, only 24 were played due to the wet weather; 14 were won, eight lost, one tied and one drawn.

Although they were able to beat three of the stronger teams, and have a tie with another, the City and Suburban Vets team had a disappointing season with six of their matches being washed out. Best performed of their 31 players were Don Molloy (34 wickets at 11.5), T McMurchie (28 wickets at 19.2) and Basil Weir (221 runs at 13.0).

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Despite fielding a team of comparable standard to that which had won the shield the previous season, the 1970/71 Poidevin-Gray team was a major disappointment, winning just two of its six matches. The loss of Steve Bernard to the NSW Shield team was a serious setback, although John Iredale (14 wickets at 15.9) , John Fitzgerald (11 at 16.0) and Dennis Kimberley (11 at 14.2) all bowled well. Best of the batsmen was the team captain, Ian Davis who scored 163 runs at 40.8 with a top score of 82.

For the third year in a row the performance of the club's AW Green Shield team was outstanding. After winning the shield in 1968/69, and sharing it with Bankstown in 1969/70, the 1970/71 team again won the Northern Division of the competition losing just one of its seven matches – ending a remarkable run of 22 matches without defeat. And they did it with an almost all-new team, only two players, captain Barry Piper and Dave Bennett (plus manager Tom Richmond), backing up from the previous season. There were however a number of talented young players making their debut with the club, including a 14-year-old from the Pennant Hills club named Ross Turner, and another in David Glasson from St **George's Marsfield, destined to lead first and second grade teams respectively** to premierships in the years ahead. The final was played at the SCG No 2 where, unfortunately the Northern District team was well beaten by Sutherland by an innings and two runs.

Again, a number of Northern District players featured in representative matches during the 1970/71 season. Five players were selected in the NSW Colts squad: Ian Davis, David West, David Falkenmire (who again travelled down from Tamworth to play for the club), Kerry Mackay and Steve Bernard – the latter two going on to win selection in the full NSW team. Both Barry Piper and Alan MacLaughlin were selected in Green Shield representative matches, Barry Rothwell and Steve Bernard played matches for different Sydney Metropolitan XI teams and Ian Davis for Metropolitan Colts. NDCC secretary, Geoff Weir, was also chosen as **manager of the Shield team which played Victoria in Melbourne while the club's other** NSWCA delegate, Austen Hughes, took a NSW team to Brisbane for a one-day limited over match against Queensland.

For the fourth straight season Northern District was defeated in the opening round of the Rothmans Sunday knock-out competition, this time beaten on a countback by Mosman when the match was stopped by rain.

1971/72

The 1971/72 season saw one of the most remarkable turnarounds in Northern District's history with **big improvements across virtually every team. The following** table compares the final position of each of the competition teams in 1971/72 compared with 1970/71:

<u>Team</u>	<u>1970/71</u>	<u>1971/72</u>
First Grade	9th	3rd
Second Grade	15th	5th
Third Grade	12th	Premiers
Fourth Grade	5th	5th
Fifth Grade A	5th	Premiers
Fifth Grade B	6th	6th
Poidevin-Gray Shield	6th	2nd
AW Green Shield	2nd	Equal 3rd

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

The sum of these improvements was reflected in the club's jump from 12th to second in the club championship, its highest finish since winning in 1959/60.

Interestingly, in analysing the reasons for this huge improvement, the most significant reason was seen as being a big increase in the number of players attending midweek practices, which in turn was attributed to the introduction, for the first time in NSW, of daylight saving.

There was further good news for the club prior to the start of the season with the return of Tim Caldwell to Sydney from Brisbane and the resumption of his administrative role both with Northern District and with the NSW Cricket Association. After four years as NDCC president Ron Ewington stood down, with Austen Hughes becoming only the sixth person to hold that position in the club's 45-year history.

The major change to the competition structure in 1971/72 was the re-introduction of a four-team semi-finals series. These had last been played to decide the premiership in 1963/64 but had subsequently been replaced by a final-only format. As before, the first team (minor premiers) would play the fourth team, second would play third, with the two winners meeting in the final. The twelve teams which **didn't make** the semi-finals still played over the final two weekends, however, to divert the criticism from clubs that it was extremely difficult to convince all players to **play in these 'dead rubber' matches the NSWCA introduced an Encouragement Award**, decided on points scored in the last five matches by those teams which were not involved in the semi-finals. The other significant rule change, introduced to try to encourage more positive cricket was the abolition of points for drawn matches or for first innings losses.

Barry Rothwell again led a strong first grade team which at one time included three past or future Test players, and six past, present and future NSW players. The second past Test player (David Sincock was the other) was former opening bowler, Grahame Corling, who had toured England with Bob Simpson's **1964 Australian team** where he played his only five Tests. A NSW Shield player between 1963/64 and 1968/69, Corling came down from Newcastle each weekend to play for ND, however after six rounds the travelling told on him and he withdrew from the team.

Another new player was batsman Max Shepherd who joined the club from Albury where he had top scored for a NSW Country XI against Ray Illingworth's touring English at Wagga Wagga. State selector, Jack Chegwyn, saw his innings and suggested that his best chance of progressing in the game would be to move to Sydney and join a grade club. In the meantime he had been selected in the NSW Colts squad, but struggled for runs in the grade competition, eventually dropping down to fourth grade.

After 15 rounds Northern District had won ten matches on the first innings, drawn three and lost just two, one by 21 runs to Bankstown-Canterbury at Bankstown Oval, the other in a crucial encounter against Western Suburbs at the Sydney Cricket Ground which Wests won by just three runs. This loss, in the 13th round, pushed Northern District back to third place, meaning that they needed to win their semi-final against second-placed Gordon to reach the final, while a draw was all that Gordon needed. Played under overcast skies at Chatswood Oval, the semi-final saw Northern District declare at 9 for 264 **thanks mainly to a fine innings by the season's batting star, 18-**



*Ron Ewington – NDCC president
from 1963 to 1968.*

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

year-old Ian Davis. Unfortunately, helped by rain interruptions, Gordon were able to hold on, being 6-211 at the end of the match.

The highlight of the season was undoubtedly the batting of Davis, by now widely recognised as one of the **state's most exciting young batsmen. In 19 innings he scored 695 runs at an average of 36.6 – just 15 runs short of Neil Harvey's post-war first grade record aggregate, and the fifth highest in the club's history.** Kerry Mackay, although frequently absent on Shield duty, topped the batting averages with 415 runs at 51.9, while Barry Rothwell was as consistent as ever, scoring 532 runs at 31.3.

The bulk of the bowling was shared between Steve Bernard (36 wickets at 14.6), David Sincock (33 at 16.0) and John Cumming (30 at 14.6).

The other highlight of the season was the performance of wicket-keeper Denis Lynch who made a total of 44 dismissals during the season. Although he had played a number of first grade matches over the two previous seasons Lynch had been pushed back to second grade by Tamworth-based David Falkenmire who, after dropping out midway through the 1969/70 season, had returned to the club in 1970/71. With the departure of Falkenmire to Queensland, Lynch finally cemented the first grade and was to remain there for most of the following decade. Despite, at 6 foot 2 inches, being well above average height, especially by wicket keeping standards, Lynch was extremely safe and agile. By the early 1970s he had established himself as one of the **top 'keepers in Sydney**, and was generally considered unlucky not to have won a place in the NSW Sheffield Shield squad.

Another of the reasons for Northern District's big improvement in 1971/72 was undoubtedly the selfless decision of former first grade players, Neil Marks and Ken Longley, to voluntarily drop down a grade. This had the twin benefits of providing greater opportunities for young players on the way up, and of giving strong, experienced leadership to the lower grade teams. With Marks in charge, the second grade team improved from 15th to fifth place while Longley took the third grade team from 12th place in 1970/71 to premiers in 1971/72.

The second grade team won nine matches, lost five, drew two and had a thrilling tie against Gordon in their round seven match at Waitara Oval. Marks himself scored most runs (418 at 27.9), while Phil Blazey (387 runs at 32.3) and Dennis Kimberley (354 at 27.2 – **including the team's only century**, 109 against Bankstown-**Canterbury at Waitara**) also played well. **With the ball, 'Toot' Byron** was the only bowler to take over 20 wickets, finishing with 30 at 15.2, while Ian Cooke, a promising 19-year-old fast bowler from Bathurst in his first season with ND, impressed in taking 17 wickets at 19.8. The third grade team had a number of **memorable matches on their way to the club's first premiership in that grade since 1949/50.** In the fifth round match against Bankstown at Hutchison Oval they scored the winning runs for an outright win in the last over of the game; in round seven, after gaining first innings points, they had Gordon eight wickets down to narrowly miss another outright; and then in a one-day round nine game against Balmain at **Birchgrove Oval a brilliant straight six over the fast bowler's head by John Moran** gave them a first innings win with only minutes remaining. The win which gave the team most confidence came against Manly at Asquith Oval in the eighth round. Chasing a substantial total of 9-303 declared, Northern District throughout the day on a mildly rain-affected pitch to score the winning run with just 15 minutes to play and with four wickets in hand. After a comfortable win in their semi-final against



BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000



The 1971/72 NDCC third grade premiers. Rear (l to r): Bob Mansfield, Tony Horsley, Jack Meredith-Jones, Bill North, Peter Dernikowitsch and Geoff Bryant. Front (l to r): Ross Webb, Peter Terrey, Ken Longley (C), Vic Gray and Gary Best.

North Sydney, Northern District met Petersham-Marrickville in the third grade final at Marrickville Oval. Batting first, ND loss three early wickets before being steadied by a good partnership between Peter Dernikowitsch (40) and Peter Terrey (64). Terrey and Ken Longley (73) then took the score to 4 for 188 before collapsing to be all out for 225. At stumps the match was nicely poised with Petersham-Marrickville having lost two wickets for 36. After a tense and tight first session, the home team were still in trouble at 5 for 107 but a couple of good fighting partnerships saw them **inch towards 200. Ken Longley's team persevered to eventually dismiss Petersham** for 197 with Dernikowitsch capping a great all round match by taking 4-22.

It was only the club's second success in a grade which they had contested since 1925/26 and it was above all a great team effort. John Moran, with 406 runs at 50.8, was the only batsman to score in excess of 300 runs for the season (earning promotion to second grade late in the season as a result) although seven others scored between 200 and 300. Opening bowlers, Tony Horsley and Jack Meredith-Jones, with 66 wickets between them were the mainstays of the bowling attack. They were well supported by off spinner, Geoff Bryant, who had returned to ND at the start of the 1970/71 seasons after an 11-year absence during which he had played with the Waverley club; and a young leg spinner in Gary Best.

The team's wicket-keeper was a promising 19-year-old ex-Barker College student named Bob Mansfield. It was his first season in grade cricket, although he had made a cameo appearance as a 14-year-old substitute fieldsman for Neil Harvey's first grade team towards the end of the 1966/67 season. In 13 matches for the 1971/72 third grade team Mansfield impressed, conceded just 22 byes and picking up a number of brilliant catches. The 1971/72 fourth grade competition was a little lopsided with a handful of strong teams and the remainder quite weak. As a

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000



The 1971/72 NDCC fifth grade premierships-winning team.

Rear (l to r): Steve Rutherford, David Glasson, Neil Howlett, Geoff Brown, Cam McDonald, David Grant and Gary Glasson. Front (l to r): Greg Levick, Lindsay Bellhouse, Doug Blazey, Reg Tulk (Scorer), Ken Tulk (Captain), Phil Harris and Geoff Weir.

consequence, despite winning 12 of their 17 matches (but only one outright), the Northern District team, again led by John Jagoe, could only manage to finish in fifth place. Best performers were Gary Beck, whose 265 runs (at 53.0) and 43 wickets (at 11.7) won him both batting and bowling averages as well as the bowling aggregate; brothers Alan and Peter Terrey who scored 280 and 265 runs respectively; Dirk Driberg, whose 26 wickets at 15.8 included 6-30 against Sydney at Jubilee Oval and 7-43 against Balmain at Waitara Oval; and Alan McLaughlin (24 wickets at 21.0).

Although Northern District had won multiple premierships in 1969/70 (fifth grade plus the Poidevin-Gray and Green Shields), 1971/72 was the first occasion, and remains the only time, that it had won more than one grade title in the same season. The second success came from Ken Tulk and his fifth grade A team, which won that competition for the second time in three years. Their performance was probably the **most dominant of any in the club's history. At the end of the 15 competition rounds** they were minor premiers with 100 points from four outright wins and 10 first innings wins, with just one first innings loss (against Balmain at TG Millner Field). They then comfortably defeated Gordon outright in the semi-final to set up a final meeting with **St George, ND's higher position in the table giving them the advantage of playing the match at Waitara Oval.**

Batting first, St George got off to a good start with their openers adding about 30 before a disastrous collapse saw them all out for just 64 with opening bowlers David Grant (6-11) and Geoff Weir (4-34) sharing all ten wickets. At 6 for about 35 the St George total began to look almost formidable however a 40-plus stand between brothers David and Garry Glasson, and an invaluable 16 not out by Ken Tulk, batting at number 11, saw ND take a 49-run first innings lead. With 20 wickets falling in just over four hours there was plenty of time for an outright result either way, however when St George could score just 102 in their second innings, ND needed just 54 runs for the premierships. The team included a promising 15-year-old opening batsman named Neil Howlett, who had played his junior cricket with the Hornsby and Normanhurst clubs in the H-KDCA. **He was the team's leading run scorer through the season, and he ensured that there was to be no miracle recovery by St George, top-**

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

scoring with 32 (the highest innings of the match) as ND cruised to an eight wicket win by early afternoon, allowing the team to join the crowd at Marrickville Oval and cheer their third grade clubmates home.

There were a number of outstanding individual performances for the fifth grade As. Neil Howlett's **410 runs at 24.1 gave an early sign of the talent which would make the tall right-hander one of Northern District's outstanding first grade batsmen** for the best part of a decade while Lindsay Bellhouse scored 336 runs at 48.0 and Geoff Brown, **337 at 37.4. The latter's innings of 135 against Bankstown**-Canterbury at Somerville Park (he reached his century before the tea break on the first day) ensuring an immediate promotion to fourth grade.

As they had done in the previous season, the fifth grade B team performed extremely well to finish in sixth place, with nine wins from their 16 matches. The effort was all the more commendable as they had begun the season with four straight losses before recovering to win six of the last seven matches, including a crucial win in a one-day round 14 match against joint-leaders, Balmain at ELS Hall Park. In their best batting effort of the season the Bs were all out for 304, thanks to a then record club fifth grade partnership of 172 for the fifth wicket between captain, Wes Oke (117) and Andrew Hemming (74). With an hour left to play Balmain were 3 for 187 and in with a chance of pulling off an unlikely win. Desperate to win the match the Balmain batsmen hit out, scoring quickly but losing wickets regularly. With three overs left they still needed 24 to win with two wickets in hand before slow left-armer John Christie picked up the last two wicket to seal an 18-run win for his team. This entertaining match had seen 589 runs scored in a single day, but more importantly had ensured that the Northern District A team would finish the competition proper as minor premiers, a big step on their way to their eventual premiership win.

The two City and Suburban teams, captained again by Rae Richmond and Max Lloyd, had mixed seasons, with the As bouncing back from an appalling start (they lost each of their first nine matches) to record eight wins and six losses from their remaining matches, and the Vets winning just three matches of the 17 matches which they were able to play in another rain-interrupted season. Best performers were John **Carter who won the A team's batting aggregate (212 runs), batting averages (16.3) and bowling aggregate (24 wickets)**; Garry Beck, who took an all-bowled hat-trick for the As against Radio Physics; and Bob Green who also took a hat-trick for the As, against **Cowra on the team's southern trip.**

The Northern District Poidevin-Gray team, captained by John Iredale, put their poor performance of the previous season behind them, to win the Northern Division of the competition for the second time in three seasons. In the final, against Waverley, at Waverley Oval they were defeated by 184 runs to 112 to give the home team its first win in the Shield since the early 1930s. John Iredale, with 23 wickets at 10.7 was the leading bowler, while Dennis Kimberley and Peter Burnett, each totalled **182 runs, Burnett's innings of 92 being the highest individual score for the season.** Wicket-keeper, Bob Mansfield, kept superbly and took 17 catches and one stumping in the seven matches played.

For the first time in four seasons the Northern District AW Green Shield failed to reach the final. Nevertheless the team did go through the competition undefeated with three matches washed out completely, two badly affected by rain and just two **played out completely. The team's batting was extremely strong, with each of the top five batsmen (Neil Howlett, Peter Tout, Ross Turner, Paul Price and Rowan McGregor) all to later play first grade.** Tout, the team captain, played the outstanding innings of the season, an unbeaten 103 against Sydney in just 85 minutes. Another fine innings in the North vs South match saw him win selection in the City Firsts team, as well as winning both club and Shield batting averages. Dirk Drieberg, Bruce Kimberley and Ross Turner were all chosen in the City Seconds team.

The Rothmans Sunday Knock-Out competition was expanded to include teams from Newcastle, the Hunter Valley, Hawkesbury and Illawarra.

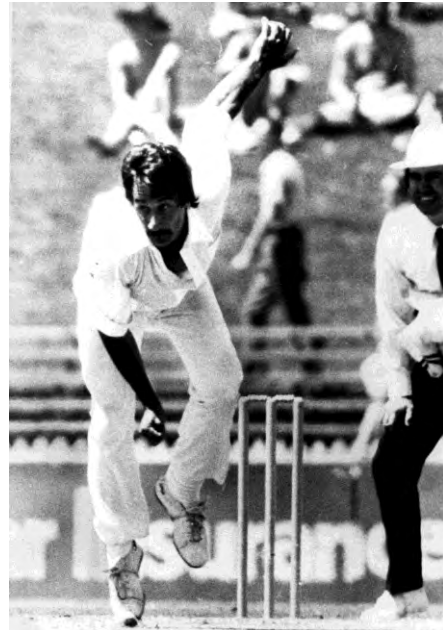
1972/73

The club's overall improvement of the previous season was sustained in 1972/73, and despite a relatively poor seventh place by first grade, Northern District finished runners-up in the club championship for the second successive season. The highlight of the season was undoubtedly the performance of the **second grade team in winning the club's ninth** premiership in grade competitions.

The performance of the first grade team was particularly disappointing because the team which took the field was probably, on paper at least, the strongest of any in the competition. The batting was strengthened by the return of Lynn Marks, back in Sydney after three years in Western Australia, whilst the acquisition of a 20-year-old fast bowler from Canberra named Mark Clews to partner Steve Bernard, gave the team the fastest, most aggressive opening attack seen in Sydney grade cricket for many years.

An outstanding schoolboy cricketer, Clews had been a member of 1970 Australian Schoolboys Team. In two seasons (1970/71 and 1971/72) of ACT first grade cricket he took 48 and 51 wickets respectively. Although considered primarily as a bowler he was an extremely capable batsman, as he showed when, as a night-watchman, he scored 173 in 265 minutes for the ACT against Illawarra early in the 1971/72 season. Later that season he played for Southern NSW against the touring World XI, a team put together following the cancellation of the South African tour originally scheduled for that season. Clews top-scored for the Country team, run out for 46. He came to Sydney on the recommendation of former St George and NSW batsman, Ray Flockton, then the ACT Cricket Association coach and a good friend of ND president Austen Hughes. Over the years the St George and Northern District clubs had built up a mutual respect for each other and Flockton suggested that these were the two clubs he should approach. Clews contacted Hughes and eventually signed up.

The team began the season poorly, in the words of captain Barry Rothwell *“due primarily to an excessive dose of confidence”*⁴⁴. By the end of the sixth round they had won just one match, then after three wins from the next four matches saw their semi-final chances gradually fade with a series of washed out or rain-affected draws. An outright win in the final round could only lift them to seventh place although wins in the 16th and 17th rounds (played at the same time as the semi-final series) did give the team the consolation of winning the first grade Encouragement



The arrival of Mark Clews from the ACT at the start of the 1972/73 season, combined with Steve Bernard gave ND one of the most powerful opening attacks in the club's history.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Award, for the best performed non semi-final team over the last five rounds of the competition.

Overall, the first grade batting was poor with only three players scoring in excess of 300 runs: Barry Rothwell (510 at 36.4), Ian Davis (357 at 21.0) and David Sincock (**302 at 27.5**). **With the ball, Bernard and Clews didn't disappoint, taking 72 wickets between them. Bernard's aggregate of 42 wickets (at 12.4) was the highest by a Northern District first grade pace bowler since Harry Hunt had taken 49 wickets way back in the 1930/31 season, and earned him a recall to the NSW Sheffield Shield team where he picked up 19 wickets in just three matches.**

At the end of 1972/73 Ian Davis left Northern District to join Gordon. The following season he had a meteoric rise **making his first class debut in NSW's second Shield match of the year, against Western Australia in Perth.** After just five matches for NSW he was a surprise selection in the Australian team for the First Test against New Zealand at the MCG. Between 1973/74 and 1977 he played in 15 Tests, scoring 692 runs at 26.6, before joining World Series Cricket at the start of the 1977/78 season. Following the reconciliation between the two cricket bodies in 1979 Davis was unable to regain his Test place and by the mid-1980s had retired from first class cricket.

Ever since John Jagoe's team had won the premiership back in 1959/60 the club had struggled to be competitive in second grade. In the 11 seasons from 1960/61 to 1970/71 they had finished in the top half of the competition just once (and that was only 7th place in 1965/66) and in five seasons from 1966/67 to 1970/71 their best finish had been 12th.

With Neil Marks' **decision to drop down from first grade and take over the captaincy,** the team suddenly became competitive again, finishing in fourth place in 1971/72 and then winning the premiership in 1972/73. In three seasons they had improved from 15th (second last) to first!

At the age of 35 Marks was still one of the club's best batsmen, and his presence in the team was certainly a significant factor in the improvement. After a moderately disappointing season - but only by his own high standards - in 1971/72 (he had scored 418 runs at 27.9) Marks was back to his best in 1972/73, scoring 500 runs at 41.7 – the seventh time in 11 seasons since his return from illness that he had reached this milestone, and the ninth time that he had passed 400 runs during the same period. But Marks added more to the team than his batting alone, moulding a **group of talented players, but without any 'stars', into a competitive, well-balanced team and, importantly, one with tremendous team spirit.**

The premiership win was far from plain sailing. After losing two of their first five matches and then enduring about five weekends of poor weather the second grade team went into the final round of the competition, against Sydney at Waitara Oval, needing a win, perhaps an outright depending on other results, to be sure of a semi-final place. The situation was made worse when rain on the first day reduced the



After four seasons with Northern District, and still only 20 years old, Ian Davis made his Test debut for Australia against New Zealand during the 1973/74 series.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000



*The Northern District premierships-winning second grade team of 1972/73 at Hurstville Oval.
Rear (l to r): Hilary Griffith (scorer), Phil Blazey, Bill North, Alan White, John Blazey, Steve Whitfield and Peter Burnett. Front (l to r): Vic Gray, Phil Wotton, Bob Mansfield, Ian Cooke, Neil Marks (C) and Ashleigh Byron.*

match to a one-dayer. **Batting first, Marks declared his team's innings closed at 5 for 158** then some fine bowling and fielding saw the team dismiss Sydney for just 38 runs. Marks then decided to push aggressively for outright points by declaring the ND second innings at 0 for 0 giving Sydney a target of 121 to win the match. Although they reached that score with two wickets in hand the first innings points proved enough to ensure the team a semi-final spot.

The semi-final, against Balmain was played at Waitara Oval, and with ND needing to win the match, Marks won the toss and batted. In a solid performance the team was dismissed an hour before stumps for 308 with five batsmen scoring between 47 and 54 runs. Balmain began the chase well and at one stage they were 0-69. The breakthrough came through a run out by Steve Whitfield. Then came one of **the most remarkable bowling spells in the club's history as left-arm paceman Whitfield, in the space of 9.1 overs, took all nine remaining wickets, to have Balmain all out for 148. Whitfield's figures went from 0-28 after 14.6 overs to 9-55 from 23.1 overs.** In one five-over period he took 6-8 from five overs, five of the six caught by the **team's promising young wicket-keeper Bob Mansfield. Ironically it was Whitfield's own run out of the Balmain opening batsman which prevented him from having the opportunity to become the first ND first grade bowler to take all ten wickets in an innings.**

The second grade final, against St George at Hurstville Oval, was a most **remarkable match. On a 'sticky' wicket St George won the toss and not surprisingly elected to bowl first.** The move appeared to have paid off when ND, against an attack led by former player Bill Jocelyn, was dismissed for just 76, and that modest score only made possible by a fine innings of 41 from John Blazey. With the wicket still affected, St George then slumped to be 5-28, recovered to 6-72, then lost their last

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

four wickets for just one run to trail by three runs on the first innings. This time it was **Whitfield's opening partner, Ian Cooke**, who did the damage, taking 7-24 from 12 overs.

With plenty of time remaining the match looked certain to be decided outright, especially when Northern District were again in trouble at 6-97. Then came the final twist in an enthralling game when John Blazey, who again was anchoring the ND innings, was joined at the crease by Ian Cooke. Together they launched an assault on the St George bowling which added 132 runs in 89 minutes, taking the score to 7-229 when Cooke was bowled by Jocelyn for a brilliant 85, including 3 sixes and 11 fours. The partnership, which took the score to 7-229, effectively snuffed out any chance St George of getting back into the match. When the game was eventually called off an hour before the scheduled time for stumps another 95 runs had been added with Blazey finishing the match on 109 not out.

Rarely had three individuals dominated matches to the extent that Whitfield, Blazey and Cooke had in these two matches. While Whitfield and Blazey were to play cricket for many more years, Ian Cooke was lost to the sport soon afterwards, choosing instead to concentrate on his preferred sport of hockey where he was to go on and win a silver medal with the Australian team at the 1976 Olympic Games at Montreal.



John Blazey (left) and Ian Cooke dominated the 1972/73 second grade final against St George at Hurstville Oval.

The individual statistics for the season show how many different players **contributed to the team's** success. In what was a difficult season for batsmen, only two batsmen, apart from Marks, scored in excess of 300 runs (John Blazey 378 at 37.8 and Bill North 324 at 27.0) while five bowlers took between 20 and 30 wickets, all at averages of less than 20.0.

The team's promising young wicket-keeper Bob Mansfield had another great season, making 34 dismissals as well as playing one match in first grade. Mansfield was to play just two seasons with Northern District, taking with him the unique record of having won premierships in each. Between 1973 and 1976 he was a student at the University of New South Wales where he played three seasons as first grade **'keeper with the university's newly-promoted** cricket club. Although he was to later play occasionally for the I Zingari club in the City and Suburban competition his rapid rise in the corporate world prevented him from playing grade cricket after the 1975/76 season. By the late 1980s Mansfield **had become one of Australia's most prominent business figures**, initially as CEO of McDonalds, then as the first CEO of Optus. During the 1990s he headed a federal government review into the ABC, served **as the Australian prime minister's Strategic Investment** Co-ordinator, and is currently a member of the boards of a number of leading Australian companies including McDonalds and Telstra, of which he is chairman. His many contributions to his country were recognised in the 2000 Australia Day Honours List when he was awarded an Order of Australia medal.

Two other players, Steve Whitfield and Bill North, also collected their second cap in successive seasons both having been members of the successful 1971/72 third grade team.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Another important member of the second grade team was its new scorer, Hilary Griffith. Although only 18 years old, Griffith had been involved with Northern District since the mid 1960s, initially as a supporter and, between 1968 and 1970, as **the Waitara Oval scoreboard operator. His path to the scorer's job began in the rather unusual location of a rugby match, when the previous first grade scorer, Rex Levy, who was refereeing the match, asked Griffith, who was a player, if he was interested in taking his place for the following cricket season.** Griffith indicated that he was interested, and after serving his apprenticeship with the 1972/73 second grade team **(and both that season's Poidevin-Gray and Green Shield teams)** would become the first grade scorer for the next nine seasons. Apart from his excellence as a scorer, Griffith was something of a good-luck charm for his teams – of the first 17 matches that he scored for the club, all were won!

The 1972/73 third grade side was again led by its premiership-winning captain from the previous season, Ken Longley. In what was an uncharacteristically low scoring season ND conceded 200 or more on only two occasions, but were able to pass that target just twice themselves. While weather was a factor the poor condition **of the team's home ground, Asquith Oval, was the main reason for the low scoring.** Twice ND was able to dismiss opponents for scores of less than 50, with University all out for 43 in the second round and Waverley for 29 in the eighth round. Opening bowler, Tony Horsley contributed on both occasions, taking 7-19 in the first match and 4-17 in the second, Steve Whitfield taking 6-11 in the Waverley match.

After the 13 competition rounds the team had won eight and lost three matches to finish in fourth place, however their inconsistent batting form showed in the semi-final where they were well beaten by Sutherland at Caringbah Oval, before losing the third-vs-fourth play-off against Manly at Manly Oval.

Best performed players were Max Shepherd (410 runs at 22.8), Neil Howlett (240 runs at 26.2), Tony Horsley (41 wickets at 13.1) and Geoff Williams (30 wickets at 14.4).

The fourth grade team, under new captain, Ian Fraser, started the season well and after five rounds were clear leaders of the competition with four wins and a draw. Unfortunately they lost the lead following the abandonment of their round six match against Bankstown-Canterbury at Asquith Oval when the pitch proved to be unplayable, and all other matches in their grade went ahead. By Christmas they were in third place but then slumped to lose three and draw three matches (all rain-affected) and eventually finished in fifth place. The best individual performers were opening batsman Geoff Brown, who scored 340 runs at 24.3 and pace bowler David Grant, who took 41 wickets at 9.8. An all-bowled hat-trick against Waverley by Geoff Williams was another highlight.

The two fifth grade teams had moderate seasons with the A team finishing in fifth place (eight wins, four losses and five draws) and the Bs in tenth place (five wins, nine losses and four draws). Phil Harris **(252 runs at 36.0) was the best of the A's** batsmen while captain Ken Tulk (34 wickets at 10.4) and Bruce Kimberley (30 at 8.9) **were the leading wicket takers. Kimberley had the distinction of having the A team's** highest score (73 against Manly A) and the best bowling analysis (7-25 against Manly B). For the young B team (just three of the 30 regular players was aged over 21) Adrian Ford was the only batsman to top 200 runs (255 at 17.0) while Peter Ragg (29 wickets at 17.1) and Ralph Condon (24 at 10.4) were the best of the bowlers.

Rae Richmond and Max Lloyd once again led the two City and Suburban teams in 1972/73. Unfortunately the long spell of poor weather meant their seasons were severely disrupted, the As having eight matches abandoned and the Vets nine. The As still managed to play 24 matches of which they won 11 (including nine of their **first 11), lost ten and drew three. Best of the team's batsmen was Mike McCarthy with 301 runs at 23.2, while a number of fine innings were played by 'guest players'**

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

including the only century of the season (103 not out against Nondescripts) by Frank Crowe; a match-winning 67 not out by former NSW player, Ray Flockton; and a 90 by **the club's promising young batsman** John Moran. Of the bowlers, leg spinner Alan Kettle stood out with 42 wickets for the season at 10.0, including innings figures of 6-16, 5-19, 5-21 and 5-37 which helped win him a place in the Combined City and Suburban team which played a match against a NSWCA team.

The Vets were able to win just four of their 18 matches played, their biggest problem being the inability of their young batting line-up to score quickly enough for one-day cricket. Only Keith Pritchard (239) and Brian Walsh (232) were able to pass 200 runs for the season while Owen Ridge (34) and Rob Walker (24) were the leading wicket takers.

Both the club's age teams had frustrating seasons, finishing fourth and fifth respectively in the Northern Division of their competitions. The Poidevin-Gray team, led by Ian Davis, had their first two matches washed out and despite wins over Gordon and Sydney University were unable to make enough ground in the short competition. Davis did well personally scoring 246 runs at 82.0, including a highest score of 116 not out against Gordon at Chatswood Oval – surprisingly, the first century by a Northern District player in Poidevin-Gray matches for five seasons.

The Green Shield team's batting was as good as any team in recent seasons, with innings totals of 3-274 against Balmain, 5-262 against Sydney and 3-278 against Nepean. Indeed they scored in excess of 150 in each match with four batsmen averaging above 35 runs per innings: Paul Price (344 at 57.3), Ross Turner (195 at 39.0), Greg McCann (180 at 36.0) and Andy Simkin (165 at 82.5). An exciting young right hand batsman, Price had been a prolific scorer for the Wahroonga Sports Club team in the Hornsby JDCA competition where he had already scored seven centuries, including a brilliant 190 not out in 180 minutes for the Wahroonga U/16s. He had also scored 180 before lunch in a Watson Shield match for Hornsby Ku-ring-gai against a St George attack which included a future Test bowler in Murray Bennett.

Price's performances in 1972/73 saw him become Northern District's first winner of the Stan McCabe Trophy – awarded by the Cricketers Club of NSW to the **season's highest Green Shield run-scorer**, and both he and Turner won selection in **the City Firsts team. Turner, later to become one of Northern District's greatest captains and the role model for one of Australia's greatest, led both the club and the** City Firsts teams. Team manager, Tom Richmond, was appointed as a Green Shield selector and also managed the Northern Division team and the Combined Green Shield No 2 team.

For the first time since the competition began in 1969/70 Northern District won its first round match in the Sunday One-Day Knockout competition, then won its second round match before being eliminated by Sydney University in the third round.

The club had its usual number of senior representative players. Both Kerry Mackay and Steve Bernard were selected in the NSW team, although poor form saw Mackay omitted for the final three matches. Ian Davis and Mark Clews played for NSW Colts, Davis against Queensland Colts, Clews against Victorian Colts, while they played together for a Metropolitan team. Barry Rothwell, Dennis Kimberley, Denis Lynch and Peter Burnett all played for various NSWCA teams.

Sadly 1972 saw the death of one of its foundation players and a long-time vice president, in Bill Shortland. A useful all-rounder, Shortland, had played for the club for its first ten seasons, before leaving to concentrate on a business career which would eventually see him become General Manager of NRMA Insurance. In his will he left a donation of \$1000 to the club which was used to partly cover the cost of constructing two all-weather practice wickets at Waitara Oval. turf practice wickets from the northern end of the ground, adjacent to the bowling club, to the opposite end.

1973/74

The 1973/74 season saw the NSW Cricket Association introduce several important changes to the rules and structure of the Sydney grade competition. One was the admission of two additional clubs, University of NSW and Nepean, bringing the total number to 18 and meaning that the competition would be expanded to 17 rounds followed by semi-finals and finals. The second change was a relaxation of the strict residential rules which had applied to all clubs (with the exception of the Sydney club) since the commencement of the grade competition in 1893. Under the new arrangement, all clubs were arranged in roughly geographical groups of four with players allowed to sign with any club within their group, subject to the approval of the last club for which they played.

Although unable to win a premiership Northern District had another excellent season in 1973/74, finishing third in the club championship, runners-up in first grade, and semi-finalists in both second grade and the Sunday Knockout competition.

The first grade team was again captained by Barry Rothwell and the season marked the culmination of a re-building phase which had taken place over the previous three or four seasons since the departure of players such as Neil Harvey, Neil Marks, Graham Southwell and John Phillips. Although the first grade team had remained competitive throughout this period, young players like Kerry Mackay, Dennis Kimberley, John Iredale, Steve Bernard, Mark Clews and Denis Lynch had now matured into top quality first graders and the team was again one of the strongest in Sydney.

The pace attack of Bernard, Clews and Mackay was arguably the best in the **club's history, certainly as good as any in the Sydney grade competition of 1973/74.** An indication of its strength was that left arm paceman, Steve Whitfield, was unable to win a permanent spot in the team despite twice having taken seven wickets in an innings on two of the occasions he was called up to fill in from second grade. Against Cumberland at Waitara Oval in round six he took 7-73, and followed up with a remarkable effort against Waverley at Waverley Oval where he had match figures of 10-25, 7-2 in the first innings including the wicket of ex-Pakistani Test batsman, Mohammed Ilyas. In that latter innings Waverley were dismissed for just 26 – **equalling the lowest score on record by an opposition team in Northern District's** history (North Sydney had been dismissed for the same total at Waitara Oval in 1938/39). At one stage in the first innings Whitfield had figures of 4-0 from 6.6 overs.

After losing their first match against Petersham-Marrickville the team went through until the 15th round against Bankstown-Canterbury before suffering another loss, although, the combination of seven one-day rounds and yet another wet summer, had seen a disproportionate number of drawn matches. In the 16th round match against Nepean a fighting innings of 99 by Barry Rothwell spearheaded the team to a first innings win which took them into third place and guaranteed them a place in the semi-finals.

The final round match against Mosman at Rawson Park was a tense and bad tempered match. Needing a win to have any chance of reaching the semi-finals **Mosman threw everything at the ND batsmen, including a 'bean' ball from their** captain, former English Test all-rounder, Barry Knight, to John Iredale before finally **reverting to a 'Mankad' to dismiss number 11 batsman, John Cumming.** Despite this ND was able to total 292 with Iredale (53), Phil Wotton (51) and Mark Clews (41 not out) leading a lower order recovery. On the second Saturday, rain delayed play for two hours, and when Mosman collapsed to 7-125 Knight declared, still 167 runs in arrears. Keen to chase an outright and possibly gain second place, Rothwell gambled

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

by forfeiting his team's second innings and giving Mosman an incentive to chase the 168-run target to win, albeit at a rate of 10.5 runs per over. David Sincok, in his first match of the season, took some punishment but still picked up 5-46 from 5.4 overs, **including the wicket of the home team's promising 17-year-old left-handed batsman, Allan Border.** Eventually Mosman was all out for 119, the 10 points meaning that ND overtook North Sydney into second place. It was the eighth time in 14 seasons that the team had reached the first grade semi-finals.

For the first time the semi-finals and finals were to be played on the Saturday and Sunday of the same weekend, rather than over consecutive Saturdays as had **always been the practice previously. This, allied to ND's higher position, proved vital** when the second vs third semi-final against Norths at Waitara Oval was washed out without a ball being bowled.

The final against Manly was played at Manly Oval and although the home team, as minor premiers, went into the match as warm favourites, Northern District had won both of their previous encounters that season (one in the grade competition, the other in a Sunday One-Day Knockout match). Indeed ND had beaten Manly in each of their prior eight encounters - not since the 1968/69 season had Manly won a match between the two teams.



Ex-NSW all-rounder Terry Lee is caught by Denis Lynch off the bowling of Steve Bernard for three in Manly's first innings of the 1973/74 final at Manly Oval.

Manly captain, Mick Pawley, won the toss and batted but ND immediately took the initiative with Steve Bernard taking the vital wicket of form opener Phil Allum with the second ball of the match. Mark Clews then chipped in with wickets in each of his first two overs to have Manly reeling at 3-12. Worse was to follow for the home team with Bernard and Mackay each picking up wickets to have Manly 5-31. However, a fightback, led by Ian

Howell (46) and Peter Harvey (43) saw Manly eventually reach 148, Mark Clews taking a career-best grade return of 6-40 from 13.7 overs. With almost three hours left to play on Saturday the Northern District batsman chose to grind the runs out and by stumps they had reached 4-87 with Mackay and Rothwell each out for 27 and John Iredale not out on 16. Overnight rain made the task a little more difficult and Manly quickly gained the initiative by picking up the wicket of Ross Howarth without adding to his overnight score. When David Sincok was run out going for a suicidal single the score stood at 6-110. As he had done in the match against Mosman, John Iredale had held the middle order together, helping take the score to 7-127 at lunch – just 22 short of victory. Soon after the resumption however Steve Bernard went cheaply, followed one run later by the vital wicket of Iredale who had batted for almost four hours in top scoring with 36. When Pawley trapped John Cumming for four ND were all out for 133 - 15 short of their target.

It was Manly's first premiership in first grade since the 1957/58 season and a bittersweet moment for Barry Rothwell who, as an 18-year-old, had been a member of

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

that team. For Rothwell, Sincock and Lynn Marks it was their last grade cricket match.

Rothwell later became a NSW selector before moving to Tamworth, while Sincock returned to the game in May 2000 when he was appointed General Manager (Cricket) with the NSW Cricket Association, a new operational position created after a review into the poor performances by NSW teams during the latter years of the 1990s. Marks continued to play City and Suburban cricket for Mosman Vets for a number of years, and died quite suddenly on 7 December 1997 at the age of 57.

There were many excellent individual performances during the season, with four batsmen passing 400 runs for the season (Kerry Mackay 522 at 30.7, Barry Rothwell 491 at 32.7, John Iredale 451 at 28.2 and Dennis Kimberley 442 at 21.0) and three bowlers taking more than 30 wickets (Mark Clews 45 at 16.9, Kerry Mackay 39 at 11.8 and John Cumming 32 at 15.3). Iredale and Rothwell each scored centuries, Iredale 103 not out against Sydney at Rushcutters Bay and Rothwell 103 against Western Suburbs at Pratten Park.

The second grade team was again captained by Neil Marks, and he led a largely unchanged team in pursuit of their second successive premiership. The season **didn't begin well with a loss in the first round match against Petersham**-Marrickville at Marrickville Oval, followed by two washed out draws, two first innings wins and another two first innings losses. Just prior to Christmas they were languishing in the bottom half of the table midway through the season. From there however they suddenly regained their true form, stringing together a series of wins, including each of their last five matches to eventually finish in third place. Unfortunately the rain **which had allowed ND's first grade team to proceed to the final without taking the field**, had the opposite effect on second grade and their season ended when their semi-final against St George was washed out without a ball being bowled.

The star of the season was undoubtedly Steve Whitfield who captured 43 wickets at an average of just 8.3 before being promoted to first grade where he took **his season's aggregate to 72 at 11.5 each. In his end-of-season captain's report**, Neil Marks **summed up this fine cricketer: "Stamina, guts and natural ability allied with modesty, team spirit and an imperturbable nature and you have Steve Whitfield, a captain's dream"**⁴⁵. Whitfield received good support from fellow left-arm pace bowler, Neil Warden (18 wickets at 11.3) while ex-Green Shield captain, Alan White, took 27 wickets at 15.9 with his accurate left arm spinners. Best of the batsmen were Bill North who missed his target of 500 for the season by just 14 runs, scoring 486 at 34.7, Neil Marks (399 at 36.7), Phil Wotton (345 at 28.8) and Ross Turner who topped the batting averages with 211 runs at 42.2. The only century for the season was scored by Vic Gray (111 against Cumberland at Merrylands Oval) who also filled in as wicket-keeper for most of the season.

Although they failed to reach the heights of the two previous seasons (premiers in 1971/72 and semi-finalists in 1972/73) Ken Longley's **third grade team** did well to finish in seventh place. Although there were a number of outstanding batting efforts, especially from some of the youngest players in the team, overall the batsmen struggled on a succession of rain-affected pitches. The outstanding batting effort of the season came from 16-year-old Paul Price who set a new club third grade record in scoring 579 runs for the season at an average of 41.4, breaking the previous record, set by Wally Rothwell in 1932/33, by just one run. Another youngster, John Moran, won the batting averages with 316 runs at 52.7, and also had the highest score of the season – 151. It was one of three centuries for the year, the others being scored by Neil Howlett (109) and John Blazey (124 not out), the latter in his only third grade match for the season. Howlett (475 runs at 33.9), Ross Webb (374 at 34.0) and Geoff Brown (373 at 24.9) all showed that they were destined for higher grades.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

The third grade bowling aggregate was shared by two young bowlers in Ron Halse and Peter Vilimaa who each took 29 wickets. Vilimaa had joined Northern District at the start of the season having played his junior cricket with the Pennant Hills club and showed such potential with his left arm pace bowling that he was immediately selected in third grade, despite being only 15 years of age.

Although the fourth grade won eight of their 17 matches, including two outright, they could only finish in 11th place, partly because the poor state of the wicket at Asquith Oval early in the season meant that two of their first three matches were drawn when matches at most other grounds went ahead. All-rounder David Glasson won both the batting and bowling averages, with 299 runs at 42.7 and 10 wickets at 8.9, with veteran Phil Harris (269 runs at 29.9 and 17 wickets at 10.2) **second in both. Glasson's 135 not out against Sydney at Asquith Oval was the season's top score.** The highest run scorer was 16-year-old Greg McCann with 342 at 19.2 while Bruce Kimberley took most wickets: 29 at 18.4.

The changes to the grade residential rules led to the loss of a number of players and for the first time since the formation of the fifth grade competition in 1969/70 Northern District fielded just one team, led by Geoff Weir. Although the team played only 14 matches the players got plenty of cricket with half of the matches finishing with outright results - four wins and three losses. Of the other seven matches, two were won on the first innings, four lost on the first innings and just one **was drawn. While the team's bowling was reasonably strong they were frequently** forced to defend moderate totals with the batsmen rarely able to accumulate competitive totals. Twice in the first five matches the team was all out for under 40, dismissed for 36 against Cumberland at Cumberland Oval in the first round, and for a record low 32 against North Sydney at Tunks Park in round five. In the entire season there were only two individual scores in excess of fifty while only one batsman, Graham Stewart (283 runs at 21.8) scored more than 250 runs for the season. The bowling averages went to Peter Ragg, whose 34 wickets costs 8.0 runs each, while Geoff Weir was the leading wicket-taker with 37 at 9.4.

It was the eighth time that Weir had won the bowling aggregate and with his retirement at the end of the season Northern District lost one of its most durable and prolific bowlers. Since joining the club from North Sydney in 1951/52, Weir had played for 23 successive seasons and at the time of his retirement was second only to the great Hughie Chilvers as the club leading wicket-taker, with 831 wickets at 14.3. Although primarily a lower grade bowler he had played in all five grades as well as **City and Suburban and had won the club's bowling aggregate on nine occasions: twice** in third grade (1951/52 and 1962/63); twice in fourth grade (1966/67 and 1967/68); three times in fifth grade (1970/71, 1971/72 and 1973/74) and twice in City and Suburban (1956/57 and 1964/65). His record of 58 wickets in fourth grade in 1967/68 still stands as a club record for that grade.

Weir won club bowling averages four times, including twice (1957/58 and **1960/61 in second grade and was one of only four bowlers in the club's history to** have taken ten wickets in an innings (10-28 in a 1954/55 C&S match). On three occasions he took hat-tricks, including a rare double hat-trick, again in a C&S match, **in 1964/65. Fortunately, Weir's retirement from the playing arena was far from the** end of his contribution to the game and he was to remain actively involved in cricket administration at both club and state level for many more years, eventually being awarded life membership of both the NDCC and NSWCA.

As had been the case in 1972/73 the two City and Suburban teams had a large proportion of their matches disrupted by poor weather. The A team had eight of their 32 scheduled games abandoned without any play and another four called off after only a few overs, while the Vets had seven abandoned games. The As won 11 and lost nine of their 20 matches while the Vets could win only five of their 20. Best

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

performed City and Suburban players for the season were ex-Combined Services player, Joff Johnson, whose 314 runs at 52.3 for the A team included four unbeaten fifties; left-arm medium pacer, Keith Parker, who took 45 wickets for the Vets at 11.5; and left arm orthodox bowler, Tim Herald, who took 6-24, 5-35 and 4-11 in successive matches, including a hat trick (all three bowled) against Old Aloysians. The teams had high injury tolls with Kerry Wise breaking his ankle while playing for the Vets at Turramurra Oval, and both Allan May and Don Molloy suffering broken fingers. **Molloy's injury was by far the most serious with the finger eventually being amputated.**

The 1973/74 Poidevin-Gray Shield team was one of the youngest the club had **ever fielded, with an average age of only 17. For the first time in many years it didn't** include a current first grade player, although no less than 10 members of the squad would eventually play in the top grade for the club. In a typically tight competition the team won two matches outright, won one and lost two on the first innings, missing the semi-finals on a countback. Despite the undoubted quality of their batting in most matches they were unable to build a reasonable score with only John Moran with a fine 65 against Sutherland able to score a fifty. Ron Halse (17 wickets at 8.2) and Peter Tout (12 at 8.8) were the stand-out bowlers.

After a good start, the AW Green Shield team slipped to eventually finish fifth in the Northern Division of the competition. The turning point of the season was **undoubtedly an injury to the team's captain and leading bowler, Peter Vilimaa**, who hooked a ball into his face and fractured a bone, missing several vital matches midway through the competition. Despite this Vilimaa was still able to win both the bowling aggregate and averages, taking 22 wickets from just 57 overs at an average of 8.2 **each, and winning selection in the City Firsts team. Vilimaa's opening bowling partner, Michael Coote**, who took 17 wickets at 19.1, and leg spinner Ross Dennett were both selected in the City Seconds team. Best of the batsmen were Brian Van Zuylen (163 runs at 40.8) and Nick Downie (124 at 24.8). Tragically, Downie, a very promising young player, fell ill shortly after the end of the season and died. The Downie Shield, a trophy for Catholic schools, is named in his honour.

1974/75

The Northern District Cricket Club celebrated its 50th anniversary at the start of the 1974/75 season, the occasion being marked with a dinner at the Pennant Hills Golf Club on the 15th November 1974. Nearly 150 past and current members of the club attended together with a number of guests including the former great English Test bowler, Alec Bedser, in Australia as the manager of the touring English team.

On the field the club had its worst season in over 20 years, finishing 14th in the club championship, 13th in first grade, 15th in second and third grades, sixth in fourth grade, seventh and 15th in fifth grade and sixth in the Poidevin-Gray Northern Division. Only the Green Shield team performed up to expectations, beaten in the final of that competition.

The collapse of the first grade team was largely due to the loss of almost half of **the previous year's team with Barry Rothwell**, Lynn Marks and David Sincok all retiring, Phil Wotton leaving the district (he later captained the Balmain first grade team), and both Denis Lynch and, midway through the season, Dennis Kimberley, being transferred interstate with their jobs. **In addition, both of the team's opening bowlers, Steve Bernard and Mark Clews**, suffered injuries and each was also selected as twelfth man for NSW, thus restricting their appearances for the club.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

With the retirement of Rothwell, the first grade captaincy passed to Kerry Mackay and he could not have set a better example to his young team, winning all four playing awards: most runs (591), highest batting average (36.9), most wickets (35) and lowest bowling average (22.5). It was only the second time that this had been done in first grade, by former State player, Vince Collins, in the 1947/48 season.

Among the newcomers to first grade, Max Shepherd (400 runs at 25.0) and Bill North (390 runs at 20.5) did best while a new player to the club, Brett Wilson, was promoted to first grade midway through the season and averaged 60.0 in his five innings. Despite approaches from rival clubs, left-armed medium pacer Steve Whitfield remained at Northern District and finally cemented the first grade spot which he had so deserved for a number of seasons. The top four bowlers, Bernard, Mackay, Clews and Whitfield were given a huge workload, bowling around 80 per cent of the overs between them. Although they took 109 of the 119 wickets between them, they took them at relatively high averages of between 25 and 30 runs per wicket.

While the second grade team also struggled, captain Neil Marks kept things in perspective, likening the situation in 1974/75 to that of the late 1950s when a large number of promising young players emerged through the grades, eventually leading **to one of the club's most successful eras. Indeed the second grade team included a future Test player, in Barker College student 18-year-old Peter Taylor, who joined the club midway through the season. Rather surprisingly in retrospect, Taylor had been overlooked for a place in the club's AW Green Shield team several years previously, team manager, Tom Richmond, defending the omission: "If we'd known he was going to play Test cricket, we'd have picked him!"**

The third grade team, again captained by Ken Longley, could win only four of **their 19 matches, finishing in 15th place. Inconsistent batting was the team's main** problem with most batsmen frequently failing to capitalise on good starts. On exception was Geoff Brown who scored 498 runs at 31.1 a highest score of 111 not out. Peter Garrett (106) was the only other century maker. David Glasson had a fine all-round season, scoring 332 runs at 20.8 and taking 29 wickets at 16.3 while Garrett (375 runs at 28.8) and Longley (332 at 20.8) were the other batsmen to score in excess of 300 runs.

Ian Fraser's **fourth grade team** was the best performed of the Northern District grade teams in 1974/75, finishing in sixth place. They were unlucky not to reach the semi-finals, losing just two matches all season, but having six drawn matches, three of them abandoned without a ball being bowled and once again the Asquith Oval pitch received much of the blame. Best performers in the young team were Phil Voysey (378 runs at 22.2), Brian Van Zuylen (222 runs at 24.7) and Glen McLaren (29 wickets at 15.2).

After entering one fifth grade team the previous season, the club decided to enter two teams in that competition and only one City and Suburban team. The A team was captained by Mike McCarthy while the B team, was led by Max Lloyd who stepped up from the abolished City and Suburban vets team. The As had a season of two distinct halves, winning just one of their first seven matches, but then being undefeated for the remainder of the year. Although they missed the semi-finals, finishing in seventh place, they did win the fifth grade Encouragement Award, a good effort given that 39 players took the field at various times during the season. The best of the batsmen were McCarthy himself who scored 321 runs at 22.9, Graham Stewart (267 at 38.1) and Brian Crawford who scored 100 not out in his only innings for the team. John Ross (27 wickets at 9.3) and Geoff Schuberg (28 at 14.5) were the leading wicket takers, Ross taking his wickets in just five matches with figures of 7-49, 5-55, 5-26 (including a hat-trick), and 4-13.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

The fifth B team found the going tough throughout the season, winning just one match and finishing in 15th place.

The City and Suburban team, once again captained by Rae Richmond, played 26 matches (six others were abandoned), winning 10, losing 12 with four drawn. The **team's best win came** on its southern trip where they defeated the strong Canberra Wanderers team, thanks mainly to a brilliant opening over from Peter Abigail who took three wickets for no runs from his first four balls. Abigail made only a limited number of matches for the team, but later was chosen as captain of a Combined Services team which played a NSWCA team. Another memorable win was against a touring team from England, the Eton Ramblers, drawn from current and ex-students from the famous English school. Here it was the promising young batsman, Brian Crawford, who dominated, scoring 102 – his second century of the season.

The 1974/75 Poidevin-Gray team, captained by Peter Tout, boasted a strong and aggressive batting line-up but overall lacked the bowling power to dismiss opposition teams. The result was a series of high scoring matches, including two where over 500 runs were made in a day. Chasing 255 in 195 minutes against Balmain, number 11 batsman, David Grant, got the winning runs from the last ball of the match. Peter Tout (319 runs at 45.6) and Peter Taylor (239 at 57.8) were the leading batsmen, while Peter Vilimaa (11 wickets at 27.5), Brett Wilson (10 at 21.3) and Taylor (8 at 24.3) were the best of the bowlers.

Under manager, Tom Richmond, and captain, Phil Voysey, the Northern District team reached the final of the AW Green Shield competition for the fourth time in seven seasons. Unfortunately they were defeated comfortably by St George in the final at Drummoyne Oval but had the consolation of providing four players for the end-of-season representative matches with wicket-keeper, Rob McCann picked in the City Firsts team which played Newcastle, and Voysey, Tony Ford and Paul Grimble in the City Seconds team against Country.

1975/76

Not for the first time the NDCC proved its resilience, bouncing back from one of its poorest seasons in 1974/75 to one of its best in 1975/76, winning the club championship for the first time since 1959/60 and only the second time in its history. The overall success of the club was tempered by the failure of any of its teams to win a premiership, although both second and third grades were desperately unlucky to each be involved in drawn, rain-affected finals.

First grade was again captained by Kerry Mackay and for the third season in succession there was a major change in the composition of the team with the arrival of four new players in Michael Hill from Newcastle, Bruce Neill and Tony Appathurai from Cumberland and Rick Lee from Sydney University (and formerly Oxford University). As well Denis Lynch returned from interstate.

Mick Hill, a left hand batsman and right arm off spin bowler, was the most prominent of the newcomers. Born in 1945 at Merewether, Newcastle, he was the son of Ken Hill, one of the best all-round cricketers ever to play in the Newcastle competition, the two playing together briefly during the early 1960s. The younger Hill first came to the notice of the NSW selectors when he scored 113 for Northern NSW against Southern NSW at the SCG No 2 during the 1963/64 season. The following season an unbeaten 102 for NSW Colts against Queensland Colts, followed by 46 (from 145) against Victorian Colts saw him make his first class debut, shortly after his 20th birthday, for NSW in a Sheffield Shield match against South Australia at Adelaide Oval (the same match in which Lynn Marks and Doug Walters set a new Shield record partnership for the second wicket). He was to play intermittently for

NSW over the next decade, and would undoubtedly have played many more times had he opted to join a Sydney club. Instead he chose to remain in Newcastle to concentrate on his studies and later his career as a solicitor.

Hill's decision to play in Sydney was made to ensure that he retained his place in the NSW team, indeed his name had been mentioned as a possible captain. His choice of club was made partly through geographical convenience (he travelled down from Newcastle each weekend), and partly through his friendship with Shield teammates like Steve Bernard and Kerry Mackay, and ex-Shield team manager, Austen Hughes. Although he took some time to settle in Hill had a reasonable season scoring 388 runs at 25.9 and taking 22 wickets at 15.2. His experience proved invaluable to the team in general and, as vice-captain, to Mackay in particular.

As it turned out, Hill's business partner, former Australian rugby union player, Ross Turnbull, was chosen to manage the touring Wallaby team, and Hill was forced to make himself unavailable for New South Wales. Although 1975/76 was his only season with Northern District, he did continue to play in the Newcastle competition for a number of years, eventually retiring with nine premierships caps with the Lambton, Merewether and Charlestown clubs. Prominent in sports administration, including many years as a district cricket selector, Hill is presently chairman of both the Newcastle Knights rugby league club and of the National Rugby League (NRL).

Despite having, on paper, one of the strongest line-ups in the Sydney competition the Northern District first grade team performed poorly in 1975/76, winning just two of their first ten matches and at one stage languishing in last place on the ladder. After Christmas things fell into place and they went through the remainder of the season without losing another match, taking out the first grade Encouragement Award in the process. Mackay had another brilliant season personally, passing 500 runs for the third consecutive season to win both the batting aggregate and averages with 504 runs at 45.8, and taking 30 wickets at 14.9 to win the bowling averages for the second year in a row. Only Steve Bernard took more wickets, his 38 at 16.5 including returns of 6-51 against Petersham and 6-39 against Balmain in successive matches. Despite these performances neither Mackay nor Bernard could **push their way back into the NSW Shield team. Nor could Bernard's opening partner,** Mark Clews, who struggled to find his rhythm for most of the season, taking just 19 wickets at 28.3.

In what was to be his only season with Northern District, opening batsman Bruce Neill performed poorly, scoring just 156 runs in 14 innings with a top score of 38 in his final match before moving to Tasmania. He was a much better batsman than these figures suggest having scored over 800 runs for Cumberland the previous season, and two years later he would play several matches for Tasmania.

The second grade team had a great season and, along with third grade, was **instrumental in ND's club championship success. They finished the competition in** second place before having a comfortable victory (7-398 declared versus 117 and 4-140) over third-placed Sutherland in their semi-final. The win was doubly important in that not only did it give the team a place in the final but it also helped peg back **Sutherland's lead in the club championship.**

Unfortunately the poor weather which had plagued the latter half of the season returned and the final, against minor premiers Cumberland, was washed out after only two hours of play giving Cumberland the premiership. The only good news to come from the match was that, because less than six hours of play had been possible, ND received 10 club championship points, while Sutherland, beaten in their redrawn match, received none.

Not surprisingly in what was one of the wettest seasons on record, the ball generally dominated the bat, and in Steve Whitfield, the Northern District second grade team had a bowler adaptable enough to take advantage of most situations.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Whilst his left arm medium pace bowling would have got him into most Sydney first grade teams, Northern District's pace trio of Bernard, Clews and Mackay again saw him pushed back to second grade. By now however he had added a second string to his bow and was also bowling left arm orthodox spin with the old ball. With this combination he bowled a total of 268 overs to capture 61 wickets, the fifth highest tally of wickets by an Northern District second grade bowler, and the best since Jim Sullivan took 75 wickets in the 1959/60 season. Surprisingly Whitfield's average of 11.4 wasn't low enough to win the team's bowling average, skipper Marks managing to bowl himself just enough to take 16 wickets at 9.2. Importantly the second grade team no longer relied on Marks' batting to anywhere near the extent it had done in the early 1970s when he had almost single-handedly dragged the team out of its long period of mediocrity. Now aged 37, Marks' remarkable batting talents were beginning to wane and his 1975/76 total of 243 runs (at 20.3) was his lowest in any full season since he had made his grade debut almost 20 years earlier.

The big improver of the second grade team was young all-rounder Peter Taylor who, with limited opportunities, took 11 wickets (at 14.6) with his off spinners and led the batting aggregate with 399 runs at 26.6.

Adding experience to the young team was former New Zealand Test batsman, Bill Playle, who played a number of matches late in the season. Playle, then aged in his late-30s, was a stylish right handed batsman who had toured England with the 1958 New Zealand touring team. He struggled on the softer English wickets and failed to regain his Test place until England toured New Zealand in 1962/63. He moved to Australia in the mid-1960s and played a number of seasons for Western Australia before retiring from first class cricket in 1968.

The best performed of the other players were ex-first grade off-spinner, John Cumming (27 wickets at 13.2), Ron Halse (29 wickets at 16.5) and Paul Price (320 runs at 24.6).

In his fifth season as captain, Ken Longley led a talented young team tantalisingly close to what would have been his second premiership, having their final, against minor premiers, Sutherland at Caringbah Oval washed out with victory within sight. Such a finish to the season had looked most unlikely when, after the first five matches, the team had just one win on the board – although the three matches they lost were by margins of just three runs, five runs and one wicket. The latter loss, against Bankstown-Canterbury at Asquith Oval, was to be their last of the season, although there were a number of rain-affected drawn matches. They rose from 11th place just prior to Christmas to finish the competition proper in third place, and met second-placed Sydney University in the semi-finals. Batting first ND could only manage a total of 122 but then fought back to dismiss Uni for just 86 with opening bowler Brian Crawford taking 5-36. A much-improved second innings batting effort saw ND score 243 and at the end of the match Uni were 5-184 giving Longley's team a first innings win. In the final ND needed to win the match and looked likely to do this when they dismissed Sutherland for 159. In reply they were 1-40 in reply when the rain came and the match was abandoned.

There were a number of good performances from the team's young batsmen, none better than that of Neil Howlett whose 430 runs from just ten innings included two centuries. Peter Garrett (422 runs at 32.5) played a number of fine innings including a gutsy and determined 36 not out in the semi-final against Sydney University. In his first season with the club Rowan McGregor (310 runs at 31.0) also showed huge potential, his highest score of 63 also coming in the semi-final. Two young all-rounders, David Glasson (298 runs and 26 wickets) and Brian Crawford (288 runs and 18 wickets) both did well, Glasson being another who saved his best for the semi, taking 5-36. The Northern District fourth grade team also suffered some wretched luck through the vagaries of the weather. Going into the 15th round the

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

team was in fourth place. Playing Western Suburbs at Blick Oval they dismissed the home team for 129 and were 4-87 in reply when the rain arrived and robbed them of a probable win. The draw saw them drop to fifth place and with their round 16 and 17 matches both being rain-affected draws they lost the chance to reach the semi-finals. They did have the satisfaction of helping to seal the club championship with a win over St George in their final match of the season.

Best performed batsmen in the fourth grade team, which was again captained by Ian Fraser, were 17-year-old Phil Voysey who for the second season in a row was **the team's highest scorer with 356 runs at 22.3; and another youngster, Bob Laing**, who won the batting averages with 348 runs at 26.8. The two stand-out bowlers were left-arm bowler David Sutherland, a son of Nigel Sutherland who had played with the club during the 1950s, who took 44 wickets at 12.5; and David Grant, who took 40 wickets at 15.9.

Although there were moves to abolish the fifth grade competition it went ahead and Northern District again fielded two teams, and as in 1974/75 they were led by Mike McCarthy and Max Lloyd – indeed, uniquely, all nine captains in 1975/76 were backing up from the previous season. The A team, which finished in seventh place used a number of Green Shield players, including Robert Thomas who won both the bowling aggregate and averages with 39 wickets at 9.2, including a rare double hat-trick against Mosman – the only grade double hat-trick on record for the club (Geoff Weir took the other in a 1964/65 City and Suburban match). Most of the batsmen struggled on pitches which were often under-prepared due to the consistent wet weather, with Terry McGovern the only batsman to total in excess of 200 runs. In fact McGovern scored his 215 runs from just five innings, including a brilliant 107 against North Sydney and 74 against Bankstown-Canterbury. Others to perform well were Paul Grimble (22 wickets at 17.3) and 15-year-old Tony Ford (21 at 14.7).

Although the fifth grade Bs eventually finished in 12th place they were in contention for much of the season, a couple of critical narrow losses pushing them down the table. The highlight of their season was a good win over their clubmates at Turramurra Oval.

Rae Richmond had a busy season planned for his City and Suburban team with a total of 35 matches on their schedule. As it was they had a few spare weekends with eight of the matches abandoned because of wet weather and another three drawn for the same reason. The team did manage to play all of its annual country matches including an exciting last ball, one wicket win against Cowra.

The two Northern District age teams each finished in third place in the Northern Division of their respective competitions. The Poidevin-Gray team was especially unfortunate in that, with five wins and two narrow losses, they actually tied for first place on points with three other teams but were relegated because of an inferior quotient. In a team which included eight future first graders, Peter Taylor topped the batting averages with 200 runs at 33.3, Peter Tout the batting aggregate (215 runs), and Peter Vilimaa took out both bowling awards with 16 wickets at 10.1.

Prior to the commencement of the 1975/76 Green Shield season the age limit for eligible players was increased from those aged under 16 at the start of the season, **back to under 17. As a consequence all members of Northern District's 1974/75 team** remained eligible to again play in the 1975/76 team. Unfortunately rain seriously disrupted the competition with four of the seven matches drawn. Opener Robert Thomas, **with 19 wickets from just 64 overs was the best of the team's bowlers, ahead** of medium pacer John Grimble (14 at 16.9) and leg spinners Paul Grimble (11 at 23.6) and David Murphy (10 at 11.7). In what was to be the final season of the Rothmans Knockout competition the Northern District team reached the quarter finals, defeated by Newcastle in a match played at Merewether.

1976/77

For a number of seasons the NSWCA policy of playing two additional competition rounds during the semi-final and final weekends had been criticised by many club administrators, mainly because of the difficulty in filling teams for what were generally seen as meaningless matches. The introduction of Encouragement Awards for the non-semi-final teams which accumulated most points in each grade over the last five rounds had been intended to overcome this problem but had failed to make any real difference. For the 1976/77 season the Encouragement Awards were abolished as was the playing of the extra two rounds in fourth grade, although they were still played in the top three grades.

Although unable to retain the club championship, ND finished in a creditable fifth place, with each of the top four grades within the first seven teams in their respective competitions.

During the tea break on the initial first grade match of the season at Waitara Oval the 1975/76 Club Championship pennant was presented to the club by NSWCA **President, Alan Davidson, himself of course a member of the club's first premiership-winning team almost three decades previously.**

In an evenly contested first grade competition seven wins and five losses was enough to see Northern District in equal third place with two other teams after the 14th, and final, pre-semi round. Unfortunately their quotient was the worst of the three teams and they were relegated to fifth place.

Although the first grade bowling attack was largely unchanged from that of the previous season, the batting line-up underwent a major revamp, not as had been rumoured during the off-season with the recruitment of West Indies Test batsman, Alvin Kallicharan, but with a group of exciting, young club batsmen who forced their **way into the team. They including six who played in that season's Poidevin-Gray team.** Peter Taylor, Rowan McGregor and Neil Howlett all made impressive first grade debuts with McGregor (384 runs at 38.4) winning the batting averages and Taylor scoring 479 runs at 31.9. The ever reliable Kerry Mackay once again topped the batting aggregate, passing 500 runs for the fourth successive season on his way to 509 runs at 36.4.

The pace attack was again headed by Steve Bernard and Mark Clews, with the latter finally forcing his way into the NSW Sheffield Shield team. This, together with **injury, limited Clews' club appearances although he was still able to capture 25 wickets** from just 99 overs to top the club bowling averages for the first time. At the other end the big-hearted Bernard had his best season since joining the club, taking 44 wickets for the season at an average of 16.8. Although still capable of bowling extremely fast he was now a much better bowler than in his early days, equally able to take on the roles of stock or strike bowler. A tearaway in many respects in his youth, Bernard had now matured to such an extent that he was given the vice-captaincy, the first step in a progression which would eventually see him appointed as Australian Test team manager in the late 1990s.

Steve Whitfield's **patience and loyalty were at last rewarded and he became a permanent member of the Northern District first grade team from 1976/77 onwards.** Although he now considered himself a better spin bowler than a pace bowler, he was used primarily in the latter role by Mackay, capping a great first full season in the First XI by taking a total of 36 wickets at 21.6 each. With Bernard, Clews and Whitfield so dominant skipper Mackay relegated himself to second change bowler, sacrificing the chance to again secure the 500 runs/30 wicket double. Only three players, Bill Alley (1026 runs and 39 wickets in 1942/43), Vince Collins (510 runs and

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

40 wickets in 1947/48) and Jim Burke (621 runs and 34 wickets in 1960/61) had achieved this double previously – remarkably, Mackay had done it in each of the three preceding seasons.

Although they finished sixth, the ND second grade team, after going so close to winning the premiership the previous season, were disappointing. Although four batsmen had 300-plus aggregates the batting in general was inconsistent, although admittedly the standard of wickets on which they played was often poor. All-rounder Brian Crawford was the most impressive newcomer, winning both batting aggregate and averages with 398 runs at 44.2 as well as taking 21 wickets at 18.8. Jack Moran, Neil Howlett and Bill Playle were the other three batsmen to pass 300 runs. All three coincidentally had top scores in the nineties: Moran 90, Playle 96 and Howlett 99. Marks himself turned back the clock with a fine innings of 106 against Sutherland at Waitara Oval.

Another young player moving up to second grade was left-arm pace bowler Peter Vilimaa who won the bowling aggregate with 36 wickets at 16.5. Former first grade off-spinner, John Cumming, led the bowling averages with 25 wickets at 12.3.

The third grade team, again led by Ken Longley, also narrowly missed a place in the semi-finals finishing in fifth place. Best performed players were Peter Garrett (354 runs at 27.3), David Glasson (336 runs at 24.0), Phil Voysey (393 runs at 20.7), Bob Laing (323 runs at 20.3), Robert Thomas (30 wickets at 17.6) and Peter Terrey (29 wickets at 19.2).

With almost the entire fourth grade team from the previous season being promoted to third grade, captain Ian Fraser had to mould a completely new team in 1976/77. He did it well enough to finish in seventh position, just two lower than in 1975/76. But for a two narrow losses, one by four runs against Bankstown, the other by one wicket to Sydney University, they would have reached the semi-finals. The standout batsman for the team was Terry McGovern who scored 405 runs, the first fourth grader to pass the 400-run aggregate since Ian Black did it in the 1968/69 season, and only the fifth Northern District player in any fourth grade season (Bill Englefield, Phil Harris and Nigel Sutherland were the other three). **A powerful and aggressive batsman McGovern provided one of the season's highlights with an innings of 121** against Gordon at Killara Oval which included 6 sixes and 15 fours. Equally dominant, but with the ball, was David Grant who topped both bowling aggregate and averages with 33 wickets at 13.3 while a couple of ex-first graders in Hartley Anderson and John Phillips each filled in for several matches.

The fifth grade A team had an unpredictable season, including six outright results (four wins and two losses) from their 13 matches, and although they finished in eighth place they were only a few points away reaching the semi-finals. Their batting was inconsistent for most of the season with only two scores in excess of 200 runs and nine under 150. In one of the 200-plus totals Graham Stewart top scored **with 118 not out, the team's only century of the season. Only Stewart (273 runs at 30.3) and Ed Boyce (247 at 19.0) had aggregates of more than 200.** While lack of concentration contributed to the low totals so also did a number of sub-standard **pitches, including the one at the team's ground of Millner Field. Not surprisingly the** bowlers did well with Paul Grimble and Tony Martin taking 35 and 34 wickets respectively.

With Max Lloyd out for most of the season, Simon Wells took over the captaincy of the fifth grade B team. Another young team, they struggled to be competitive and eventually finished in 16th place.

Rae Richmond again set a hectic schedule for his City and Suburban team, this time arranging 37 matches. Six were eventually abandoned because of wet weather **and of the 31 played Northern District won 18, lost 11 and drew two, the team's best** performance for a number of years. The improvement was brought about largely by a

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

much improved batting effort, not surprising considering that the 64 players who played at various times included most members of the first grade team as well as the current NSW wicket-keeper Steve Rixon who picked up a couple of stumpings in his only match. Leading scorer for the team was Bruce Lumby with 437 runs at 23.0, including an unbeaten century against Sydney University, while high grade all-rounder Brian Crawford scored centuries against Nondescripts and Navy.

Northern District entered the 1976/77 Poidevin-Gray Shield competition with one of its strongest teams ever with four permanent first graders, two others with first grade experience and the added advantage of having played together for three seasons. Unfortunately the competition was played under farcical conditions with just three matches being scheduled prior to the semi-finalists being decided. With one round being disrupted by rain the competition became a lottery. Northern District did reach the semi-finals through a comfortable win over Nepean and a draw against Cumberland. In their semi-final against Bankstown they looked certain to proceed to the final when, chasing 220 to win they were 2-170 when a storm hit, washing out the match. As it was the team missed a final place by the smallest of margins. Peter Tout and Neil Howlett, the only two players to bat in all three matches, scored totals of 181 and 159 respectively, Tout scoring a fine 103 in the Bankstown match.

For the first time in a decade the Northern District AW Green Shield team had a different manager with Tom Richmond's **recent appointment as Deputy Principal of Galston High School** forcing him, reluctantly, to reduce his cricket workload. He did remain closely involved with the team, assisting his replacement, Hilary Griffith, as well as continuing to act as a talent scout and selector.

The 1976/77 Green Shield team included two young players who would eventually be considered **amongst the club's finest** ever cricketers in Randal Green and 14-year-old Tim Ebbeck.

Then aged 15, Green had been born at Hawthorn in Melbourne on 15 July 1961 with his family moving to Sydney in 1963. His father, Don Green, was a fine Melbourne district batsman who had played



Two of Northern District's finest players of the 1980s, Tim Ebbeck (left) and Randal Green, made their debut for the club with the 1976/77 AW Green Shield team.

one match for Victoria against Tasmania during the 1956/57 season. A strongly built and aggressive batsman, Randal Green joined ND from the Epping YMCA club in the Northern Districts association and made an immediate impression.

A compact, neat wicket-keeper, 14-year-old Ebbeck had previously played for **St Leo's College at Wahroonga.**

Green in particular made an immediate impression. Batting at number five in the **team's opening match against Mosman at Waitara Oval, he had reached 87 by the** lunch break and, despite some nervous flutters, brought up his hundred with a six and a four. Northern District won that match comfortably then were held to frustrating draws, firstly by Balmain and then by Manly. The Green Shield at that time was not played under limited-over rules but relied on the team batting first declaring in time to ensure a result. In addition there were no rules to prevent

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

negative field placements or slow over rates. Both Balmain and Manly batted well past the half-way point in the match, indeed Manly batted for 67 overs in scoring 169, while ND reached 8-162 from 35 when the match ended.

The team's final three matches resulted in an easy win over Gordon, a loss to Cumberland and a rain-affected draw against North Sydney. The three drawn matches proved crucial and the team could only finish third in their group. Others to shine were the team captain, Graeme Reece, who topped the batting aggregate with 265 runs at 44.2; 14-year-old Greg Briggs (201 runs at 40.2); Green (192 at 32.0); and two leg spinners, David Murphy and Paul Grimble, who captured 15 and 14 wickets respectively.

Two other new competitions were played for the first time in 1976/77. In place of the cancelled one-day competition was the ANZ Bank Cup, a super-grade style competition between six teams, four made up from broadly geographic groupings of grade clubs, the other two from northern and southern NSW country areas. Introduced to try and lift the standard of NSW cricket by providing a higher standard of cricket, each team playing each other in two-day matches.

The other new competition was the Northern District Cup. The brainchild of Neil Marks, and organised by Marks and Tom Richmond, it was played in a knockout format by a number of the high schools within the club's boundaries. Eight schools competed in that first season: Eastwood Marist Brothers, Epping Boys High, Knox Grammar, Asquith Boys High, St Leo's College, Galston High, Barker College and Normanhurst Boys High. Barker College became the inaugural winners, beating Knox Grammar in the final, with the Cup being presented by NDCC senior vice president Tim Caldwell at a special school assembly.

Within a few months Caldwell, in his capacity of Australian Cricket Board Chairman, was to become embroiled in the greatest upheaval in the history of the game with the formation of the breakaway World Series Cricket.

The 1977 Annual General Meeting saw both the club's secretary, Geoff Weir, and treasurer, Maurie Willcoxsen, step down after terms of eleven and ten years in their respective positions to be replaced by Graham Southwell and Mike McCarthy. Weir also ended an 11-year period as one of the club's NSWCA delegates during which time he served on the Grade Committee for nine seasons (from 1967/68 to 1975/76). It was far from the end of Geoff Weir's involvement with cricket. In December 1975 he had been appointed secretary/manager of the Cricketers Club of NSW in Barrack Street, Sydney where he remained until 1981. Between 1985 and 1987 he was treasurer of the Cricketers Club and he also served for many years as a dressing room attendant at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Weir managed several NSW Sheffield Shield teams as well as travelling with the NSW team on their short tour of Zimbabwe at the end of the 1985/86 season. At the 1994 NDCC Annual General Meeting he was made a life member of the club but died just three years later, on 25 October 1997.



Geoff Weir.

The 1976/77 season also saw the first appearance at the club of the man who would eventually take over Weir's voluntary job at the SCG and who would, like Weir, become a life member of both the NDCC and NSWCA. Earlier in 1976, leading Sydney umpire Rocky Harris had moved to Epping and, as was a common practice with umpires, decided to attend pre-season training at his local grade club to volunteer his services in any trial matches the club was planning to hold in order to hone his own skills. When he arrived at Waitara Oval he was made so welcome that when he

subsequently discovered that his house actually lay within Cumberland's boundaries and technically should have gone to Old Kings Oval, he had found the northern club so much to his liking that he decided to stay.

Born Ronald George Harris in Townsville on 16 September 1932, Harris had lost his mother in his early childhood and had been brought up by various relatives, including an aunt in Melbourne who had previously been a matron at Rockhampton Hospital. It was she who decided that he needed a nickname and dubbed him Rocky in honour of her home town. Harris played his early cricket at Thornburgh College in Charters Towers before joining the army in 1950. There he played as a right arm medium pace bowler in a number of Services teams, including matches in Singapore, Malaya and Hong Kong, before transferring to the RAAF in 1957. By the early 1960s had been posted to the Pearce Air Force base in Perth where he played some lower grade cricket before deciding to concentrate on umpiring. In 1967 he umpired his first match in the Perth first grade competition where he encountered a 16-year-old tearaway fast bowler named Dennis Lillee who was playing just his third first grade match.

In the early 1970s Harris was transferred to the ACT where he umpired both Canberra grade and Southern NSW representative matches, before moving to Sydney in early 1973. At the time of his arrival at Waitara he was recognised as one of **Sydney's leading umpires and was on the verge of breaking through** to first class level.

1977/78

With the exception of the third grade team which reached the semi-final and the U/17 team which won the AW Green Shield, 1977/78 was a disappointing season for the club which finished eighth in the club championship.

The composition of the first grade team was largely unchanged from the previous season, although with Denis Lynch again unavailable through business commitments, Newcastle-based Tony Edwards took over the wicket keeping duties as well as strengthening the middle order batting. Although they finished in seventh place the first grade team performed considerably better than this suggests. They had no luck in the early rounds losing three of their first six matches, all by narrow margins, and all away from Waitara Oval which was unavailable until late-January 1978 due to being resurfaced. The team did well to recover through the second half of the season and went into their final round match against Gordon at Chatswood Oval in third place. On a wet wicket the toss in proved decisive and although they fought hard their total of 9-189 declared was never going to be enough.

Both Steve Bernard and Mark Clews played in the NSW Sheffield Shield team, Bernard missing three and Clews six grade matches as a consequence. Despite this, Bernard was still able to top the bowling aggregate with 39 wickets at 11.5 from 127.1 overs. Clews took 14 at 20.5 while Steve Whitfield and Kerry Mackay picked up 35 and 21 wickets respectively. For the fifth straight season Mackay (588 runs at 42.0) led the batting aggregate, scoring in excess of 500 runs on each occasion, while Clews was as surprise winner of the batting averages with 201 runs at 50.3. Paul Price, promoted from second grade midway through the season, carried on his good form from that grade scoring 103 against Balmain at Drummoyne Oval in only his second match – the only first grade century of the season.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

In the 13 seasons between 1971/72 and 1983/84 the Northern District second grade team produced a record of consistency unmatched in the club's history, reaching the semi-finals on 10 occasions and winning the premierships three times. So **the performance of the 1977/78 team in finishing's 17th, or second-last, place** was totally out of character. Led again by Neil Marks and with a line-up comparable in strength with those in recent seasons, lack of application, especially with the bat, appeared to have been the only explanation for such a poor season. The low point came in the round 11 one-day match against Western Suburbs at Pratten Park when they were dismissed for 19, easily the lowest score by a Northern District second grade team (30 against Cumberland in 1929/30 had been the previous low).

Despite the overall disappointment there were a number of individual highlights including the batting of Ross Turner (446 runs at 49.6) and Paul Price (341 at 48.7), both of whom later established themselves as permanent first graders. Each scored centuries, Turner 157 against North Sydney at Waitara Oval, and Price 112 against Randwick at the SCG No 2.

After a successful six-season period in charge of the third grade team Ken Longley passed the captaincy to John Blazey at the start of the 1977/78 season, although Longley remained in the team. After a poor start in which they lost three of their first five matches, the team settled down, losing just one more of their competition matches to finish in fourth place – **the club's only senior semi-finalists**. Unfortunately they were semi-finalists in name only, their match against minor premiers, Randwick, being washed out without a ball being bowled. Blazey had a tremendous season personally, becoming the first third grader to win all four individual awards: most runs (382), highest average (31.8), most wickets (33) and lowest bowling average (14.6). Phil Voysey (354 at 25.3) was the only other batsman to pass 300 runs for the season, while young Randal Green (178 runs from five innings) again impressed. Opening bowler John Grimble (26 wickets at 26.0) shouldered most of the fast bowling duties without a regular partner all season while Phil Blazey took 19 wickets at 18.2 with a mixture of medium pace and off-spin. John Phillips (15 at 19.5) played a handful of games in what was to be the last grade season of his distinguished cricket career.

Ian Fraser's fourth grade team had a fluctuating season, opening with two wins, then going for a seven matches without another victory before coming home with just one loss in the final six rounds. The early season slump proved costly and they could only finish in seventh place. No single player stood out, although two batsmen scored centuries: Graham Stewart (105 against Balmain) and Tony Ford (101 **not out against Gordon**), both made at Asquith Oval. Stewart's innings was part of a 185-run opening partnership with Brian Van Zuylen, the highest recorded opening stand for the club in fourth grade and the second highest for any wicket behind the 203 put on by J Mater and L Gordon for the fourth wicket against Balmain in 1950/51. Winner of the bowling average was off-spinner John Thompson, whose 24 wickets (at 10.5) including two seven-wicket hauls: 7-43 from 19 overs against Sydney at Jubilee Oval and 7-28 from 16 overs against Western Suburbs at Blick Oval.

With a total of 28 players taking the field at different times, the team used a number of fill-in players including John Phillips, Ross Webb, Phil Harris and Lindsay Foster. A fifth fill-in rated a special mention in the captain's end-of-season report: *"I would like to thank the president, Austen Hughes, for filling in for the Balmain match. After the opening partnership of 185, Austen held up the attack for one ball and it was much appreciated by all the team."*⁴⁶

Both fifth grade teams had poor seasons finishing in 12th and 16th places respectively. The As, again led by Mike McCarthy, began well enough and were near the top of the table on 24 points in mid-December, but struggled for the remainder of the season gaining only six more points in the remaining matches. Although he only

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

played in five matches, John Thompson won both batting and bowling averages with 190 runs at 31.7 and 15 wickets at 12.9. Chris Haviland was the leading wicket taker (32 at 16.6) and David Murphy the top run scorer (227 at 22.7). Ross Henry's hat-trick against Cumberland was another, while young wicket-keeper, Tim Ebbeck, who made his grade debut with the fifth grade As, impressed to such an extent that by the end of the season he had reached second grade.

The fifth grade B team had a poor season, winning just one match. Andy Morgan provided one of the few highlights by taking 9-39 against Bankstown-Canterbury at TG Millner Field, the second best club bowling figures behind Geoff Weir's 9-22 in the 1970/71 season. John Phillips, who played matches for both fifth grade teams, turned back the clock scoring 50 and taking 5-29 in the B's match against Cumberland at Coleman Park. The team had again been captained by Max Lloyd, in what was to be his last season with the club. Since first playing as a 16-year-old in the 1938/37 Shires and Green Shield teams, Lloyd's career had spanned a total of 39 years, and 34 seasons. In that time he had scored a total of 6453 runs and taken 603 wickets in lower grade and City and Suburban matches, the only player to have achieved the career 6000-run/600-wicket double. His departure from the club was the result of his moving to the Central Coast where he continued to play for The Entrance club until the mid-1980s.

The City and Suburban team had its best season for many years with 20 wins, nine losses and one draw from the 30 matches played. Star of the season was Michael Grant who took 77 wickets, just short of Alf Hodges' club C&S record of 79, set in the 1958/59 season. Coincidentally, both Grant and Hodges had an identical average of 9.12 per wicket. On five occasions Grant took five or more wickets in an innings, including 8-23 and 7-40, and was selected in the combined City and Suburban team which played an Association team late in the season. Best of the other bowlers were Allan May (34 wickets at 13.9) and Steve Lewis (27 at 8.3), while Hugh Southwood was the stand-out batsman, scoring 529 at 26.5 – the first C&S batsman in almost ten years to pass 500 runs in a season.

The performances of the 1977/78 Poidevin-Gray team didn't live up to expectations and they were able to win just one of their five matches. Despite having a number of regular first graders there was only one half century scored, a superb 87 by Paul Price against Balmain. Price's 162 Poidevin-Gray runs gave him a total of 804 for the season: 256 in first grade, 341 in second grade, 162 in Poidevin-Gray and 45 in City and Suburban. Although he struggled to find form in his first season of grade cricket, former Kenthurst player, Brad Patterson, showed enough in Poidevin-Gray matches to indicate that he was destined for the top grade. Team manager, Hilary Griffith, also showed his ability to spot talent when he commented in his end-of-season team report: "*Ross Turner led the team with a level of maturity to suggest that he has a future in this area.*"⁴⁷

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000



The 1977/78 Northern District Green Shield winning team.
Rear (l to r): Greg Briggs, John Jenkins, Richard Ganter, Ross Henry (Captain), Keith Pitty, David Weeks, Hilary Griffith (Manager). Front (l to r); Peter Joyce, David Creagh,

The best-performed Northern District team of 1977/78 was its youngest, the Under 17 team reaching the AW Green Shield for the fifth time in ten years and winning it for the third time in that decade. Managed by Hilary Griffith and captained by Ross Henry, the team won each of its first four matches (against North Sydney, Gordon, Balmain and Cumberland), then drew with Mosman before having their last two divisional matches washed out. Despite this they finished first in the Northern Division and met Petersham, **their opponents in the club's first Green Shield win in 1968/69**, in the final at Drummoyne Oval. Petersham surprised most observers by winning the toss and sending Northern District in to bat, but after being 1-50 at one stage the move appeared to have paid off when ND was dismissed for just 130. Petersham began the run chase confidently scoring 13 runs in their first over but also losing their first wicket. By the afternoon tea break they looked in control at 3-62 however the young Northern District players fought back magnificently with Greg Briggs getting an lbw decision shortly after play resumed to make the score 4-66. Captain Ross Henry then bowled an inspired spell, picking up three quick wickets including two in one over, to have figures of 4-4. When bad light stopped play at the **end of an eventful first day Petersham's score stood at 9-93** with a superb diving catch by wicket-keeper John Jenkins off opening bowler Peter Joyce wrapping up the game early on the second day.

It had been an outstanding team effort throughout the competition but there were nevertheless some notable individual performances. In his second season of Green Shield, Randal Green again showed outstanding ability to score 223 runs at 37.2, including his second century – 132 against Balmain at Ryde Oval. Even better was the performance of David Weeks who totalled 274 runs at 91.3. Weeks, a boarder at Barker College, was in his third and final year in the Green Shield team and often travelled down from Maitland for matches. He played several fine innings but none better than an amazing 155 not out in just 152 minutes (5 sixes and 18 fours) against

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Mosman at Rawson Oval. Four players from the team won selection in combined Green Shield teams, Green in the No 1 team (where he scored 95 against Newcastle at the SCG), and Briggs, Weeks and Joyce in the No 2 team.

1977/78 saw the decision made to proceed with the building of a new clubhouse at Waitara Oval. It was the start of almost 20 years of frustration and not until the mid-1990s was the project finally completed.

After just one season, the ANZ Cup was discontinued and replaced by a new, but similarly formatted competition, called the State Cup. Eight teams, four from Sydney and four from NSW Country, contested the new cup. Teams were spilt into two divisions with each team playing the other three in its division with the two divisional winners meeting in a final.

In its second year, 16 schools contested the Northern District Cup with Normanhurst Boys High defeating Barker College in the final.

1978/79

After the relatively disappointing results of the preceding season there was a significant improvement by most of the six Northern District grade teams in 1978/79 together with double success in the age competitions.

The successes of the season however were overshadowed when, in early February 1979 the club, indeed the entire cricketing world, was stunned by news of the suicide of Jim Burke. The popular former Test opener, who had played for Northern District between 1953/54 and 1963/64, had later become a stockbroker by profession and had also been a regular cricket commentator on ABC Radio. Outwardly an eternally genial and cheerful person, a number of factors, including the death of his father, marital problems and some failed investments appear to have brought on a bout of severe depression. On the morning of Friday 2 February he left his company's Sydney office and took a ferry to Manly. There he went to the local police station where he applied for, and was given, a gun licence. From there he went to a nearby sports store, purchased a .22 rifle, around midday, drove up the hill to St Patrick's College, There he pinned a suicide note to his lapel and shot himself through the heart⁴⁸.



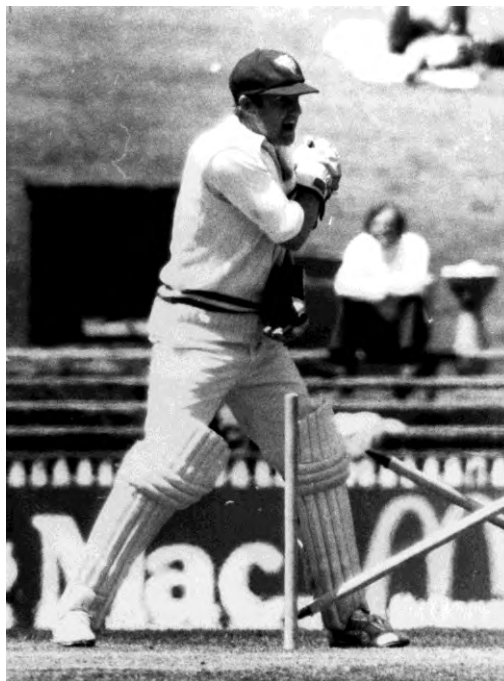
Jim Burke's death shocked the entire cricketing world.

Neil Marks, a former team-mate and close friend of Burke, summed up his complex character: *“On the surface, Jim Burke was a handsome, hail-fellow-well-met sort of bloke, with a great sense of humour and a sense of fun, but Burkey was not always what he seemed. He was also a serious, unwavering individual and a dedicated professional who feigned timidity but underneath was as tough as old teak. Burkey was a man confident in his own ability yet he never seemed conscious of his fame and of the standing he held in the community. He could never be accused of being a ‘big noter’, he never patronised people, nor did he cultivate the individual, as one or two others in his position were inclined to do. Yet Burkey could also be obstinate, self-absorbed and single-minded to the point of refusing to admit there was a contrary viewpoint to his own. He was also a man who was kind and helpful*

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

*and who performed countless favours for others. He was one of the most complex characters I've ever known."*⁴⁹

The only major change to the 1978/79 Northern District first grade team from the previous season was the arrival of former Test batsman, Ross Edwards. Edwards, originally from Perth had moved to Sydney as a consequence of taking an administrative position with Channel Nine and was now living at Wahroonga. A stylish right hand middle order batsman and the outstanding fieldsman of his era, Edwards had played 20 Tests for Australia between 1972 and 1975. Although he was only available for six matches for Northern District during the 1978/79 season **Edwards' experience and enthusiasm was a valuable addition to the first grade team.** He led the batting averages with 241 runs at 48.2, the highlight a classy 136 against Manly at Graham Reserve.



Former Australian Test batsman Ross Edwards joined Northern District during the 1978/79 season. A sensational fieldsman he had begun his career in Western Australia as a wicket-keeper/batsman.

The first grade team had the frustration of losing just one match all season but still failing to make the semi-finals. The main reason for this was that the Waitara Oval wicket was now such a perfect batting strip that, of the seven matches played there, five resulted in draws. Despite having one of the strongest bowling attacks in Sydney grade Northern District was able to dismiss opposition teams at home on only two occasions.

With Mark Clews again a permanent member of the NSW team the ND bowling was dominated by three players, captain Kerry Mackay who took 34 wickets at 13.2, Steve Whitfield 37 at 19.4 (about half with pace and half with spin) and Steve Bernard whose outstanding performance in taking 47 wickets at 13.9 earned him a **belated recall to the State team. It was to be Bernard's last season with Northern District** who left to join the St George club. Since coming to the club from the bush at **the start of the 1970/71 season, Bernard had developed into one of the state's leading fast bowlers of the decade.** In his nine seasons with ND he had taken 320 wickets (all in first grade) including 130 in his last three seasons.

The most significant aspect of the team's batting was Neil Howlett's arrival as a high quality first grade opening batsman. The tall, stylish left hander consolidated his place in the team with his maiden first grade century (116) in the third round against North Sydney at Waitara Oval. With a season total of 406 runs at 33.8 he led **the club's first grade aggregate, and also won a place in the NSW Colts team which played Western Australian Colts in Perth.**

The other young batsmen in Paul Price, Peter Taylor, Ross Turner and Vic Gray all consolidated their positions in the top team.

After their horror season of 1977/78, when they finished in second last place, Neil Marks and his second grade team returned to their more normal position near the top of the ladder. Finishing the competition proper in fourth place they met minor premiers, Randwick, in a semi-final played at Coogee Oval. Batting first the home team scored 175 but then dismissed ND for 145 before batting out the match for a first innings win. Randwick then went on to take the premiership.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

The strength of any sporting club is best measured in its depth and the Northern District second grade team had a team full of players putting pressure on first grade - indeed one would later play Test cricket for England. Paul Terry, then aged 19, had made his county debut for Hampshire the previous season. A right hand batsman, he played just the one season with Northern District scoring 255 runs at 31.9, and later played two Tests for England against the West Indies in 1984. In the second of his two Tests, at Old Trafford, he had his arm broken and was never able to regain his position.

The two highest scorers were Bill North, who topped the batting aggregate with 428 runs, just two ahead of Jack Moran, who at 42.6 per innings won the averages. Captain Marks had a good season scoring 245 runs at 35.0. The opening bowling attack of Peter Vilimaa (39 wickets at 19.6) and Michael Coote (26 wickets at 21.4) was as good as any in the competition while Phil Blazey (23 wickets at 17.4) won the bowling averages for the second successive season.

Despite losing only four matches, with a biggest margin of just 27 runs, and despite having a significantly better quotient (1.45) than in the previous season (1.15) when they finished fourth, the third grade team could only finish in eighth place in **1978/79. While the team's batting and bowling was clearly as strong as that of any team in their grade they were let down badly by poor fielding and catching with nine catches being dropped in one match. The team's batting strength was indicated by the fact that, for only the second time in the club's history, two batsmen scored more than 400 runs on the same season, with Bob Laing totalling 559 runs at 37.3 and Brad Patterson 452 at 37.7. Laing's total was the third highest aggregate in third grade since 1925/26, just behind Paul Price (579 in 1974/75 and Wally Rothwell (578 in 1932/33). Other good contributions were made by John Grimble (341 runs at 26.2), captain John Blazey (259 at 28.8) and Ed Munday (156 in just three innings). Both Laing and Munday scored centuries (Laing 143 against Manly at Graham Reserve and Munday 150 against Mosman at Asquith Oval), although Grimble (99 against Waverley), Patterson (81, 95 not out and 85) and Andrew Shore (91) all weren't far away.**

The third grade bowling honours were shared evenly with five players taking between 20 and 22 wickets for the season, David Glasson (21 at 13.1) winning the averages, while John Cumming (22 at 13.2) and Bob Cadden (22 at 14.2) shared the aggregate.

Whereas the third grade team had lost four matches all season and finished eighth, the fourth graders lost three matches yet finished as minor premiers. The major difference between the two results was that fourths, under new captain Ross Webb, managed to pick up three outright wins and only draw three matches. It was the first time that ND had taken out the minor premiership in that grade.

With no other Northern District team contesting semi-finals the match, against fourth-placed Petersham-Marrickville, was allocated to the club's highest rated home ground – Waitara Oval. **Despite a full season's cricket the Waitara pitch remained a batsman's dream and the Petersham bowlers laboured for two full days** trying to dismiss the ND batsmen. When Webb declared late on Sunday afternoon the score stood at 7 for 530 – a new club record team score, passing the 53-year-old mark of 5-458 set by first grade, also at Waitara in the 1925/26 season. Both Webb (103) and Greg Briggs (141) scored centuries. With the final also to be played at Waitara ND **were now warm favourites to take out the club's first fourth grade premiership** although their confidence was tempered by the knowledge that their opponents, Randwick, had beaten them comfortably (1-181 to 97) in their previous encounter that season. Batting first, Northern District crumbled before the strong Randwick bowling attack and were all out for just 129. Randwick passed the score comfortably, eventually finishing the match on 9-273. Individual highlights of the fourth grade

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

season included the batting of Andrew Shore (391 runs at 30.1), Ross Webb (333 at 37.0), Ed Munday (309 at 38.6) and Peter Coyle (**257 at 64.3**). **Munday's 154 not out** against Manly at Turramurra Oval was the top score. Off spinner, John Thompson stood out with the ball, taking 48 wickets at 13.3 including 10 wickets (8-21 and 2-23) in the match against Cumberland at Mascot Oval, including a hat-trick.

Like third grade, the fifth grade A team paid the price for playing a number of draws and, despite losing just one match all season, they could only finish in sixth place. Their final round match proved crucial when after scoring 6-262 declared and having Cumberland 4-40 the match was washed out. Ken Tulk, who captained the team won both bowling aggregate and averages with 31 wickets at 12.0 while his son, Reg Tulk, topped the batting averages with 253 runs at 50.6. John Seach was the leading run scorer, 268 at 33.5

The fifth grade B team struggled to field a full team for most of the first half of the season and not surprisingly their results were disappointing. In the second half, with Ian Fraser taking over the captaincy they played with full teams and the results improved significantly winning. Keith Delooze, with 165 runs at 20.6 and 13 wickets at 18.7 won both batting and bowling averages, Richard Arbon (239 runs at 19.9) was the leading run scorer and Michael Reid (21 wickets at 25.4) taking most wickets.

Rae Richmond and his City and Suburban team had another excellent season, winning 19 of the 27 matches played. Steve Lewis, with 631 runs at 30.0) was the **team's leading batsman** - only the second C&S batsman to score in excess of 600 runs in a season (Ken Griffith's **675 in 1956/57 was the other**). **Hugh Southwood** was next with 403 at 28.8, including the only century of the season – 100 not out against Wyvern. For the third consecutive season Michael Grant was the leading bowler, taking 41 wickets at 15.3, ahead of Allan May (31 at 13.1) and Tony Thew (26 at 13.0).

The 1978/79 season saw the start of a three-year period of dominance of the Poidevin-Gray Shield competition by the Northern District club. Led by captain Peter Vilimaa and manager Chris Haviland the team had its first match, against Manly, washed out before having an easy win over Mosman, the match dominated by a brilliant unbeaten 104, in just 98 minutes (2 sixes and 18 fours), by Brad Patterson. The third match, on a benign Waitara Oval pitch against the strong North Sydney team, was also drawn meaning that ND needed an outright win over Balmain in their final match to have any chance of reaching the semi-finals. Fortunately Balmain could also reach the semis with an outright win so both teams approached the match in an aggressive frame of mind. Vilimaa won the toss and put Balmain in to bat and with pace bowler John Grimble and 16-year-old spinner Greg Briggs dominating they were dismissed for just 98. Despite a middle order collapse Northern District took a narrow first innings lead. With nothing to lose the Balmain batsmen attacked from the start but again Grimble and Briggs, aided by some brilliant outfielding, had them all out for 121 leaving ND with 18 overs in which to score 115. By now news had come through that North Sydney looked like winning their match and so an outright now became imperative. Grimble and Randal Green made a good start and although they again lost wickets late in the match ND scraped home with just three balls to spare, reaching the semi-finals on a marginally superior quotient to North Sydney.

The semi-final against St George at Hurstville Oval was a high scoring match, with Northern District recovering from 7-194 to set the home team the imposing target of 338 to win with Peter Vilimaa and Ross Henry adding 143 in 128 minutes. The partnership proved crucial as St George replied with 289.

Unfortunately, despite having three days set aside, the Poidevin-Gray final against Western Suburbs was rained out with the two teams sharing the Shield. It was **only Northern District's third success in the competition but with only Vilimaa and Michael Coote** unavailable for the following season there was much promise of more to come.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000



The successful 1978/79 Northern District AW Green Shield team during the final against Sutherland at Pratten Park. Rear (l to r): Hilary Griffith (manager), Stephen Day, Steven Clements, Gary Patterson, David Watt, Lyster Hart. Front (l to r): Jon King, Steven Jones, Greg Briggs (C), Warwick Rippon, Glenn Hodson, Jim Gavin and Warren Smith.

Also enhancing the hopes of future Poidevin-Gray success was the performance of the Northern District AW Green Shield team which earlier in the season had won that trophy for the fourth team in just 11 seasons. Under the supervision of Hilary Griffith the team dominated the Northern Division of the competition winning six of their seven matches, with the other being drawn. The final, against Sutherland at Pratten Park, was a classic match. Northern District batted first and were given a great start by their captain Greg Briggs who scored a brilliant 80 out of a team score of 3-106. From there however ND slipped to be in some trouble at 7-159 before Steven Jones (69) and Glen Hodson (34) helped take the score to a respectable 262. Overnight Sutherland were 2-46 and, although ND always looked the likely winners, the southern team fought hard throughout a long and enthralling day of cricket, eventually falling just 11 runs short of their target.

Although the game was over the controversy was only just beginning and at one stage it looked as if the Shield may have been taken away from Northern District. The problem arose when it was found that one member of the team was over-age - by one day. The problem arose when a check was made, following the final, of the ages of all players who competed, to verify that they were all sixteen years or younger as at 1 October 1978 (the competition having reverted to being under 16 after two years as under 17). It was found that one of the ND players, Jon King, had actually been born on 1 October 1961 and so technically should not have played. Both Sutherland, the beaten finalists, and Mosman, the Northern Division runners-up, put in a claim for the Shield, however at the next meeting of the NSWCA, it was decided that it should remain with Northern District.

Rarely had a player dominated a Green Shield season to the extent that Greg Briggs did in the 1978/79 season. A son of a former NSW and Australian XI batsman

of the early 1950s, Ron Briggs, he had played his junior cricket with the Gosford Cricket Club prior to being graded with Northern District at the start of the 1976/77 season when he was just 13 years old. In the eight matches of the 1978/79 Green Shield competition Briggs scored a total of 442 runs, including a top score of 113 against Gordon at Killara Oval, winning him the Stan McCabe Trophy for the best aggregate in the Green Shield competition. It was easily the highest aggregate by an ND player in a Green Shield season, beating Kerry Mackay's **previous (1964/65) club record** by almost 100 runs. With the ball, he bowled his left arm orthodox spinners with remarkable accuracy for one so young, taking 16 wickets for 200 runs from 116.5 overs, taking 2-47 from 35 overs in the final. His leadership was equally impressive and led to his appointment as captain of the combined Green Shield firsts team.



Greg Briggs set a new Green Shield batting record in 1978/79.

In the Northern District Cup Epping Boys High (9-129) defeated Barker College (8-119) in the final at Asquith Oval with future Wallaby five-eighth Brett Papworth top-scoring for the winners with 44.

At the 1979 Annual General Meeting, Graham Southwell stood down after two years as club secretary and NSWCA delegate, to be replaced by Hilary Griffith. At the **age of 24, Griffith was the youngest secretary in the club's history, and while this in itself caused no problem, there were doubts as to how, with his confident and often outspoken manner, he would fare in the austere surrounding of Cricket House and the monthly meetings of the NSW Cricket Association.** Under strict instructions from club president, Austen Hughes, to **"look, listen, learn and keep quiet"**, Griffith attended his first Association meeting, accompanied by fellow delegate and ACB Chairman, Tim Caldwell, where he achieved the unique distinction of being appointed immediately to the Grade Committee. After about half a dozen meetings during which he sat, listened and was dutifully silent, he was given free reign by Caldwell to express his opinions as he saw fit. It was the start of a major contribution which Griffith would make over a period spanning more than two decades, both with the NDCC and with the Hawkesbury club.

1979/80

Prior to the start of the season, the Grade Committee made a number of modifications to the competition structure. Two new clubs were admitted, Southern Districts and Macquarie University, although both only fielded teams in the third and fourth competitions. This brought the total number of teams in those grades to 20 meaning that they played under a different draw from the first and second grades. All grades were to play 15 rounds followed by the normal semi-final and final matches.

For the first time since the 1938/39 season, and only the second time since ND had entered the grade competition, all first grade matches were played over two days, including three on the Saturday and Sunday of the same weekend. 1979/80 also saw the end of the contentious re-drawn matches over the final two weekends of the competition with the club championship now being decided after the 15th round and not including semi-final and finals.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

For Northern District the overall improvement shown by most teams in 1978/79 continued into the 1979/80 season with the club moving up one place to third in the club championship.

The first grade team was captained for the first time by Ross Edwards, and **although at one time it looked as if Trevor Chappell would join the club, he didn't, and the side was largely unchanged from that of 1978/79. In a continuation of the team's** frustrating run which had seen the team narrowly miss out on a place in the semis in five out of six seasons, they finished in fifth place just one point out of the play-offs. Edwards himself missed a number of matches, initially through representative commitments (he played three matches for NSW including one as captain) and later through a nagging hamstring injury. In his absence Kerry Mackay resumed the captaincy.

Much of the team's success flowed from the consistently good starts given them by opening batsmen, Neil Howlett and Paul Price. On seven occasions they put on at least 50 for the first wicket including 102 against Sutherland at Sutherland Oval and 222 against Balmain at Waitara, Price scoring an even 100 and Howlett 118. Their stand was just 12 runs short of the first wicket record set by Jim Burke and Finley Brian in 1953/54. The two batsmen had contrasting styles, Price short in stature but dogged and determined, while Howlett was tall, stylish and fluent. Both topped 400 **runs for the season, Price scoring 445 at 31.8 while Howlett was the team's leading** sun scorer with 642 at 45.9.

Kerry Mackay had yet another outstanding season, scoring 553 runs at 46.1 and taking 21 wickets while Edwards, in just nine matches scored 397 runs at 44.1. The leading wicket taker was Steve Whitfield with 31 at 22.4 while all-rounders Peter Taylor and Mark Clews had contrasting seasons – Taylor winning the bowling averages with 25 wickets at 19.0 but having a disappointing season with the bat, and Clews taking just 14 wickets but scoring 246 runs at 35.1.

Neil Marks again captained the second grade team, although he did announce that it was to be his last full season as a player. The side he led contained a good blend of youth and experience, the former including players like Randal Green, Greg Briggs, Tim Ebbeck and Michael Coote; the latter led by Marks, John Iredale, Phil Blazey and a mid-season signing, all-rounder Hugh Martin. A right hand batsman and right arm medium pace bowler, the 32-year-old Martin, born in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) had played first class cricket for Transvaal in the South African Currie Cup competition before moving to Australia where he played grade cricket with Balmain as well as a number of matches for New South Wales.

Despite a narrow loss to Randwick in their first match the second grade team led the competition by the middle of the season, following a string of six straight wins. From their next seven matches they won just one before a crucial outright win over St George at Hurstville Oval in the final round saw them finish in fourth place and met minor premiers Balmain at Drummoyne Oval. The match was dominated by John Iredale who took 5-22 as Balmain collapsed to be all out for just 101 and then scored 95 as ND piled on the runs, with Marks eventually declaring at 9-402. Randal Green (83), Jack Moran (69), Martin (46) and Marks (35) all made valuable contributions. Facing an impossible task Balmain batted again and were 9-157 at the end of the match.



John Iredale.

The second grade final between Northern District and Sydney University was played at University Oval No 2 with ND needing to

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

win the match, a draw being enough for the higher-placed Uni team. On a good batting strip ND declared at their overnight score of 8-300 with Iredale (55) again top-scoring just ahead of Martin (53). University began steadily to be 0-35 when the ND spin attack of leg-spinner Paul Grimble and slow left-armed Greg Briggs took control. At the lunch break Uni had collapsed to be 5-62 and shortly after, at 6-84, with their last specialist batsman, Steve Ward, at the crease and three and a half hours to play the game appeared to be over. By tea however the students had rallied to reach 7-173 with Steve Ward joined by leg-spinner Chris Elder, destined, a decade and more later to play a major part in another final involving ND. The pivotal moment in the match came soon after tea when a skied hook from Elder was dropped in the outfield. Ward and Elder remained together for almost an hour more, before Michael Coote made the vital breakthrough having Ward caught by Jack Moran. Elder and opening bowler, Steve Glenday, then combined to take the score to 8-243 when Elder was finally dismissed for 21. The match ended in controversial circumstances, firstly with Glenday being given not out to a bat/pad catch by Brian Crawford (which Glenday later acknowledged was out), and then, with 40 minutes of scheduled play remaining, when the umpires stopped play because of bad light.

It was a frustrating way to end the remarkable playing career of Neil Marks. Since his first match for the club, as a 12-year-old in the 1950/51 Green Shield team, Marks had scored a club record total of 11,229 runs at an average of 33.7, had represented his state at Colts and first class level. But for the life-threatening illness which struck him in his early twenties he would almost certainly have played Test cricket, and the courage and tenacity which he showed in overcoming that illness **proved an inspiration to all those who knew him. He played in both of the club's** premierships-winning first grade teams of the 1960s and later led the second grade team to the title in 1972/73. The benefits to the club of his nine years as second grade captain cannot be underestimated, taking an under-performing team from 15th place to premiers in just two seasons. Throughout the 1970s, as second grade captain, Marks played a major role in the development of the many talented young cricketers who were moving through the grades during that period and much of the future success of the club can be directly attributed to his influence. Off the field Marks was equally active, serving on the club committee from 1959 onwards, and he would remain active for many more years both at club and Association level. At the 1980 NDCC Annual General Meeting Marks, Ian Fraser and John Jagoe were all awarded life membership.

The star of the 1979/80 second grade team was 18-year-old John Iredale whose total of 684 runs (at 45.6) was second only to the 742 runs scored by Carl Brennan exactly 50 years previously. As well as winning both batting awards Iredale also took out the bowling averages, his 18 wickets costing just 14.4 runs apiece. Jack Moran (509 runs at 28.3) also batted consistently, while teenagers Randal Green (451 at 23.7) and Greg Briggs (353 at 35.3) showed that they were both ready for first grade cricket. Against Penrith at Waitara Oval, Briggs scored a superb 151 not out

The bowling honours were shared between Iredale, Brian Crawford (42 wickets at 15.8), Paul Grimble (41 at 17.3) and the consistent Phil Blazey (39 at 16.6).

John Blazey again captained the Northern District third grade team in the 1979/80 season. The competition, now comprising 20 teams, was dominated by Northern District and Randwick both of which went through the 15 rounds undefeated, without being drawn to play each other. Randwick took out the minor premiership with ND finishing in second place. Both teams won their semi-finals with Northern District having a comfortable win over University of NSW at Waitara Oval (9-266 declared versus 173 and 9-128). In a closely fought final at Coogee Oval ND was dismissed for 108 with Randwick scoring 8-158 in reply to take out the premiership. In a season largely dominated by bowlers, especially in the nine matches

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

played on the poor Asquith Oval pitch, two batsmen passed 400 runs (Richard Fethers with 466 at 25.9 and Andrew Shore 406 at 25.4). Seam bowler David Glasson's **56 wickets (at 12.9) was the third highest aggregate for the club in third grade** behind Hedley Day's record of **68, set during the one-day war years**, and Alf Ziehlke's **60 in 1950/51**. **John Grimble**, bowling with much improved control, took 41 wickets at 14.0, including match figures of 14-66 against Manly at Graham Reserve. In the second innings of that match he took 9-32, the best ever return for the club in **third grade. It was to be Grimble's last season with Northern District. From 1980/81** he played for Sydney University, **winning the 1987/88 O'Reilly Medal for the first grade player of the year.**

After going so close to winning the premiership in the previous season, the fourth grade team performed poorly in 1979/80. After nine matches they had won just one match and looked likely to finish last, before gaining some respectability with four wins in their last six matches, and finishing in 14th place in the 20-team competition. The team was captained by Lindsay Foster with the best performed players being Bob Cadden (433 runs at 43.3 and 22 wickets at 19.2) and David Grant (22 wickets at 18.6).

Northern District again fielded two fifth grade teams in 1979/80. The trend for the season was set when the two teams met in the first round of the competition at Somerville Park with the Bs scoring an upset 37-run first innings win. The Bs followed this up with a comprehensive win over North Sydney thanks to an unbeaten 113 by Keith Delooze while the A team was beaten by Gordon. These early results ensured that the two teams would be treated relatively evenly by the selectors and as a result the B team went from strength to strength, eventually finishing in third place. By contrast the A team struggled to compete, finishing in 17th place. For the A team, captained for the first half of the season by Ross Webb and from then on by Mark Payne, one of the few highlights was a brilliant innings of 149 not out by 16-year-old right hand batsman Stephen Day against the University of NSW at David Phillips **Field South. Day's Green Shield team-mate Angus Farncomb** also impressed in his first season in grade.

Much of the success of the fifth grade B team in 1979/80 can be attributed to Ian Fraser **who, in his final captain's report at the end of the previous season, had** pushed strongly for the second fifth grade team to be treated more equitably to ensure that the young players in the team were given fair opportunities. The results of this new approach could hardly have been more emphatic with the B team winning ten of its 15 matches to finish the competition proper in second place. Unfortunately they were beaten by Cumberland in a high-scoring semi-final at Asquith Oval. Stars of the season were Keith Delooze, who was dismissed just four times in nine innings on his way to scoring 356 runs at the outstanding average of 89.0. Delooze also played seven matches for the A team where he scored 185 runs for three times out, his total for the season of 541 at 77.3 establishing a new club fifth grade record for both batting aggregate and average, and also winning him the Sydney fifth grade batting averages. Equally dominant with the ball for the B team was pace bowler Chris Haviland who took 55 wickets at 15.4, also a club fifth grade record.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000



The 1979/80 Northern District Poidevin-Gray Shield winners.
Rear (l to r): Reg Grimble (Scorer), Tim Ebbeck, Tony Ford, Andrew Shore, Ross Henry, Gordon Morgan, Graham Reece, Stephen Day, Chris Haviland (Manager). Front (l to r): Paul Grimble, Greg Briggs, Randal Green, Phil Voysey (Captain), John Grimble, Peter Coyle.

After many years of frustration over negative tactics and an excessive number of drawn matches, the Poidevin-Gray Shield competition was finally changed to a limited-over format with each side permitted to bat for a maximum of 60 overs. As joint holders of the Shield, and with a largely unchanged team, Northern District entered the 1979/80 competition as one of the favourites. They went through their five divisional matches without defeat, although the weather did intervene in matches against Gordon and Mosman, both of which were drawn. These results were enough to win the Northern Division of the competition and set up a meeting with St George at Waverley Oval.

Batting first, Northern District got off to a great start with Greg Briggs (57) and John Grimble (20) putting on a 61-run opening stand. The next seven wickets fell for just 67 to leave them 7-138 before Tony Ford (23) and Ross Henry (15) pulled the score up to a defensible total 185. Opening bowler Henry immediately had the St George batsmen on the back foot bowling aggressively and picking up an early wicket. Continuous pressure, combined with two brilliant pieces of fielding by Gordon Morgan, an ankle height catch followed by a run out, had St George in trouble at 5-51, and they were eventually all out for **105. It was Northern District's fourth Poidevin-Gray success, three times as premiers and once as joint premiers.**

Northern District's Green Shield team began their quest for a third successive title confidently with a win over Mosman at Waitara Oval. Then the frustration set in with Balmain's last pair holding out for the draw in the second round, followed by a three-run loss to Manly and two washed out draws against the weak Gordon and Sydney teams. An easy win over North Sydney and another rain-affected draw against Cumberland meant that the team could only finish third in the Northern Division, behind the eventual Shield winners, Balmain. The team was again managed by Hilary Griffith and captained by Stephen Day, who later became the fourth Northern District player in 11 seasons to captain the Combined AW Green Firsts team (Barry Piper in 1970/71, Ross Turner in 1972/73 and Greg Briggs in 1978/79 were the others). Day (186 runs at 37.2), Stuart Reed (189 at 37.8) and former Thornleigh junior Scott Sexty

(165 at 33.0) were the major contributors with the bat, Reed's 101 against North Sydney at Waitara being the only century of the season. Pace bowler, Stephen Liggins from the St Ives club, was the leading wicket taker with 14 wickets at 11.5, including returns of 4-23, 4-50 and 4-39 in the first three matches.

Two of the club's most promising young batsmen were the leading scorers for the season, Stephen Day scoring 774 runs in all matches (250 in third grade, 131 in fourth grade, 187 in fifth grade, 20 in Poidevin-Gray and 186 in Green Shield); Greg Briggs 698 runs (353 in second grade, 229 in third grade and 116 in Poidevin-Gray).

Rae Richmond again ensured that his City and Suburban team had its usual full book playing 31 matches of which 17 were won, 12 lost and two drawn. Three batsman scored over 400 runs for the season: Steve Lewis (453 at 18.1), John Grant (412 at 31.7) and David Lewis (401 at 20.1); while four bowlers passed the 30-wicket mark: Tim Stokes (53 at 14.1), Steve Lewis (42 at 13.5), Michael Grant (34 at 18.2) and **John McManis (32 at 18.8). Lewis's double of 453 runs and 42 wickets was only the second 400 runs/40 wicket double in the club's C&S history (John Dower's 533/53 in 1962/63 was the other).** Lewis was later selected in the Combined City and Suburban team which played a NSWCA team.

In the schoolboys' Northern District Cup, 16 teams entered, with Marsden High becoming the fourth different winner in the four years of the competition, defeating Turramurra High in the final. Ross Edwards made the presentation.

1980/81

The 1980/81 season was one of highs and lows for the Northern District Cricket Club. After several seasons of steady improvement across the grades the club championship was won for just the third time since 1925/26. Unfortunately, despite this overall success no grade premierships were won, although each of the top three teams reached the semi-finals, first grade in second place and both second and third grades as minor premiers.

There was one significant alteration to the rules of the game in Australia with, as part of the agreement which brought about the end of the World Series Cricket split, six-ball overs becoming standard across all levels of Australian cricket at the start of the 1979/80 season.

The first grade team, again led by Ross Edwards, was virtually unchanged from that of the previous season. They began the season well with an outright win over Balmain, a draw against Mosman and two first innings wins over Sydney University and North Sydney, the latter match highlighted by Jack Moran's **maiden** first grade century – a match-winning 102 not out from an innings total of 7-181. A loss to St George followed then, apart from losses in the only two scheduled one-day matches in rounds six (against University of NSW) and round nine (against Waverley), the side remained unbeaten for the remaining competition rounds. Finishing in second place ND had a comfortable win over Petersham-Marrickville at Waitara Oval, the match dominated by a fine all-round performance of 74 and 4-33 by Kerry Mackay.

The final, against minor premiers University of NSW at the latter's **home ground, Village Green, was Northern District's first in the top grade in eight seasons.** Batting first and needing only a draw to win the premiership UNSW batted well into the second day, eventually dismissed for 236 in 481 minutes. With just four hours in **which to reach this target, and in conditions which suited the Uni's strong bowling** attack headed by future Test paceman Geoff Lawson, ND struggled eventually falling for just 103.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Once again the batting star of the season was opener Neil Howlett, whose aggregate of 713 narrowly passed Neil Harvey's **post-war** club record of 710, and was the second highest in a non-war season since Roy Loder's **1925/26 total of 754**. Kerry Mackay once again had a great all-round season with 384 runs (at 32.0) and 42 wickets (13.0), as did Mark Clews (302 runs at 25.2 and 45 wickets at 14.7), the first **time in the club's history that two first grade players had achieved** the 300 runs/30 wicket double in the same season. Others to perform well were Jack Moran, whose 363 runs at 25.9 finally cemented a permanent first grade spot and wicket-keeper Bob Oakley who backed up his 22 dismissals by scoring 293 runs at 26.7.

Under new captain John Iredale the second grade team began the season brilliantly winning each of their first five matches. A mid-season slump which saw them lose three of four matches was followed by another five straight wins, punctuated only by an abandoned match against Bankstown at Waitara Oval. Finishing as minor premiers, ND met fourth-placed Waverley at Somerville Park. Batting first Waverley scored 217 with young all-rounder Brad Patterson taking 4-75. In reply Northern District could only reach 197 with Patterson again the main contributor with 50.

Best performed second grade batsmen for the season were captain Iredale (476 runs at 34.0), a newcomer in former Parramatta and Western Suburbs batsman, Gavin Ridley (421 at 32.4), Randal Green (334 at 30.4) and Ross Turner, down from first grade after a disappointing first half of the season, who recovered his form quickly to top the batting averages with 307 runs at 38.4. Ridley and Green scored the **team's only centuries, 145 in even time against Gordon at Chatswood Oval (Ridley) and 104 not out against Balmain at Ryde Oval (Green)**. The season's bowling honours were shared evenly between Phil Blazey (25 wickets at 19.8), Hugh Martin (24 at 13.5), Brad Patterson (24 at 16.1) and Brian Crawford (21 at 21.1).

The third grade team, again captained by John Blazey, was able to match the **second grade team's performance in taking out the minor premiership, their 76 points** from 12 wins from 15 matches highest by any team in any grade that season. For most of the season they had looked odds-on favourites to take the premiership winning their first 11 matches, most by comfortable margins. Indeed, if the abandoned round 12 match is ignored, the team won 12 straight. Unfortunately after round 13 the team slumped badly, losing their last two matches in the competition rounds, and like second grade were beaten in their semi-final against the fourth-placed team, Petersham at Asquith Oval.

The club's disappointment at the defeat of all three of its higher grade teams in the finals was heightened with news of the death of Bill North. Popular and highly respected, North had first played for the club with the 1963/64 AW Green Shield team, later captaining that team. He won back-to-back premierships with the 1971/72 third grade and 1972/73 second grade teams and during the mid-1970s had been a regular first grader.

During 1980 he had been diagnosed with cancer and had undergone surgery to remove the tumour. The operation appeared to have been successful and North had resumed his cricket career at the start of the 1981/82 season with scores of 68 and 86 in third grade, and 60 in second grade suggesting that he had made a full recovery. Late in 1980 however it was found that the cancer had returned and in March 1981 he died.

As a tribute, the Bill North Memorial Award was created. Effectively the NDCC Clubman of the Year award,



Northern District lost one of its most popular members with the death of Bill North.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

it was first presented at the end of the 1980/81 season, and each subsequent season since, to the player who, in the opinion of the club committee, had contributed most to the club both on and off the field during the previous year. The names of one or more nominees are submitted to the full club committee by a sub-committee, generally comprising the club president and senior vice president.

The popular winner of the inaugural Bill North Memorial Award was Ross Turner, **with the award being presented to him by Bill's widow, Carolyn, at a function** held at the Blue Gum Hotel to celebrate the club championship victory.

The Northern District fourth grade team had another disappointing season, finishing in 12th place with six wins, six losses and three draws from their 15 matches. Best performed batsmen were Andrew Shore (314 runs at 44.8) and Peter Coyle (281 at 40.1), both of whom were promoted to third grade in the second half of the season. Shore was one of three century-makers, scoring 147 against Cumberland at Merrylands Oval; the others were Warwick Rippon, whose 166 against Balmain at ELS Hall Park was a club fourth grade record individual score, and Peter Burnett, 103 not out against Waverley at Snape Park. Team captain, Bob Cadden, was the leading wicket-taker, with 27 at 20.4, ahead of Stephen Liggins (26 at 17.3).

After its poor performance of the previous season when they had finished 17th, the fifth grade A team improved significantly to be placed fifth with nine wins, four draws and just two losses from their 15 games. Captained by Reg Tulk, the son of club stalwart Ken Tulk, they were unlucky not to reach the semi-finals with one of their two losses, against Cumberland at Coleman Oval, being by a single run and at least two of the draws looking like certain wins before rain washed out each second day (against Manly, ND was 2-55 chasing 64). Alan Darwin, with 328 runs at 41.0, won both batting aggregate and average, scoring his maiden grade century (108) against the University of NSW at David Phillips Field sharing a 176-run fourth wicket partnership with Keith Delooze whose 110 not out (in one session) was the only other century of the season. The team total that match of 5-350 declared was a new club fifth grade record. Of the fifth A bowlers, John Thompson (34 wickets at 14.4) and Alan Swan (29 at 14.6) dominated, sending down almost half **of the team's total overs** between them.

The fifth grade B team, after their surprise success in 1979/80, finished near the tail of the competition with five wins, eight losses and two draws. Captained by Mark Payne the team included a number of promising young players the best of which was Angus Farncomb who won both batting awards with 262 runs at 32.8. Chris Haviland did likewise with the ball, taking 32 wickets at 15.3.

Although he was to play at least one match each season until the C&S team was disbanded in 1994, the 1980/81 season effectively saw the end of Rae Richmond's long and distinguished career with the Northern District Cricket Club. Richmond, a local real estate agent for many years, sold his business and retired to a property at Anembo, south of Captains Flat in southern NSW. There he continued to play for many years, firstly with the local Jerangle Cricket Club and then occasionally with the Kookaburra **Cricket Club in Crookwell, one of the Northern District C&S team's** regular country opponents.

Since joining ND in the 1951/52 season Richmond had worked tirelessly, not just for the City and Suburban teams but for the club in general. Because City and Suburban matches were generally organised between the various clubs rather than by the C&S Association there was a considerable amount of work involved and for around 30 years Richmond took on this task not only for his own team but also for the B or Vets team. In addition to this, from the early 1970s onwards, Richmond organised a series of annual trips to the country for his team. In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the club, a Farewell Dinner was held for him in May 1981 at the Royal Automobile Club in Sydney, where a number of club members

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

including Ken Griffith, John Carter, Doug Cameron and Austen Hughes spoke of his achievements.

The 1980/81 City and Suburban team had a reasonably successful season, winning 18, losing 10 and drawing eight of their record 36 matches. For the third straight season Steve Lewis topped the batting aggregate, scoring 497 runs at 24.5, while Hugh Southwood led the batting averages with 327 runs at 40.9. Best of the bowlers was Michael Grant with 49 wickets at 11.3.

The club's two age teams once again stood out, winning the Poidevin-Gray Shield jointly with St George and going down narrowly to the same club in the final of the AW Green Shield. The Poidevin-Gray team was led by Paul Grimble, and although it had several high grade batsmen, in Randal Green, Stephen Day and Greg Briggs, all three struggled throughout the competition. Indeed only two batsmen (Brad Patterson and Warwick Rippon) had 100-plus aggregates. **It was the team's bowling and fielding which contributed most to their success.** The team won four of their five divisional matches, a 7-run loss to North Sydney in the opening round being followed by wins over Balmain, Manly, Gordon and Mosman. These results gave them first place in the Northern Division and the right to host the semi-final against Bankstown-Canterbury at Waitara Oval. That match was subsequently abandoned due to wet weather, as was the final, against St George, also set down to be played at Waitara. Although a disappointing way to finish the competition, the end result was an unprecedented third straight success in Poidevin-Gray following the joint premiership by Peter Vilimaa's **1978/79 team and the win by Phil Voysey** and his 1979/80 side. The stand out player was Brad Patterson, who not only won all four club performance awards (batting aggregate, 227 runs; batting average, 56.8; bowling aggregate, 18 wickets; and bowling average, 7.5) but also took out the Richie Benaud Award, presented to the outstanding Poidevin-Gray player of each season by the NSW Cricketers Club.

Despite having disappointing seasons both Greg Briggs and Stephen Day had shown enough talent previously to win selection in the NSW Under 19 team which contested the Australian Under 19 championships in Brisbane. From there Briggs was chosen in the Australian U/19 team which toured Pakistan in February/March 1981.

The 1980/81 Green Shield team was led by all-rounder Scott Sexty and again managed by Hilary Griffith. They began the competition positively with a rare outright win over North Sydney at Somerville Park, dismissing the visitors for 76 and 78. Another comfortable win over Gordon, including a club record Green Shield score of 160 by Sexty, was followed by a one-run loss to Balmain – the first loss to that club in 16 seasons. Another thriller followed, against Cumberland at the Old Kings School, where after dismissing the home team for just 82 ND collapsed to be 6-32. Bruce Cunningham and Angus Farncomb added 45 for the seventh wicket before the next three wickets fell for the addition of just one run – still five runs needed with the last two batsmen at the wicket. Todd Wills and Andrew Small then saw the score safely past the Cumberland score and gave their team a 26-run first innings lead. A generous declaration by the Cumberland captain gave ND the opportunity of a second outright win and they reached their target of 105 with the loss of just two wickets. **The team's final two matches, against Mosman and Manly were both won, the latter match dominated by Steve Liggins with 71 not out and 5-18 as the home team was bowled out for just 35 in its first innings.**

The final match, against Sydney, was washed out and the team progressed to the final against St George at Drummoyne Oval. Winning the toss and batting, St George scored 9-170 from their 60 overs with Steve Liggins again bowling superbly to take 5-29 from 21 overs. Unfortunately the pressure of the occasion told on the Northern District batsmen with four of them being run out as the team fell just 22 runs short of the St George score. Liggins capped a memorable season (229 runs at

45.8 and 27 wickets at 7.3) by winning places in the Combined Green Shield Firsts team and in the NSW team which contested the Australian Under 16 Championships at Launceston. Team-mate Andrew Adam, who travelled down from Maitland to play for ND, was also selected in that NSW team, while Scott Sexty and Angus Farncomb both also made the Green Shield Firsts team.

In the Northern District Cup, Normanhurst Boys High School became the **cup's first multiple winner when they defeated Epping Boys High in the final. Earlier**, in their opening match against Galston High, Normanhurst had established a new ND Cup record innings total of 3-206 with future NDCC player Tod Wills scoring a brilliant 90.

1981/82

Not long before the start of the 1981/82 season NDCC President, Austen Hughes, received a phone call from Ken Walker, the captain of the Lindfield Cricket Club's first grade team and a fellow traveller with Hughes on the 1980 Australian Old Collegians tour to the West Indies and England. Walker rang to ask Hughes if he was interested in having a look at a 16-year-old left handed batsman who had just completed **his second season with Lindfield, and who, in Walker's opinion was** already far too good for Shires cricket.

Born on 27 October 1964 at Leeton where his father was then based in his job as a valuer with the Rural Bank, Mark Taylor first played cricket when his family moved to Wagga Wagga in 1971. By the time he was 14 he was playing on Saturday mornings in the junior competition and then backing up to play lower grades in the afternoons for the Lake Albert Cricket Club. He first attracted attention in November 1978 by scoring 184 runs in one day - 116 for his U/14 team in the morning followed by a 68 in the afternoon for third grade. Shortly afterwards the family moved again, this time to Sydney where they lived at Lindfield. Although he **didn't play again during** the 1978/79 season Taylor resumed his cricket career in 1979/80 playing that season and the next with Lindfield in both junior and senior competitions, as well as for Chatswood High School from where he was selected for Combined High School Firsts, alongside Stephen and Mark Waugh.

Although Taylor made an immediate impression on Neil Marks and the other selectors they resisted the temptation to put him straight into first grade, instead letting him find his feet in the third grade team.

With the retirement of Ross Edwards, the first grade captaincy was taken over by Mark Clews. Apart from this, the team was largely unchanged from that of recent seasons with Ross Turner regaining his first grade spot in place of Edwards, and Denis Lynch returning after a three-year absence to take over the wicket-keeping job from Bob Oakley, who had returned to the country. Pace bowler, Michael Coote, missed the season, replaced by young left armer Peter Vilimaa; while young Greg Briggs, fresh from the Australian U/19 tour to Pakistan made his first grade debut.

Although they began well enough, with a seven-wicket win over Balmain, the side struggled for much of the first half of the season, losing three of their first six matches and looking unlikely to reach the semi-finals. From there however they strung together six consecutive wins, and despite a final round loss to Randwick finished the competition rounds in fourth place.

Much of the team's success was due to the outstanding opening pairing of Neil Howlett and Jack Moran, Moran having replaced Howlett's previous partner, Paul Price, who had struggled to retain his form during the previous season and had

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

eventually been dropped to second grade. Howlett and Moran's opening stands during the 1981/82 season included 138 against Gordon (Moran 125, Howlett 69); 120 against Balmain (Moran 86, Howlett 53) and 213 against Petersham (Howlett 105 not out, Moran 96). By the end of the season the two batsmen had accumulated a total of 1288 runs between them, finishing first (Howlett 709 at 44.3) and second (Moran 579 at 34.1) in the batting aggregate. In three consecutive seasons in first grade Howlett had now scored 2064 runs at an average of 42.1, becoming the first player in **the club's history to score more than 600 runs three times** in a row. Despite these consistent performances he continued to be overlooked for the State team, although he had belatedly now been selected in the NSW Squad.

Having finished in fourth place Northern District again met Randwick, who were minor premiers, in their semi-final at Coogee Oval. Batting first they scored a respectable 209, to which Randwick had replied with 0-29 at stumps on the Saturday. Unfortunately rain intervened and the match was abandoned without any further play. Normally this would have been the end of the season however with the re-introduction of the contentious re-drawn rounds over the final two weekends of the season they were forced to play a final one-day match, beating Penrith in a low-scoring match at Howell Oval.

Apart from the two openers, four other batsmen scored in excess of 300 runs for the season: the ever dependable Kerry Mackay (399 at 36.3), Ross Turner (396 at 28.3), Mark Clews (318 at 26.5, including a career best 99 against Sydney – bowled after having hit each of the two previous balls for six!) and Peter Taylor, who topped the batting averages with 370 at 61.7, including a remarkable 38-minute innings of 101 not out in the second innings of the match between Northern District and Mosman at Mosman Oval. The century was just four minutes slower than the fastest ever recorded hundred in the Sydney first grade competition, scored by Balmain batsman, Jim Minter, in the 1934/35 season. In all Taylor faced 51 deliveries, hitting 16 fours and two sixes. To keep the performance in perspective (and Taylor himself is the first to do so) Mosman had taken the first innings points for the match and were trying to give away runs in the hope that a declaration by the ND captain would give them the chance of an outright win. Nevertheless it was one of the most amazing innings ever played by a Northern District batsman.

With the ball, Steve Whitfield and Kerry Mackay shouldered most of the workload bowling over 600 overs between them. By now Whitfield had established himself as one of the most accurate bowlers in the Sydney grade competition, this reflected in his figures of 342.5 overs, 129 maidens, 682 runs and 37 wickets. His tally of overs was nominally a new club record, beating Hughie Chilvers' **tally of 319 overs** set in 1941/42 (Chilvers of course bowled eight-ball overs and his 319 overs equates to 425.2 six-ball overs – a record which Whitfield would eventually break!).

Meanwhile Mackay was re-writing his own records, his 30 wickets at 16.7 meaning that he had now achieved the 300-run/30-wicket double for the sixth time.

The second grade team, again led by John Iredale, had had a hard luck story like few others. After a season of fluctuating fortunes they eventually finished the competition **rounds in fourth place and met minor premiers, Cumberland, at the latter's home ground, the Old Kings School**. Batting first on a poor wicket ND made a good total of 220 shortly after the tea break. At stumps they appeared to have won the match with Cumberland in deep trouble at 6-40. Despite overnight rain the weather was clear at the scheduled start time on Sunday however the groundsman refused to hand the pitch over to the umpires. Shortly after the lunch break, heavy rain began to fall and no further play was possible.

Despite the frustrating finish to the season (although like first grade the second graders had to re-group for a final round match during the weekend of the finals) there were a number of highlights, including Brian Crawford's **outstanding**

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

double of 566 runs (at 51.5) and 26 wickets (at 20.2), David Glasson's **29 wickets at 19.8** and the brilliant return to form of Greg Briggs, who scored 110 not out against Mosman, most of them during an 80-run last wicket partnership with Denis Lynch. Promising 17-year-old fast bowler, Steve Liggins, also impressed, taking 14 wickets in a handful of matches late in the season.

After four seasons in charge, John Blazey handed the third grade captaincy to his younger brother Phil. Throughout the season the team showed little consistency, never able to win more than two matches in a row and eventually finishing in 15th place. Even at the age of 16, Mark Taylor exhibited the qualities which were to take him to the top. As his captain commented in his end-of-season report: **"Mark has a sound defence with a fine array of shots, combined with a good temperament"**.⁵⁰ **Taylor's 392 runs at 23.1 was the highest aggregate for the season and included his maiden grade century - a brilliant 105 in a limited-over match against Petersham at Marrickville Oval. Only two other batsman topped 300 runs for the season: Stephen Day, with 338 at 22.5, and Taylor's opening partner, Jon King, 301 at 21.5. Ross Henry topped the batting averages with 257 runs at 36.7, scoring the only other century of the season, a match-winning 100 not out against Sydney University at University Oval. The bowling honours were shared evenly with six bowlers taking between 15 and 22 wickets, veteran spinner John Cumming, in his 24th consecutive season, being the leading wicket taker with 22 at 20.9.**

The fourth grade had a similarly mixed season, winning nine and losing seven matches to finish in seventh place. Best performed players were Terry McGovern who led both batting aggregate (323 runs) and averages (35.9) as well as scoring the only century, 113 against St George at Cahill Park; Mal Middleton with a fine double of 291 runs at 19.2 and 31 wickets at 13.4; and Alan Swan, whose 26 wickets at 23.3 included match figures of 12-75 (6-18 and 6-57) against Bankstown at Asquith Oval.

The fifth grade A team was another which had little luck in 1981/82. In what was clearly a lop-sided competition they entered their final round match against Sutherland at Tonkin Park having lost just one match from 14 yet still needing an outright win to have any chance of reaching the semi-finals. This result looked **possible when Sutherland's first innings score stood at 9-77 in reply to ND's 184.** However the last pair managed to avoid the follow-on, meaning that ND's only hope was to make a risky declaration and hope to bowl the home team out. Set 140 to win Sutherland got the runs with six wickets in hand, and so despite losing just two matches all season the team finished in seventh place. The best individual performances came from Graham Stewart (392 runs at 28.0), Garry Patterson (338 at 28.2), Matthew Wade (344 at 28.7), captain Chris Haviland (32 wickets at 18.2) and Todd Wills (29 at 12.2).

The fifth grade B team, captained for half of the season by John Thompson and half by David Broadfield-White, had a forgettable season, finishing in last place and frequently struggling to get 11 players on to the field. In a season with few highlights, Mark White's **effort in taking 30 wickets at 18.5 and Andrew Weeks' 111** against Waverley B at Somerville Park stood out. It was to be the last occasion in which Northern District fielded two fifth grade teams.

With the retirement of Rae Richmond the captaincy of the Northern District City and Suburban team was taken over by Michael Grant. There was a slight decrease **in the team's workload with just 26 matches being played, of which 18 were won and eight lost.** Highlights of the season included a record opening stand of 196 undefeated (from just 29.5 overs) by Hugh Southwood and Joff Johnson against Lindfield (the previous best C&S partnership had been 168 by Don Allum and Bob Baldwin in 1960/61), and the match against Cintra where ND was dismissed for 57 and then bowled their opponents out for 53 - after they had been 3-48!

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

There were a number of outstanding individual performances, none better than Hugh Southwood's **643 runs at 58.5 (top score, 104 not out) and veteran Allan May's 50 wickets at 12.1.** Steve Lewis (420 runs at 26.3) and Greg Poynter (415 at 19.8) both passed the 400-run aggregate while Joff Johnson was the other century-maker, scoring 123 not out in the course of the big opening stand against Lindfield.

A washed-out draw and a loss in the first two rounds of the 1981/82 Poidevin-Gray Shield competition proved disastrous as the Northern District team attempted to win the Shield for a fourth straight season. Although they went on to win all three remaining matches in their division the damage had been done and they could only finish in fourth place. As had been the case the previous year the batting was disappointing with Mark Taylor (215 runs at 71.7) the only batsman to score in excess of 100 runs throughout the competition. Taylor's **innings of 127 against Gordon at Chatswood Oval** was the highest club P-G innings since Bruce Gilroy's **149 not out in the 1956/57 season.** Of the bowlers, promising young fast bowler Steve Liggins was the best, taking 10 wickets at 15.1.

The Green Shield team had its poorest season for a number of years, finishing fifth in their division with four wins and three losses from their seven matches, although with the majority of players in their first season of the competition it was very much a development season. Best of the batsmen were opener Paul Heptonstall, who scored 273 runs at 39.0, while left-arm pace bowler, Grant Hillsey, was the leading wicket-taker with 16 at 15.9. Hillsey made front-page news when he was bitten by a funnel-web spider on the eve of one match but left his hospital bed to play.

Two talented young players who would later play representative cricket made their debut in the 1981/82 Green Shield. One was a 14-year-old all-rounder named Neil Maxwell who played in just one match although he neither batted nor bowled. The other was opening batsman Jamie Bray, who would later play for NSW Colts and win a first grade premiership with Gordon.

In the Northern District Cup high school competition Eastwood Marist Brothers won for the first time, defeating the defending cup-holders, Normanhurst Boys High in the final. The win was the first by a non-government school since Barker College had won the inaugural cup in 1976/77.

1982/83

In October 1982 the remarkable administrative career of Tim Caldwell came to an end when he announced that he was stepping down from all positions and moving to Orange. Over the preceding years he had received numerous honours including life membership of the NDCC (1960), the NSWCA (1967) and culminating in the award to **him of OBE in the 1976 New Year's Honours.**

A farewell club dinner held at the Pennant Hills Golf Club was followed by an Appreciation Dinner arranged by the NSW Cricket Association in March 1983. The **latter function was attended by 140 of Australia's most prominent cricket figures,** including Sir Donald Bradman who made the trip from Adelaide especially for the occasion. At the Dinner, ACB Chairman Phil Ridings announced the creation of a new trophy to be named the Tim Caldwell Cup for international youth Test series in Australia.

Those who worked with him invariably commented, not just on his innate common sense and wisdom, but also on the humanity and sense of humour which he brought to the various committees on which he served. After an 11-year retirement at his property in Orange, Tim Caldwell died there on 17 June 1994. He was survived by his wife of 50 years, Betty, and sons Robert and Simon.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

After several seasons of frustration and near misses Northern District finally won another grade premiership in 1982/83, its first in ten seasons and its tenth overall. The win came, as it had in 1972/73, in second grade and under a rookie captain in David Glasson, who led his team to a final win over St George at Bankstown Oval. Overall the club improved from fifth to third place in the club championship – the seventh time in eight seasons that it had finished in the top five. Disappointingly, **none of the club's other teams reached the semi-finals** of their respective competitions.

Mark Clews again captained the first grade team, although he had a frustrating season personally battling injury and loss of bowling form for much of the year. There were several changes to the team. After missing the previous season pace bowler Michael Coote returned, while middle order batsman Bill Crane transferred from the North Sydney club. Two players, Brad Patterson and Greg Briggs, left to play with other Sydney clubs – Patterson to Gordon and Briggs to Bankstown-Canterbury.

Briggs, largely due to the success of his fellow left-arm spinner Steve Whitfield, was getting few opportunities to bowl, and was persuaded to transfer to the Bankstown-Canterbury club in a bid to get greater bowling opportunities and so increase his chances of winning state selection. Briggs played just one season with Bankstown, returning to play with Gosford in the Gosford-Wyong competition from 1983/84 to 1985/86. Between 1986/87 and 1989/90 he again played Sydney grade, this time with the Gordon club before a ruptured disc brought his grade career to an end.

After being competitive for the first four months of the season, when they won **seven of their 11 matches played, the first grade team's opportunity to make the semi-finals** was lost when they were beaten in three successive matches in mid-season by Petersham, Bankstown and the University of NSW, the latter match notable for being Mark Taylor's **first grade debut**.

For the first time in five seasons Neil Howlett did not win the first grade batting aggregate, that honour going to his opening partner, Jack Moran, who scored 547 runs at 36.5. Although not quite up to the high standards he had set in the preceding seasons, Howlett nevertheless had a fine season, scoring 475 runs at the same average of 36.5. Ross Turner had his best season to date in first grade with 514



The 1982/83 NDCC Second Grade team photographed at Bankstown Oval following their win over St George in the competition final. Rear (l to r): Stephen Day, Bob Laing, Steve Liggins, Randal Green, Gavin Ridley and Brian Crawford. Front (l to r): Phil Blazey, Tim Ebbeck, Dave Glasson (Captain), John Iredale and Mark Taylor.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

runs at 34.3 while Peter Taylor, still playing principally as a specialist batsman scored 404 at 28.9. The bowling attack was shared between four pace bowlers, Clews (17 wickets at 19.7), Coote (22 at 28.5), Vilimaa (20 at 35.4) and Mackay (19 at 36.8), with Whitfield (35 at 24.3) the only spinner.

David Glasson took over the captaincy of the second grade team, and after losing their first match to Cumberland and playing a rain-affected draw in the second by Balmain, they settled down to play consistently good cricket for most of the remainder of the season. With the exception of matches against Randwick in round six when they were dismissed for 115, Sydney (133) in round nine, and Bankstown (108) in round 13, the batting was solid and consistent. Importantly, in a number of matches they were able to successfully chase relatively large targets: 5-283 to beat Sutherland (270) and **8-277 to beat North Sydney (266)**. **The season's batting high point** came in the round 10 match against Western Suburbs at Waitara where ND declared at 5-377 with Randal Green scoring 218 (in 260 minutes) and equalling the club record individual score set by Phil Payne in 1936/37. It was only the third double century by an ND player (Les Fallowfield had the other) and the first in second grade - **Carl Brennan's 192 not out in 1929/30 being the previous highest score in that grade**.

A good win in the final round against St George wrapped up the minor premiership, with the team having won ten, lost four and drawn one match. Yet again the semi-final, against Penrith at Waitara Oval, was severely curtailed by bad weather and eventually drawn with only a few hours of play possible. Fortunately on this occasion, as the higher-placed team, Northern District was the beneficiary and proceeded to the competition final against St George on neutral territory at Bankstown Oval.

Batting first, St George reached a competitive score of 200 with young fast bowler Steve Liggins taking 3-24 and Phil Blazey 3-51. In reply ND lost early wickets, their usually reliable opening batsmen, Mark Taylor and Brian Crawford, both out in single figures, as was Randal Green. When John Iredale fell for 21, the score stood at about 4-40. The comeback was led by Stephen Day and Gavin Ridley who added over 100 for the fifth wicket, Day eventually out for 57, Ridley for 66. Bob Laing (24), Steve Liggins (86) and Tim Ebbeck (34) then made sure of the victory and the premiership, taking the score to 319 all out.

The end-of-season statistics revealed the extent of the team's batting depth with six batsmen scoring at least 300 runs. Gavin Ridley (469 at 39.1) led both the batting aggregate and averages from Mark Taylor (433 at 30.9), Brian Crawford (388 at 25.9), Randal Green (354 at 32.2), Steve Day (329 at 29.9) and Steve Liggins (300 at 33.3). Both Crawford (24 wickets at 22.7) and Liggins (34 at 18.0) were also major contributors with the ball, although the bowling star of the season was undoubtedly Phil Blazey who won the club aggregate with 43 wickets and both club and grade averages with 11.7.

Northern District's 1982/83 third grade team was captained by Bob Cadden and like first grade, a mid-year slump cost them a place in the semi-finals. Their chances were not helped by a major blunder which saw Trumper Park dug up for drainage work during the week between the first and second days of the match against Waverley in what was a crucial round 12 match. Despite appeals from both clubs for the match to be replayed, or at least some special allocation of points made, the NSW Cricket Association decided that the match was drawn and that neither team would receive any points. The match interrupted a five game winning streak and may well have prevented the team from reaching the semis. As it was ND finished in sixth place with a total of nine wins, five losses and three draws.

Only three players scored in excess of 300 runs. Two of those, John Blazey (332 at 47.4) and Bob Laing (**316 at 52.7**), **played only about a third of the team's**

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

matches, both later being members of the winning second grade team. This left only Jon King, who scored 319 runs at the modest average of 18.8. Indeed no batsman in the team was able to average over 25.0 for the season. It was a similar story with the bowling, where Scott Wills with 24 wickets at 14.8 was the top wicket-taker.

The 1982/83 fourth grade side was one of the youngest in club history with only three or four players over the age of 20. The team also had a young captain in Reg Tulk, who importantly would go on to lead fourth grade for a further seven seasons. The team had a moderate season finishing tenth in the 20-team competition with eight wins, seven losses and two draws from their 17 matches. Andrew Weeks was easily the best batsman, scoring 359 runs at 32.6 in just seven matches. Of the bowlers, Warwick Barnes topped the aggregate with 46 wickets at 14.3 ahead of 16-year-old Mark Watkins (38 at 11.0) who won both the club and grade bowling averages.

For only the second time since the start of the fifth grade competition in 1969/70 Northern District entered a single team. Whilst many over the years had questioned the wisdom of entering the second team and thus splitting the available talent, the decision to drop the B team (permanently as it was to turn out) was done out of necessity rather than any strategic reason – **there simply weren't enough** players to fill six grade teams. Indeed such was the exodus, primarily of lower grade players that the club struggled to find 55 players to take the field for the first match of the season. As a consequence, the fifth grade side struggled for most of the season winning just two of their 15 matches and finishing in 17th place.

Rather surprisingly, given the team's poor results, five centuries were scored although in a way that contributed, with four of the five players quickly promoted to higher grades. Best of the batsmen were Malcolm Barnes (410 runs at 29.3) and Darryl Thompson (382 at 38.2), who combined to compile a club fifth grade record **partnership of 273 in the team's fifth round match against Balmain at ELS Hall Park. Both batsmen scored centuries: Thompson, 159, and Barnes 110. The team's other** century-makers were Michael Terreiro (155 against Mosman B at Balmoral Oval), John Cheeseman (107 not out against Gordon at Castle Cove Park) and Andrew Lane (102 not out against Manly-Warringah at Balgowlah Oval). Of the bowlers, only captain Chris Haviland (23 wickets at 20.7) and John Thompson (22 at 18.1) took more than 20 wickets for the season.

Northern District fielded one of its youngest Poidevin-Gray Shield teams in many years for the 1982/83 competition with just two players over the age of 19. Despite this they got away to a good start with comfortable wins in each of their first two matches, Mark Taylor's **115 a highlight of the opening match against North Sydney** at Waitara Oval. A narrow loss to Gordon on a wet wicket was followed by an abandoned match against Manly meaning that the team had to win its final round match against Balmain to have any chance of qualifying for the semi-finals. Despite playing without captain Steve Day, the top five batsman all reached 20 and should have set Balmain a big target, however all five got out for less than 35 and the total only reached 203. Balmain eventually scored 8-226, relegating Northern District to fourth place in the Northern Division. For the third successive season Stephen Day was selected in the NSW Under 19 team, captaining that team in the Australian Championships.

The Green Shield team also had a disappointing year, winning three and losing four of their seven matches to finish fifth in their division. The team was captained by John Cheeseman, who along with Murray Chapman won a place in the NSW Under 16 team. Neither player performed anywhere near the expected standard and only one batsman, Andrew Parker (220 runs at 31.4) scored in excess of 200. Neil Maxwell (10 wickets at 19.8) and Gary Hasling (11 at 24.0) were the best of the bowlers, with

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Hasling's 8-69 against Mosman at Waitara Oval one of the best performances of the season.

For the third successive season, Normanhurst Boys High contested the final of the inter-school Northern District Cup, this time against Marsden High. By winning the match Normanhurst took the cup for the third time in the seven years it had been contested.



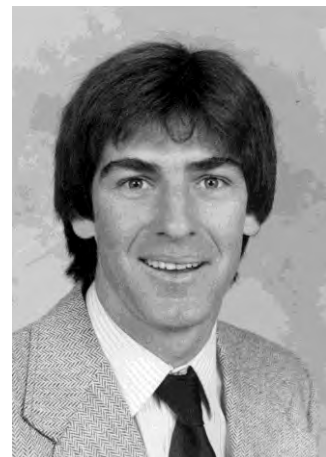
Long-serving clubmen, Austen Hughes and Ken Tulk were awarded life membership of the NDCC in 1983.

The 1983 Annual General Meeting saw the nomination of two new life members: Austen Hughes, who was nominated by Neil Marks; and Ken Tulk, nominated by Greg Lynch. Both nominations were carried unanimously making Hughes and Tulk the 22nd and 23rd NDCC life members. The AGM also saw the Bill North Memorial Award presented to David Glasson; **club's Player of the**

Year award to Warwick Barnes and the First Grade Player of the Year to Neil Howlett.

1983/84

When Mark Clews had taken over the first grade captaincy at the start of the 1981/82 season he had done so on the understanding that it was to be a transitional move only and that when a new, younger captain was ready to take over he would step down. By the end of his second season in charge the dual demands of opening the bowling and captaining the team, together with a series of nagging injuries, led to his resignation. His replacement, Ross Turner, was to prove to be an inspired choice. Quietly-spoken, composed and thoughtful yet firm and determined, **he was to quickly establish himself as one of the club's most outstanding captains.** Indeed his talent was recognised as early as the end of the 1983/84 season when he was **awarded the Sydney Morning Herald's Captain of the Year** award. It was no coincidence that, a decade or so later, the **qualities which so marked Turner's captaincy would be** used to describe another ND player who by that time had taken the Australian team to **the top of world cricket and established himself as one of his country's greatest captains.**



Ross Turner.

Aside from the switch in captains there were several changes to the composition of the first grade team. The promising Tim Ebbeck replaced Denis Lynch as wicket-keeper while all-rounder Brad Patterson returned after a season with the Mosman club. The major loss however was Neil Howlett who transferred to Balmain. Fortunately the club had a ready made replacement opening batsman in 19-year-old

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Mark Taylor, and after two matches in second grade he took his place alongside Jack Moran at the top of the batting order.

After his first match, against North Sydney at North Sydney Oval where he scored an unbeaten 20, Taylor was given a memorable 'baptism of fire' by former Test bowler, Len Pascoe in the fourth round match against Bankstown-Canterbury. With Waitara Oval still under repair after a particularly severe winter of rugby, the match was played on a greentop at Somerville Park. Batting first, the strong Bankstown batting lineup collapsed to be all out for 64 with Peter Vilimaa taking 6-33. In his two previous first grade matches Taylor had batted in the middle order but when given the option by skipper Turner, he volunteered to open. Pascoe, who had just been dropped from the Test team was determined to make someone suffer. He struck early dismissing Jack Moran for a golden duck and should have had Taylor shortly afterwards when a ball brushed his glove on the way through to the keeper but was **given not out by the umpire. This only increased Pascoe's hostility and he dug the next ball in only to have Taylor pull the ball for four.** Pascoe had his revenge next ball with Taylor caught behind and given an appropriate send-off by the fiery quick.

Although they struggled, Northern District took the lead thanks to a great late order rally led by Steve Whitfield (34) and Peter Vilimaa (22) and eventually reached 136. In reply Bankstown collapsed again, all out this time for 92 leaving ND a target of just 21 for an outright win. Pascoe, determined to make things as difficult as possible, threw everything into a brief but fiery spell, dismissing Moran for his second golden duck of the match and then felling Ross Turner with a sharp rising ball to his chest. With the ball steeping off the grassy pitch Taylor, after ducking and weaving, decided to attack and hooked another short ball over the backward square leg boundary for six. Furious at this treatment, Pascoe pounded back to his mark ready to send down **an even faster and shorter delivery, when the call came from the sideline "That's the winning run"**. With that the two combatants headed off, a relieved Taylor to the dressing shed and a still fuming Pascoe straight to his car.

The win over Bankstown was the fourth straight victory for the team and was followed by a fifth, over Sydney University, a draw with Manly then two more wins, over Sydney and University of NSW, the latter match dominated by a brilliant 103 not out by Mark Taylor. Going to the Christmas break the team had played eight matches without defeat and was a clear **competition leader. Then, inexplicably, the team's top order batsmen lost form** and after a draw against Gordon in the ninth round, they were beaten in each of their next four matches in turn by Wests, Petersham, Penrith and St George. By this time they had slid out of the top four and despite a round 15 win over Sutherland they could only finish in fifth place. A most disappointing end to a season which had promised so much, but a clear portent of what was to come.

In his first season of first grade Mark Taylor headed the batting averages with 418 runs at 52.3. He missed several matches towards the end of the season when he was selected firstly for the NSW Under 19 team and, following the Australian Championships in Melbourne, for the Australian Under 19s. The team, which also **included the Waugh twins and Craig McDermott, played three 'Tests' against Sri Lanka** at Manuka Oval, Canberra, Adelaide Oval and the Melbourne Cricket Ground. An innings of 86 in the third of these matches clearly showed that the young left hander was heading for higher levels of cricket.

Peter Taylor with 522 at 34.8, while Ross Turner (442 runs at 31.6), Jack Moran (461 at 24.3) and Brad Patterson (357 at 23.8) all made valuable contributions, although predominantly in the first half of the season.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Injury again severely curtailed Mark Clews and he was able to bowl just 83.5 overs in the 11 matches in which he played. In his absence Peter Vilimaa (25 wickets at 13.6), Kerry Mackay (20 at 19.6) and Michael Coote (22 at 21.5) shared the pace bowling duties, while Steve Whitfield performed the bulk of the old ball bowling, taking 39 wickets at 15.1 from 305.2 overs.



Action from the 1983/84 second grade final between Northern District and Balmain at Rawson Park, Mosman.

With the departure of David Glasson to the Epping Shires club, the captaincy of the second grade team was initially given to Peter Vilimaa, then when he was promoted to first grade, Stephen Day took over, with Brian Crawford replacing Day during the four matches that he played in the top grade. Apart from the loss of Glasson and Mark Taylor the team was largely unchanged from that of the previous season. **While Taylor's place in the team was more than adequately filled by a new batsman from the Gosford Cricket Club named Chris Shelley who had an impressive debut season, his role as opening batsman proved harder to fill and not once during the season did the openers put on a 50 partnership. Despite this the team's batting** was solid and generally reliable and they began the season with wins in eight of their first nine matches, including three invaluable outright wins over Waverley, Sydney University and Gordon. A narrow loss to Western Suburbs in the 10th round was followed by two more wins, a rain-affected draw over the strong Balmain team, and a win over St George in the second last round. Despite a loss to Sutherland in the final preliminary round the team finished as minor premiers. The importance of a high finish was once more accentuated when the semi-final against Penrith, scheduled for Waitara Oval was abandoned without a ball being bowled due to rain.

The final, against Balmain, was played, as it had been the previous season, on a neutral ground - this time at Rawson Park, Mosman. Batting first, Balmain made a great start and midway through the day were in a seemingly impregnable position at 3-164. Then an inspired spell of bowling from spinners Paul Grimble and Phil Blazey, combined with some brilliant fielding saw the last seven Balmain wickets fall for 57 runs, Grimble finishing with 4-67. Chasing 222, ND got away to its best start of the season, Brian Crawford and Angus Farncomb putting on a valuable 47 losing Crawford for 15. From there however Balmain was gradually squeezed out of the match as Farncomb (47), John Iredale (59) Randal Green (24) and Chris Shelley (27) pushed the score towards and past their target. With the score at 6-281 the two captains agreed to call the game off, Stephen Day (80 not out) sacrificing the chance to score a century to allow the celebrations to begin.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000



1983/84 NDCC Second Grade Premiers at Rawson Park, Mosman following their win over Balmain. Rear (l to r): Paul Grimble, Phil Blazey, Steve Liggins, Randal Green, Angus Farncomb and Brian Crauford. Front: Bob Laing, Mick Hewett, Stephen Day (Captain), Chris Shelley and John Iredale.

The star of the season was undoubtedly Phil Blazey whose 60 wickets (at 12.3) was the sixth highest aggregate for the club in second grade, the highest aggregate and the second best average in Sydney second grade for the season. Blazey was well-supported by the team's new wicket-keeper, Michael Hewett, who in his first full season in second grade made 32 dismissals, including 10 stumpings – three in one innings in the round 15 match against Sutherland.

For the fourth time in four years the third grade team had a different captain, with Vic Gray taking over initially, before being replaced by Ross Henry midway through the season. With a total of 30 players, continuity was always going to be a problem and the team had a most disappointing season, finishing in second-last (19th) place with just four wins from 17 matches. The low point of the year came in the 15th round match against Bankstown at Punchbowl Oval where, in reply to the home team's total of 164, ND was dismissed for 31 and 60, with Ross Henry the only batsman to reach double figures, which he did in both innings (16 not out and 13).

Only one batsman scored more than 200 runs for the season, Philip Harmer (265) while none of the regular batsmen in the team was able to average 20.0. Similarly no bowler could take more than 15 wickets in the season.

One promising player who played briefly for the club during 1983/84 was former Australian Under 19 all-rounder Peter Bowler. A right hand batsman and off spinner Bowler had been born in England, but had played his early cricket in the ACT from where he was named the 1981/82 NSW Country Cricketer of the Year. In 1982/83 he came to Sydney where he played for the Manly club before joining Northern District in 1983/84. Then aged 20 he played only a handful of matches with the club in second and third grades, top scoring with 81 for thirds in their match against the University of NSW at David Phillips Field. Midway through the season Bowler moved to Tasmania before returning to England where he made his first class

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

debut for Leicestershire in 1986. The following season he transferred to Derbyshire and from the mid-1990s to Somerset where he was still playing in the 2000 season at the age of 37. For many years he played in England during the northern summer and returned to Australia where he later played one Sheffield Shield for Tasmania during the 1986/87 season.

The fourth grade team had an average season, beginning well and indeed leading the competition after four rounds before slipping to eventually finish in eighth place. Best of the batsmen was Graeme Reece who scored 414 in just seven matches, with an unbeaten 101 against Manly at Graham Reserve and a 97 run out against North Sydney at Somerville Park. After winning promotion from fifth grade, young all-rounder Neil Maxwell impressed with innings of 88 against Gordon at Killara Oval and 60 not out against Bankstown at Asquith Oval, the latter score in the second **innings of a match the visitor's 15-year-old** tearaway fast bowler Wayne Holdsworth had taken 9-29 in the first innings as ND collapsed to be all out for just 83. Darryl Thompson **was the team's other century maker, scoring 122 in** the match against Gordon where he and Maxwell added 166 for the fourth wicket.

Best of the fourth grade bowlers, and the only one to take more than 20 wickets, was Geoff Roberts who finished with 26 at 14.6 including returns of 5-29 against North Sydney, 5-32 against Petersham and 5-37 against Bankstown.

After a couple of poor seasons the fifth grade team, captained by Graeme Stewart, improved greatly to finish in sixth place with nine wins, two draws and five losses. They were in contention for a semi-final spot until the final round when they were beaten outright by Western Suburbs on a synthetic pitch at Concord. Best performed batsmen were a 15-year-old batsman from the Thornleigh club named Ross Toohey, who topped the batting averages with 285 runs at 35.6; Andrew Parker, who was the leading run scorer with 326 at 21.7; and David Broadfield-White whose **two innings included the team's only century** – 101 against Manly at Somerville Park. The opening bowlers sent down around two-thirds of the team's total overs, with Rowan Williams topping the averages with 30 wickets at 15.2 and Manuel Terreiro the leading wicket-taker with 36 at 17.2.

The club fielded its strongest Poidevin-Gray team in recent years. Led by the successful second grade captain Stephen Day, they went through their divisional matches with wins over Parramatta (the new name of the Central Cumberland CC , Manly and Mosman, a narrow loss to Gordon and an abandoned draw against North Sydney enough to have them finish top in the Northern Division. Unfortunately they went into the preliminary final against Penrith at Hurstville Oval without Mark Taylor and Steve Liggins who were in Melbourne with the NSW Under 19 team. Despite a powerful 73 by Chris Shelley **the ND total wasn't enough, Penrith passing that score** for the loss of just three wickets, thanks to an innings of 105 not out by future NSW batsman Trevor Bayliss, and subsequently going on to beat Randwick in the final.

For the second season in a row Mark Taylor won both P-G batting aggregate and averages for the club, with Angus Farncomb's **114 not out against Parramatta at Old Kings School** the other batting highlight. Spinner Todd Wills was the dominant bowler, taking 18 wickets at 10.8 including 8-36 against Gordon at Chatswood Oval – the best P-G bowling analysis for the club in almost 50 years and the third best of all **time behind Phil Dunncliff's 9-11 in 1934/35 and Rowley Cuddy's 8-14 in 1929/30**, both coincidentally also against Gordon.

The 1983/84 AW Green Shield team was led by Ross Toohey and managed by Brad Patterson. In a season disrupted by rain, two of their matches, both against weaker teams, were abandoned and this, together with losses to Balmain and Sydney meant that they could only finish fourth in their division. Andrew Lenton was the **team's leading batsman, scoring 174 runs at 34.8, and winning a place firstly in the Combined AW Green Shield Northern Division team and then in City Seconds.**

The City and Suburban team, captained by Stephen Lewis, had a perfectly even season, winning ten matches, losing ten and having a tie in the other. Hugh Southwood (409 runs at 40.9) and Duncan McPherson (36 wickets at 16.0) were the leading players and both were rewarded with selection in the Combined City and Suburban team.

Normanhurst Boys High continued its domination of the Northern District Cup with a win over Eastwood Marist Brothers in the final. Coached by leading NDCC player, Gavin Ridley, **it was the school's fourth win in eight years and its third in four years.**

The club's three major awards were won by Stephen Whitfield (First Grade Player of the Year), Phil Blazey (Player of the Season) and Stephen Day (Bill North Memorial Award), while club president, Austen Hughes, was elected as a life member of the NSW Cricket Association at the 1984 Association AGM.

Having recently married and moved into a new home at Kellyville, Hilary Griffith stepped down as club secretary with first grade wicket-keeper, Tim Ebbeck, agreeing to take on the position on an interim basis until a longer-term occupant could be found. Griffith remained closely involved with the club, as manager of the **Green Shield team, club statistician and as editor of the club's increasingly comprehensive Annual Report.**

1984/85

1984/85 was a disappointing season for Northern District, especially based on the high standards which they club had set over the previous 25 years. Remarkably, in that period, ND had finished in the lower half of the club championship table on only five occasions. Unfortunately 1984/85 was one of these seasons, with the club finishing in tenth position, reaching the semi-finals in just one grade and failing to win a premiership.

The season began controversially with the club selectors making the extremely difficult decision to drop former first grade captain Kerry Mackay to second grade in order to find a place in the top team for one of the batch of young players such as Randal Green, Stephen Day and Angus Farncomb who were now ready to tackle the top grade. Now aged 35, Mackay, had played with Northern District since he was 15, and was convinced, rightly so as it turned out, that he still had a number of seasons of quality first grade cricket left in him. In what was the toughest decision of his career Mackay accepted an offer to play with the Manly-Warringah club. Ironically Manly **was Northern District's opponent in the opening round of the competition and in a tight match Mackay played a major role in Manly's eventual win. By the end of the season Mackay had scored over 300 runs, taken 50 wickets (at 14.1) and picked up the prestigious *Sydney Morning Herald* Player of the Year award, four points ahead of his nearest rival, former team-mate Steve Whitfield.**

Three matches into the season injuries finally forced Mark Clews to retire and his loss, on top of that of Mackay, severely weakened **the team's pace attack which** now was based predominantly on Michael Coote and Peter Vilimaa, both of whom relied on guile rather than sheer pace as had been the case in the heyday of Clews and Steve Bernard.

As had been the case in the 1930s and 40s when the first grade team had relied almost entirely on the spin of Chilvers and Caldwell, Steve Whitfield and Peter Taylor dominated, **bowling more than 50 per cent of the team's overs. These two players, together with Mark Taylor and Randal Green, the latter in his first full year in first grade, all had outstanding seasons. Whitfield had a remarkable season taking 64**

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

wickets at an average of 14.7, bowling 414.5 overs, 148 of them maidens. His 50th wicket for the season, taken during the match against St George at Hurstville Oval **was an emotional occasion, Whitfield's late father having discussed him** passing the milestone shortly before his death not long before the start of the season. Although kept out of the State team by Greg Matthews, Murray Bennett and Bob Holland, Whitfield did play one match for the NSW Second XI in a match against the touring England team at Manly Oval, dismissing Mike Gatting.

The season also marked the emergence of Peter Taylor as a top quality off spinner. Until this time Taylor had played primarily as a batsman and had been bowled only sparingly. Not that his batting suffered as a consequence of his extra bowling duties – **he was the team's third highest scoring bat, his 522 runs (at 43.5)** and 41 wickets (at 16.8) being only the second 500-run/40-wicket double in the club's history (the other was Vince Collins with 510 runs and 40 wickets in 1947/48).

The rise of Mark Taylor continued relentlessly. Still only 19 at the start of the season, he scored a total of 717 runs in first grade at an average of 47.8 including three centuries in four matches: 104 not out against Gordon at Chatswood Oval (he and Angus Farncomb passed the Gordon total of 170 without loss); 110 against Sydney University at Waitara Oval and 100 against Mosman, also at Waitara. He was clearly under the notice of the State selectors and played two matches for the NSW Second XI (against England and Victoria) and one for the State Colts team (against Queensland) under the captaincy of Steve Waugh – a reversal of their eventual roles **at Test level. Equally impressive was the quality of Taylor's fielding. Ever since he first** attended his first ND practice his slip catching had attracted attention and, in what was to be his last full season for the club, he set a new, non-wicketkeeping record of 22 catches.

The biggest improver of the season was undoubtedly Randal Green who scored 548 runs at 45.7. Tall and strong, Green was a player of considerable natural ability whose batting strength lay in his powerful drives and cuts. However, prior to **the 1984/85 season, his powers of concentration hadn't matched his technique and although he had played a number of outstanding lower grade and Poidevin-Gray innings he hadn't been able to score consistently enough to secure a permanent first grade spot. Now aged 23, a tightening of his defence and improved self-discipline were all that was needed to turn him into, not only one of ND's finest batsmen but also one of the best in the Sydney grade competition.**

Despite the outstanding individual performances of the two Taylors, Whitfield and Green, the team could only manage to finish in eighth place with eight wins, seven losses and two draws. More importantly though, under the astute leadership of Ross Turner, the nucleus **of what many would consider to be Northern District's** greatest ever first grade teams was now in place.

Following its back-to-back premierships victories the second grade team underwent a major reshuffle, losing a number of young players up to first grade. They did regain two former players in Peter Tout and Max Shepherd. Both had played with the club during the 1970s, Tout coming back after several seasons with University of NSW, and Shepherd returning to Sydney from Albury to take up the position of Director of Coaching with the NSW Cricket Association. Tout captained the team during the first half of the season, with Stephen Day resuming the job midway through the season after being dropped from first grade.



Max Shepherd.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

The team began the season confidently enough, with first innings wins in each of the first three matches. A loss to Bankstown was followed by another win and a thrilling tie against Parramatta. In a rain-affected seventh round match, Balmain declared at 5-117, **well behind ND's total of 7-295**. Eager to chase outright points, **Tout gambled and forfeited his team's second innings, only to have Balmain score the necessary runs and take outright points**. This proved to be the turning point of the season with nine successive first innings losses following and the team sliding down the table into 14th place.

Best players were the evergreen Phil Blazey whose 41 wickets at 19.2 gave him the outstanding total of 101 wickets in two seasons. His spin partner from the previous season, Paul Grimble had a slightly disappointing year with the ball, taking 25 wickets at just under 30 each but batted consistently and determinedly to top the aggregate with 409 runs at 27.3. Wicket-keeper, Michael Hewett, was unlucky to have the talented Tim Ebbeck ahead of him but again proved himself in the most difficult aspect of his craft, against spin, by making 17 stumpings on top of 27 catches.

After finishing second last in 1983/84 the third grade team improved to finish in tenth place with eight wins, eight losses and a draw. It was a promising performance by a young side under a young, first season captain in David Watt. The amount of talent in the team was illustrated by the fact that five batsmen scored six centuries between them, Andrew Weekes (128 against Manly and 125 against Fairfield), Todd Wills (166 against University of NSW), Brian Crawford (128 against Gordon), Tim Johnson (115 against Macquarie University) and Ross Toohey (108 not out against Mosman).

In the opening round match against Manly at Asquith Oval, Andrew Weekes and Steve Heptonstall combined to set a new third grade record partnership for any wicket, taking the score from 6-119 to 7-304 – a stand of 185. The best of the bowlers was Scott Wills with 30 wickets at 24.4.

The fourth grade team was the club's success story of the 1984/85 season. Again captained by Reg Tulk they overcame a moderate start to win seven of their last eight matches, finishing in fourth place. This of course pitted them against the minor premiers, Western Suburbs, in a match played at Kensington Oval, Randwick. **Needing to win, ND's season looked over when the Wests score stood at 4-231** but a great fightback by the bowlers saw the last six wickets fall for only 25 runs, with Mal Middleton taking 4-59 from 27.2 overs. Despite their collapse Wests remained favoured to win, especially when Northern District slumped from 4-155 to 7-172, still 85 runs short of their target. A determined unbeaten 66 by young Michael Goeke, supported by Middleton (19 not out), saw the target reached without the loss of any more wickets.

The final, against Penrith, was played at Rawson Park, Mosman, the venue for **the club's previous premiership win** in the second grade final two years earlier. Sent in to bat on a damp wicket Northern District were in serious trouble at 6-71 but once again recovered to reach a competitive score of 210 thanks to innings of 41 each by Ross Henry and Andrew Willey. The game continued to ebb and flow on the Sunday, with Penrith making a solid start, then losing wickets steadily to be 8-162 at one stage, before the lower order did what the ND tail had done in the semi-final, reaching their **target without further loss. Despite the team's courageous effort the fourth grade premiership once more eluded Northern District**. Twice before, under Ian Fraser in 1949/50, and again under Ross Webb in 1978/79, they had been runners-up however this was to be the closest that the club would come to taking out the only title which they had not won.

The best of the fourth grade batsmen were the two opening batsmen, 17-year-old Andrew Lenton, who topped the aggregate with 359 runs at 25.6, and Darryl Thompson who was next with 334 runs at 22.3. Another 17-year-old, all-rounder Neil

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Maxwell, had a brief stay in the team, scoring the only century of the year, a brilliant 133 in the first match of the season against Manly at Somerville Park, then followed up with 5-30 against Sydney at Asquith, before being promoted, eventually to second grade. Vice-captain Mal Middleton carried most of the bowling burden, sending down a total of 366.2 overs in taking 49 wickets at 16.8. The most impressive new player was fast bowler Michael Coen who took 30 wickets in eight matches at the best average of 11.1, including returns of 5-20, 4-48, 6-48 and 4-59, the latter in the final. Medium-pacer Andrew Willey was the other main wicket-taker with 31 at 18.4.

The fifth grade team, led by Rowan Williams, struggled for most of the season and eventually finished in a disappointing 17th place with five wins from 17 matches. Despite this there were several highlights, most notably a club fifth grade record score of 202 not out by promising young batsman Michael Goeke against Balmain at **Somerville Park. It was only the fourth double century in the club's history.**

Tim Stokes took over the captaincy of the City and Suburban team for the 1984/85 season, one which was severely curtailed because of poor weather. In total 13 **of the team's 31 scheduled matches were abandoned including the annual match** against Cowra. Of the 18 matches played only five resulted in wins, with one washed out draw, 11 losses and a memorable tie against I Zingari at Concord Oval. For the first time in a number of years no batsman was able to score more than 250 runs, Stephen Lewis (248 at 22.5) the only one to pass 200. Michael Grant (30 wickets at 16.4), Allan May (22 at 11.3) and Tim Stokes (23 at 20.9) were the best of the bowlers.

For the third season in a row Stephen Day captained the Northern District Poidevin-Gray team. As runners-up from the previous season and with a team which included six past, present or future NSW junior representatives players they went into the competition as firm favourites. In a major upset they were beaten by Manly in their first round match, then lost by one run in a thriller against North Sydney, the eventual divisional winners. Despite easy wins in their last two matches the damage had been done and they could only finish fourth in their division.

At the start of the season Tom Richmond returned as manager of the AW Green Shield team and later as a member **of the club's Development Sub Committee** and Junior Association Liaison Officer. With four wins and three losses the Green Shield team had a disappointing year, finishing in fourth place in the Northern Division. The team was captained by Darren Latimore and included a player with the familiar surname of Chilvers. An exciting right-hand batsman, Craig Chilvers was a grandson of Arthur Chilvers and a great nephew of Hugh. One of four Green Shield players who travelled down from the Central Coast, he had played his junior cricket with the Matcham-Holgate club. He headed the batting aggregates with 167 runs (at 23.9), narrowly ahead of Latimore (165 at 33.0) while another Central Coast player, Glen Briggs (a cousin of Greg Briggs) from the Woy Woy Cricket Club led the wicket takers with 14 at 18.3.

In the Northern District Cup high school knockout competition Muirfield High scored an upset win over defending champions Normanhurst Boys **High. It was Normanhurst's fifth successive** appearance in the Cup final.

The club's search for a replacement for Tim Ebbeck as secretary ended when the experienced Frank Clark agreed to accept the position. A native of Essex in England, Clark had played club cricket there in his youth and had become associated with the Essex county club, of which he would later become a life member. In the early 1950s he had served in the Royal Marines before joining the P&O shipping company



Frank Clark.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

where he worked until 1964 when, at the age of 31, he migrated to Australia with his young family. In the early 1970s when his sons, Mark and Julian, began playing cricket, Clark again became involved in cricket administration, firstly as secretary of the Epping Cricket Club, then as a committeeman with the Sydney Cricket Club and as deputy president of the Penrith Cricket Club. Throughout his period in Australia Clark had retained his links with Essex and was actively involved in arranging contacts between clubs in that county and young Australian cricketers looking to play in England. Outside of cricket he had also been heavily involved in soccer and the lifesaving movements as well as being the Director of Immigration for the Apex Club, responsible for arranging sponsorship of potential English immigrants and helping **them to get settled when they arrived in Australia. In recognition of Clark's various services to both immigration and sport he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM).**

While with both the Sydney and Penrith grade clubs Clark had also served as a delegate to the NSWCA, a role which he automatically took on, along with club president Austen Hughes, when he joined Northern District. There he resumed his place on the Grade Committee with Hughes continuing to serve on the Country Committee. It was to be the last occasion that these two committees would meet with a major restructure of the NSWCA taking place which saw them replaced, from August 1986, by the Sydney Cricket Association (responsible for the administration of grade and Municipal and Shire cricket) and the NSW Country Cricket Association (similarly in control of cricket in country areas). Although both of the new bodies were largely autonomous they remained under the overall control of the NSWCA.

1985/86

The Sydney Grade competition was expanded to 20 teams across all grades, a net increase of two teams brought about by the admission of three new clubs (Fairfield, Hawkesbury and Campbelltown) and the omission of the Sydney club. Despite this each team only played 14 matches prior to the semi-finals, although all were two-dayers. To cater for the one-day game a new Sunday limited-over competition began. The much-maligned, and frequently manipulated, residential rules still applied with players permitted to play with their choice of clubs within broad geographical regions, these having been re-drawn to allow for the new clubs.

1985/86 season was an outstanding season for the club, especially for its flagship first grade team which won the premiership for the fourth time. Now in his third season as captain, Ross Turner had moulded an immensely talented group of players into what was to prove an outstanding team - arguably the best to ever play for Northern District. There were only two significant changes to the team personnel with Stephen Day transferring to Gordon, although his loss was offset by the return, from Balmain, of Neil Howlett. The only new player was a high order right-hand batsman from Queensland named Ian Moore who took the place of Jack Moran who, after four successful seasons in the top grade dropped down to seconds.

The **team's awesome batting strength was evident right from the first match**, against Mosman at Waitara Oval when they amassed 3-376 declared. Showing the concentration and discipline which were to become the hallmark of his later international career, Mark Taylor batted throughout the innings, adding 87 for the first wicket with Neil Howlett (35), 151 for the second wicket with Ian Moore (66) and 123 for the third with Randal Green (62). **When Turner called a halt Taylor's individual score stood at 185 not out, just 19 runs short of Les Fallowfield's 1946/47 club record first grade score of 204.**

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Despite still being a month short of his 21st birthday, Taylor was now pressing strongly for a place in the NSW Sheffield Shield team. His momentum continued with a score of 102 for NSW in a Second XI match against Victoria and it came as no surprise when he was selected in the NSW team for the opening match of the Shield season against Tasmania at the TCA Ground in Hobart. Opening the batting with fellow debutant Mark Waugh, Taylor scored an unbeaten 56 in the second innings. He scored fifties in each of the next two matches, followed by his first century, 118 against South Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground. By the end of the Shield season he had scored 937 runs, the most by any Australian batsman in his initial season in first class cricket, easily beating the previous record of 656 runs set in 1909/10 by Victorian batsman Bert Kortlang. As a consequence Taylor's appearances for the club in 1985/86, indeed for the remainder of his career, were restricted and he would play only five full matches during the season.

Following their big win over Mosman in the first match of the season the ND first grade team played rain-affected draws against Gordon and North Sydney, the latter featuring a superb innings of 90 by Neil Howlett on a damp Waitara pitch. They then strung together successive four first innings wins, followed by a loss and a draw against the two Universities, and three more first innings wins. In most of these matches Peter Taylor made major contributions with both bat and ball, including scores of 80 not out, 32, 45, 86, 66 77 and 39 not out, and bowling returns of 3-48, 3-41, 2-43, 4-20, 7-77 and 5-16. By the latter half of the season he had joined his namesake in the NSW team, making his debut coincidentally, in the return match against Tasmania at the SCG. One of three spinners in the team, Taylor impressed by picking up 2-42 from 20 overs and remained in the team for the remaining two matches of the domestic season, including the Sheffield Shield final against Queensland at the SCG where he played a crucial part with both bat and ball in helping NSW hold out for a draw and so win the Shield.

For most of the second half of the grade season ND had been on top of the competition, but were joined at the top by St George following a narrow loss to that team in a high-scoring 13th round match at Hurstville Oval. In the final round both teams were held to draws, ND (8-260 dec.) by Sutherland (8-186) and St George by



*The Northern District first grade team which won the 1985/86 premiership.
Rear (l to r): Peter Dernikowitsch (Coach), Brad Patterson, Neil Howlett, Steve Whitfield,
Michael Coote, Peter Vilimaa, Neil Maxwell, David Brookes (Manager). Front (l to r): Paul
Grimble, Angus Farncomb, Tim Ebbeck, Dr Bill Woods (Scorer), Ross Turner (Captain),
Austen Hughes (NDCC President), Ian Moore and Randal Green.*

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Mosman. Unfortunately, because the latter match was considered to be a washed-out draw both teams received two points while ND received none. This not only gave St George the minor premiership but also relegated ND to third place behind North Sydney who had a superior quotient.

Although the Sheffield Shield final had been played at the same time as the last round of the grade competition both Mark and Peter Taylor remained unavailable for the finals, having been in the NSW team which made a brief match tour to **Zimbabwe. In one respect it was a blessing in disguise because all the team's** batsmen were in such good form that it would have been difficult to have found one to drop. Randal Green in particular was in the middle of a remarkable run of success, having strung together scores of 55, 94, 123 not out, 35, 98 (run out) and 35. He then dominated the semi-final against North Sydney at Drummoyne Oval scoring an unbeaten 133 as his team recovered from 5-110 to **pass North Sydney's total of 213** without further loss. His batting partner, Neil Maxwell, promoted to first grade late in the season scored a crucial 32 not out. Earlier Steve Whitfield (5-65) and Michael Coote (4-48, and twice on a hat-trick) had bowled superbly to dismiss the strong North Sydney batting team.

The final, against minor premiers, St George, was played at Bankstown Oval, **the scene of the club's second grade victory three years earlier. For the first time the** final was scheduled to be played over three consecutive days, from Saturday to Monday, although rain intervened, reducing the amount of time available and also affecting the pitch. Batting first St George made a reasonable start adding about 30 for the first wicket before Peter Vilimaa struck. For most of **the season 'Esto' as he was** known (short for Estonia, from where his family originated) had struggled and going into the final he had taken just 11 wickets at an average of almost 40. Repaying the faith which the team selectors had in him he turned in what was to be the greatest bowling performance of his career, taking 7-55 from 32.3 overs as St George tumbled to be all out for 192.

With the final wicket falling late on the Sunday afternoon Northern District was faced with a short, three-over spell. With fieldsman crowded around the bat the two District openers, Neil Howlett and Ian Moore, decided to gamble. Rather than play out the overs they attacked and by stumps the score had reached 0-27, to prove crucial runs in the eventual result of the match.

Both openers were dismissed early on the third day of play, followed shortly afterwards by captain Turner before the innings was steadied by a good stand between Randal Green and Brad Patterson. The wicket of Green for 34, to a dubious decision, was followed in quick succession by those of Angus Farncomb and Neil Maxwell leaving ND in trouble at 6-110. Patterson was joined at the **wicket by the team's bowling hero, Vilimaa.** Although he was a very capable lower-order batsman, such **had been the strength of the team's batting that he had** only batted six times all season to date. Together these two steadied the innings and with a blend of tight defence and occasional aggression (Patterson took 16 runs off one over from NSW bowler Murray Bennett) gradually began to work off the required runs, the situation further complicated by the arrival of a bank of heavy, black clouds. After adding a vital 69 runs for the seventh wicket Vilimaa was dismissed for 26, however Patterson, with Michael Coote at the wicket, saw the team home, remaining not out on 79 – an innings of great character under difficult circumstances.



Although he played most of his cricket in second grade Alf Ziehlke was one of ND's finest leg spin bowlers.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

The victory added an appropriate finishing touch to the club's 60th anniversary celebrations which culminated in a Diamond Jubilee Dinner, organised by Phil Blazey and Rocky Harris, and held at the Pennant Hills Golf Club in May 1986. The night of the Dinner also saw the release of an updated Book of Records, produced **by the club's remarkable scorer and statistician Hilary Griffith**. Sadly just two weeks later the club lost one of its great characters with the death of Alf Ziehlke at the age of 74.

While the first grade team's success had been built from a coordinated team effort the performance of Randal Green was remarkable. His aggregate of 835 runs was the highest in Sydney grade for that season and certainly a contender for the best batting in a season by an ND batsman. Although statistically it was only the third **highest aggregate in the club's history, both of the higher totals, those of Bill Alley (1026 in 1942/43) and Les Fallowfield's (1011 in 1941/42) were made during the war years** when not only were more matches played but also the standard of first grade cricket was significantly lower with the absence of so many players on war service. **While Fallowfield's 1941/42 average of 72.2 was slightly better than Green's 64.2, Alley's runs were scored at 'only' 46.6. Fallowfield's season was of course memorable for its five consecutive centuries, yet even there Green wasn't far behind with two 90s and two centuries in five matches. Green's season surpassed the other two in one important respect, in that it was a major factor in his team's winning of the first grade premiership.**

The second grade team's season stood in sharp contrast to that of first grade, finishing in 14th place for the second season in a row with four wins and seven losses from their 14 matches. The team was captained by Paul Grimble who set a good example, scoring 334 runs and taking 28 wickets. Others to perform well were Neil Maxwell who led both batting aggregate and averages with 368 runs at 40.9, including his maiden grade century, 105 against Sydney University at University Oval; Jack Moran with 335 runs at 25.8; Phil Blazey, who again led the wicket-takers with 34 at 19.7; fast bowler Geoff Roberts (27 at 21.7) and Michael Hewett (23 catches and 13 stumpings).

After improving from 19th in 1983/84 to 11th in 1984/85 the young third grade team, again under the captaincy of David Watt, made another big jump up the table finishing in second place after the 14 rounds of the competition proper, with eight wins, five draws (two abandoned) and just one loss. In their semi-final against Penrith at Chatswood Oval, they looked to be in trouble when Penrith amassed 8-323 declared. Although a draw would have been enough to progress to the final, to their credit the Northern District batsman accepted the challenge and, led by Chris Shelley's **brilliant innings of 126 not out, supported by Tim Johnson (48)**, they passed the Penrith score with three wickets in hand. By contrast the final, against Gordon at Manly Oval was a low scoring match. Batting first, Gordon scored 171 with captain Watt and Michael Coen taking three wickets each. ND never recovered from the loss of early wickets and despite a partial middle order recovery led again by Shelley (23) and Johnson (40) they could only manage to score 8-104.

With a number of players from the successful 1984/85 fourth grade team promoted, Reg Tulk had to mould an almost entirely new team in 1985/86. After six matches they had still to record a win, although there had been five draws, many **influenced by the consistent wet weather. By the season's end they had improved sufficiently to win four matches and finish in 13th place.** With just two players playing more than nine matches there were few aggregate individual performances of note, Matthew Wade, with just 218 runs (at 24.2) the leading scorer, and Andrew Willey (20 wickets at 14.4) taking the most wickets. Steve Taylor's **105 in the team's first win**, against Sydney University at University Oval was the only century of the season, before that player was promoted to third grade.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Under, John Lynch, its eighth different captain in nine years, the 1985/86 fifth grade team struggled to be competitive. Winning just two of their 14 matches, they **ended the season in 16th place. The team's batting was extremely disappointing with** the best individual aggregate just 166 runs and the only century partnership being for the ninth wickets. Of the bowlers, Rowan Williams and Lynch took 21 wickets each while Grant Nati, an 18-year-old 6 foot 6 inch fast bowler, showed promise.

Former ND first grade batsman, Max Shepherd, now the Director of Coaching with the NSW Cricket Association returned to the club where he played with the City and Suburban team, topping the batting averages with 412 runs at 41.2. The consistent Steve Lewis had the best aggregate with 467 runs at 27.5 while captain Tim Stokes (37 wickets at 12.5) and Michael Grant (32 at 13.9) were best of the bowlers.

The Poidevin-Gray Shield team was again strong, and with eight players from the previous season still there, reasonably experienced. Although still eligible to play, **and the team's logical captain, Mark Taylor** could fit in only two matches, and the captaincy was taken by opening bowler Steve Liggins. Placed in a western division of the competition with teams as far afield as Campbelltown, Penrith and Hawkesbury, they began poorly, dismissed for just 91 and beaten by Fairfield,. Although they followed up with good wins in their next three matches a fifth round loss to Parramatta placed them in a disappointing fifth place in their division. The strength of **the team's batting was in its openers with Ross Toohey** and Angus Farncomb having opening stands of 54, 104 and 105, and Toohey and Taylor putting on 94 in their only match together. The remainder of the batting was generally disappointing.

The AW Green Shield team was again managed by Tom Richmond and captained for the first time by Craig Chilvers. Only five divisional matches were played instead of the usual seven, with ND winning three and losing two. The importance of the Central Coast as a nursery for the club was well illustrated with four of the top five highest scoring batsmen travelling down the F3 to play. Best of the bats was a new right hand batsman from the Umina club named Simon Blake who scored 195 runs at 65.0, while Chilvers (217 at 43.4) and Glen Briggs (14 wickets at 14.3) both performed consistently. Both Chilvers and Blake gained representative honours, with Chilvers selected for the NSW Under 16s and Blake in both the Green Shield Northern Division and City Seconds teams.

Boundary changes imposed by the NSWCA reduced the number of schools which contested the 1985/86 Northern District Cup for local high schools to just 12. As part of a three-year sponsorship deal between the NDCC and the McDonalds hamburger chain was given the naming rights to the cup. The winners were the team from Barker College who defeated Normanhurst Boys High, the latter school playing **in the final for the sixth straight year. Barker's win made it only the second school to** win the cup more than once, having been the inaugural winner ten years previously.

Despite missing a number of matches, Peter Taylor **was able to win the club's** major playing award (now the McDonalds Player of the Year) for the second year in a row, joining David Glasson as a multiple winner of the award. In what was the closest finish to date Taylor (179 points) beat Paul Grimble by a single point. Taylor also won the prestigious Sydney Morning Herald Cricketer of the Year while Ross Turner was **runner-up in that newspaper's Captain of the Year award. The Bill North Memorial Award** was won by Phil Blazey.

During the off-season, a number of changes to the competition rules were made, the most significant of which was the abolition of the much-maligned, and frequently ignored, residential restrictions. The rules, which had been the cornerstone of the Sydney grade competition when it was formed in 1893, meant that only those players who lived within the defined boundaries allocated to each grade club, could play for that club. Over the years the rules had gradually been diluted with allowances made for players with long-service to remain with a club despite living

outside of that club's boundaries, the creation of neutral zones to cater for players in outlying or inner-city areas, and of four-club zones whereby a player could register with any one of four clubs within a broadly geographic area.

By 1986 it was clear that residential restrictions were no longer relevant and they were consequently abolished, the most unfortunate effect being the end to the many humorous tales of the measures taken by club officials to hide players who had been registered at an incorrect address to enable them to play.

1986/87

By any criteria the 1986/87 season stands out as one of the greatest in the history of the Northern District Cricket Club. At the club level the effort in finishing third in the club championship was excellent; at a team level Ross Turner's **first grade** team won their second consecutive premiership and were narrowly beaten in the final of the Limited Over competition; while at the individual level the club produced its **first truly 'home-grown' Test cricketer**.

The choice of Peter Taylor to play in the Australian team for the Fifth Test against England at the Sydney Cricket Ground in January 1987 was one of the biggest selection surprises in Australian cricket history. The 30-year-old Taylor had played just four matches for NSW, three in 1985/86 and just one in 1986/87, and had taken just seven wickets. His selection caught the media totally off guard, leading initially to the assumption that there had been an error in the announcement of the news and that it was club and state team-mate, Mark Taylor, who had been picked. When the selection was confirmed the newspaper headlines read "*Peter Who?*", a nickname which was to stick with Taylor for the rest of his career. Although Taylor was the 14th cricketer to play both club cricket for Northern District and Test cricket, he was only the second to have started his grade career at ND (Alan Davidson was the other) and the only one to have been playing with the club at the time of his Test debut.

With both the selectors and Taylor on a hiding to nothing, and the cynics poised to ridicule both should he fail, Taylor silenced all his critics with a match-winning performance, scoring 11 in the first innings and taking 6-78 from 26 overs, including the prize wickets of Alan Lamb, David Gower and Ian Botham. Then, in the second innings, batting at number nine, he went to the crease with Australia in trouble at 7-145 and scored 42, adding 98 for the eighth wicket with Steve Waugh. Two more wickets in the second innings were enough to win him the Man of the Match award.



Peter Taylor during his remarkable match-winning debut against England in the Fifth Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

As good as the performance of the Northern District first grade team had been in 1985/86 it was surpassed in 1986/87 as they powered their way through the competition, eventually winning 13 of their 16 grade matches and four of their five Sunday Limited-Over matches – a total of 17 wins, two draws and just two losses from 21 matches. One of the two losses, and the only one in a grade match during the season, came in the first round when ND, despite having scored 8-340 declared (Mark Taylor 123) was beaten by North Sydney (8-341). The second match followed a similar pattern with Mosman declaring at 9-311 and ND replying with 6-331. Six more first innings wins followed with the team dismissed only twice, and then for scores in excess of 250. A lucky draw in the ninth round against the strong Campbelltown team, their eventual opponents in the final, was the only hiccup and was followed by a further five consecutive wins giving them a comfortable minor premiership win on 74 points.

While the team was strong in all aspects of the game, its batting strength was quite awesome. In the 14 competition rounds they were all out on just three occasions (for 252, 257 and 215) with five 300-plus totals. The top order was rock solid with four century partnerships for the first wicket, and three for the second, Neil Howlett featuring in six of these seven stands.

At the start of the season the competition rules had been changed, and **semi-final and final matches were again to be played on the higher placed club's home ground**. As minor premiers, Northern District were up against fourth-placed Western Suburbs, with the match to be played at Waitara Oval. At one stage it looked as if the game would have to be moved after vandals broke into the ground on the Friday night and using the metal star pegs which helped rope off the wicket square, punched holes through the covers, causing major damage to the pitch. Fortunately, groundsman Kevin Haddrick arrived at the oval early enough to begin work on repairing the pitch and with the help of first grader Neil Maxwell, had the wicket ready for play just half an hour after the scheduled start time.

Adding extra spice to the match was the fact that ND had defeated Wests the previous weekend at Pratten Park and thus had relegated them back to fourth place. Batting first, and needing of course to win the match, Wests scored 302. Against an attack spearheaded by rep. bowlers Dave Gilbert, Greg Matthews and Chris Killen, ND made a faultless start with Mark Taylor and Neil Howlett putting on 108 before Taylor (50) was dismissed. Although Howlett went on to score 85 and Randal Green 34, the middle order collapsed, and with an hour and a half to play ND had lost eight wickets for 240. Tim Ebbeck then joined captain Ross Turner at the crease and, despite a concentrated effort by the Wests bowlers and fieldsman, led by NSW captain Dirk Wellham, the pair managed to bat out the remaining overs.

The final, against Campbelltown, was also played at Waitara Oval. This time ND were seeking revenge, having been beaten by the southern team in the final of the Limited Overs competition earlier in the season. At stumps on the first day it looked as if they were going to win the double, having bowled Northern District out for just 167 and reached 1-56 in reply. The innings had begun badly with Campbelltown picking up the prize wicket of Neil Howlett without scoring. Although the two Taylors scored 37 (Mark) and 59 (Peter) the middle order again failed and but for an innings of 26 by Peter Vilimaa at number nine, their score would have been even lower.

Buoyed on by an emotional speech from Brad Patterson the Northern District players took the field determined to fight their way back into the match. The tone of the day was set within the first half hour when Peter Taylor picked up three wickets for just one run. From there, Taylor and Steve Whitfield bowled relentlessly at the now tentative Campbelltown bats, with their line and length immaculate, and when Whitfield dismissed England Test all-rounder Derek Pringle for a duck the game had **swung for the first time in ND's favour. Under Turner's astute leadership**

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000



The 1986/87 Northern District First Grade Team which is considered by many to be the best to ever represent the club. Rear (l to r): David Brookes (Manager) Neil Maxwell, Michael Coote, Peter Vilimaa, Steve Whitfield, Bruce Mills and Ross Collins (Club Coach). Centre (l to r): Mark Taylor, Peter Taylor, Austen Hughes (NDCC President), Ross Turner (Captain), Dr Bill Woods (Scorer), Ian Moore and Neil Howlett. Front (l to r): Angus Farncomb, Randal Green, Brad Patterson and Tim Ebbeck.

Campbelltown were never going to come back, and when Vilimaa picked up the final wicket they were all out 33 runs short of their target. The analyses of the two spinners tells the story of what had been a tense and enthralling cricket match: P Taylor 35-20-43-3 and S Whitfield 36-21-33-3.

The win, the club's fifth first grade premiership and the first consecutive victories, was a testimony not only to the considerable technical ability of the players in the team but also to their mental toughness which in the end proved the difference between success and failure.

Earlier in the season the team had won each of the three matches in its division of the Limited-Over competition, beating Parramatta, Randwick and Hawkesbury comfortably. In the semi-final they had another easy win, over Sydney University, before meeting Campbelltown in the final at Waitara Oval. In a thrilling **finish Campbelltown, chasing ND's score of 7-180** scored the winning run with just three balls to spare.

The statistical wrap for the season showed Mark Taylor at the top of the batting averages for the third time in four seasons with 571 runs at 63.4, while Neil Howlett's **aggregate of 658 runs at 38.7 again somehow** escaped the notice of the NSW selectors. Randal Green was more fortunate. His 504 runs (at 36.0) on top of his outstanding performance in 1985/86 saw him selected in both NSW Colts and Second XI matches. Brad Patterson, with 399 runs and 17 wickets, proved himself a quality all-rounder, scoring his maiden first grade century (108) against Parramatta at the Old Kings School as he and Peter Taylor (123 not out) added 211 for the fourth wicket. Centuries were also scored by Mark Taylor (123 against North Sydney and 104 against

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Bankstown), Neil Howlett (101 against Penrith) and Ian Moore (100 against Petersham). The twin spin attack of Peter Taylor (22 wickets at 21.9) and Steve Whitfield (37 at 24.6) was again the best in Sydney, while Tim Ebbeck, after a frustrating first half of the season finished brilliantly to make 39 dismissals (38 catches and one stumping).

The star of the season however was undoubtedly Peter Vilimaa. Buoyed by his match-winning performance in the 1985/86 final he bowled magnificently throughout the season to take 47 wickets at an average of 16.8. Although apparently bowling within himself such was his rhythm that he was generating more pace than previously and he was a constant threat to opposition batsman. His batting also proved invaluable and he scored 295 runs at 29.5, including back-to-back scores of 80 against Gordon and 64 against Manly.

The second grade team, again led by Paul Grimble, improved from 14th to eighth place with seven wins, five losses and two draws from their 14 matches. The team was largely unchanged from that of the previous season with exciting young batsman, Ross Toohey, promoted from third grade and the arrival of a 21-year-old off spinning all-rounder, Bruce Mills, the youngest of three cricketing brothers from the Woy Woy Cricket Club on the Central Coast, all of whom would eventually play for Northern District.

Inconsistency proved to be the team's main problem and apart from a three-match winning spell early in the season their form was patchy from there on. Toohey proved to be the find of the season, his 469 runs at 39.1 being the best aggregate and average for the season, ahead of the ever-reliable Jack Moran (350 at 29.2) and Chris Shelley (320 at 24.6). Ian Moore played a number of matches in second grade, scoring 111 against Balmain at Drummoyne Oval, only the second player to score centuries in both first and second grade in the same season⁵¹. Gavin Ridley and Peter Coyle were the team's other century-makers, the latter's 115 not out against Gordon at Waitara Oval finishing about an hour and a quarter after he was supposed to have been at a friend's wedding taking place at a local church. Unfortunately for the bridal party the news of Peter's innings had filtered through to a large number of family and friends who decided to call in at the oval on their way to the wedding and then hung around to see him reach his 'ton'.

After two seasons in charge David Watt stepped down from the third grade captaincy in favour of Mal Middleton, although Watt remained in the team. A poor start in which they won only two of their first nine matches was turned around in the second half of the season with four straight wins followed by a narrow loss in the final round match against Western Suburbs at Blick Oval. Such was the tightness of the competition that a win would have seen them sneak into fourth place, while the subsequent loss saw them finish tenth. Best performer was Tim Johnson who topped both batting aggregate and averages with 465 runs at 51.6 (including a top score of 156 against Bankstown at Asquith Oval) and also picked up 13 wickets. Other major contributors were Michael Cant (329 runs in six innings, including 134 against Sydney University at St Pauls Oval) and Mark Clark (311 runs at 23.9).

For the second time in three seasons Reg Tulk took his fourth grade team through to the semi-finals, winning ten of their 15 matches. The team went through a series of fluctuations caused primarily by personnel changes with a number of young players promoted and several experienced players returning to take their places. Former first grade all-rounder, John Iredale, appreciating the drop in standard, began the season brilliantly with scores of 64, 115 and 75 leading the side to three 300-plus totals and three consecutive wins. Ex-second grader, Gavin Ridley, back with the club after a break of two seasons, and the promising Andrew Lenton, also scored centuries in the first two games. While both Ridley and Lenton, together with two other fine young batsmen in Craig Chilvers and Michael Goeke, were promoted to

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

higher grades the experienced Iredale volunteered to remain in fourth grade. After seven matches the team was at the top of the competition table with six wins and one loss, but then slipped to two straight losses. The return of two club stalwarts in David Glasson and Brian Crawford then helped them to four consecutive wins although it was only enough to reach fourth place where they were well beaten by eventual premiers, Sutherland.

In fifth grade the ND team, again led by John Lynch, improved slightly to finish in 13th place with five wins, six losses and three draws.

The City and Suburban team fielded one of its strongest teams in years with three high quality batsmen in Max Shepherd, who scored 566 runs at 47.2, Greg Poynter (575 at 33.8) and John Hollioake (610 at 55.5), all three scoring centuries. Hollioake, who was with Northern District for just one season, had previously played cricket while working in Hong Kong and would later move to the UK. During the season the older of his two sons, 15-year-old Adam Hollioake, filled in for the team in one match scoring one not out. Eleven years later he was to make his Test debut for England, in the Fifth Test against Mark Taylor's **touring Australian team, and would** later captain the England One-Day team, where his younger brother, Ben, also played a number of matches.

In the Poidevin-Gray Shield competition, Northern District had its worst season in years, winning just one of their four matches played and finishing near the bottom of their division. The team was captained by Neil Maxwell, and although it included five batsmen who had scored grade centuries none could find their touch with only one half century being scored and no batsman having an aggregate in excess of 100.

The Green Shield team, led by manager Tom Richmond and captain Kerry Mullins had a moderate season, finishing fourth in their division with three wins, two losses and four draws. The standout performers were two players who would serve the club well for many years in Mark Lowe and Simon Waddington. Lowe, formerly from the Normanhurst club was a left-handed opening batsman who totalled 337 runs at 67.4 including a rare century on debut, 112 not out against Petersham at Waitara Oval – the first hundred by an ND Green Shield player in seven years. Waddington, a left-arm pace bowler from Sydney Grammar School, was the leading wicket-taker with 13 at 20.2.

Defending holders, Barker College, again won the Northern District Cup schoolboy competition in 1986/87, downing Castle Hill High in the final.

1987/88

Chasing its third consecutive premiership the Northern District first grade team underwent a number of changes. Peter Taylor was now a regular member of both the Australian Test and One-Day teams, and, belatedly, the NSW team. Consequently he was able to play just one full game and two half-games for the club – the competition rules having been amended several seasons previously to permit players required for representative matches to be replaced by a lower grade player for either day of any two day match. Likewise Mark Taylor played only six matches plus four half-matches. **The biggest losses however were of the club's outstanding** batsman of the previous decade, Neil Howlett who returned to Balmain, and of the leading bowler of the same period, Stephen Whitfield, who decided to finish his career with his local, Manly-Warringah, club.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Since making his debut in fifth grade and Green Shield in the 1971/72 season, the elegant and stylish Howlett had scored 8216 runs at an average of 30.3 including nine centuries. On four occasions he had scored in excess of 600 runs in a season, three in succession between 1979/80 and 1981/82 where he totalled 2062 runs. Just as Hugh Chilvers was one of the best leg spinners not to play for Australia then surely there were few better batsmen than Neil Howlett to miss selection for their state.

Equally unlucky had been the amazing Whitfield who, during the previous season, had passed Tim Caldwell as the second highest wicket-taker for the club in first grade, finishing his career at ND with 486 wickets - but still not even **halfway to Chilvers' 'unbreakable' record of 1153.**

In all matches during his 17 consecutive seasons his tally of 722 wickets was the fourth highest **behind Chilvers' 1226. Whitfield's move to Manly was made with the club's blessing** to reduce the amount of travelling required of him from his home on the peninsula. Despite his bowling being as accurate and consistent as ever, at the age of 37 his chances of gaining selection in the NSW team seemed to have ended so it came as a pleasant surprise to all who knew the popular, quietly-spoken Whitfield when he was selected as one of three spinners in the NSW team which played South Australia on the spin-prone Sydney Cricket Ground in February 1989. His selection meant not only that he could resume his bowling partnership with Peter Taylor but also that, along with Mark Taylor, the Shield team included three players who had all started their grade careers at Northern District.

After being hit for 32 runs from just five overs in the first innings of the match against SA, Whitfield bounced back to take 2-54 from 34 overs in the second. He played two more Sheffield Shield matches, both at the SCG and again bowled with his customary accuracy but picking up just one more wicket.

Although the team's batting remained strong the bowling attack was altered significantly with spinners Paul Grimble and Bruce Mills replacing Taylor and Whitfield, and pace bowler Steve Liggins taking the place of Michael Coote who announced his retirement after five matches.

Despite these changes the first grade team went through the 14 competition rounds with just one loss, against St George in round five where they were dismissed for under 200 for the only time in the season. Indeed they were all out on only three times, the other occasions being against Sutherland (for 202) and North Sydney (292). After a particularly dry season the year before, the rain returned with a vengeance during 1987/88 and a total of six matches were drawn, all because of wet weather. As a consequence, despite having lost just the one match, ND could only finish in third place, thus needing to win both semi-final and final to take the premiership again.

Drawn to play second-placed Bankstown-Canterbury in the semi-final at Bankstown Oval, the match, despite having three days scheduled was again severely affected by rain with just a few hours of play possible. Turner was forced to gamble, declaring his innings closed with a score of 5-119 in the hope that he could dismiss the **strong Bankstown batting lineup. It wasn't to be, and although the match was drawn,**



Steve Whitfield received a well-deserved, albeit belated, call-up to the NSW team in the latter half of the 1988/89 season while playing with the Manly club..

the home team's higher placing sent them through to the final, where a win over Petersham gave Bankstown its first premiership in the top grade since 1958/59.

The two big improvers of the season were all-rounders Brad Patterson and Neil Maxwell. Both scored in excess of 400 runs (Maxwell 471 at 58.9 and Patterson 427 35.6) and although Maxwell was used sparingly with the ball, Patterson shouldered much of the burden previously carried by Michael Coote, sharing the new ball with Peter Vilimaa for most of the year. He did it well enough to take both **bowling aggregate and averages with 29 wickets at 12.9. Maxwell's potential was again** recognised by the state selectors and he played a number of minor matches, including two for the NSW Second XI and one, as captain, for NSW Colts.

The team's batting had been solid and reliable throughout the season with the top six batsman all scoring in excess of 350, all at averages above 35. Opener Ian Moore had his best season with the club, leading the aggregate with 514 runs at 39.5 while Randal Green again staked a claim for higher honours with 498 at 38.3.

At the end of the season Ross Turner announced his intention to stand down from the first grade captaincy, although he would remain with the club as a player. In his five seasons in charge he had taken them to two premierships, the first ND captain to win multiple titles and, importantly, had done so with a calmness and dignity which brought great credit to Northern District as a club and indeed indirectly, through his influence on Mark Taylor, to Australian cricket as a whole. Throughout **Taylor's reign as Australian captain whenever he was asked about the influences** on his cricket career he cited Turner as the best captain under whom he had played and as the person on whom he based his own captaincy style.

The effectiveness of Turner's leadership and the respect with which he was held in Sydney grade circles is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that in his five seasons as Northern District's first grade captain he finished lower than second in the **Sydney Morning Herald's Captain of the Year Award on only one occasion, winning it** twice on his own (in 1983/84 and 1986/87) and sharing it with Trevor Chappell in 1987/88.

With Paul Grimble's **return to first grade, that great club stalwart Jack Moran** took over the captaincy of the second grade team from 1987/88. With just three of the **permanent members of the previous season's team still there at the start of the season** Moran did an excellent job in moulding together a side which only narrowly missed a place in the semi-finals. Their 14 matches resulted in seven wins, three losses and four draws, for 46 points and fifth place. Best of the batsmen were Tim Johnson who batted consistently through the season to score 546 runs at 36.4; David Watt, who scored 344 in just nine innings at 49.1; Craig Chilvers (359 at 35.9) and captain Moran (363 at 27.9). Of the bowlers, pace bowler Geoff Roberts and spinner Paul Mills each took 26 wickets at averages of 22.0 and 23.3 respectively.

Chilvers won a place in the NSW Under 19 team, captained by Michael Slater, which contested the 1987/88 Australian Championships in Brisbane.

The third grade team was captained by Peter Coyle, **the team's seventh** different captain in eight seasons. Although they won five and only lost four matches, five rain-affected draws plus some inconsistent batting saw them finish in a disappointing 12th place. Andrew Lenton **again proved the team's most reliable bat** winning both batting awards with 269 runs at 29.9, while Mal Middleton (21 wickets at 23.4) was the only bowler to take more than 20 wickets.

Fourth grade had an almost identical season to thirds, finishing in 12th place with five wins (one of them outright), four losses and five draws – four of them at Asquith Oval and all interrupted by bad weather, often when other matches around Sydney went ahead. Such was the turnover of players that the only player from the last match of the previous season to take the field in the opening match of 1987/88 was captain Reg Tulk, starting his sixth straight year in charge of the team equalling

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Ian Fraser's record set during the 1970s. Best performers were Clinton Bragg (352 runs at 29.3) and Glen Mills (167 runs at 33.4 and 15 wickets at 22.8). A right hand bat and left-arm fast medium bowler, Glen was the oldest of the three Mills brothers (Bruce and Paul were the others) all of whom were now playing with Northern District. Their father, Fred Mills, had played with the Balmain club during the 1950s before moving to the Central Coast.

After struggling for most of the decade the fifth grade team proved to be the big improvers of 1987/88 jumping from 13th into a semi-final place for the first time since 1979/80. Led by first year captain Geoff Harris **they began slowly and didn't** register their first win of the season until the fifth round. From there however they were undefeated for the remainder of the season, finishing in fourth place but then having to sit and watch their semi-final against minor premiers, Sydney University being abandoned without a ball being bowled. Interestingly an analysis by club coach Peter Dernikowitsch at the end of the season revealed that fifth grade players had the best attendances of all teams at both Wednesday and Friday club practices.

Highlights of the year for fifth grade included the batting of an exciting young batsman in Andrew Quinane whose 110 not out against St George at Somerville Park was the only century of the season. Promoted to fourth grade Quinane almost had another ton, being stranded on 96 not out in a match against Mosman at Asquith Oval, and capped a great season by being chosen in the NSW Under 17 team which contested the Australian Championships in Launceston where his teammates included Simon Waddington, an ND Green Shield player from the previous season then playing for Sydney Grammar, and an exciting young wicket-keeper/batsman from Lismore named Adam Gilchrist.

Another fifth grade newcomer to impress was pace bowler Winston Olegasegarem, who despite travelling from Bathurst each weekend was able to capture 27 wickets at 9.6, including 6-9 against Gordon at Somerville Park.

For the first time the Poidevin-Gray Shield competition was included in the calculations to decide the grade club championship with points gained multiplied by four. The ND team, again captained by Neil Maxwell, could hardly have made a better start. Batting in their first match, against North Sydney at Waitara Oval, opening batsmen Ross Toohey (126) and debutant Mark Lowe (105) added 198 for the first wicket, the second highest P-G partnership for the club, behind the 203 put on, also for the first wicket, by Lynn Marks and Don Allum against Balmain in 1959/60. The eventual team total of 5-330 from 60 overs was also believed to be a record. After their four divisional matches the team had three wins and one loss but still managed to finish top of the Northern Division. As was to happen to both the first and fifth grade teams in the semi-finals later in the season rain brought the **P-G team's season** to an abrupt halt when the match against Southern Division winners, Sutherland, at Sutherland Oval was abandoned because of wet weather. Sutherland, because of their better divisional record, went through to the final.

The AW Green Shield team was comprised almost entirely of first-year players. Captained by Mark Bayliss and managed again by Tom Richmond they won three and lost three of the six matches played with two others abandoned because of the poor weather, and finished fourth in their division. Players to impress included St **Leo's College opening batsmen, Steve Marando**, and Matthew Watson, from the North Turramurra club, who scored 218 and 178 runs respectively, and opening bowler Richard Burns (11 wickets at 16.2).

The poor weather reduced the City and Suburban season to just 16 matches, from the 26 originally scheduled. Of the three 500-plus batsmen of the previous season only Greg Poynter returned, his moderate total of 308 runs (at 22.0) being the highest aggregate for the year. Best of the bowlers were captain Ian Clifton (29 wickets at 16.0) and Michael Grant (28 at 13.0).

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

In the Northern District Cup high school competition Eastwood Marist Brothers defeated Ku-ring-gai High School in the final. It was the second success for the Eastwood school having previously won in 1981/82.

First grade all-rounder Brad Patterson and second grader David Watt fought **out the club's Player of the Year award with Patterson (169 points) taking the prize** just ahead of Watt (161) with Neil Maxwell third on 131. The Bill North Memorial Award for 1987/88 went to Reg Tulk.

Two more of Northern District's finest players, former first grade wicket-keepers Jim Mathers and Bill Englefield, both passed away during the 1987/88 season.

1988/89



By the end of the 1989/90 season Mark Taylor was arguably the best opening batsman in the world.

Although the first grade team continued to perform strongly, the lower grades generally performed below expectations, leaving Northern District a disappointing ninth in the club championship, its lowest finish in five years. Mark Taylor captained the first grade team on those occasions when he was fully available, with Brad Patterson leading the side on the other occasions.

Although he was to play with ND for the remainder of his cricketing career and make many valuable contributions to the club both on and off the field, 1988/89 was to be last season where Taylor was able to play more than the occasional grade match. His 119 against Wests at Waitara Oval in the opening match of the grade season marked the beginning of a Bradman-like run of scoring which would see him amass almost 5000 runs in grade, first class and Test cricket in a two-year period. At the start of the 1988/89 season Taylor was a steady, reliable and competent state batsman. By the end of

the 1989/90 season he was arguably the best opening batsman in the world. Twice he had scored over 1200 runs in an Australian season; he had made his Test debut; scored his first Test century on debut against England in England; made a Test double **century; scored over 800 runs in a Test series; been named as one of Wisden's Cricketers of the Year; twice scored centuries in each innings of first class match; and captained NSW to victory in a Sheffield Shield final.**

The major rule change for the 1988/89 season was the introduction of a bonus points system with one batting point being awarded for every 50 runs scored beyond 200 in two-day first and second grade matches (beyond 150 in lower grade and one-day first and second grade matches), one bowling bonus point after taking six wickets

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

and an additional bowling bonus point after taking nine wickets. Bonus points were only awarded in the first innings of any match.

The Northern District first grade team for 1988/89 was largely unchanged from that of the previous season with the only major loss being that of opening batsman Ian Moore, who returned to Brisbane thus giving the promising Ross Toohey an opportunity to consolidate his place in the team. The team began the season poorly losing three of their first five matches including the opening game against Wests **where Taylor's century and a total of 7-330 declared wasn't enough, Wests finishing the match with 5-350.** One of the umpires at the game was Rocky Harris who announced his retirement after what had been his 200th Sydney first grade match.

Although they won six of their next nine matches, they entered the final round **just out of the top four (indeed they hadn't been in the four at any time during the season)**, needing not only to win their match against Hawkesbury but also relying on other results to go their way. Fortunately all the preferred results happened and the team actually took third place on 98 points, just four points behind minor premiers, St George. The second-vs-fourth semi-final against Manly at Manly Oval saw the team pitted against Kerry Mackay and Steve Whitfield. Sadly for the ND players they had plenty of time to reminisce with their former team-mates as the match was severely restricted by rain and drawn. The result meant that the higher placed Manly **proceeded to the final, eventually taking the premiership when the following week's final against Bankstown-Canterbury was also rain-affected.**

With the burden of the captaincy off his shoulders, Ross Turner had his best season with the bat since coming into first grade in 1981/82, scoring 602 runs at 46.3, including his maiden first grade century: 102 against Balmain at Waitara in the fourth round. Randal Green once again was the dominant batsman in the team, scoring 638 runs at 45.6. Despite having consistently scored more than 500 runs a season in each of his five years in the top grade Green, like Neil Howlett before him, was still being overlooked by the state selectors.

In his first two seasons in first grade Neil Maxwell, although he had developed into a quality batsman, had been used sparingly as a bowler, taking just 13 wickets in 25 matches. Early in the 1988/89 season an injury to Brad Patterson provided him with the opportunity to use the new ball. He thrived on the increased workload (258 overs) to such an extent that by the end of the season he had taken 49 wickets at the amazing average of just 11.0 including innings figures of 5-38, 5-44, 6-25 and 5-49. As well he had scored 369 runs (at 26.4) to establish himself as one of Sydney's leading all-rounders. Brad Patterson, in his end-of-season captain's report, summed Maxwell up best: *"The great thing about Maxie's cricket is that whenever he is batting or bowling, something exciting is happening, such is his fierce competitive nature and natural zest for the game."*⁵² - a "mini-Botham" as club president Austen Hughes described him.



Neil Maxwell.

The culmination of Maxwell's brilliant season came when he won the Sydney Morning Herald Player of the Year award, now re-named the O'Reilly Medal in honour of the former great Test leg spinner who was still writing for the SMH. Maxwell's win capped a great run by past or present NDCC players in the Herald award. In his first season (1984/85) with Manly, Kerry Mackay had taken it out; Peter Taylor had become the club's first winner in 1985/86; while John Grimble, then with Sydney University, had won in 1987/88.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

At the end of the season the club lost another fine cricketer to the corporate world when Tim Ebbeck retired from the game to concentrate on his business career.

In second grade the club had one of its most forgettable seasons winning just three of their 15 matches and finishing in second last place. In a season with few highlights Angus Farncomb and Jack Moran proved a memorable one in the 13th round when they added 357 runs for the second wicket in a match against Campbelltown at Waitara Oval. The partnership was the **highest for any wicket in the club's history while Farncomb's innings of 237 broke the record for the club's** highest individual score of 218, previously held jointly by Randal Green (scored in 1982/83) and Phil Payne (in **1936/37**). **Moran's innings of 127, his sixth century for the club,** was the only other hundred for the season. Indeed, in a season of inconsistent and unreliable batting, no other batsman could score more than 75 with Moran the only one to pass 300 runs for the season, scoring 464 at 35.6.



Angus Farncomb's innings of 237 was the highest in the club's history.

Paul Mills was easily the best of the second grade bowlers, his 34 wickets (at 15.6) almost twice as many as the next best.

Third grade was equally disappointing, finishing in 15th place with just four wins from 15 matches. Led again by Peter Coyle they never recovered from a horror start in which they won only one of their first six matches. As with second grade there were some individual highlights, none better than Matt Watson's **double of 6-103 and 167** against Campbelltown at Raby Park. Craig Chilvers again showed the outstanding talent which he possessed with an innings of 186, with 22 fours and 6 sixes, against North Sydney at Somerville Park.

A poor start also cost fourth grade any chance of reaching the semi-finals. **Their first win didn't come until the fifth** round and from there onwards the team proved competitive winning five and losing just two of their remaining matches. Best performed players were the promising Matt Watson, who scored 337 runs at 33.7 prior to his promotion to third grade; Peter Truscott, who had a fine all-round season with 258 runs and 22 wickets; and leading wicket-taker 17-year-old John Whelan whose 23 wickets at 19.4 included an 8-73 against Balmain at Ryde Oval.

Fifth grade was the best-performed of the Northern District lower grade teams in 1988/89. A young team, with a young captain in U/21 player David Roughley, only about half of the team had any previous grade experience. Despite this they combined well to win seven of their 15 matches, losing the opportunity to push for a semi-final spot when their final round match against Hawkesbury was abandoned without any play. 15-year-old Cameron Watson was the most impressive batsman, scoring 328 runs at 32.8, while right-hand batsman Steve Marando batted consistently, dismissed just once for under 28 in his eight innings with the highlight a gutsy innings of 61 against Penrith on a wet pitch at Rance Oval. Leg spinner Andrew McKinnon, with 22 wickets at 19.5, was the leading wicket-taker taking at least one wicket on each of the nine innings in which he bowled.

With the first grade limited-overs competition no longer being played, and additional playing dates consequently available, the Poidevin-Gray Shield competition was expanded in 1988/89 to a more equitable two division format with 10 teams in each division, the divisions being non-geographic, and each team playing every other team in their division. The Northern District team was led by first grader Ross Toohey, and finished sixth in their division with three wins, three losses, one

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

draw and two matches abandoned without any play. The highlight of the season was undoubtedly the final round win over a strong Bankstown team which included young express bowler Wayne Holdsworth and future Shield player Dean Waugh. Simon Blake with 284 runs and 11 dismissals had a fine series, his batting average of 47.3 being the best in the competition, while young Englishman Alan Van Lint was the leading wicket-taker with 15 at 15.9.

After a series of moderate performances the AW Green Shield team improved significantly and were unlucky not to take the Shield for the first time in a decade. The team, captained by wicket-keeper James Simpson-Lee and managed by Bill Johnson, began brilliantly with wins in each of their first six matches. An uncharacteristic batting collapse against Parramatta led to the only loss in the divisional matches with wins over Mosman and Penrith in the last two rounds giving them the top spot in the northern division and a place in the final against Bankstown at Hurstville Oval.

As had been the case on a number of occasions in recent years for Northern District teams the elements once more worked against the team. With the game reduced to 44 overs per team, ND batted first and put together what looked like a being a match-winning score of 9-180, with Brendan Driscoll (51) and Phil Stanbridge (62) batting superbly. However 10.4 overs into the Bankstown innings the rain returned and the match was eventually called off. Provision had been made for such an occurrence and the match was replayed on the following day, a Sunday, on the same ground. This time the ND bats failed and were dismissed for just 93, a target which Bankstown was able to pass for the loss of only three wickets. The team included a number of promising young batsmen, including Craig Waddell who broke Greg Briggs' **1978/79 record aggregate (442 runs) in scoring 455 runs at 50.6. Not far behind** were Phil Stanbridge (409 at 40.9) and Brendon Driscoll (330 at 30.), with all three batsmen scoring centuries. Stanbridge travelled from Newcastle to play, while Driscoll, from the Woy Woy Cricket Club, travelled down from the Central Coast along with two other promising youngsters in Geoff Fogarty and Nathan Branz, from the Umina and Toukley clubs respectively. Branz was the son of the cousin of the two Branz brothers, Ellis and Kel, who had played for Northern District in the mid 1940s.

Waddell, Stanbridge and Martin Field were all selected in the Green Shield North team which played matches against teams from the Combined Country Coaching Class. It was to be **Stanbridge's only season with Northern District. He** would later establish himself as a leading Sydney grade batsman, and in 1999/2000 set a new batting aggregate record of 421 in the First Grade Limited-Overs competition.

Once more the weather badly affected **the City and Suburban team's season** with 10 of their scheduled 27 matches abandoned. Of the 17 played they won nine and **lost eight. The team's batting was ordinary with just two scores over 50 ... both just over** (51 by Brian Clifton and 52 by ex-first grader Vic Gray) and only one aggregate **over 200: Greg Poynter's 247 at 19.0. The bowlers did better with veteran Allan May's** 17 wickets taking his career tally to 955, while captain Michael Grant (27 at 14.4), Ian Clifton (26 at 19.5) and Tim Stokes (23 at 18.5) all did well.

The final of the 1988/89 Northern District Cup, played at Waitara Oval, was **the closest in the cup's 13-year history** with Normanhurst Boys High defeating Epping Boys High by just one run. The win gave Normanhurst its fifth Cup win.

Since 1985/86 the NSWCA had conducted a Grade Cricket Groundsman of the Year award based on points awarded by umpires at the end of each match in all five grades. Runner-up for the 1988/89 award was the Waitara Oval curator, Kevin Haddrick, beaten by the narrowest possible margin of half a point (235.5 to 236) by Robert Barnes, the groundsman at Hurstville Oval.

1989/90

Following two separate reviews into the structure of the Sydney grade competition, reports were tabled during the 1989/90 season. One, chaired by Fred Bennett for the NSW Cricket Association recommended the formation of a three-division competition with promotion and relegation. The other, chaired by James Rodgers from the Sydney Cricket Association recommended a reduction in the number of teams, through mergers, from 20 back to 16. Neither report was acted upon and the 20-team competition continued as before.

The season followed a similar pattern to 1988/89 with the first grade team again reaching the semi-finals and the lower grades disappointing.

After his prolific scoring on the tour of England⁵³, Mark Taylor was now fully committed to state and international cricket and Brad Patterson, who had shared the captaincy with Taylor during the previous season, took over in his own right for 1989/90. Although Taylor was available for just two matches he still managed to score 245 runs in two innings, 78 against Waverley in the second round and 167 in the fourth round against Mosman.

Taylor's place in the ND first grade team was taken by former Maitland batsman, Tony Fort. Although still in his early-20s, Fort had built an impressive reputation in country representative cricket over a number of years and had starred **for NSW Country in the previous year's Australian Country Championships held at Bunbury in Western Australia.** His performance in winning the Bradman Trophy for the outstanding batsman of the carnival, the Player of the Series and the NSW Player of the Series helped win him a place in the NSW Colts team.

Peter Taylor, after being overlooked for the Australian team to England, was recalled to the Test team in the latter half of the season, playing two matches against Pakistan and one on a short tour to New Zealand where he top scored in both Australian innings (29 out of 110 in the first and 87, as a night-watchman, out of 269 **in the second**). **Four days later, on the team's return to Australia, he found himself** twelfth man for NSW in the Sheffield Shield final against Queensland at the Sydney Cricket Ground. It proved a bittersweet match for the two ND Taylors. Less than an hour before the start of the match, NSW captain Geoff Lawson was forced out of the team with a shoulder injury. Mark Taylor, thrust into the role, won the toss and proceeded to score 127 and 100 to lead his team to an easy win.

The other major changes to the first grade team were the loss of Ross Toohey (to Gordon) and the arrival of former North Sydney and Sydney University leg spinner Chris Elder, replacing Paul Grimble who had accepted an offer to play with Manly. Born and raised at Tumut in southern NSW where his father had an accounting practice, Elder had played junior representative cricket in the Riverina before moving to Sydney for his final two school years as a boarder at Knox Grammar. On leaving Knox he began studying law at Sydney University but continued to play cricket with Knox Old Boys in the City and Suburban competition. From 1969/70 to 1974/75 he played first and second grade with North Sydney, captaining the second grade team in his final season with the club, then played for Sydney University between 1975/76 and 1988/89. Although he was almost 40 years old when he joined ND he was still one of the most respected leg spinners in Sydney and was to make a valuable contribution to the club for a number of seasons.

Once again the team's batting strength was as good or better than any in Sydney and in their first four matches they scored 9-346, 254, 5-343 and 6-320 with Neil Maxwell, Mark Taylor, Randal Green and Ross Turner all scoring centuries. After

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

a draw in the first round, they won each of their next four matches before being beaten by Balmain. A draw against Manly was followed by a great outright win over North Sydney, converting a 46-run first innings deficit into an eight wicket win courtesy of a brilliant 91 not out on a poor North Sydney Oval pitch by Ross Turner. He followed this up with his second century of the season, an unbeaten 128 against Petersham at Waitara Oval combining with Tony Fort (102) to add 192 for the third wicket. Coincidentally Turner, Fort and Randal Green combined in a sequence of three big partnerships with Green and Fort adding 190 for the second wicket against Manly, Turner and Green 191 for the second wicket against Penrith, and then Turner **and Fort's 192.**

Midway through the season the team was strengthened by the arrival of a second ex-Sydney University bowler in paceman Darby Quoye who proved a consistent wicket-taker. Despite losing just two matches Northern District, five draws, more than any other team in the competition, meant that they only finish in equal fourth place, edging Petersham out of the semis on quotient.

It was the fifth successive season that the team had contested the semi-finals. While wet weather had deprived them of the chance to reach the final in each of the two previous seasons, the opposite applied in 1989/90 with the match, against minor premiers Gordon, being played on a perfect batting strip at Killara Oval. Needing to win the match against the much-improved young Gordon team, only big-match specialist Peter Vilimaa threatened and the home team were eventually able to reach the good score of 313 all out, Vilimaa finishing with 6-90. In reply ND were in huge trouble, losing seven wickets for under 100 with only two good partnership between Jack Moran (playing his only first grade match of the season) and Peter Vilimaa (82 runs for the eighth wicket) and Moran and Dave Talbot (33 for the ninth) allowed them to reach the respectable total of 210.

Gordon, led in the absence of NSW wicket-keeper Phil Emery, by ex-ND batsman Stephen Day, went on to take out the premiership for the first time since **1947/48 when the final against Balmain was washed out. Emery's position as the Gordon and NSW wicket-keeper would eventually send that club's promising 17-year-old 'keeper, Adam Gilchrist,** firstly to Northern District and later to Western Australia in search of greater opportunities.

Once again Randal Green was **ND's leading batsman, scoring 570 runs at 35.6** with two centuries, and was the winner of the SMH-based First Grade Player of the Year award. Tony Fort made a successful transition from country to grade cricket topping the batting averages with 472 runs at 36.3. Seven centuries were scored, equalling the record set in 1925/26 and again in 1941/42. Neil Maxwell, with 374 runs and 19 wickets was the leading all-rounder, while Peter Vilimaa was the leading wicket-taker (34 at 21.5). The retirement of Tim Ebbeck opened the way for young David Talbot to move into first grade where he had an impressive first season.

Although they improved from 19th to ninth **position on the table, the club's** second grade team were again disappointing, especially as they had begun the season with four straight wins including innings of 414 against St George in the opening round and 9-331 in round four against Mosman. In the remaining 11 matches they could record just two more wins, one of which was against the eventual premiers Manly. Several new players to the club made impressive starts, batsman Keith Maskey scoring a century on debut and Chris Elder taking 14 wickets in his first two matches (including 7-33 and 3-59 against Waverley) before being promoted to first grade. Wicket-keeper Michael Goeke also began the year impressively with six catches and a stumping and scoring 52 in the opening match against St George.

Dropped from first grade Bruce Mills revelled in the increased opportunity **this provided him with both bat and ball, and by the season's end he had achieved the** rare double of most runs (506) and most wickets (26) for the season. In addition he

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

was a runaway winner in the club's Player of the Season award, finishing 58 points ahead of his nearest rival, Randal Green. Jack Moran, who again led the team, once more provided stability to the batting scoring 438 runs at 39.8

After a break of two seasons Mal Middleton took over the captaincy of what was an extremely young third grade team, with 13 of the 16 regular players still eligible to play Poidevin-Gray. Their final position of 15th was quite misleading given they won more games (5) than they lost (4), suffering from the consequences of four consecutive rain-affected draws at the end of the season. A number of talented young batsmen established themselves during the season, including Matt Watson who confirmed the potential he had shown the previous season by scoring 416 runs in just seven matches before being promoted to second grade. Watson and the equally promising Mark Lowe combined to set a new club third grade partnership record, adding 204 for the second wicket in the match against Penrith at Asquith Oval. Both scored centuries: Watson 136 and Lowe 118 not out. Watson followed up with an innings of 134 not out against North Sydney at North Sydney Oval No 2 and was promoted to second grade for the remainder of the season. Another exciting player was Craig Waddell whose 393 runs at 49.1 also included a century: 112 not out against **Sydney University at University Oval. The best of the team's bowlers was Colin Podmore**, easily the leading wicket-taker with 35 wickets at 11.7 with a best of 7-45 against Fairfield at Cabramatta Oval.

Reg Tulk led the Northern District fourth grade team for the eighth season in a row. After being in the top four for the first 13 rounds they suffered badly when their round 13 match against Bankstown at Jensen Park was drawn with ND looking like certain winners. With each of their main rivals for semi-final spots all playing, and winning, they dropped out, eventually finishing in sixth place. Tulk himself showed had an excellent season with the bat, heading both batting aggregate and average with 418 runs at 34.8. Teenager Ben Munro had an impressive debut season, taking 21 wickets (at 19.2) and scoring 199 runs (at 33.2) from just nine matches, while John Whelan was the leading wicket-taker with 32 at 14.4.

David Roughley began the season as captain of the fifth grade team, with Geoff Howden, in his first season with the club, taking over when Roughley was promoted to fourth grade after four matches. After four rounds the team was near the top of the table with three wins mainly through fine individual performances by Peter Truscott (111 vs Waverley at Somerville Park) and Winston Olegasegarem (4-58, 4-19 and 6-44 in successive matches). For the remainder of the season however their form was inconsistent and they were able to win just four of their last 11 matches, eventually finishing in 11th place. While the bowlers, led by Olegasegarem (22 wickets at 15.5) and Rod Simpkins (17 at 18.0) did their job, dismissing opposition batsmen for an average of 20.8 each, the batsman disappointed, scoring at a rate of just 19.8 per wicket.

The wet summer again restricted the opportunities of the City and Suburban team with eight of their 31 scheduled matches washed out. Under Michael Grant, they began the season with a thrilling win over Old Aloysians where, chasing 112 to win, they recovered from 8-39 to win with one wicket in hand, thanks mainly to an innings of 76 not out from ex-first grade all-rounder Brian Crawford. Although they went on to win each of their next four matches their form slipped from there on and in the remaining 16 matches they could win just three more games.

A poor start and washouts in each of their last three matches cost the Poidevin-Gray Shield team any chance of winning their division. The team was the youngest for a number of years with almost all players available again for the following season. Highlight of the season was a 172-run opening partnership between Andrew Quinane (100) and Chris Lea (**58**) against **Balmain. Lea was the team's most consistent batsman**, scoring 234 runs at 39.0 while captain, JohnWhelan (11 wickets

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

at 23.4) and Ben Munro (7 at 21.8) were the best of the bowlers. Although he had a disappointing year in P-G, Simon Waddington won a place in the NSW team which won the 1989/90 Under 19 Australian Championships played in Melbourne.

The Green Shield team, managed by John Hopkins and captained by Cameron Watson, finished fourth in their division with four wins, three losses and two rain-affected draws. Two promising all-rounders, both from the Umina club on the Central Coast, stood out. Mark Cattley, a leg-spinner, was the leading wicket-taker with 17 wickets at 8.2, including 5-24 against Manly at Parklands and 5-16 against Gordon at Chatswood Oval. Geoff Fogarty, in his second Green Shield season took 15 wickets at 14.2 and scored 134 runs at 26.8, winning a place, alongside Watson, in the Combined Green Shield representative team.

The continual rain which so affected the grade competition also led to the postponement of the 1989/90 Northern District Cup final. The match, to be contested by Asquith Boys High and Oakhill College, was originally postponed until the start of the 1990/91 season but eventually had to be abandoned with the two schools sharing the cup.

The 1990 NDCC Annual General Meeting saw the return of Hilary Griffith as club secretary in place of Frank Clark.

1990/91

A most disappointing season saw Northern District have its lowest finish in the club championship (16th) in almost 40 years with only one of the five grade teams (fifth grade) reaching the semi-finals, and first and second grades both in the bottom half of their competitions for the first time since 1974/75.

The poor performance was partly due to the loss of a number of first grade **players who transferred either to other Sydney clubs or interstate. The previous year's** captain, Brad Patterson went to Sydney University with Randal Green taking over the captaincy. Pace bowler Steve Liggins, who had struggled to gain a permanent first grade place at ND, decided to try his luck at Gordon where he joined former teammates Steve Day and Michael Cant - all three players being members of the team which won Gordon its second consecutive first grade premiership.

After the disappointment of being made twelfth man for NSW in the 1989/90 Sheffield Shield final, Peter Taylor packed his bags and moved to Brisbane (and the University club) to try and secure a permanent place in the Queensland team. There he joined another former NDCC player in Ashleigh Byron who had been appointed as State coaching director. In five matches for Queensland, Taylor took only six wickets (at 42.8) but nevertheless was selected in the Australian team which toured the West Indies where he played in all five One-Day Internationals and one Test. The following season, 1991/92, was to be **Taylor's last in first-class cricket** with injury, loss of form **and family commitments combining to bring an end to one of Australian cricket's** most remarkable stories. Since his shock selection in the Australian Test team, after just four first-class matches, Taylor had played a total of 13 Tests (scoring 431 runs and taking 27 wickets) and 83 One-Day Internationals (437 runs and 97 wickets) and had established himself as one of the best one-day spin bowlers in the world.

While Taylor headed north, Neil Maxwell travelled south to Melbourne, looking to force his way into the Victorian Sheffield Shield team. The move meant that he had to resign from the NSW Cricket Association where he had worked since January 1986, initially as a cadet administrator and later as assistant secretary to both the Sydney Cricket Association and the NSW Country Cricket Association. During

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000



Among the special guests at Northern District's 1000th first grade match were the club's great spin bowling pair of the 1930s and 40s, Tim Caldwell (left) and Hugh Chilvers (right).

1988 he had also spent six months on secondment at Lords in an administration position with the MCC.

Offsetting these losses were the return to the club of Angus Farncomb and Neil Howlett, the latter coming back after two seasons with Balmain for what would be his final season of grade cricket.

Despite scoring in excess of 200 in each of their first five matches, and being dismissed just once, the ND first grade team could win only one of the five. An easy win over Parramatta, followed by a thrilling one-run win over Fairfield brought them back into contention but then three losses and a draw from the next four games brought an end to their chances of reaching the semi-finals for a sixth straight season. The twelfth round match against the University of NSW at Waitara Oval was notable **in that it was the club's first grade match.** To honour the occasion a special function was organised by a committee headed by Ross Turner. A large number of ex-players attended including 87-year-old Hugh Chilvers, **the last survivor of the club's first** weekend of matches back in 1925. Although ND won the match they eventually finished in 14th place the lowest finish since 1964/65 when they had finished 14th in the 16-team competition.

Four batsmen scored in excess of 400 runs for the season, Ross Turner (528 at 31.3) having the highest aggregate and Tony Fort (498 at 35.6) the best average. Randal Green's **486 runs at 32.4 meant that he had now scored 400-plus** first grade runs in a season for the seventh time in a row. After captaining the NSW Second XI in matches against ACT and Victorian seconds Green was finally chosen in the NSW team for the final two matches of the season. In his debut against Tasmania at Bellerive Oval he was dismissed for 15 in the first innings but then top scored with 59 (run out) in the second. That performance was enough for him to retain his place in

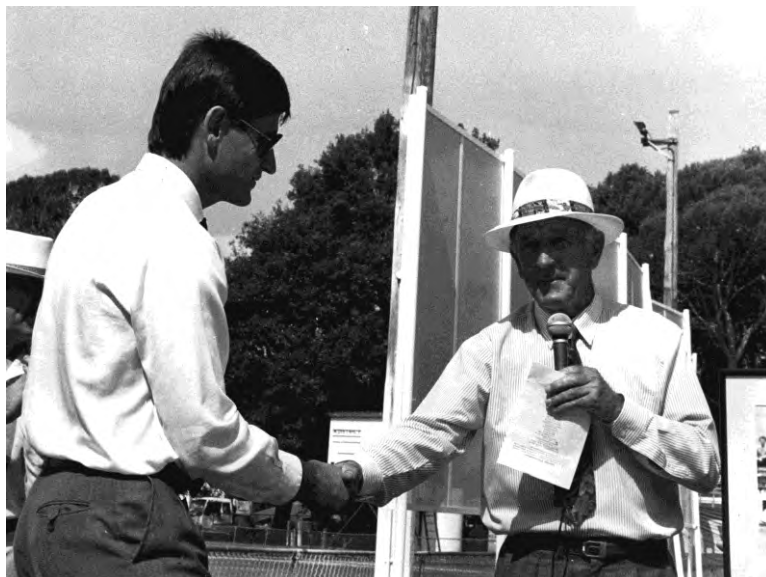
BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

the team for the 1990/91 Sheffield Shield final against Victoria at the MCG. Again he did well coming in at 4-59 and batting for almost three hours on a difficult pitch to score 40 – adding 117 in partnerships with Steve Small and Phil Emery.

Chris Elder was the best of the bowlers taking 32 wickets at 22.0 ahead of Darby Quoye (22 at 23.2) and Peter Vilimaa (20 at 32.0).

The departure of so many players from first grade had an adverse effect on Jack Moran's **second grade** team which began the season with a very young team and with only two or three players with experience in that grade. The step up in standard told, and for the second time in three seasons they finished in second-last place with just two wins from their 15 matches. **The team's batting** was reliable enough with five players scoring more than 400 runs, but the bowlers struggled, conceding a massive 41.7 runs for each wicket with Simon Waddington's **best** average being 28.0.

Of the batsmen, 19-year-old Simon Blake was the best, scoring 646 runs at 43.1 – the highest second grade aggregate since John Iredale's **684 in**



Many of Northern District's greatest players attended the celebrations for the club's 1000th first grade match.

Top: Five former first grade captains in Neil Harvey, Tim Caldwell, Hugh Chilvers, Neil Marks and Barry Rothwell.

Centre: Six members of the premiership-winning team of 1966/67: Ken Longley, Graham Southwell, Neil Harvey, Neil Marks, Lynn Marks and Hartley Anderson with Tim Caldwell at rear.

Bottom: Steve Bernard and Austen Hughes.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

1979/80. Matthew Watson (456 runs at 28.5), Jack Moran (436 at 36.3), Stuart Dorahy (405 at 31.2) and Mark Lowe (419 at 27.9) all made good contributions with **the bat. Blake's 116 not out against Manly at Waitara Oval was the only century of the season.**

The effect of the player drain filtered down through the grades with almost the entire fourth grade team from the previous season, including captain Reg Tulk, promoted to third grade. Based upon this, their effort in finishing in seventh place with seven wins and six losses was extremely good. The character of the team was established early with remarkable last-ball wins in each of the first two matches. Unfortunately, between rounds three and nine they could win just one match and although they came home strongly with four wins in their last six matches they could only reach seventh place. Best performed player was undoubtedly Ben Munro who won the batting averages (383 runs at 42.6), bowling aggregate (27 wickets) and bowling averages (18.9). Declan Barnett (415 runs at 29.6) won the batting aggregate with Matthew Watson (101 not out against Fairfield), Clinton Bragg (147 not out against Petersham-Marrickville) and Munro (100 not out against Mosman) each scoring centuries.

In an even and hard-fought fourth grade competition the ND team finished in sixth place, despite an 8:4 win/loss ratio. Their season hinged on a round 14 match against Hawkesbury when, chasing 232 to win, they collapsed from 0-70 to be all out for 194. As it transpired a win in that match would have not only given them a place in the semi-finals **but also the minor premiership. The team's batting was generally solid** with three batsmen passing 400 runs for the season (captain David Roughley, 548 at 42.2; Justin Howse, 410 at 41.0; and Andrew Prince, 410 at 34.2) and four scoring centuries (Roughley, Prince, Cameron Watson and Richie Griffiths). **Roughley's 548** runs set a new fourth grade club record.

The other impressive player was Jim Gavin, who in his return to ND after several seasons in club cricket took 29 wickets at 17.1 while scoring 328 runs at 29.8.

Unlike the higher grade teams which underwent significant changes the **1990/91 ND fifth grade team was able to retain the nucleus of the previous season's** team. This, together with the arrival of several promising young players, enabled them to reach the semi-finals – the only team in the club to do so. The team improved steadily during the season, and after having just two wins from their first six matches they won seven of their remaining nine matches to finish in a five-way tie for fourth place, but squeezing into the semi-final place because of a superior quotient .

Needing to win their semi-final **against Randwick the team's bowlers toiled for** over four sessions against a strong batting line-up on a benign pitch at Snape Park, eventually dismissing the minor premiers for 377. Throughout the season the bowling attack had been carried by pacemen Dominic Hodson and Brad Erickson and this was again the case in the semi, with Erickson bowling a marathon 49 overs to take 4-108. Set the unlikely task of scoring 378 in under four hours ND ended the match, and their season, on 8-209.

There were a number of good individual performances through the season. Mal Gale, with 457 runs at 25.4 had the best batting aggregate, ahead of captain Geoff Howden (364 at 36.4) and 17-year-old wicket-keeper-batsman Craig Beed (349 at 38.8). Dominic Hodson achieved the rare double of batting and bowling averages, with 265 runs (at 44.2) and 33 wickets (at 17.5) while Brad Erickson was the leading wicket-taker with 39 at 21.9.

For several seasons the Poidevin-Gray Shield team had suffered through a lack of commitment from a small number of key players who, when they played, treated the competition as practice matches for either grade or other representative matches. In an effort to eradicate this problem the NDCC committee decided that only those players who were totally dedicated to the P-G competition were to be selected.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

Although the results in 1990/91 were a little disappointing the decision was vindicated with a much-improved performance the following season.

The 1990/91 team was again led by John Whelan and won three of their nine matches to finish in sixth place in their division on 18 points. Whelan and Simon Blake were the stand-out players with **16 wickets and 350 runs respectively. Blake's P-G runs capped off a brilliant season for the teenager who took his overall aggregate for the season to 1002, becoming only the third batsman in the club's history to score over 1000 runs in competition matches (Les Fallowfield and Bill Alley were the other two).**

For the second successive year the Green Shield competition was expanded with teams from Gosford-Wyong and Illawarra taking the total number to 22, split evenly into two divisions. The Northern District team was managed by John McQuillan, a local teacher who had been a central figure in primary school cricket for more than 20 years. The team finished sixth in the Northern Division with four wins and six losses from their 10 matches. Captain, Mark Cattley, had a fine all-round season, scoring 301 runs (at 30.1) and taking 19 wickets (at 15.6) and both he and wicket-keeper/batsman, James Godfrey (**the team's leading scorer with 344 at 34.4**) won selection in the Combined Green Shield representative team. Several promising U/14 players made their club debut, including Matthew Daykin and Tim Lowe.

In other minor representative matches, Ross Turner and Tony Fort both played for a Sydney XI at the SCG against a touring team from the London-based Club Cricket Conference. Turner led the team and top-scored with 54 in the Sydney XI innings, while former team-mate Paul Grimble, then with Sydney University picked up a couple of wickets.

The City and Suburban team won 11 of their 21 matches, the most memorable of which was a last-ball win over Yaralla after being 6-28 in reply to 143. The outstanding individual performance was undoubtedly that of Paul Croll who took an unprecedented two separate hat-tricks in a match against Parramatta.

For the second year in a row there were joint winners of the local high school **Northern District Cup competition. On this occasion Crestwood High and St Leo's College** shared the cup.

Another significant event in 1991 was the formation of the Northern Metropolitan Cricket Council. The brainchild of Ross Turner, then the Development Manager for the NSWCA, the council included representatives from each of the various cricketing bodies within the northern region of Sydney: the NDCC, two local junior associations (H-KHDCA and NDCA), the two Shires clubs (Pennant Hills and Epping) as well as local schools. The first body of its kind in Sydney, and still the most effective, **the Council's aims were to present a united front in dealings with local government**, to better publicise cricket in the area and to introduce junior coaching clinics. Importantly the Council, chaired for the first seven years of its life by Tom Richmond, was to have the added benefit of significantly improving the relationship between its various component bodies.

After returning to fill in as secretary for the 1990/91 year, the twin demands of continually travelling from Kellyville and a young family, forced Hilary Griffith to leave the club. He was to remain heavily involved in cricket administration as a committeeman and Sydney Cricket Association delegate for the Hawkesbury grade club and later as secretary of the Hawkesbury District Cricket Association. From 1994 to 1998 he would be deputy chairman of the SCA and from 1998 would also be a member of the NSW Districts Cricket Association (formerly the NSW Junior Cricket Union).

1991/92

Another disappointing season, where the club finished 15th in the club championship, a marginal improvement only on its 16th place in 1990/91. The performance of the four lower grade teams was abysmal with none able to finish higher than 16th place, although these were more than offset by the return to form of the first grade team which bounced back from 14th place in 1990/91 to reach the semi-finals for the sixth time in seven years and the final for the first time since 1986/87. Unfortunately the perennial problem of poor March weather robbed them of the chance of taking the title.

The first grade team was again led by Randal Green and was strengthened by the arrival of 22-year-old ex-Balmain and Petersham player, Mark Atkinson. The diminutive wicket-keeper/batsman made an immediate impact. In the first match of the season, against Fairfield at Waitara Oval, the visitors posted a score of 9-311 declared on the first day. At the start of the second day, Atkinson and Mark Taylor opened the batting with Taylor being dismissed from the first ball of the innings. Angus Farncomb followed soon after leaving the score at 2-10. By stumps Atkinson had steered ND to a comfortable four-wicket win reaching his double century from the last ball of the match. His score of exactly 200 not out included 30 fours, and was only the second double century by an ND first grade batsman, after Les Fallowfield's 204 in 1946/47, and remains the highest first grade score for the club. In the fourth round, again at Waitara, Atkinson scored 129 against a Sutherland bowling attack, led **by that club's rookie fast bowler, Glenn McGrath** (19-8-20-1). Then, in round eight, he scored 108 not out against the University of NSW at Village Green, adding 221 unbeaten with Randal Green for the second wicket. Remarkably, after seven matches Atkinson had batted nine times and scored 583 runs at an average of 83.3 and made 15 dismissals (13 caught and two stumped). His average was the highest in first grade **in the club's history, narrowly beating the 81.0 set by Jim Burke** in 1953/54. **Surprisingly however it wasn't good enough to win the Sydney grade averages which were taken out by Petersham batsman (and Canterbury-Bankstown footballer), Graham Hughes with 424 runs at 84.8.**

Unfortunately for Northern District, Atkinson's performance, and his preceding reputation, had also attracted the attention of the Tasmanian Cricket Association and, with the path to the NSW wicket-keeping position barred by both Phil Emery and Emery's up-and-coming Gordon team-mate, Adam Gilchrist, Atkinson accepted an offer to move south where he made an impressive first class debut for Tasmania against the touring Pakistan team at Devonport Oval on 9 February 1992, scoring 55 not out and making three dismissals. He was to retain his place in the team for the remainder of the decade.

Another newcomer to the club was a 21-year-old left hand opening batsman named Nick Knight who had made his debut for Essex in the English County Championship during the preceding northern summer. Despite this he was initially selected in third grade, where he took 9-76 with his right arm mediums against Petersham to earn immediate promotion. A score of 94 in his only second grade innings then saw him go straight up to first grade where he played for the



Future England international Nick Knight played with ND during the 1991/92 season.

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

remainder of the year. It was to be **Knight's only season with ND. After struggling for several seasons to retain a spot in the star-studded Essex batting lineup, Knight transferred to Warwickshire in 1994 where his aggressive batting eventually won him a place in the English Test team for the fourth Test against the West Indies at Old Trafford, Manchester. For the remainder of the decade he struggled to retain a Test place, playing 16 matches prior to August 2000, scoring 704 runs at 25.1 but was a regular member of England's ODI team, where he had scored 1923 at 40.1 in 55 matches.**

The Northern District first grade team's route to the 1991/92 final wasn't an easy one. In captain Green's words, they "scratched and clawed" their way to a number of tight wins including in the match against Sutherland where, defending 272 ND looked beaten with Sutherland on 3-214 but won after a great spell from Darby Quoye (6-55) saw the last seven wickets fall for the addition of just 37 runs. A controversial win over North Sydney followed with Bruce Mills taking 7-114 and new wicket-keeper Mark Lowe scoring an unbeaten century - surely the only time that two keepers had scored four centuries in a first grade season. A number of losses meant that they needed to win each of their last four matches to reach the semi-finals. This they did, capping a great run home with a fine victory over the strong Bankstown side in the final round highlighted by a great captain's innings of 109 not out by Randal Green (from an innings total of 206 and Chris Elder's remarkable bowling analysis of 34-21-30-6. While a loss would have seen the team miss the semis, the win actually allowed them to reach second place.

There they were drawn to meet third-placed Gordon, seeking their third straight premiership. Yet again rain intervened, although in this case it came to **Northern District's rescue when, chasing Gordon's score of 231 (ex-ND player Stephen Day top-scoring with 78 not out) they had slumped to 4-24 but proceeded to the final, against Waverley, because of their higher finishing position.**

The final, played at Bankstown Oval was delayed from the start with play not commencing until 3pm on the Friday of the three-day match. Batting first, and needing only a draw, the Waverley batsmen ground away remorselessly throughout the first two days to score 328 runs in almost nine hours. At stumps ND had scored 0-2 from four overs but unfortunately that was to be the full extent of play with the rain returning and preventing any play on the Sunday.

Leading batsmen, apart from Atkinson, were Green (485 runs at 40.4) and **former St George and Campbelltown batsman Peter O'Reilly (306 at 23.5) while Mark Taylor's four innings included his customary century. The bowling honours were shared between spinners Elder (32 wickets at 18.5) and Mills (26 at 22.2), and pacemen Quoye (30 at 17.5) and Paul Scurr (30 at 17.0).**

At the end of the season the club's lion-hearted left-arm pace bowler, Peter Vilimaa, announced his retirement after 19 consecutive seasons. Vilimaa had joined ND as a 15-year-old in 1973/74 playing both Green Shield and third grade and taking 29 wickets in ten grade matches. In an era where the club had arguably its strongest-ever pace attack he needed to earn every promotion, and for three seasons (1976/77 to 1978/79) he was the cornerstone of the second grade pace attack, taking exactly 100 wickets at 16.5 but denied even a single match in first grade by the outstanding Bernard-Clews-Mackay trio. The departure of Steve Bernard in 1979/80 finally saw Vilimaa make his first grade debut, however it wasn't until 1984/85 that he was able to command a permanent top grade spot. The pivotal point in his career occurred in the 1985/86 first grade final against St George at Bankstown Oval. After struggling for much of the season with injury Vilimaa repaid the selectors' faith with a match winning performance of 7-55 from 32.3 overs then followed up by taking 47 wickets at 16.8 in 1986/87, spearheading first grade to a second consecutive premiership not just with his bowling but also with 295 runs, many in the tense situations which

BLUE GUM AND WILLOW
A History of the Northern District Cricket Club, 1925-2000

invariably brought out his best. He remained in first grade for the next five seasons, eventually finishing with 284 first grade wickets from 169 matches at an average of 24.1 and a total in all matches of 583.

After finishing second last in 1990/91 the second grade team, again led by Jack Moran, was looking for a significant improvement in 1991/92. However an inability to win close matches cost the 1991/92 second grade team dearly and they eventually could move just **one place higher in the competition table. The team's batting was the poorest in years with no batsman able to pass 300 runs for the season, Stuart Dorahy's leading aggregate of 282 runs being the lowest in 30 years. Dorahy's unbeaten 161 against Randwick was one of four centuries, the others, two scored by Angus Farncomb (111 vs Waverley and 107 vs Balmain) and one by Peter O'Reilly (165 not out against Waverley)** saw both batsmen promoted to first grade. Of the bowlers, only John Whelan (22 wickets at 25.4) and Ben Munro (26 at 28.1), took more than 20 wickets for the year.

Having led the team for two seasons during the mid-1980s, David Watt returned to the third grade captaincy after the fourth round of the 1991/92 season. Although they were adversely affected by poor weather, with four matches abandoned, the batting also lacked consistency and, like second grade, no batsman was able to score more than 300 runs. Indeed none got close, with Scott Cumming (the son of long-serving ND off-spinner John Cumming) winning the aggregate with just 226 runs - equalling the lowest winning third grade aggregate of Bill Shortland in 1929/30. David Roughley scored the only century of the season (102 against Fairfield) while Andrew McKinnon (27 wickets at 20.4) and Geoff Fogarty (20 at 23.8) were the best of the bowlers.

Reg Tulk, after a season in charge of third grade, resumed the fourth grade **captaincy in 1991/92 but was unable to halt the club's lower grade slump. From 13 matches played (two were abandoned because of rain) they were able to win just two – one against Fairfield in the opening round, the other in the sixth round against Petersham.** Of the other matches three were drawn and the remaining eight lost on the first innings leaving the team in 17th place. The only individual performances of any note were by John Cheeseman (351 runs at 25.1) and Martin Field (31 wickets at 13.4). Remarkably, Cheeseman was the only batsman in the four lower grades to pass 300 runs in any one grade.

Fifth grade was again led by Geoff Howden but after the promise of the previous season when they reached the semi-finals, they slipped to finish in 16th position. The main difference between the 1991/92 team and that of the preceding season was the loss of its three leading bowlers, Brad Erickson and Dominic Hodson to higher grades, and Winston Olegasegaram to Fairfield. Indeed for much of the season the team had just one specialist bowler, in James Sullivan, relying on all-rounders to support him. Of the batsmen, Roger Clift's **110 against Sydney University** helped him win the batting averages with 252 runs at 25.2 while Howden had the leading aggregate (282 runs at 21.7).

The persistent rain which plagued the 1991/92 season restricted the City and Suburban team to playing just 15 of their scheduled 26 matches. Of the 15, nine were won, the most memorable against I Zingari where ND was able to defend a total of just 103 when the opposition had at one stage been 3-68 with two wickets to ex-first grade all-rounder Brian Crawford and four run outs proving the difference between the **two teams. Apart from Crawford other 'guest' players during the season included Steve Whitfield, Vic Gray and Mick Hewett, as well as Rae Richmond who had managed to play at least one match per season since his move to the country in the early 1980s.**

Aside from first grade the only ND team to perform well during 1991/92 was the **Poidevin-Gray team which finished top of the competition's northern division but**

were beaten in their semi-final. **Best of the team's batsmen were opener Craig Waddell** (259 runs at 64.8) who consistently helped give his team a good start, and Simon Waddington (156 at 31.2). Both scored centuries. Of the bowlers, captain John Whelan was best with 13 wickets at 16.2 ahead of Martin Field (11 at 19.3). Ashley Shoobridge, a tall left-arm orthodox bowler from the Central Coast, played a number of matches before winning a place in Australian Under 17 squad following the National Championships.

The AW Green Shield team did only moderately well, winning only two matches and finishing eighth in their division. Right-hand opening batsman, Adam Elbourne, with 255 runs at 42.5 was the standout player, his innings of 122 and 93 marking him as a player of potential. A promising young player, Elbourne would later play first grade for Sydney University and win selection in the 1995/96 NSW Under 19 team.

For the first time in three seasons the Northern District Cup final went ahead with Barker College taking the cup for the fourth occasion by beating Oakhill College.

Entering the final round of the season it looked like the 1991/92 Barclays Player of the Season award was going to have to be shipped down to Hobart with Mark Atkinson still in front despite not having played for the club for almost three months. As it was Randal Green's **brilliant century against Bankstown** which sealed his team a place in the semi-finals also saw him win the club's major playing award for the second successive season. The other major award recipient was Geoff Howden who became the 11th winner of the Bill North Memorial award while Phil Blazey's 35 years of service to the club were recognised when he was awarded life membership.

1992/93

As in the previous season the club's hopes were carried by the first grade team with all four lower grade teams, although improving, unable to make any impact on their respective competitions. Nevertheless the club was able to move up nine places in the club championship, finishing in a respectable sixth place almost entirely due to the brilliant performance of the first grade team which won the club its sixth first grade premiership and reached the semi-finals of the resurrected Sunday one-day limited-overs competition.

For the second successive season the club welcomed a new, high quality wicket-keeper, and again for the second successive season lost that player for much of the latter half of the season due to representative commitments. Although still only 20 years old, Adam Gilchrist had already established a reputation as one of the most exciting young wicket-keeper/batsmen in Australia.

Born on 14 November 1971 at Bellingen on the far north coast of NSW where his father, Stan, was a school teacher, Gilchrist played his early cricket at Deniliquin from where he won a place in the NSW Primary School team. The family later returned to the north coast where Adam completed his education at Lismore from where he was selected in the 1987/88 NSW Under 17 team which won the Australian Championships in Launceston. In 1989/90 he followed his older brother Dean to Sydney where he joined the Gordon club. After a couple of lower grade matches he was promoted to first grade where he quickly cemented a permanent place as reserve wicket-keeper to NSW captain and wicket-keeper Phil Emery when the latter was absent and as a specialist batsman when Emery was available. In that debut season **Gilchrist played a major role in Gordon's first premiership in first grade for over 40 years**, scoring 297 runs at just under 50 and making 15 dismissals. Further success