

Strathallan and Bridgehaugh May 1946 – May 1970

Led by President, Dr. W. H. Welsh, the County had a most satisfactory first season with the London Scottish fixture on Boxing Day the highlight on the playing side. Captain, Mr. J. C. Muirhead was top points scorer overall.

The start of the '47-'48 season saw speculation about "assistance from coaches, team talks after Saturday games, criticism over lack of continuity in 2nd XV selection, the poor condition of the playing area and frustration caused by being unable to use the Stand pitch.

However Mr. R. Scott and E. Roy improved both pitch and pavilion, the 2nd XV managed a 70% record in sixteen matches to the 1st XV's 38% and training facilities were sought at Anfield.

Harry Kay, R. W. W. Blakey and J. Lilley scored 34, 33 and 27 points respectively for the 1st XV. Appreciation of Dr. Welsh's services to the club were recorded on his demitting office to allow the honour to go round and A. T. Ramsay Duncan took over the Presidency.

The new President referred to Dr. Welsh as "a name in Rugby" and that while he, Mr. Duncan, did not know Rugby as well as many others, he was at least extremely interested and would do what he could towards helping the club."

A subsequent amendment to the Constitution created the office of Honorary President, and on the proposal of J. McLaren, seconded by D. W. Mitchell, the appointment of Dr. Welsh to this office was agreed.

BELOW . . . the 1946-47 Stirling County squad under the Captaincy of J. C. Muirhead, who had an excellent first season, with skipper Muirhead top points scorer.



At this time G. Wotherspoon raised the 'old chestnut' of players being selected for the 1st XV before playing for the 2nd XV. The usual explanations, problems with late call offs and the 'horses for courses' selection policy were used by way of justification for the inevitable 'misdeeds' of the committee.

The following season George Wotherspoon took the limelight again, this time with his excellent goal kicking and scored 74 points. A 3rd XV was formed and won 4 out of 9 matches.

Petty and Peter Russell while 2nd XV stars were Ian Dewar and Wilson Simmons. The 1st XV enjoyed first class fixtures and a 61% record with visits to Kilmarnock and Aberdeen prominent as were the activities of the Entertainments Committee under Donald Cameron.

Regarding after match tea etc. it was decided not to attempt to use the Pavilion as the hospitality in the Hotel attracted visiting teams. The 'unheard of' suggestion, that a clean turnout in kit

(to page 17)



Standing:— E. Oliphant, A. N. Other, A. Christie, A. N. Other, A. Robertson, D. Stewart, R. Cumming, G. Yorston, J. Fraser, G. Imrie, F. Irvine, H. Innes, W. Yule.

Sitting: J. Bennet, M. Sharman, M. Hill, A. Imrie, E. Roy, J. Craig, W. Simmons, W. Lewis.

Kneeling: G. Barras, H. Hamilton, G. Patterson, W. Lambie, A. N. Other, J. Robertson, D. Mair, W. Allan, L. Baillie.



Back Row: H. McGoldrick, D. Scobbie, F. Gordon, J. Robertson, S. Fraser, W. Aitken.
Third Row: E. Roy, F. Parker, W. Lambie, G. Preston, D. Johnston, E. Sanderson, N. Perry, D. Irvine, K. Sinclair, J. Rankin, J. Gibson, J. McDonald, D. M. Kennedy, W. Jarvis, D. Hill.
Second Row: M. Gaynor, A. N. Other, R. Westfield, W. Miller, A. Imrie, A. Wallace, S. Moffat.
Front Row: F. Irvine, H. Hamilton, J. Kennedy, I. Goldie, G. Bryce.

was expected on match days, was endorsed by members!

George Witherspoon made a century of points in '49-'50 recording 108 in a season with a 1st XV record of 33% in a higher grade of rugby, early progress in the Kirkcaldy and Kilmarnock Sevens, a good match against touring Durham Medical School and excellent fitness training facilities at Annfield. John Muirhead's sterling service was minuted on his retirement from Secretaryship as was thanks to retiring treasurer D. W. Mitchell.

A Notice Board appeared for the first time in the Clubhouse upon the suggestion of Frank Irvine.

The scoring power of Andy Robertson emerged in '50-'51 and that exceptional County Cricketer George Yorton became a 2nd XV stalwart. It was also agreed to adopt the design for the Club blazer put forward by James Allan.

Captain David Stewart reported on a below average playing season in April 1952, with George Witherspoon re-emerging on the scoring front and the progress of a speedy winger, Willie Lambie being noted.

Advancement of the club was the subject of lively debate and it was decided to pay due regard to the potential nursery at the school in Spittal Street especially when George Sinclair and Dawson Lambert were guiding its growth so well there. The club seven-

a-side tournament was proving to be very popular and Jimmy McLaren's industry in this connection was commended.

Loss of players through injury contributed to an undistinguished 1952-53 season when the survival of the club financially was largely due to the efforts of the Entertainment's Committee led by playing skipper David Stewart. Their contribution of £150 allowed the loss for the year to be shown as only £22-3s-1d. David Hill's convenership of the Entertainment's Committee the following year brought in £240 which helped to wipe out previous losses and put the club in credit by £31-9s-1d. On the field the 1st XV's 41% record was aided by 'big' Sandy Richardson's 'round the corner' method of goal kicking and skipper Easton Roy's uncompromising scrummaging between excursions around the paddock like an enraged rhino.

The end of the '54-'55 season marked the retirement of President A. T. Ramsay Duncan after 7 years in office and also L. Hunter after 9 years performing various secretarial duties for County.

Both were accorded votes of thanks for their unstinting efforts. In their last season as office bearers they had supported Malcolm Hill's team to a 42% record with Andy Robertson taking the scoring honours.

The sudden death of President R. F. W. Blakey during his first year in the

chair was a tragic loss but it heralded the return of the former Bridge of Allan captain Eric Pullar and the start of a remarkable 14 year Presidency by him.

Frank Irvine maintained the splendid standards of fund raising in his four years convening Entertainments up to 1958 and Bert Cumming's precise secretarial work lasted for five concentrated years until 1959.

The dedicated Hugh Hamilton did not find victories easy to come by when leading the '55-'56 side to 29%, but he predicted brighter prospects if young players like Jim Rankin and Willie Miller fulfilled their early promise.

Willie Lambie took the side through the 50% barrier to 64% in '56-'57 for only the third time in 10 years. Kerr Sinclair scored 36 points including four drop goals and Willie Miller had 9 tries.

That year, the issue of using a white ball was debated as were the economics and practicality of attempting Pavilion amenity improvement. Mr. Pullar's remarks at the '57 A.G.M. were most perceptive particularly when he stressed "the importance of regular training sessions, and the value of tactics which a wise captain should adopt to suit the conditions and to exploit opposition weaknesses."

This counsel did not fall on deaf ears as the three seasons which followed produced quality rugby and results

(To page 19)

which have only been equalled (or perhaps nearly equalled?) in recent years.

In '57-'58 Mike Weld's enthusiasm was rewarded with a 68% return. Willie Miller scored 12 tries in his 93 points and Bannockburn's answer to the "Townies." — the gangling 18 year old Jim Rankin — collected 9 tries. Vic Colquitt weighed in with another 30 points.

Plumbing bills for burst pipes and increased catering costs strained 'the economy' and an £80 loss was shown for the year but Jimmy Robertson's efforts for fund raising allowed Ian Goldie to report a healthier current balance of £90 and substantial reserves by April 1960.

Jimmy worked on solidly in various club committees for twelve years and his role as a key man behind the scenes was invaluable.

During this period Bill Gibbon handed over the control of financial matters after a Herculean nine years period of service. Duncan Kennedy, in dual secretarial roles began to exert his influence on fixtures and Willie Miller's generalship edged the 1st XV onto the rugby map in '58-'59 with a 78% season. Willie picked up 110 points himself including 10 tries. Russell Gibbon scored many elegant tries in his 16 touch downs and the bustling Andy Imrie nipped over 9 times.

Season 1959-60 was exceptional. The 1st XV's 100% record under Willie Miller was a tremendous boost to morale and it may well be the case that the club will 'never see the likes again'!

The team photograph hangs in a place of honour in the club lounge and an occasional reverent glance there is the duty of every true 'County man'! Leading scorers were the skipper with 74 points, W. Aitken (65), the spring heeled decathlete George McLachlan (39), the opportunist Noel Perry (32), the stream-lined Russell Gibbon (29) and sprinter Jim McDonald (21).

The possibility of merging with the County Cricket Club to the mutual benefit of each was explored but the necessary number of pitches and showering facilities were not available at Williamfield at that time, so progress was sought concerning a longer lease at Strathallan Park and the building of a Sprays' House there. Lease up to 1966 was secured and the washing facilities completed, but water pressure continued to be a problem.

The inimitable Bill Allan had the unenviable job of leading the side in 'the follow that' season and his merry band came up with 52% which would be a 'bare pass' in schoolteacher Bill's assessment. Injuries to key players had much to do with the drop in attainment. Not even the massive 2nd row of McNair and Allan could joke, or jolt opponents into defeat every week.

Ian Goldie retired as Treasurer and Duncan Kennedy transferred all his attention for the next seven seasons to fixture arrangements and selection.



Standing:— W. McLaren, T. Cullen, D. Pope, D. Scobbie, I. Mailer, T. Howie, M. Weld, D. Ball, D. Cannon, E. Sanderson, M. Frost, F. Spence, F. Gordon, W. Miller, E. Roy, W. Hart, W. Lawton.

Sitting:— A. Paterson, P. Gibbon, A. N. Other, T. Jenkins, A. Wallace, D. Johnston, J. Bremner, E. MacRae, W. Imrie, J. Bain.

Willie Miller brought his proven expertise in banking to reveal new possibilities of financial growth in club affairs and Bill Stevenson, applied himself with indefatigable enthusiasm to the tasks of Club Secretary.

Great efforts were made to attract more youth membership but with few schools introducing the rugby code, the plans did not bear much fruit at that stage.

However Match Secretary Fred Parker was able to report a 75% increase in the four XV's matches but only a 26% success rate for the 1st XV under John Kennedy's resolute captaincy.

Long standing and loyal supporter Mr. Cheetham died during the '62-'63 season and final reference to this fine gentleman and his press coverage of club affairs appears in the minutes of the 1963 A.G.M.

This winter was particularly severe, with one lay off lasting eight weeks, but results were a little better overall during Mike Weld's comeback captaincy. Mike continued for the next season but neither he nor the next skipper Alex. Wallace had much to boast about in terms of results.

It is a pity that such durable servants as Mike and 'Ikes' did not have more outstanding individuals with them to tip the balance in their favour. But there were some real characters amongst them — Doc Johnston — Eric Sanderson.

Sid Fowler was an exceptionally good player who came to the fore during this lean spell but he quite correctly chose senior rugby at Dunfermline and achieved many North-Midlands representative honours, Scottish trials, and a Scotland B cap v France, with that club.

Fixtures in the 60's were against many top class sides and this may have had much to do with poor records obtained by the 1st XV. Typical 'big' games were against Ayr, Kilmarnock, Leith, Howe, Jordanhill, Clarkston, Gordonians, Kirkcaldy, Marr, Greenock W., Trinity, Ardrossan, Madras.

Through '65-'69 the club's activities were dominated by thoughts of better facilities and Secretary McLaren did not spare himself in further unsuccessful negotiations with the County Cricket Club, obtaining a 20 year lease for Bridgehaugh from 1.8.67 and masterminding the building of a suitable clubhouse which was opened in April 1969 by Dr. Welsh.

Ted Huggan, Bob Burnam, 'Ikes' Wallace and Peter Gibbon rallied the players through these problem packed days while Ian Cuthbertson's broad shoulders carried the match organisation with confidence and improvisational skill. Neil Malcolm watched over monetary complexities into the seventies and then handed over the books into Jim Richardson's capable care.

Ted Huggan's team won the Gowan's Cup in 1966 but for signs of improvement in the normal fixture list members had to wait for the injection of new talent during Peter Gibbon's two year reign.

First ever club coach, Ralph McNaught worked to good effect here and attention to basic skills as well as improving tactical awareness proved worthwhile in the long term.

Davy Pope did much important management work after the illness and death of Jimmy McLaren at the turn of the decade and was always prepared to roll up his sleeves and get 'stuck in' to the less attractive chores.

Jimmy Wishart looked after fixtures but also played a major part in the practical aspects of the development.

In June 1969 Dr. Welsh presented the "Welsh Cup" to be competed for at the Annual Seven-a-side Tournament and the following year the Club started the new decade with a new constitution and a new President Mr. Archie Walls.

Retiring President Eric Pullar was made an Honorary Member of the club and since then his name has been linked with those of Michael Kelly, Duncan Kennedy and Archie Walls in holding the highest honour the club can bestow.