

ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL CLUB

DECADE ONE - "The BIRTH of the AUFC"

Written by David Bartlett #11

The Adelaide University Football Club was officially formed on 26 March 1906 and became affiliated with the Sports Association two weeks later on 9 April, 1906. Prior to this time, there was no University Football team competing in a regular competition. Games were arranged on an irregular basis, generally against schoolboy sides.

Dr F.A. (Fred) Bloch's excellent book *A History of the South Australian Amateur Football League 1911 – 1994* notes the early days of football in South Australia.

"Australian Rules football has been played in South Australia on an organised competitive basis at least since 1877 when the South Australian Football Association was formed. In that year, the Association (the forerunner of the SANFL of today) included such clubs as Adelaide, Bankers, Gawler, Kensington, Kapunda, North Adelaide, Port Adelaide, Prince Alfred College, South Adelaide, South Park, Victorian, Willunga and Woodville."

And further on

"During these formative years of competitive football in South Australia, many groups of individuals played football matches against each other without going through the formalities of forming associations, or indeed, in some cases, even bothering about forming clubs. Students from Adelaide University, for example, had, from around the turn of the century, combined to play an annual match against students from Melbourne University without there being a University Football Club as such, and members of Saint Francis Xavier played regular matches in the early 1900's, but didn't form a football club until 1911."

The earliest reference to football at University was found in a *Prince Alfred College Chronicle* of 1885. The report stated that Adelaide University could not organise a full side for a Saturday game, however, there were enough players available for a mid-week game. This game was arranged for Wednesday, 19 June 1885 and several League players and old scholars from PAC comprised the side. University lost this encounter 4.11 to 1.1.

Regular references are subsequently made to these games against PAC in later editions. However, on several occasions, University managed to field a strong enough side to defeat the schoolboys.

On 12 May 1886, a side consisting of several players from Norwood and South Adelaide League clubs defeated PAC 6.15 to 1.10. The prominent players for University were Rounsevell (Captain), Shaw, Bertram, Hill and Joyce. Joe Darling, later to gain prominence as an Australian Test Cricket Captain, was one of the best players for PAC.

The matches against Prince Alfred (PAC) and St Peters (SPC) continued to be played every season, with the University side manned by old scholars from the two schools and League players. However, this situation was considered to be unsatisfactory by many people and a letter to the Editor of *The Medical Students' Society Review (The M.S.S. Review)* in December 1891 raised this issue. The writer deplored the grounds available at the University, but for the want of an oval, *"there is no reason why the University should not put a football or cricket team in the field in the coming year"*

(1892)".

Unfortunately, this did not occur, and a similar program of matches against the two schools was continued.

In retrospect, it was little wonder that enthusiasm for a football club was lacking as the more prominent players were playing League football, and there were only 150 students enrolled at the University at this time.

A brief summary of the games played prior to 1906 can be found in the School Magazines of PAC and SPSC and *The M.S.S. Review*. Generally, the team had mixed results, depending on the availability of key players, most of whom had commitments to League clubs.

The June 1892 edition of *The M.S.S. Review* reported that there was a distinct possibility that Melbourne University would come to Adelaide for a match. Messrs W. Boucaut and B. Goode, who were both South Adelaide League players, were requested to arrange the trip if it eventuated.

As no further record has been found of this game being played, it is assumed that arrangements fell through. In September 1892 University played a Combined College side but lost 3.4 to 3.7. W. Boucaut captained the team, with F.S. Hone being the best player. He was later to be a key figure in the formation of the Amateur League.

In 1901, two games were played against PAC at Norwood Oval. On both occasions Norwood did not have a match on that day, and so University fielded strong sides. On 29 May 1901, University beat PAC 8.13 to 4.10 with D. (Dean) Dawson leading the team. Best players were D. (Dean) Dawson, Jolly, P.M. Newland, C.L. Jessop, L.T. Cowan, and Bennett.

In the second game, Varsity again triumphed, running out winners 6.8 to 1.17 with L.T. Cowan, Smith and Kirkwood the best players. Most of these players were ex-PAC scholars, and several of them (D. (Dean) Dawson, L.T. Cowan, C.L. Jessop and P.M. Newland) represented University in the first Inter-Varsity game in 1904.

The September 1904 game against Melbourne University was the first match in a regular Inter-Varsity program between the two University Clubs and was played at Adelaide Oval. Dean Dawson was Captain of this first side with C.L. Jessop the Secretary. Prominent members of this team were S.G.L. Catchlove, who was in the first group of players to earn a Football Blue in 1908, and D.R.W. Cowan who was one of the first members of an elite group awarded Triple Blues (Lacrosse in 1908, Football in 1909 and Tennis in 1909). Melbourne University won this first encounter 6.5 to 4.9.



There was obviously a strong connection with the Norwood Football Club at this time, with L.T. Cowan and D. (Dean) Dawson representing the 'Redlegs' from 1901 to 1906 and D.R.W. Cowan in 1907 and 1908. The latter two men were doctors who took a strong interest in the affairs of the Sports Association after graduation. They were Vice Presidents of the AU Sports Association, along with P.M. Newland, in the inaugural year of the Amateur League in 1911.

Names of players who appeared frequently prior to 1906 were W. Boucaut, B. Goode, F.S. Hone (who later donated the Hone Medal to the SAAFL), Cavenagh, Shanahan, Gibbs, P.M. Newland and Chapple.



D. (Dean) Dawson

D. (Dean) Dawson was one of the early University Football Club stalwarts, in the days before the Club was officially formed. In these early days, players from other clubs came together to represent the University once or twice a year in matches against College sides.

Dean played League football for Norwood in those days and was Captain in 1906. (His wedding gift from Norwood used to be displayed in the Redlegs Club.) The earliest reference to Dean that has been found was in the 1901 *Prince Alfred College Chronicle*, where he led the University team to victory over a PAC team, and was named as the best player (Norwood did not have a game that day).

Dean Dawson undoubtedly played in 1902 and 1903. In 1904, he had the honour of captaining the first Inter-Varsity side against Melbourne University at Adelaide Oval. He was Captain again in 1905 for the return IV match in Melbourne.

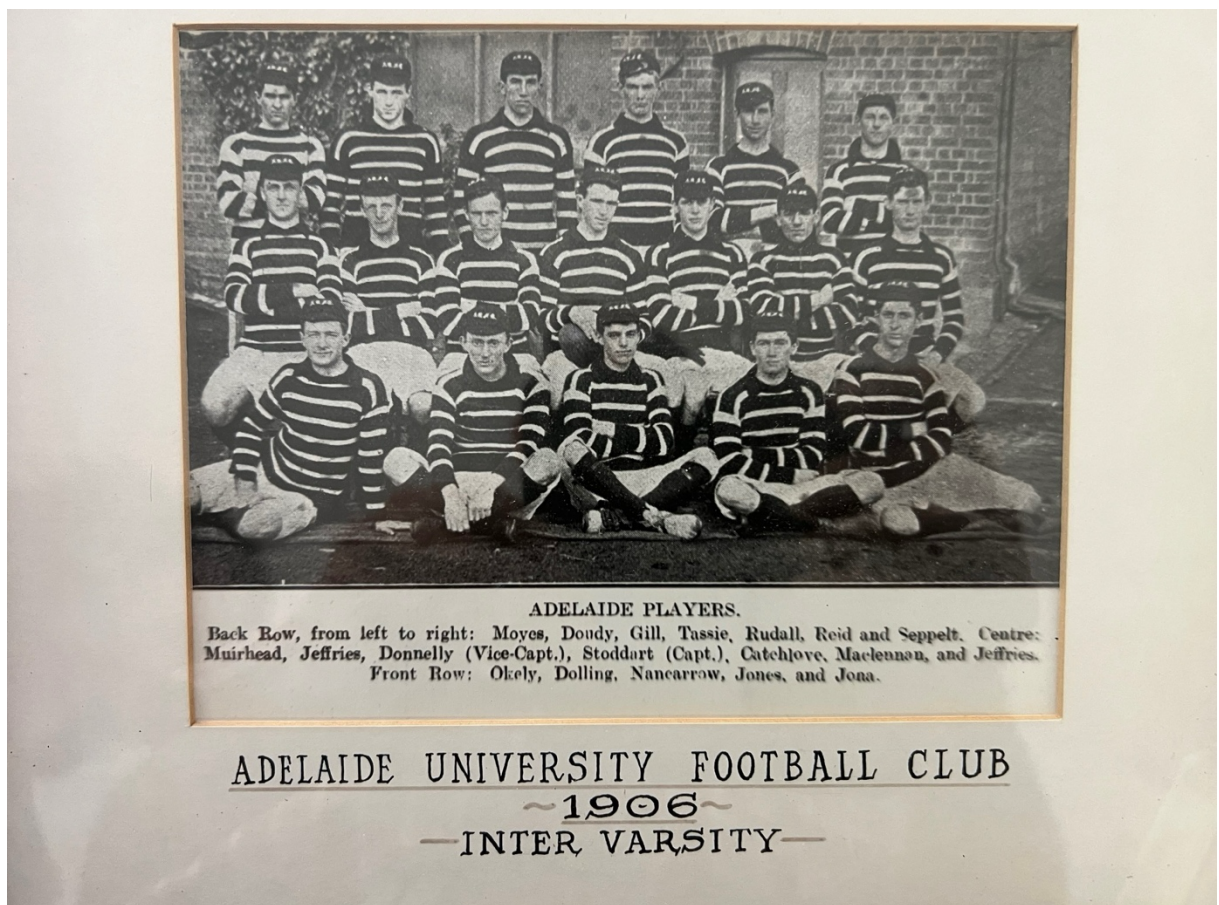
The scorers' box at University was named the Dean Dawson Memorial Scorers' Box in his memory, and a plaque recording this fact can be found on it.

The first team to truly represent the University Football Club began competing in the Adelaide and Suburban Association in 1906, with H.W.D. Stoddart as Captain and T.H. Donnelly as Vice-captain. This Association was already in existence when joined by the 'Varsity side. The other five teams competing at the time were Portland Imperial, Semaphore Central, Norwood II, West Suburban and Prospect. University finished out of the top four.

The University Football Club had applied to join the South Australia Football Association (SAFA) in April 1905, foreshadowing the example of their Melbourne University counterparts who were admitted to the Victorian Football League in 1908. The application stated that their player base would consist of "*undergraduates and graduates of less than two years standing*".

(Note: SAFA was the forerunner of the SANFL – in 1907, SAFA became the SA Football League, with SAFA becoming the Seconds competition.)

For the 1906 season, the University Football Club had recruited well and hence applied again to join SAFA.



The application was refused on the grounds that the admission of a University team would break up the electorate system, where players qualified for clubs on the basis of electoral boundaries.

During the 1906 season a match was also played against Melbourne's Scotch College on Adelaide Oval and the University team was defeated 5.8 to 4.9.

During 1907, the Club again competed in the Adelaide and Suburban Association, which then consisted of ten teams (West Torrens II, South Adelaide II, North Adelaide II, Sturt II, and West Adelaide were the new sides with West Suburban becoming non-existent). University finished ninth with only one win after 10 of the 11 rounds. West Adelaide finished bottom.

It is interesting to note that there were 11 minor rounds in the program at this time, with one round off for the South Australia v. Victoria League match and one round off for the International Lacrosse contest, which was then a major sport.

Finals consisted of the Minor Premiers playing the third side and the second side playing the fourth side. The winners of these games then played off to decide the Premiership, with the proviso that if the ultimate winner was not the Minor Premiers, then a Challenge Final could be played.

During the three years 1908 to 1910, the University Football Club existed in name only and, except for the annual match against Melbourne University, did not compete at all. This of course, put the Club at a disadvantage in these matches. Adelaide University was basically a scratch side, whilst Melbourne University was admitted to the VFL in 1908 after being Premiers of their Metropolitan League for the previous two years.

Prominent players of this period were H.W.D. Stoddart, T.H. Donnelly, C.E. Dolling, A.C. Wilton, W.A.V. and C.F. Drew.

A new competition emerges

During this period, the main drive for the formation of a new Amateur football association came from the University students. Despite the rejection of the Club's applications in 1905 and 1906, there were further applications between 1907 and 1910, each time being refused on the same grounds.

In 1910, several League players had signed notices of intention to play with University.

The last such application was in 1913, after the South Australian Amateur Football League (SAAFL) had been formed. 'The Blacks' were again unsuccessful.

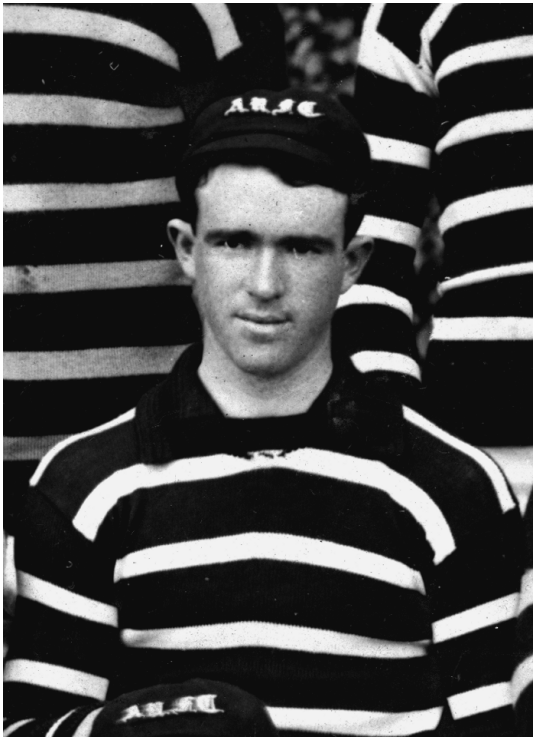
The Dr F.A. Bloch book on the history of the SAAFL reports:

"In April 1910, after the fifth successive unsuccessful application, a special meeting was called at the University to discuss the matter. This meeting was chaired by the President of the University Sports Association, Dr. Cavenagh-Mainwaring, and addressed by Professor Darnley Naylor, who eloquently put the case for University's admission to the S.A. Football League (as it then was), on the grounds that it would benefit football and amateur sport.

The Chairman expressed the opinion that the case for admission would be strengthened if the University had a team playing successfully in regular competition. To this end, the time might be right to form a purely amateur league, as the Glenferrie and St. Bartholomew teams, amongst others, were in no association and so might also be interested in joining.

This meeting laid the foundation for what was to follow. At the annual social of the St. Bartholomew team in August 1910, the Secretary of the University Sports Association S.W. Jeffries spoke of the possibility of forming a new amateur association (Advertiser, 29 August 1910, p.10). His speech received favourable responses from the secretary of St. Bartholomew (R.F. Middleton), as well as from representatives of teams from Glenferrie (T.L. Gepp) and Marlborough (J. Redwood)."

Hence, the seeds for the development of the SAAFL had well and truly been sown. A regular competition was to be initiated with the University Football Club playing the key role.



H.W.D. Stoddart

H.W.D. Stoddart was the Captain of the first University Football Club side that began

competing in the Adelaide and Suburban Association in 1906, and was a member of the side again in 1907. When the Club went into recess, from 1908 to 1910, he played League football for Norwood, managing 46 games at centre half back (records of this time are sketchy and he may also have played for Norwood during 1907.)

H.W.D. Stoddart was awarded a Blue in 1908. He played in four Inter-Varsity games from 1906 to 1910 (no match in 1909), captaining all except the 1907 side.

He was active on the Sports Association General Committee around the time that the University Oval was opened (1910) as a delegate to the Sports Ground Committee.

H.W.D. Stoddart was an Auditor of the Sports Association in 1909 and 1910.

Few other details of his career have been found but he is remembered for an incident with Umpire Kneebone whilst playing with Norwood in 1909. Details of this can be found in below in the section on anecdotes for this period.



C.E. (Charlie) Dolling

In the very early days of the University Football Club C.E. (Charlie) Dolling was a prominent player and active on the administrative side of the Club, being Secretary in 1907 and 1909. He was the Football Club delegate to the Sports Association and also represented the Cricket Club in that body.

Charlie Dolling was better known as a cricketer, topping the District Cricket aggregate in 1908-09 season with 769 runs whilst playing for the University Cricket Club. In 1912 he toured New Zealand with an Australian Second XI. He was an outstanding cricketer for South Australia and topped the District Cricket aggregate again in the 1922-23 season.

Charlie was a State cricket selector from 1909 to 1912 and from 1928 to 1936 acted as the Medical Officer. C.E. Dolling was also a Test cricket selector.

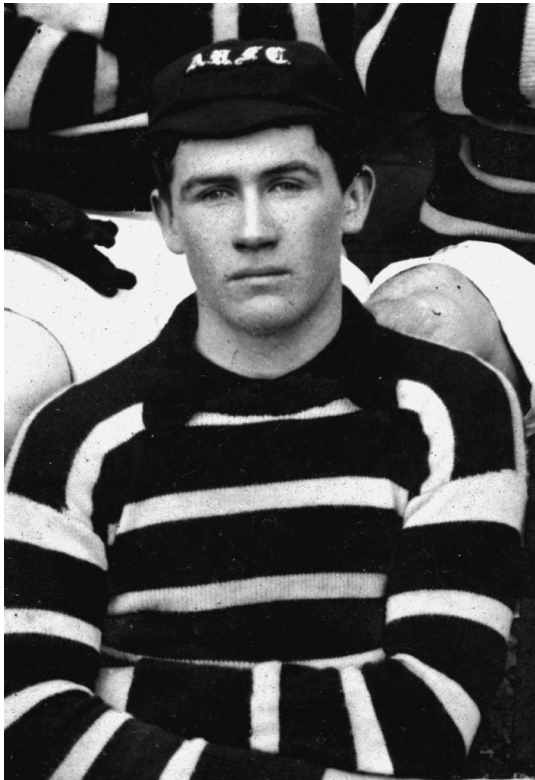


A.C. Wilton

A.C. Wilton was a prominent player in the University Football Club prior to the formation of the Amateur League in 1911. He played in the 1908, 1910 and 1911 Inter-Varsity teams and represented 'the Blacks' through to the 1912 season.

He was a prominent player in this era, regularly appearing in best player lists. In 1911, he was selected in the Combined team against the Gawler Association and played well. In 1912 (his last season with 'the Blacks'), he topped the Amateur League's goalkicking list with 41 goals.

A talented all-round sportsman, he was awarded Blues for both Football and Cricket in 1911.



E. (Edward) Britten Jones

E. Britten Jones played for 'the Blacks' in the very early days – 1906 onwards, being a good player in the 'A' grade side. He was in the first group of University footballers to be awarded a Blue in 1908.

He was a regular at Inter-Varsity and was the Vice-captain of the 1910 team in Adelaide. He played in the first season of the SAAFL in 1911, having returned from League football. His talents extended to the cricket field where he was awarded a Blue in 1911 – the first player to complete the Football – Cricket double.

Edward was awarded the 1912 Rhodes Scholarship as a recognition of his all round talents. He became an eminent physician and, later in his career, was knighted, becoming Sir Edward Britten Jones.

ANECDOTES ON THE EARLY DAYS

Knights of the realm

It is interesting to note that two men who began playing with the Club in 1906 and represented the Club in its first season in the SAAFL were knighted. These men were Sir Edward Britten Jones and Sir Shirley Jeffries.

Strife with umpires – not University!

H.W.D. Stoddart, Captain of the first University team in 1906, played League football with Norwood from 1908 to 1910 before returning to University in 1911. He was the centre of great controversy in 1909 when a one month suspension imposed by the Tribunal for telling umpire P. Kneebone to "*get off the ground*" was waived after he wrote a letter of apology to the League. The umpires threatened to resign unless the suspension was upheld, but this

was averted at the last minute. Umpire Kneebone resigned later in the year, having had enough of football.

Inter-Varsity – only if competitive

In 1909 the Inter-Varsity was due to be played in Melbourne. However, leading players of the Club considered it unwise to send an inferior side, which resulted from the SANFL refusing to admit Adelaide University to senior ranks. The team was therefore at a decided disadvantage as Melbourne University was playing successfully in the VFL.

A meeting was held to decide this issue, and it was finally resolved not to compete.