

### KINGS OF THE MOUNTAIN MONBULK FOOTBALL CLUB 1911-1924

In 1893 the virgin forests of the Dandenongs were thrown open to settlement as a response to the financial depression which was gripping the country. Remarkably, within the space of just 2 years, a football club was formed in this new district. The Monbulk Football Club began tentative steps of a story which has now spanned nearly 125 years.

For supporters of the Club, recent history has shown itself to reveal a competitive team that reached its peak between 1917 and 2006. During those years Monbulk claimed the premiership on 4 occasions within a decade to dominate the Yarra Valley & Mountain District Football League.

There have, however, been long periods of struggle as well. Between the pennants of 1935 and 1983 the club endured a 48 year premiership drought. Monbulk suffered countless seasons, years where they were forced to disband and where glory seemed far removed.

It was in the early years of Monbulk's existence that another era occurred which could match the success of recent times.

By 1911 the various clubs of the Dandenongs formed the Mountain District Football Association (MDFA). Monbulk was joined by Ferny Creek United, Belgrave and Olinda in a four-way competition. The Belgrave club was to pip Monbulk for the premiership that year by finishing on top of the ladder. A Grand Final would only be played if teams were tied on points, and this method was in place until 1921 when a finals series was introduced.

This first incarnation of the MDFA existed from 1911 until 1924, with a break from 1915-18 due to The Great

War, WWI. Over the ensuing years more clubs entered. Emerald, Gembrook, Macclesfield, Silvan, Bayswater and Ferntree Gully all spent time in the MDFA. All these clubs were to find a determined resilience whenever they would be drawn to play the Monbulk boys.

In 1912 Monbulk claimed top spot but a protest by Ferny Creek against Olinda resulted in the two clubs tying, necessitating a Grand Final. Monbulk went on to win their first Mountain District premiership when they defeated Ferny Creek by 4 points.

They were to follow this up with further wins in 1913 and 1914. Despite finishing 4 games clear on top in 1914, it was not without drama as Mick English and Phil Simpson found themselves in court over a rough game against Ferny Creek; a few altercations which were resolved by fines.

An attempt to win a fourth successive flag was curtailed by the outbreak of The Great War which resulted in the competition being abandoned part way through the year.

When the competition resumed in 1919 at the completion of the war, Monbulk again took their place at the head of the ladder. This was until Ferny Creek protested that Monbulk had played an ineligible man in six matches. The resultant loss of points cost them top position. Having no

luck in persuading the MDFA to reconsider their stance the club took an unusual process to right the perceived wrongs and challenged the ruling in the County Court.



Monbulk Football Club Premiers MDA plaque 1912-13

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**Premiers 1912.** Back: Jim Kay, Angus Shaw, N. Rogers, Phil Simpson, Josh Martin, Arthur Rogers?, ? McCarthy?, Joe Tennant, Fred Lane?, Pat O'Connor, Norm Camm, B. Robinson, Arch Kay, "Boiler" Byng, Geo. Gilmore, Dan Camm.  
Centre: Ernie LeJuge, Hughie McAllister, Alec Hamilton, F. 'Bluey' Robinson (Captain), N. Bowers, 'Baldy' Garrett, Bert Camm. Front O'Donohue, Geo. Thomson.

When the case came up before Judge Moule, he voted in favour of Monbulk, who had their points reinstated and were given the premiership pennant and medals. The decision did not go down well at Ferny Creek. They refused to compete in 1920 in protest. To rub it in Flossie Ramshaw penned a club song which had the opening stanza of:

*"We are the Monbulk Football Team  
The Boys of the Maroon and Gold  
We know how to play the game  
And Ferny knows its true"*

With Belgrave and Bayswater disbanding this left just a 3 team competition and Monbulk won their 5th successive premiership in 1920.

Mountain football was restructured in 1921 as the Mountaineer Football Association, named after the local newspaper which promoted it. Monbulk and Ferntree Gully were the two dominant sides but as Ferntree Gully had finished on top by percentage they had the right to challenge if they lost the final.



1920 Monbulk football team. Ernie Le Juge is holding the ball. The player, middle row 2nd from right is Norm Camm.

Can you help name these players?

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MFC Team of 1921. Dick Wigmore Snr. standing on left.  
Back: Stan Crerar, Fred Lane, Harry Bradshaw, Les McAlister, Norm Camm, Alb Crerar, Charlie McCarthy, Josh Martin, Charlie Dite, Fred Cox, Dooley O'Donohue (Pres).  
Middle: George Waterman, Oscar Winberg, Jim Simpson, Ernie LeJuge (Capt), Jack Christian, Perc Murray, Phil Camm Snr.  
Front: Danny Jones (trainer), Bill Simpson, Billy Byng & Charlie McCarthy.

The first final ended in a draw, and the replay was won by Monbulk which meant a Grand Final had to be played. Monbulk were successful and carried off the honours yet again. They adjourned to the Ferntree Gully Hotel afterwards but overstayed their celebratory revelling and were busted in a police raid for being on a licensed premises after 6pm. Even more annoyed was Bert Nation, the coach driver who was to take the players back home. He was trying to get them out at the time and was also charged.

Monbulk's winning streak came to an end in 1922 when Ferntree Gully gained their revenge. Monbulk finished third, the first time since 1911 that they hadn't won the premiership.

With a 16 year old Albert Hyde at full back in 1923, Monbulk bounced back to lose only one match for the season. The Maroon and Gold defeated their old nemesis Ferny Creek in the Grand Final by 31 points with the ninth consecutive win that year culminating in 7 flags in 8 years.

Albert Hyde was to kick a club record 19 goals in the opening round of 1924 against Macclesfield and by the time he was 18 he was full forward for Hawthorn in the VFL, leading their goalkicking for 5 consecutive seasons 1926-1930.

Ferny Creek finally won their long awaited flag in 1924 when they defeated Belgrave in the Grand Final. Monbulk finished 4<sup>th</sup> as their reign as kings of the mountain came to an end. The competition folded at the end of the season and the clubs joined the Scoresby District Football Association in 1925.

#### MDFA Premiers 1911-24

- 1911 – Belgrave
- 1912 – Monbulk
- 1913 – Monbulk
- 1914 – Monbulk
- 1919 – Monbulk
- 1920 – Monbulk
- 1922 – FTG
- 1923 – Monbulk
- 1924 – Ferny Ck

Monbulk Football Netball Club is looking for more photos and memorabilia to help for the updated history book planned for the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020. If you are able to help please contact us [explore@monbulkhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:explore@monbulkhistoricalsociety.org.au) or comment on our Facebook page.



Monbulk Football Team 1922. Back: M. Dite, Ern LeJuge, Ted (Pop?) Anderson, Josh Martin, \_\_\_? Norm Camm, Jerry McCarthy, Jack Christian, Bill Simpson, Dooley O'Donohue, Albert Hyde Snr., Fred Lane, Jackie Harris.  
Middle Row: Harry Bradshaw, Les McAllister, Geo. Waterman, Phil Camm, Peter Bradshaw, Jock Murray, W. Hyde.  
Front: Jim Simpson, Stan Crerar, Albert Hyde Jnr. (boundary).

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### Jean celebrates 100 Years

Ralph Speedie of The Patch alerted us to the fact that his mother, Jean Speedie, celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday this month. Jean, who lives in Tecoma, celebrated with her family and friends at Rose Cottage in Monbulk.

Among the many well wishes Jean received a letter from the Queen and a special surprise visit from Ken Fletcher who played for the 'Bombers' in the 1960s. Jean has been an Essendon Football Club supporter all her life.

Jean has 6 children,  
16 grandchildren,  
28 great grandchildren and  
2 great great grandchildren.

**"Congratulations Jean"  
100 years! What an accomplishment!**

Jean is the granddaughter of Isaac Simmon of The Patch.



Jean Speedie

#### Isaac Simmons and 'The Patch'

Isaac (Ike) Simmons, a tough, black-bearded bushman, arrived in the hills in the 1870s with his wife, Harriet, and their 9 children. Like many others of that time, it had been the lure of gold that had brought this tough young Irishman to Australia. However, his subsequent survival came to depend on a more mundane occupation.

Ike Simmons found a patch of Blackbutts suitable for palings growing behind the site of the existing Post Office. He made his camp and cleared the land around his hut for safety for his family. He split the timber into palings and they were carted by early bullockies to Dandenong. Ike became a well-known timber splitter in the district. He was one of the last timber splitters working in the forest before the area was thrown open for selection.

When the 1893 settlers came from Narre Warren along Selby's Hill and steeply down "Aunt Sally" in the William Road area to Simmons' "Patch", they often camped in the clearing where once Simmons' hut had stood and in turn christened the place "The Patch".



The Patch c.1900

Monbulk Historical Society will be having its AGM on 24th October 2018, 10am at the Monbulk Hub.

Monbulk Historical Society covers the townships of Monbulk, The Patch, Kallista and Sherbrooke. If you enjoy talking or learning about the people and places of yesteryear, please become a member and join us and enjoy our exclusive member benefits.  
**ALL WELCOME**