

TOM RICHARDS – A UNIQUE RUGBY PLAYER

by Kevin Berry

When Australia played against the British and Irish Lions in a recent rugby series, they played for the Tom Richards trophy. But who was Tom Richards? Well, he is the only man to have represented both England and Australia in the noble game of rugby.

I became interested in the name "Tom Richards" when, two years ago, it was decided that the Sydney suburb of Manly should construct an Honour Pathway of Olympians. In this small, beach side municipality, there have been over sixty men and women who have represented Australia.

As a member of the Manly community, I was asked to join a committee which researched the names of those residents eligible for inclusion in this Pathway. My particular quest was to find our earliest Olympian. I was aware Australia had only one representative at the first Games in Athens, 1896. He was Edwin Flack, the winner of both the 800 and 1500 on the track. And he came from the state of Victoria.

It was then discovered that this country's most successful sprinter, Stan Rowley, had lived for a time in Manly and is buried in this suburb's cemetery. At the first Paris Games of 1900, Rowley won three bronze medals over 60 metres, 100 metres and 200 metres. By a strange quirk of fate, and not unusual for that period, he also won a gold medal as a member of the Great Britain 5000 metres cross country teams event. Thus we had found our first honoree for the Pathway.

There were only two members of the Australian team in St. Louis (1904) and neither of them had a Manly link.

So attention was turned to the team who went to London, to try and find our next plaque for the Pathway.

Australia has always been proud our gold medal win in rugby at the 1908 Games. (Rugby was played at four Games, 1904, 1908, 1920, 1924.) I started to look at the names of the '08 Wallabies – the nickname for Australian rugby teams. My research turned

to Harry Gordon's authoritative tome, "*Australia and the Olympic Games*". I asked Harry about members of the early Wallabies and he said Richards had once lived in Manly. We had found a local connection to the fourth Modern Olympic Games.

Richards had been born in the small New South Wales town of Tenterfield in 1882. His father was a six-day-a-week miner who was a Bible-basher. Due to this, he didn't believe in sport, especially sport played on the Sabbath.

In the mid 1880's the family moved to Charters Towers, in Queensland. Tom left school at 15 and started working for a blacksmith. He soon threw that in and followed his father into mining.

Richards first became exposed to the sport of rugby when a NSW team visited Charters Towers as part of a tour of Queensland. This ignited his passion for the code of football, which is described by some as 'the game they play in heaven'. However, the young lad still had opposition to sport from the god fearing father.

Around 1890, Richards senior went to South Africa in search of work and this allowed Tom and his brother Bill, to start to play the sport they both loved.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Richards boys developed their rugby skills and by 1903 Bill had been selected to play for Queensland. He was later to play five Tests for Australia. Meanwhile, Tom was playing for a Charters Towers team.

In 1905 the family followed their patriarch to South Africa and Tom was to play for a provincial side. He later travelled to England where he played with several county teams. In 1907 he returned to his native Australia with the hope of making the national team which was to tour England the following year.

Tom Richards was playing well enough to make that team and thus he competed in an Olympic Games.

Now, while the previous Olympic tournament of 1904 had three nations taking part— France, England and Germany— the London Games had only two teams, Australia and Britain.

The host country was represented not by a national team, but rather by the previous year's county champions, Cornwall. The locals were full of hope and over a thousand Cornishmen made the journey from their home to London. But they were to return crestfallen. Australia had won 32-3 and was crowned Olympic champion.

Tom Richards was an Olympic gold medallist!

The boy from Charters Towers decided to return home via South Africa where he visited his family. It was while there that a visiting English team asked him to play two Tests against the Springboks. He did and thus became the only Australian born player to ever play, at Test level, for both England and Australia.



The '08 Wallabies

The Manly connection. Well, upon returning to Australia, Tom Richards took up residence in Manly and had a long association with the district. He was involved with surf life saving and of course, played his beloved game of rugby for the Manly Rugby Union Club.

With the outbreak of hostilities, in 1914, Richards enlisted and saw action on several fronts in Europe. He rose through the ranks to become lieutenant and was awarded the Military Cross. But that's another story!!

In February, 1919, Tom Richards was back in Sydney, living in Manly. He was 37 years old. He worked for several newspapers and eventually became a travelling salesman. But his health was deteriorating mainly due to the effect of gassing he had received during the War.

Tom Richards died on 25th September, 1935. His ashes were interred in the grave of his brother Bill, in Manly cemetery.



ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND OLYMPIANS

By Wolf Lyberg. Statistician for the I.O.C.

When I recently finished my always continuing counting of the athletes participating in the Summer Olympic Games, I was surprised to notice that the final figure for competing athletes in the Olympic Games from 1896 to 2000 was considerably higher than expected. It seems that the final counting surpassed the figure of 100,000 Olympic athletes a little earlier than we originally thought.

However, please accept the figures below as still provisional, because I have not yet decounted the double starters in the Olympic Winter Games. The margin seems to be rather satisfactory, as you can see below:

	Total	Women
Athletes participating in the Summer Olympic Games:	87.112	16.785
Athletes participating in the Winter Olympic Games:	13.310	2.913
Total:	100.422	19.698

An interesting fact is that the participation of women in the Winter Olympic Games is a little higher (21,89 %), compared to the participation of women in the Summer Olympic Games (19,27 %).

Another comparison between the participants in the Olympic Summer and Winter Olympics shows that the athletes participating in the Winter Olympic Games usually have a longer Olympic career than their colleagues in the Summer Olympic Games:

Starts in consecutive Games:	<u>Percentages:</u>	
	Winter	Summer
1	70.59%	77.54%
2	21.34%	17.08%
3	6.59%	4.26%
4	1.25%	0.89%
5	0.18%	0.18%
6-9	0.05%	0.05%
Total:	100%	100%