

# 100 years of hockey

The lack of a home field hasn't stopped the University Hockey Club being at the forefront of the sport since 1907. **Graham Croker** reports.

**W**hen the Sydney University Men's Hockey Club was formed in 1907, its biggest problem was finding a playing field to call home. When the Women's Hockey Club was formed the following year it suffered the same challenge, but was blessed with the formidable leadership of a then budding suffragette, Jessie Street.

So began a 100-year quest.

"The inception of this game into the circles of University sport has been

marked with unparalleled enthusiasm," the University's *Hermes* magazine reported in 1908. "Last year there were barely enough members to run one eleven; while this season the membership roll shows that four or five teams could be put into the field. The difficulty which faces the NSW Hockey Association is that of obtaining the necessary grounds for the matches on Saturday, and so the number of teams each club can put into the field has to be restricted."

The club's president, Brian Gunner, says the problem persists to this day. "We've never had a ground to call home," Mr Gunner says. "There are no such things as home and away games – all of our games are played away."

The problem was compounded when the men's and women's clubs amalgamated in 2003. The new entity became one of the biggest sporting clubs on campus, featuring seven men's teams, six women's teams, two men's veterans



Hockeyroos Wendy Alcorn and Megan Rivers ... representing Australia on the field.

(over 40) teams, one women's veterans team and six junior teams. The club also fields indoor hockey teams in summer.

"We've had a 100-year battle to get a ground to call our own," Mr Gunner says. "With the introduction of voluntary student unionism and the resultant loss of funds and the cost of installing and maintaining synthetic pitches, I'm worried about the future of the hockey club. We're a foundation club in the Sydney men's and women's competitions but it mightn't last another 100 years unless we can get a base. At present we train late at night on pitches at Homebush

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and Kyeemagh. The women's teams mostly play at Homebush, while the men play wherever we can find a ground."

"Have sticks, will travel" could have been an early motto for the men's club, which competed against Corinthians, Sydneians, Bandits and Fleet in the 1908 competition. The competition was arranged in two rounds, similar to the present structure.

Two years after the club was founded, players were on a train bound for Melbourne on their first intervarsity foray. As the May 1909 edition of *Hermes* announced: "An invitation was received from the Melbourne University to send a team over some time during the season, which was accepted after due consideration by the committee. It is probable that the visit will take place during the June vacation and a match en route against Wagga Wagga or Wangaratta may be arranged."

Until then the hockey clubs had not been affiliated with the Sydney

University Sports Union, but their applications for membership were assisted when the touring men's team was awarded honorary membership of the Melbourne University Students Union. The clubs became affiliated with the sports union and the newly formed NSW Hockey Association in 1910. That year Melbourne University players travelled to Sydney and the annual intervarsity hockey competition was instituted. Adelaide University joined the following year, when Sydney University Women's Club was victorious at its first intervarsity competition, played in Melbourne.

The start of the intervarsity competition coincided with the award of the first hockey blue. G.C. Willcocks, who was awarded blues from 1909 to 1913, was also a member of the Sydney University Cricket Club's first XI. The men's hockey club's first representative players were A.L. Butler, A.S. Lloyd and L.C. Terrey, who played for NSW against Victoria in 1909. Terrey also bowled for the cricket club first XI that year.

Meanwhile, the women's club was busy campaigning for a ground. The sports union, which controlled sporting facilities on campus at the time, refused to rent its oval to the "Newtown tarts", as they were termed, but hadn't reckoned on Street, a first-year arts student residing in Women's College, who captained the team in its inaugural year. Although later recognised nationally and internationally for her activism in women's rights, social justice, equality of status for women, equal pay and the election of women to parliament, Street's first campaign was for a playing field and facilities for sportswomen at the University. It was a campaign she continued for 50 years, during which time the Square, the choicest real estate on the campus, was developed for women.

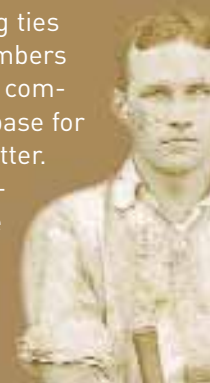
Having won the intervarsity competition at their first attempt in 1910 and provided two NSW representatives – L and N Meares in 1911 – the women's club has fielded some outstanding teams and individuals over the years, including an Australian captain in Isabel Harrison, nee McKinney.

## Centenary dinner

The Hockey Club will be holding a centenary dinner in the Great Hall on 4 August at which blues, former players, captains and office-bearers will be present. The club is working with past players to document and publish its history. One of the main problems is that records are not centralised and often the references to hockey are not catalogued.

The club would be delighted to hear from any past or present members who can help with this task. The club is also interested in re-establishing ties with all past members and in building a comprehensive database for a regular newsletter.

For more information about the centenary celebrations, email [centenary@suhc.asn.au](mailto:centenary@suhc.asn.au)



McKinney played for NSW from 1931 to 1939 and captained the state from 1936. She played for Australia from 1936 and was captain of the Australian touring team that was called home at the outbreak of World War II.

Another illustrious member was Mollie Dive, an all-round sportswoman who won blues in hockey and cricket. She played both sports at state level and was captain of the Australian women's cricket team that won the Ashes for the first time in 1948–49.

In recent times, the women's team have dominated the annual Australian University Championships and have produced a host of representatives at the state level and a number at the national level. They include the Hockeyroos Leanne Tooth and Megan Rivers, Jenny Gosper, who was in the Australian Junior World Cup team in 2003, Georgina Brown (Australian indoor hockey squad 2005–06) and Brielle Baxter (Australian under-21 indoor squad 2004–06).