

— NELSON SPORTS CHAMPIONS —



**Looking back:** Nelson Mayor Auty Harley hosts a civic reception on the Church Steps for the Seddon Shield-winning Nelson rugby team of 1954, along with a number of other successful teams from the province. Photo: R. KINGSFORD/BROMA STUDIO.

# Photo call uncovers slice of history

A call for a historic Seddon Shield photograph for inclusion in a book on the history of the Church Steps has uncovered a story about Nelson's sporting prowess in 1954.

Nelson history writer Karen Stade made a call through the *Leader* and sister publication the *Nelson Mail* last month for a photo which appeared in the pages of the *Nelson Evening Mail* in August 1954.

It showed a large crowd surrounding a bus carrying the members of the victorious Nelson rugby rep team that won the Seddon Shield for the first time in 14 years. The bus was making its way to the Church Steps for a civic reception.

Karen has written a history of the Church Steps and the events held on them and wanted the photograph to accompany a story in the

book about the historic rugby win.

But although she received many calls about it, no-one actually had a copy of the photograph. Fortunately Tony Gargiulo, the son of the captain of the team, Calvi (Lick) Gargiulo, had a photo of his father with the shield and the Mayor of Nelson, Auty Harley, taken on the steps the day of the civic reception and this will appear in the book.

During the reception, Karen says the president of the Nelson Rugby Union, D. Merritt, spoke of the province's joy at the win, having despaired of ever regaining the shield. Other Nelson representative teams had won titles, he told the crowd, and it had often felt as though rugby was "the poor sister in Nelson sport".

Such was the pride in the win that a call in the *Nelson Evening Mail* was made a short time later for members of the province's winning representative sports teams to meet at the steps for a combined sports champions photograph.

The resulting image by Reg Kingsford of Broma Studio shows Mayor Harley with hockey, basketball (netball), table tennis, rowing, motorcycling, bowling, cycling, shooting, soccer and marching teams, along with the victorious Seddon Shield rugby team. They are all dressed in their team uniforms and are displaying their cups and shields. A separate photograph was taken of all the team captains.

Karen says a number of people rang to offer the team photograph and it would also appear in her book, *Meet You At The Church Steps, A Social History Of A Nelson Landmark*, which will be launched on September 20, along with an event on the steps.

"I was told by a number of people in the photo there was something special about 1954 and the province's sporting success," she said. "It was a big year for Nelson in many respects. The euphoria of the Queen's visit in January and the Seddon Shield win in August was followed by anger and disbelief at the closure of the region's railway at the beginning of September after a last-ditch attempt to save it failed. Pride in Nelson's sporting prowess was something everyone could cheer about."

■ Karen is trying to get a complete list of the names of all the team members in the photograph to give to the Nelson Provincial Museum. If you can help, please contact Karen on 546 6288 or kstade@clear.net.nz.

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