



## An Abridged History of the Queanbeyan Tigers

85 Years In The Making.

1925 - 2010

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### Affiliated:

- Federal Territory Football League 1925-6;
- Canberra Australian National Football League 1927-74;
- ACT Australian Football League 1975-99;
- AFL Canberra 2000-present

**Club Postal Address:** P.O. Box 344, Queanbeyan. New South Wales. 2620

**Website:** [www.tigersclub.com.au](http://www.tigersclub.com.au)

**Email:** [qtigers@tigersclub.com.au](mailto:qtigers@tigersclub.com.au)

**Football Administration Office and Home Ground:** Dairy Farmers Park in the confines of the Margaret Donoghoe Sportsground Complex, Queenbar Road, Queanbeyan

**Licensed Club:** 30 – 32 Queenbar Road, Queanbeyan NSW. 2620

**Formed:** 1925

**Colours:** Black and Gold with yellow sash.

**Emblem:** Tigers

## Premierships:

- **1<sup>st</sup> Grade Premiers:**

1939, 1940, 1941, 1953, 1954, 1956 1985, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1998, 1999, 2000

- **1<sup>st</sup> Grade Grand Finals:**

1938, 1952, 1955, 1961, 1986, 1987, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1995, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007

- **Reserve Grade Premiers:**

1953, 1954, 1985, 1989, 1990, 2007, 2009

- **Reserve Grade Grand Finals:**

1955, 1956, 1992, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2008

- **Intermediates / Under 19 / Under 18 Grade(s) Premiers:**

1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1984, 2002

- **Intermediates / Under 19 / Under 18 Grade(s) Grand Finals:**

1997, 2004, 2007

- **Club Champions:** 1985, 1989, 1997, 2000, 2002, 2007

**Runners Up:** 1986, 1987, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1998, 1999, 2005, 2009

## Mulrooney Medallists:

Tom Kelly 1938; Merv Strang 1938; **Keith Schow** 1950; **Roy Watterston** 1953 & 1954 **Tony Wynd** 1983, 1988, 1989 & 1990; Steve Cornish 1990; **Michael Kennedy** 1994; Steve Vizy 1997; Mitch Daniher 2009

## League Top Goalkickers:

G.Lovell (93) 1940; R.Savage (54) 1946; **L.White** (100) 1956 M.Wheeler (58) 1958; J.Lysewycz (67) 1977; I.Male (63) 1987; D.Skuta (61) 1989; S.Cornish (105) 1990; A.Mapleson (126) 1992; M.Niesen (45) 1997 (97) 1998; L.Ellis (70) 2002, (89) 2003; M.Armstrong (103) 2007, (57) 2008

## Highest Score:

43.37 (295) vs. RAAF on 27 July 1940

## Record Finals Attendance:

10,000 (approx.) for 1985 Grand Final: Queanbeyan 23.18 (156); Ainslie 14.13 (97)

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*The following Quote from the Publication - History of the Richmond Football Club certainly relates to the Queanbeyan Tigers Club.*

**“The Tigers refuse to be humbled and whenever a decline has set in, strong men have emerged from the ranks to lead them back to the top”**

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When the soul of the Queanbeyan Club has been destroyed during its 85 year history it has risen from the ashes.

- No more so than in the early years of 1927 and 1929 when lack of players forced the withdrawal of the team only to regroup.
- No more so than the late forties and early fifties when our juniors carried the flag.
- Then the devastating period between 1962 and 1974 when the club languished at the bottom of the table. In 1972, the League threatened to remove the Club from all competitions !.

How true a quote – in particular – **“strong men have emerged from the ranks to lead them back to the top”**

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The late Alan Muir –wrote the Forward in the Tigers History Book, Edition One. He mentions the following names as reason for the clubs continued existence:

**Quote** “The fact that the club survived all of those tough periods was due to the dedication and vision of men like our Foundation President Wal Mason followed by other outstanding Administrative personalities in Jim Prendergast, Maurie Richards, Dick Sydes, Tom Borrowman, Reg Watson, Jack McNamara and Dave Imrie through to more recent administrators covering both football and the licensed club in Ron Fowlie, Gary Bullivant, Van Rakowski, Geoff Gosling and Mark Thompson”.

Indeed Alan Muir himself gave over 60 year’s service to the Tigers Club as a player / administrator and passionate one eyed Queanbeyan advocate.

**Further**, he mentions the outstanding Coaching contributions of Junior Tigers Club Founder and Coach George Schow, other Junior Coaches in Jimmy Walters and Charlie Stephens and Senior Club Coaches Floyd Pimmer, Roy Watterston, Lindsay White, Brian Quade, James Dore, Rod O’Riley and Mark Armstrong.

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The Tigers Club has at all times demonstrated a unique and unequalled spirit that has enabled it to survive the difficult times in their now legendary 85 Year history.

The following is an abridged version of the Tigers Club History mostly collated from:

- Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright – Edition One (Covering the period 1925 – 1988)
- Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright – Edition Two (Covering the period 1989 – 1999)
- History of the Tigers 100 Club and Famous Faces (Covering Club achievements by individuals)

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## Abridged Version of History

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Situated just on the New South Wales side of the ACT-NSW border, Queanbeyan could in some ways claim to be the birth place of Australian football, for it was there on 19 August 1835 that Thomas Wentworth Wills, popularly regarded as the sport's founder, was born.

Realistically, such a view depends on a somewhat sentimentalised interpretation of the history of Australian football, and one which has, to a certain extent, fallen out of favour in recent years, but it is nevertheless not without a certain charm and allure.

It is highly ironic therefore that the football club which calls Queanbeyan home should so frequently in its short history have had to struggle frantically for survival. Indeed, on no fewer than three separate occasions the club was actually forced to disband, while in 1942-3, between 1952 and 1957, and between 1966 and 1968 it entered into temporary mergers with rival clubs.

During the 1990s, however, the Queanbeyan Tigers vied with [Ainslie](#) for the distinction of being the ACTAFL's dominant force, and if the last few years have been somewhat less auspicious it would nevertheless seem that the club's future is now reasonably secure. However, not many clubs have trodden a rougher road to stability than Queanbeyan.

Queanbeyan Football Club was founded in 1925, with Wal Mason generally regarded as the prime mover in getting the club established. The team wore red and white jumpers in its debut season and, after losing heavily in each of its first two matches, soon became competitive, winning 4 out of 10 home and away games for the year. With only four clubs in the competition a place in the finals was assured, and Queanbeyan players and officials could have been excused for thinking they had 'arrived' when a 6.9 (45) to 4.9 (33) semi final victory over Federals seemed to have given them a berth in the final.

However, it was subsequently discovered that Queanbeyan had been guilty of fielding ineligible players and the club was disqualified. As if to rub salt into the wounds, Federals went on to secure the premiership.

In 1926 Queanbeyan adopted light and dark blue playing uniforms and became known as 'the Blues'. Third place at the end of the season was not inauspicious, but the club was having trouble recruiting and retaining players, and in 1927 it was forced to withdraw from the competition.

Re-forming in 1928, and with the players now bedecked in red and blue, the team once more finished in third place on the ladder before again having to disband at the end of the year owing to player shortages.

Thankfully, the period in mothballs was again brief, and in 1930 Queanbeyan re-entered the fray. Over the next four seasons the team never finished out of the finals in what by 1932 had become a six team competition, but an appearance in the grand final remained beyond it. After finishing out of the four in 1934 the team was obviously in need of some kind of a shot in the arm, and this came prior to the start of the 1935 season when a new emblem and new set of playing colours were adopted. VFL club Richmond donated a set of black and gold playing jumpers to the Queanbeyan intermediate side and these were immediately 'borrowed' by the seniors.

After ten years of uncertainty and prevarication the club had finally found an identity with which it felt comfortable: the Queanbeyan Tigers were born and, although there would still be many hard times to come, it can in hindsight be considered appropriate that all of the club's successes have been achieved under the Tiger emblem.

In 1935, however, success was still a long way off, and indeed in both 1935 and 1936 Queanbeyan failed even to reach the finals. A losing first semi final in 1937 was a marginal improvement, but it was not until 1938 that the black and gold could finally be said to have come of age.

An outstanding home and away campaign saw the team take out the minor premiership with a 12-2 win/loss record and the imposing percentage of 177.8, making flag favouritism automatic. However, at this stage in their development the Tigers lacked the experience necessary to take that vital next step, and in both the second semi final and the grand final a finals hardened **Manuka** held sway.

As so often seems to be the case, however, grand final defeat acted as a catalyst to ultimate achievement the following year. In an epic series of finals encounters with their 1938 nemesis, Manuka, the Tigers won the second semi final by a point, drew the grand final, and then suddenly found another level in the grand final replay to surge to victory by 57 points, 18.22 (130) to 9.19 (73).

Over the next two seasons the Tigers were clearly the dominant side in the competition. After losing their opening match of the 1940 season Queanbeyan remained unbeaten for the rest of the year concluding with a 93 point grand final annihilation of **Eastlake**.

A year later the victims on grand final day were the RAAF, a side which had entered the CANFL in 1940, and which remained a force in the competition throughout the war years. The victory margin on this occasion was a mere 3 points, but given the quality of the opposition (the RAAF side contained a sprinkling of players with VFL and SANFL experience) the triumph has to go down as arguably one of the finest victories in Queanbeyan's history.

The halcyon days proved to be short-lived, however. In 1942 and 1943 the club entered into a temporary merger with Acton, and then in 1944 and 1945 the club was forced to withdraw its senior side from the competition as the exigencies of war made it harder and harder to retain players.

In 1952, the home of the Tigers the Queanbeyan Park was closed by local government for two years to allow improvements to the Oval and the cycle track encircling the oval.

Frustrated with a team of champion young footballs set to graduated from 5 consecutive Intermediate Premierships, but with little or no finance, the Tigers appeared to have no future.

However, the Acton Football Club, one of the founding teams in the Canberra League in 1924, were also facing hard times but for a different reason to the Tigers.

Acton was financially sound but with a few exceptions did not have players in their ranks capable of playing at first grade level.

Consequently following a meeting between Queanbeyan and Acton officials it was decided to merger and upon approval by the League the famous Combine sides were formed. By 1952 morale was at an all time low, and prior to the start of the season it was announced that, in a bid to reverse the on field decline, Queanbeyan would once again be amalgamating with Acton. Initially, the merger was intended to last for just a single season, but so successful did it prove (in playing terms at any rate) that it was extended for another five years.

The Queanbeyan-Acton combine wore uniforms which were a straight amalgam of the two clubs' colours. Most of the team's players hailed from Queanbeyan, but home matches were held at Acton, meaning that the vast majority of the club's revenue went straight into the Acton coffers.

The League in its wisdom determined that in 1957, Queanbeyan should resume its own identity which led to the Combine's dissolution, but not before the side had contested five consecutive grand finals for wins in 1953 (against **Ainslie** by 5 points), 1954 (over **Eastlake** by 109 points), and 1956 (against **Manuka** by 51 points).

Flying solo again from 1958 the Tigers performed solidly at first, but following an 8 point loss to **Ainslie** in the 1961 grand final their fortunes dipped. By 1964 the club was in crisis. Only fifteen people turned up to the committee elections that year and they had to be postponed. When the meeting re-convened the following week there was a lengthy debate over whether it was even practicable to remain in the competition, but in the end the members opted to grasp the nettle and forge ahead.

The following two decades would be hard to describe as anything other than disastrous. An ill-conceived merger with Turner between 1966 and 1968 only served to emphasise how impoverished football in Queanbeyan had become, and it was not to be until the early 1980s that the Tigers would again start to prove capable of mounting a consistent challenge for premiersip honours.

The 1980 season saw the club re-locate from its long time home at Queanbeyan Park Oval to a new facility in south Queanbeyan, the Margaret Donoghoe Sportsground. Despite being the object of a fair amount of ridicule at the outset - **Ainslie** coach Kevin Neale once referred to it as 'Mary Poppins Oval' - the ground has since become the envy of rival Australian football clubs in Canberra.

Other important off field developments in the 1980s included the acquisition of a liquor license in 1982 and the opening of licensed premises the following year.

On the field, as the '80s progressed so did the team's prowess. After reaching the preliminary finals of 1982, 1983 and 1984 the Tigers finally made it to a Grand Final in 1985 - their first for twenty-four years. They did it the hard way, losing their second semi final clash with **Ainslie** by 3 points before outplaying **Manuka** to the tune of 33 points a week later in the preliminary final.

In the Grand Final the Tigers were fortunate enough to have one of those days when everything 'clicks', and they comfortably accounted for Ainslie by 59 points, 23.18 (156) to 14.13 (97). It was Queanbeyan's first Premiership as an individual club since 1941 and, given the long barren years that the club had been forced to endure in the interim, must arguably go down as the most satisfying of them all.

Comparative newcomers Tuggeranong got the better of the Tigers by a single point in the 1986 grand final, while a year later it was **Ainslie** which delivered the *coup de grace*, somewhat more tellingly on this occasion, 21.9 (135) to 11.15 (81).

At the start of the 1988 season Queanbeyan was felt to be a team on the downward spiral, an impression reinforced when it lost to 1987 wooden spooners **Belconnen** in the pre-season knock-out competition. They had lost no less than 12 1<sup>st</sup> Grade players from the 1987 Grand Final team.

However, it was to prove plain sailing for the Tigers as they won all bar 3 of their 20 home and away matches, and then defeated Ainslie in both the second semi final (by 4 points) and grand final (by 19 points).

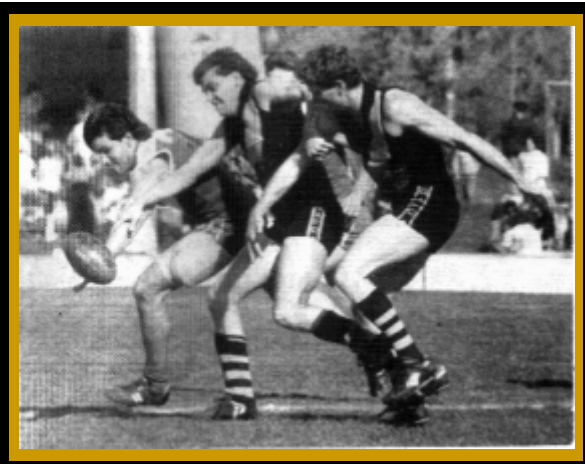
Queanbeyan was now an acknowledged power in the ACTAFL.

In 1989, the Tigers clinched back to back premierships for the first time since 1940 (not counting the 1953-1954 triumphs of the combine) with a 12.15 (87) to 9.13 (67) Grand Final victory over **Manuka Weston**. A 27 point Grand Final loss to **Ainslie** in 1990 was followed by further premiership success a year later in 1991 when Southern District succumbed by 4 goals.

**Pictures from the 1991 Grand Final in which Queanbeyan 14.9 (93) defeated Southern Districts 10.9 (69)**



*The pumped up Tigers, led by (L-R) Steven Vizy and skipper Tony Wynd, hit the track before the start of the match.*



*Intense, eyes on the ball action, featuring (L-R) Keith Hanna (Southern District) and Queanbeyan's Murray Boyer and John Watson.*

Between that success and the club's next in 1998 Tigers' supporters had to endure Grand Final losses at the hands of **Ainslie** in 1992, 1994 and 1995 – most in very controversial circumstances - but the fact that Queanbeyan was now an almost perennial Grand Finalist emphasised just how far things had progressed since the dim, dire days of the 1960s and '70s.

A second successive premiership in 1999 was the best imaginable way of bringing the twentieth century to a close.

The twenty-first century started as the twentieth had ended as the Tigers made it three flags in succession with a thumping 23.10 (148) to 14.11 (95) Grand Final defeat of **Eastlake**. Since then, however, there has been no further Premiership success, although the Tigers did play off against **Belconnen Magpies** for the 2002, 2003 and 2004 flags.

The first of these Grand Finals were lost by significant margin, but in 2003 the deficit was just a single straight kick, Belconnen winning 11.14 (80) to 11.8 (74).

In 2005 the Tigers premiership aspirations were stopped at the 1st semi final stage, thereby consigning the Tigers to 4th position, their worst finish since 1996. Serious leg injuries including broken legs to the Coach, Captain and the eventual Best and Fairest player robbed the Tigers of going forward.

The side managed just 6 wins from 18 matches in 2006 to miss the finals for the first time in a quarter of a century.

The 2007 season saw the Tigers bounce back to reach the Grand Final in all Grades. They provided an unbeaten Sydney Swans side with a stern challenge, particularly in the second half, coming to within 6 points early in the last quarter only to fall short in the end by 28 points. A Reserve Grade Premiership came the Tigers way.

The Club also made Grand Finals in every grade of the Junior League competitions it entered in 2007.

A year later Queanbeyan missed the finals completely after finishing fifth, while in 2009 the Tigers' season was ended at the first semi final stage. A Premiership victory to a very young Reserve Grade team provided a highlight to the season along with a Mulrooney Medal crossing the border for the first time since 1997.

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## Conclusion

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The abridged version of the Tigers Club History has been told.

From its humble beginnings in 1925 through those gritty years of building, the heady years of success and the bitter years of struggle.

It has never been easy and never will be.

Many clubs have risen and many clubs have fallen. The Queanbeyan Club remains intact and deservingly claims to be the oldest club in the League.

Through the depression years, World War 11 and now into the semi professional ranks of Australian Football we have survived.

The History of the Tigers Club from 1925 through to 1999 is available in Editions 1 and 2 of Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright from the Club Office – email [qtigers@tigersclub.com.au](mailto:qtigers@tigersclub.com.au)



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