

Chapter 3

The all-Australia game



Metropolitan v. New Zealand in Sydney in 1905.

The touring Soccerites from Western Australia and their New South Wales opponents in 1909.

At the beginning of the new century the colonies of Australia came together to form the Commonwealth of Australia and on 1 January 1901 the new Federation of Australia came into being. The former colonies, now states, surrendered some of their former autonomy to the new central parliament, but they retained all the rivalries that existed before. In sport, although soccer was the poor cousin of the two other football codes, it was the only football code that came close to emulating the political nation by forming a federation taking in all the states: in little more than a decade the game had

spread throughout the new Commonwealth to form a controlling body with a genuine national reach. In December 1911 the Commonwealth Football Association (CFA) was constituted,

Any team representing Australia in 1914 would have been made up largely of players from New South Wales

determined to consolidate this national reach and take advantage of the game's international potential. With one eye on the Olympic Games due to be held in Berlin in 1916, the new body sought the permission of the Football Association (FA) in London to enter an Australian team in the upcoming Games. To this end it urged that Scotland or England send a team to Australia or invite an Australian team to tour the United Kingdom. Not for the first or last time, the authorities in the home countries showed little enthusiasm for the game down-under and the outbreak of war in 1914 put paid to any sporting trips to Germany.

Any team representing Australia in 1914 would have been made up largely of players from New South Wales, and the success of soccer in that state raised another issue that would continue to dog the game: a threat by the strongest teams, mainly made up of immigrants, to break away from the official body and form a league of their own, unrestricted by the system peculiar to Australia whereby the make-up of teams was determined by the 'district' that had been allocated to them. The major issue early in the new century, however, was the attempt to establish a single football code for the whole of Australia. The Victorians, fired by the success of their own football code in South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, and enthused by the optimism that the creation of the new nation inspired, renewed their campaign to make their Victorian rules, now called Australian rules, the national code. From 1903, under the slogan 'One Flag, One Destiny, One Football

Code', they descended on New South Wales in particular with missionaries and money to prove to their northern neighbours the superiority of the southern code—and even stretched across the Tasman to convince their fellow Australasians that the game they had taken to their heart was a false god. In 1908 a gigantic football carnival was held in Melbourne billed as the 'Australasian Football Championship', but despite the disarray in the ranks of the rugby people with the split to form rugby league the previous year, attempts to make the Australian game a national game would not succeed for several decades. Indeed, the rugby split in 1907, which led to the breakaway and formation of rugby league the following year, only strengthened the new code.

In the midst of the Victorians' missionary efforts, soccer, as the association game was now being called, was virtually ignored. But with the failure of rules north of the Murray, and the even more dismal failure of rugby to make a significant impact beyond New South Wales and Queensland, soccer would become the second most popular football code in every state. And at the end of 1911 it had a genuinely national controlling body, albeit dominated by New South Wales, as the equivalent body for rules, set up as the Australasian Football Council (AFC) in 1906, was by Victoria.¹

One nation, one football code—but which one?

The Depression of the 1890s affected the various football codes, almost bringing the Australian rules game to a halt in South Australia. In the west, however, the goldfields became the attraction for unemployed men seeking the literal pot of gold. The population more than doubled in a few years and Western Australia joined New South Wales and Queensland with a controlling body for soccer in their state. The goldmines in Kalgoorlie attracted many workers from the other states, inevitably leading to the formation of football teams, including soccer. But soccer teams were also formed in Perth and Fremantle as well as at the goldmines and on the coalfields around Collie.

The first Western Australia British Football Association was founded on 30 May 1896, although there had been many scratch games played before this. As Richard Kreider has shown, the prompt for the formation of an official body followed a letter in the *West Australian* of 6 May 1896 from

‘An Old Reptonian’, where the alumnus of that famous soccer school in England called for the formation of a club on ‘English Association’ rules.² Shortly after, four teams were represented in a formal league—Perth FC, Civil Service, Crusaders and Fremantle Wanderers—and in 1898 a Challenge Cup was introduced, fought out in 1899 by eight clubs, two of which came from the regions: Collie from the coalfields and Yarloop from the timber country.

Games between Perth (occasionally called Coast) and the Goldfields had been played from 1896 and were a regular feature of the code in the succeeding years. Further indications of the progress of the game came in 1900 when a schools’ league for Under-16s was introduced (Under-15 from 1902) and in 1901 the Western Australian Junior British Football Association was formed. Such was the success of the boys’ game that a team was sent to South Australia in 1905, although the age limit was raised to 21. The young state team lost its key games, played against senior SA teams, and it was noted at the time that while all of the SA players were British, all of those from the west were native-born. As was the case in New South Wales, the number of Australian-born was an indication of the strength of the game. Another feature that helped the game’s popularity was a series of games against the English test cricketers on the last leg of their return trip to the old country in 1902, 1904

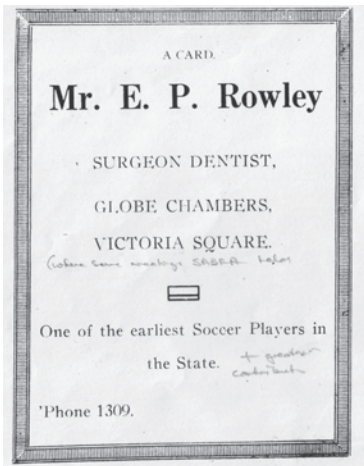
and 1908. The cricketers took these games seriously and won all of them: 4–0, 3–0, 3–2 in games of two 30-minute halves with crowds of over 2000.³

The Western Australians were to the fore—along with New Zealand—in trying to interest the home countries in a tour to Australia, but more realistically they also turned their enthusiasm to arranging interstate games, especially against New South Wales. Despite the reluctance of the NSW authorities, the persistence of the Sandgroppers bore fruit in 1909, as discussed later.

In South Australia, soccer was officially organised in 1902, with two teams that soon became three. A version of the Victorian game had been played as far back as 1860, and after a lapse it was taken up enthusiastically in the 1870s with the encouragement of some Victorian expatriates who helped South Australia found its own association the same year as the Victorians did, in 1877. By the 1890s Australian rules had once more fallen into decline, enough for some rules people to fear that soccer posed a threat.⁴ It was not a very obvious one, as there are few reports of soccer being played before 1893 and it was not until 1897, when some workers brought out from Britain to work at the Holford Potteries in Norwood took up their favourite sport, that regular games were organised. Even then it was not until 1902 that the South Australian British Football Association



Fremantle Wanderers in 1897. Richard Kreider believes this is the earliest photograph of an association football team in Western Australia.



'Ted' Rowley, a dentist by profession, was a stalwart of the nascent game in South Australia. His efforts led to the purchase of Rowley Park, which in turn financed Hindmarsh Stadium in the 1950s when the park was found to be more useful for speedway racing than soccer.

in the United Kingdom, won the two games they played 4–2 and 6–1. A crowd of 400 was estimated to have attended the first game and the close result led to the re-match: it also led to the formation of the South Australian British Football Association a few days later at the tailor shop of Frank Storr in Gawler Place in the city.⁵

A team from Woodville joined North Adelaide and South Adelaide to take part in the inaugural league season in 1903. The following year they were joined by Port Adelaide, founded in 1903 and today one of the oldest clubs in Australian soccer.⁶ Others soon joined and at the outbreak of the First World War there were three divisions with 18 clubs and 350 registered players. In addition to the league games, there were various cup competitions, most notably the Webb-Harris Cup started in 1907 and the Cambridge Cup that replaced it in 1912.

was formed. Prior to this a North Adelaide and a South Adelaide team had played regular monthly games, to the jeers of passers-by on their silly 'billy goat game'. None of this deterred the two teams from issuing a challenge to the crew of the HMS *Mildura*, anchored at Outer Harbour, to play a game against the two teams combined. The lads from the *Mildura*, several of whom had played to a high standard

In Tasmania contact with the world outside the island was mainly by sea and it was in the occasional games of soccer with the crews from visiting ships that the locals enjoyed their soccer contacts. The officers and crew of the ships of the British Empire were often the unwitting



Formed in 1903, Port Adelaide is one of the oldest teams in Australian soccer. This is the championship team of 1912.



The Honeysett family made a huge contribution to Tasmanian football, first at New Norfolk and then South Hobart, a club that still survives. J.J.B. Honeysett is at the left in the back row, and his nephew Charles and son Joe are second and third from the left in the front.

missionaries of the association game throughout the world, but in Australia this did little more than offer a bit of shore leave for the crews and some fun for the locals. Tasmania, like all the other states, played many games against ships' crews, but the first game to set in motion what led to regular competition was played in 1898, and two years later a league was introduced, thanks to the efforts of the Rev. Fred Taylor, from Manchester in England, who organised a team at the University of Tasmania, called Trinity after his church. The two other teams were the Gunners from the regiment of the Anglesea Barracks and Sandy Bay, a team made up of army volunteers. The Boer War (1899–1902) had a particularly serious effect on Tasmania as many of its young men answered the patriotic call. When football picked up again at the end of the war it was the Victorian game that progressed most rapidly, but soccer also made a comeback.⁷

The soccer code got back on its feet through the efforts of the Honeysett family, J.J.B. and his son Joe, along with cousin Charles, who settled in Tasmania in the early 1900s. In 1906 they called for players to take part in games, especially against visiting ships, and new clubs were formed, but it was not until 1910 that the Tasmanian British Football Association was founded. In that year the first North v. South game was played: although this might represent progress, it was in fact an indication of the north–south divide in the island that split loyalties and militated against a strong Tasmanian identity. Also in 1910, J.J.B. Honeysett moved from New Norfolk to Sandy Bay, where he founded South Hobart, still in existence today as one of the oldest clubs in Australia. Joe Honeysett moved to Canberra in 1926, where he was instrumental in setting up the first soccer association in the capital, the Federal Capital Territory British Football Association.



A large framed collage presented to Harry Dockerty in 1909 by his fellow football players and officials after the revival of the game in Victoria, which he did so much to promote.



The Dockerty Cup was played for in Victoria from 1909 until the turn of the twenty-first century and, after a gap, was presented to the winner of the state knock-out competition again in 2013.

Soccer in Victoria, despite its promising start in the 1880s and the regular intercolonial games with New South Wales, languished in the 1890s when it was harder hit by the Depression and the collapse of ‘Marvellous Melbourne’ than the other states. Early in the new century the game revived, but it was not until the establishment of a league in 1908 and the introduction of the Dockerty Cup, named after the Scot from Glasgow who presented it in 1909, that the code was resurrected in that most hostile of the rules states.⁸ Dockerty played in the first cup final but had to present his own trophy



St Kilda was one of the teams competing in the Victorian league and the Dockerty Cup in 1909 at Middle Park, the main venue for the game in Melbourne until the 1950s.



The Ipswich and West Moreton British Football Association team defeated a team from New South Wales 4–1 in 1914. Here the victorious team poses with members of the association executive.

to his Carlton opponents at the end of the match. At the creation of the CFA in 1911 the Victorian representative, W.A. Cumming, gave the least positive report, speaking of the ‘good prospects’ but also mentioning the difficulties with grounds and the lack of progress with schools. He noted that there were 15 teams in the competition, one less than South Australia and three fewer than Tasmania. Figures can be misleading, however. Under the leadership of Harry Dockerty Victoria was running successful league and cup competitions and was invited by the new CFA, in pursuit of one of its goals, to host the interstate carnival in 1913 where it would show that it could match it with New South Wales. Indeed, when a visiting Victorian team ended its ten-day tour of New South Wales in 1914 undefeated it was acclaimed by the hosts as ‘easily the best combination who have as yet visited us’.⁹

In Queensland, as noted earlier, the Scots had been behind the formation of most of the early clubs, and in

Andrew Rankine provided another of these individuals who would play a key role in the development of the game. The Queensland British Football Association was founded in 1889 and the following year a state select played four games in New South Wales, two as full interstate games. Queensland won all four games, 3–1 and 1–0 in the interstate games. The tour was a financial loss, however, and the players, caught up in the great maritime strike, had to find their own way home. It would be another eight years before the next interstate foray between the two states, when New South Wales travelled to Brisbane, and lost the two interstate games, 3–2 on each occasion. There were no more encounters between the two states until 1912, when New South Wales finally notched up a victory against their interstate rivals.

Queensland encompasses a vast area, with teams as far north as Cairns, but its greatest geographical problems came with the rivalry between Ipswich and Brisbane, in soccer no

less than in any other venture. The first recorded games played in Ipswich were in June 1886, but it was not until 1892 that a regular competition was set up, a four-team Challenge Cup. Before that, however, an Ipswich select played a Brisbane select in 1889 and so began what would become a regular and vital part of the Queensland soccer calendar. In that vast state the title of Queensland British Football Association concealed what was essentially a regional association, as other centres in the vast northern state founded their own associations to cater for such regions as Rockhampton, Maryborough, Cairns and Townsville.

By the 1890s, the challenge of rules to rugby in Queensland was gone, and soccer easily filled the second spot as the most popular football code. It was a slow progress early in the new century, but it picked up from about 1910 and, after the disruption of the First World War, took off again to threaten once more the supremacy of the reigning league code.

New South Wales leads the way

For most of the twentieth century, indeed until the challenge from Victoria in the 1960s, New South Wales dominated the Australian soccer world, with Queensland its only challenger. By the turn of the century, many of the soccer officials in New South Wales had been born in Australia, albeit from parents who had recently arrived in the country.

When the question arose about founding an association to control the game throughout the newly federated country, Sydney was the obvious choice to host the conference that resulted in the formation of the CFA, in December 1911.

New South Wales was the first state to replace the qualifier 'British' in their title with the name of their state, when in 1898 the British Football Association of New South Wales became the New South Wales Football Association (NSWFA). In 1903 it was in New South Wales that the peculiarly Australian district system was first introduced, a system alien to the immigrants who made up the bulk of the players, and which would cause many future headaches. The rationale for the district or 'electoral' system was the essentially amateur one that rewards should be spread around as many teams as possible, and that financial or other inducements should not be used to buy success. In the strictest application of the district system players could be registered only for the team representing the designated area in which they lived, with transfers from one team to another allowed only by the player changing his address. There was thus no promotion or relegation. Clubs based on a particular ethnic basis, such as the Scottish teams that had dominated so much of the early games, or others representing counties in England or elsewhere, were thus expected to give up their ethnic allegiance or form a league of their own. The one advantage of the district system was that it might make the

<p><i>Our Genuine Tyres are branded.</i></p> <p>20</p> <p>District Boundaries.</p> <p>Balmain.—The whole of that suburb on the northern side of Weston-road, Terry-street, Wise-street, Reynolds-street, Mullens-street, Government-road, to the waters of White Bay.</p> <p>Rozelle.—The district bounded by Parramatta-road at Battle Bridge, Johnstone-street to the water's edge, separated from Balmain by the abovenamed boundary, bounded on the western side by the waters of the harbour, and also inclusive of the boroughs of Five Dock and Drummoyne as present (1903) municipally bounded.</p> <p>Pymont.—The area north of Allan-street from Darling Harbour to Wattle-street, bounded by the waters of the Harbour to Circular Quay (western side), along George-street to Market-street, to the water's edge.</p> <p>Ultimo.—The district encompassed by the following boundaries:—Allan-street, from Darling Harbour to Wattle-street, along Wattle-street to Bay-street to City-road, along Cleveland-street to Dowling-street into Arthur-street, into Cooper-street, along Holt-street to Devonshire-street, along George street to Market-street, to the water's edge.</p> <p>Glebe.—The district enclosed within these limits:—Wattle-street, from Blackwattle Bay into Bay-street to City-road, through Newtown-road, King-street, Newtown, along Enmore and Stanmore roads, New and Old Canterbury roads; Parramatta-road, from Battle Bridge to Johnstone-street, to the waters of Rozelle Bay.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Manufacturers—</p> <p>Barnet, Glass & Sons' Propy., Ltd., 165 Clarence St.</p>	<p><i>Don't be put off.</i></p> <p>21</p> <p>East Sydney.—The district east of George-street, Devonshire-street, Holt-street, into Cooper-street, along Arthur-street into Dowling-street, along Bunnerong-road to Rainbow-street, Bondi, to the water's edge, and bounded on the northern side by the waters of Sydney Harbour.</p> <p>South Sydney.—The district between the following boundary line:—Cleveland-street, at its junction with City-road, along Bunnerong-road to Rainbow-street, Bondi, to the water's edge; also along Newtown-road, King-street, Newtown, Enmore and Stanmore roads, New and Old Canterbury roads, into Hanks-street, along Holden-street, along Liverpool-road to its junction with Cook's River to its mouth and the Tasman Sea.</p> <p>North Sydney.—The district encompassed by Sydney Harbour, Tasman Sea, Broken Bay, Hawkesbury River to Brooklyn Station, thence along the railway line to Ryde.</p> <p>Granville.—The whole of the district (except such portions of it as are situated in the before-mentioned districts) west of the following line of demarcation:—The municipal boundary of Five Dock, Parramatta-road, Burwood-road, along the Liverpool-road to Cook's River, and bounded on its westernmost side by the boundaries of the County of Cumberland.</p> <p>The Navy.—Members of His Majesty's naval forces on the Australian Station are eligible for any team representing the station as a whole.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Manufacturers—</p> <p>Barnet, Glass & Sons' Propy., Ltd., 165 Clarence-st.</p>
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The district system, 1903. Unique to Australia was the district system where players had to play for the team in the district where they lived: this was a constant source of irritation for incoming immigrants.

COMPETITION WINNERS, 1912.

JUNIOR COMPETITION. PYRMONT RANGERS (W. Wilcox, J. Gray, F. Kruger, A. McLean (Capt.), G. Kelso, A. Timms, J. Christian, C. Johnstone, E. Scanlan, A. Golden, H. Christian, M. Brown.

NURSE CUP. LEICHHARDT ROVERS (L. Adams, A. Adams, L. Jelfs, E. Nash, J. Lonsdale, R. Flood, G. Orr, W. Bray, H. Bolt, J. Johnson, G. Cartwright, W. Alston.

JUVENILE COMPETITION. EASTON PARKS (W. Smith, J. Jolliffe, A. Cutler, G. Gamble, W. Bettel, H. Thompson, W. Hollis, S. Matthews, B. Denham, H. Love, J. Scullin, R. Matthews, R. Leadbeater.

COMPETITION WINNERS SINCE INCEPTION OF COMPETITION.

Year.	Junior.	Nurse Cup.	Juvenile.
1906		Balmain Alberts	
1909		Balmain Wentworths	
1910		Ultimo Bulwarra	Leichhardt Rovers
1911		Balmain Earlsbrae	Pine Parks
1912	Pymont Rangers	Leichhardt Rovers	Easton Parks

There were 37 teams in NSW junior competitions in 1912. In the 1920s the junior competitions would expand even further.

local council more amenable to allocating a good playing ground. In most states the Scots and English who made up most of the players played for a district club but did not require a residence qualification; they might also play against clubs with a regional identity, such as the ubiquitous Northumberland and Durhams (N & D) and the inevitable Scots, often with the Thistle or whatever added to the name of the district, while there were also clubs representing an industry, an occupation or one of the arms of the military.

When New South Wales introduced the district system in 1903, it did not apply to teams outside the Sydney area, and in the northern coalfields and other industrial regions of the north, in Newcastle, the Hunter Valley and South Maitland, separate associations were founded, as well as to the south in the Illawarra Valley. Each year from the beginning of the new century the annual reports of the NSWFA recorded the game's steady progress, with discussion of the perennial topic of visits to or from the home country.¹⁰ It was suggested that the amateur split in England in 1907 might open a new avenue, the amateurs not relying on the wages that had to be paid to professionals, but it was decided to stay loyal to the FA in London. On the other hand, the suggestion that the much-travelled Corinthians might include Australia in one of their overseas tours raised some optimism. Competitions between the different associations within the state were a regular feature, but when the South Coast association suggested that a cup or trophy be offered for such games, this was dismissed as 'pot hunting'. Nevertheless, the association already encompassed various cup competitions, above all the Gardiner Cup, and in this and every other aspect of the game, the 1910 season was proclaimed a 'record'.

In that year the Granville, Wallsend and South Coast branch associations affiliated with the central body, and 13 new entries were received for the Metropolitan League. There were record entries for the Gardiner Cup with four country teams, 13 metropolitan, and 'B' teams from Granville and Balmain. At the junior level, the Nurse Cup catered for players 18 years of age and under, while eight teams played for the Juvenile Cup for players aged 16 and under: the schools' competition was made up of two divisions. In 1911 the New South Wales Junior Football Association was established to bring all these competitions under the one body, and the following year the NSW schoolboys went to Queensland where they played curtain-raisers in the interstate games involving the visiting senior NSW team. On the south coast a Public Schools Football Association was formed and in 1913 in Sydney a High School League was set up with 30 teams from the metropolitan area.¹¹

Competitions between the different associations within the state were a regular feature

Central to the future progress of the game was its success at the schools and juvenile level, but for more immediate progress the strength of the game came from the arrival of skilled players who made up a large number of the immigrants who arrived from the old country in increasing numbers from 1906. However that may be, and despite the progress of soccer at every level, the controllers of the game's destiny, in their annual report for the 1910 season, dismissed as 'visionary' the thought that an Australian

Football Federation be established. Such wild fantasies, however, would become a reality within two years.

Despite the progress of soccer in New South Wales, it was still well behind the ruling rugby code, and even when that body split in 1907 with the formation of rugby league, it was the league code that made more progress, while union was increasingly left to prosper in the private schools. In 1907, 50 000 spectators paid their entry fee to see the test between Australia and New Zealand, none of which went to the players, who were barely compensated for any injury sustained. Four years later, and despite some spectacular

In Dunedin, that most Scottish of towns, soccer was being officially played in 1880

initial problems, most of these fans were attending professional league games to which most of the union players had defected: in 1910 the British Lions visiting New South Wales and Queensland attracted 42 000 to the Sydney Showgrounds, while club games approached 20 000. In the following year league gained access to the Sydney Cricket Ground, where a crowd almost as large as that which had watched union four years previously saw New South Wales play New Zealand.

Soccer could not match this. At the time of the rugby split, soccer in New South Wales had spread throughout the state, with works teams playing in a Wednesday half-day league, a vibrant Protestant Churches League, and a thriving junior involvement, but it would not be until the 1920s that the other football codes in the northern states had any reason to fear a threat from soccer.

International and interstate tours

The game in New South Wales was prospering, but its future could not rest in New South Wales alone. The ultimate goal was to enter the global soccer community, but before that, regular competitions had to be organised closer to hand. The Depression of the 1890s dealt a severe blow to the interstate games that had promised so much for the future of the game: the annual games between New South Wales and Victoria ended in 1888 and after the Queensland v. New South Wales interstate games of 1890 and 1898 there was no more interstate competition, apart from the Under-21 WA team that played in South Australia in 1905, until 1909 when a team from Western Australia embarked on a remarkably successful

tour of the eastern states. Before that, however, New South Wales embarked on a ground-breaking tour when they sent a team across the Tasman to play New Zealand in 1904 and received them as guests the following year. New Zealand had not suffered to the same degree as Australia in the Depression and was spared the ‘Great Federation Drought’ that lasted for a decade from the mid-1890s. As a result it welcomed, like Western Australia, many immigrants from the eastern Australia states.

New Zealand was Australia’s nearest anglophone neighbour, and indeed had even been considered as a part of the new Federation of Australia, a possibility that it firmly rejected. In sport, especially in tennis but also in the Olympic Games, the two countries played together as Australasia until the First World War, while in cricket since 1872 and athletics from the 1890s the two nations engaged in friendly sporting rivalry. At the turn of the century, however, it was rugby union that dominated winter sport with ‘internationals’ against New South Wales and Queensland before full internationals against Australia took over. Among the Australians who emigrated to New Zealand in search of work in the decade after 1895 there were enough Victorians to boost their game so that there were 100 Victorian rules clubs by 1900. This inspired the imperial optimism of the ‘Great Australian Game’ that led to New Zealand being invited to join the Australasian Football Council, founded in Melbourne in November 1906.¹²

The association game had also been growing in New Zealand in this time, with Wellington claiming in the first years of the new century to have more teams than in the whole of New South Wales.¹³ In Dunedin, that most Scottish of towns, soccer was being officially played in 1880, and despite provincial rivalry in a country divided into two islands and the rivalry of the two main cities, Auckland and Wellington, a national body was founded in 1891 and affiliated with the FA in London. The New Zealanders were as excited as their Australian cousins, especially in Western Australia, to visit or have a visit from the old country, and in 1902 a combined Oxford/Cambridge team said they would come to the antipodes if a guarantee of £3000 could be found. Wellington was prepared to put up £300 towards this, but the other soccer associations did not come to the party. Attempts to arrange a trip to the United Kingdom or have a team from there visit the colonies was the enduring dream of the ‘soccerites’, but despite many invitations from Australia, a tour had to wait until 1925.