

The Lost Years 1903-1925

In the twenty two years the two separate associations centred on Hawera and New Plymouth continued to look after cricket in their areas. Significantly the association based upon Hawera continued to operate as Taranaki and in the Hawera Club's 50th Jubilee publication the bitterness that the breakaway engendered was still very much apparent.

In 1910-11 began the competition for the Hawke Cup, the symbol of minor association supremacy. North and South Taranaki teams competed but it became quickly apparent that separately they could not match other associations, especially their southern neighbours Wanganui and Rangetikei.

T.W.Reese, the first historian of New Zealand cricket, commented that because of the division Taranaki lost all claim to be considered a major province.

There were attempts to bring the two associations together, and though there were six matches – two against Australian teams – in which a Taranaki team was fielded, that remained the closest measure of re-unification could be achieved.

The 1910 match against Australia ended in a draw. Australia, with only two second innings wickets left, still needed nineteen runs to win when bad light ended the match. The Pukekura Park pitch was quite fiery; Hasall (for Taranaki) retired hurt with a broken arm and the Australians allowed Taranaki (who were batting fifteen) to replace him for the balance of the game. T.R.Southall, a tall left arm fast bowler, who was later to play for Wellington, took 6 for 78 and 5 for 49 in the Australian innings. In a 1908 match for Taranaki against Wanganui, he also had impressive figures of 8 for 46.

The First World War years saw the complete cessation of organised club cricket in North and South Taranaki.

In 1919, when club cricket recommenced, there were signs of growth in North Taranaki with two club competitions – Thursdays and Saturdays, and the fielding of teams based on occupation – Sash & Door, Fire Brigade and Law.

In 1922-23 both South and North Taranaki challenged Wanganui unsuccessfully for the Hawke Cup but with sufficient glimmers of hope to consider what might be if they were to combine their resources.