

THE FOUNDING OF THE HELENSVILLE RUGBY CLUB

Rugby has always been important to the people of Helensville and its surrounding districts. A rugby club has existed in some shape or form for many years before the Helensville Districts Rugby Football Club was formed in 1970.

It has been recorded that the first game played in the Helensville area took place in 1890 – the game was between North and South Helensville and it was played at the old showgrounds opposite the Kaipara Dairy Company factory. Competition developed from this beginning and in the early 1900's teams from Parakai, Glorit, Waimauku, Kaukapakapa, Riverhead and the three teams from Helensville (Pirates, Power Board and Helensville) met regularly for games.

Until 1925 the Kaipara Sub Union was part of the North Auckland Rugby Union but in that year transferred to the domain of the Auckland Rugby Union. Teams that played in the sub union from the 1930's on were Helensville, Parakai, Woodhill, South Head, Kumeu, Kaukapakapa, Silverdale, East Coast Bays and Albany. Many of Helensville's traditional close associations with other North Harbour clubs were established from this period.

With the disbanding of the Kaipara Sub Union in 1961, rugby in the Helensville area came under the jurisdiction of the Western United Club.

While maintaining their Helensville identity and organisation the teams of that decade played in the colours of that club. Initially only boys teams were catered for but in 1969 a senior team was established. Coached by Jock McLeod this team quickly established a reputation in the Auckland 2nd grade competition and in 1970 it won the Peter Mackie Trophy presented by the Referees Association for adherence to the rules and spirit of the game.

It was in that year that a public meeting was called with a view to reforming a Helensville Club. That meeting saw the formation of the Helensville Districts Football Club which took as its monogram the symbol of the phoenix bird, signifying its rebirth from the remains of the clubs sub union days.

A committee was elected with Ray Lovell as its Chairman and it began the work required to establish a rugby club.

In 1971 with its affiliation to the ARU, Helensville had its own rugby club again. The committee applied to register its colour as red (the jersey of Helensville Old Boys of the past) but it was rejected by the ARU as being too similar to that of the Barbarian Club. The Union, however accepted our now established colours of red, gold and black which are based on the Western United pattern.

As Rugby Park had been sold to the Helensville Borough Council for £90 on the demise of the Kaipara Sub Union a lease was arranged for its use. The ground was levelled and

drained and over the years further improvements have been made so that it now provides a playing surface for games when many other grounds are closed.

The original clubhouse built in 1948 was in a state of disrepair but players endured its leaking roof and draughty interior while plans were drawn up for the new building. Work on the new facility was started in 1972 and it was officially opened in 1974. The new clubhouse was extended in 1976 and again in 1980 with the addition of extra changing rooms. The final stage, that of an extensive lounge area is nearing completion. The building programme has been a community effort, involving countless hours of voluntary labour, but the result has been the development of a clubhouse with the replacement value of \$600,000.

Other high rise developments have seen the raising of goal posts equal in height to those of Eden Park and the erection of two 84 foot towers to provide an illumination for night games that is superior to most grounds in the North Harbour area.



Helensville District Rugby Football Club 1972 — winners senior 'C' championship.