

Kieran Bonin, Rugby in Union? – The Macquarie University Centre for Applied History Award

At the end of last year, I got to work with the Woonona Shamrocks Rugby Club to uncover the club's history for their 50th anniversary in 2019. I helped out with the club by assisting on a Thursday morning when the older members would mow the field and paint the lines for the coming home game. In this time, I got to interview several members of the club and had the opportunity to be granted access to look through the restricted Illawarra Rugby Union archives which informed me on the early history of the club. Initially for the project I aimed to help with writing the book for the 50th anniversary, however I quickly learnt that this task was too large, and I would not be able to complete the book within my timeframe. While continuing to assist in creating the 50th anniversary book, I started a project that despite not directly benefiting the club but was a way in which I could use all the information I had gathered to present a finished product that not only will promote the Shamrocks but benefit the greater rugby community. I have decided to create a video cast or vodcast. I initially decided to just create a podcast, however I felt that it would be more engaging if there was a visual element to it. I audio recorded rather than video record the interviews as I felt it was too invasive to video the people being interviewed and wanted to showcase the truest perception of the club that I could capture. The vodcast concentrates on the decline of Australian Rugby, the common argument is that this decline is the cause of the neglect of grassroots rugby. The vodcast uses the Shamrocks 50-year history as a case study on a local scale to highlight issues and changes over time on a national level. The overall message is that clubs are built with social connections, with the neoliberal influence of rugby it is losing this social aspect. The Shamrocks from 50 years ago to now is similar, however at a junior level cracks are starting to appear with one participant stating there will 'not be a junior rugby club in 10 years'. Australian rugby is not dead there is still a pulse at a grassroots level and it is these people that I have spent this semester with that is keeping this pulse to continue beating, not because Australian rugby is helping them but because they are helping each other. And this is not indigenous to the Shamrocks but many clubs around Australia. The way to fix Australian Rugby is for rugby to be in union, meaning that this sense of local community needs to emulate from the grassroots to the Wallabies. The last line of the Shamrock songs encapsulates the motivation of the club to continue the struggle through the decline of Australian rugby, 'until we hear that bell, that final bell, Shamrocks will fight like hell!'.

Vodcast Link – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEaGBurEUN4&feature=youtu.be>