



STIRLING COUNTY R.F.C.

75th ANNIVERSARY

FOREWORD

Early last year, the Management Committee was reminded that the club was approaching a landmark in its history — the 75th Anniversary of its admission to full membership of the Scottish Rugby Union in 1904.

Tentative suggestions were made then about ways of celebrating this milestone. Special matches were mooted but ultimately the idea of a Festival Week of Rugby gained unanimous approval. In addition, the publication of a souvenir magazine was deemed appropriate, not to

document in full the Club's considerable history, but rather to record some moments in the past which might allow all those interested in rugby to sample the progress of the game in the Stirling area over the years.

Inevitably my research, collection and subsequent choice of material will omit someone's treasured memory of events and personalities. If this is so, — I apologise for it, but hope nonetheless that the glimpses provided may be enjoyed by many.

My thanks must be accorded to Jerry Yates, Jim McKeown and Hugh McKinlay of the Stirling Observer (Scottish and Universal Newspapers Ltd) for providing professional assistance towards the production of this magazine and to all who contributed information for possible inclusion.

JOHN HENDERSON, Vice-President
(Playing and Administration) March 1980



Congratulations . . .

It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to wish you continued success in providing club rugby in Stirling. Those who have played at Williamfield, or Bridge of Allan or Bridgehaugh will remember the fine spirit in which their matches were played and the hospitality so generously provided thereafter.

JAMES ROSS
President of the S.R.U.



Still Growing . . .

I am grateful for the invitation to contribute an opening article in this brochure, and do so with great pleasure.

The material presented represents many weeks of enthusiastic research, selection and preparation by my Vice-President (Playing and Administration) John Henderson and we are indebted to him for his industry and the quality of his 'snapshots' in word and picture. Reading through the pages will be a sentimental journey and makes us aware of the wonderful heritage that has passed into our care.

Since becoming President I have endeavoured to follow my successful predecessors' leadership policy of delegated management in running a club which is effectively a full time business concern. We are all amateurs but it is fortunate that over the years so many have used their professional expertise to benefit the club.

I am proud to lead and to have been associated with the efforts of so many dedicated servants, too many to list here, and particularly so in this our 75th Anniversary season.

May we all look back with gratitude but also forward with hopes of further rises in playing status and the quality of fellowship in competition which is at the heart of the great game of rugby.

JACK McANDREW
Stirling County President



Rugby in Stirling . . . The Early Days

From 'A Hundred Years of Sport,' Stirling Observer (Century Number 1836-1936)

By the late WILLIAM LITTLE



Pictured above, a copy of a real collector's item . . . a team picture of Stirling High School F.P. which is dated back to 1906.

Although there was a form of Hand Ba' played in the King's Park, Stirling, in the 'sixties, similar to that yet played on ceremonial occasions once a year in some parts of the Borders, rugby was first played in Stirling in the early 'seventies. Fundamentally the game was played then in the same way as the present-day code with the object of either side being to touch down the ball over their opponents' goal-line and then attempt to kick a goal between the uprights above the cross bar, but there were many differences, in this the early stages of the evolution of the game. As to-day, teams were generally fifteen-a-side, but the placings and formations were entirely different.

There were two full-backs, two half-backs, two quarters or quarter-backs (who worked the scrums) and nine forwards, which is entirely different from the present formation of one full-back, four three-quarters, two half-backs and eight forwards. There was no such thing then as an echelon formation of the back division when a scrum was formed, the two quarters feeding the scrum from either side and the two half-backs waiting on the ball coming back, to make a dash through.

When a scrum was formed there was no regular three-two-three formation or anything in the nature of a definite "hooker" for the forwards. Points were not awarded for tries or goals. A goal or a dropped goal for one side would wipe out any number of tries scored for the other side.

The pioneer clubs of the game in the Stirling District were the Stirling County Club and the Stirling Town Club. Both these clubs were founded about the year 1870 and both played in the King's Park. It proved a very popular game when first mooted, and it is within living recollection the large crowds which gathered in the Park to watch the new game. The "County" XV. were among the first flight of clubs in Scotland and had fixtures with Glasgow Academicals, Watsonians and other early clubs of the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow.

For their important games they co-opted the strongest players in the "Town" XV, and also enlisted the help, at times, of Alloa players. They had about eight or nine matches in a season and they were always played on Saturday afternoons. The "Town" Club played chiefly against clubs from Tillinoultry, Alloa and Dollar. Mr. A. M. Kidston, who afterwards became the Provost of Helensburgh, had much to do with the fostering of the game in Stirling.

Bankers, lawyers, and other professional men took up the game very keenly, and it was exceptionally popular in the late 'seventies. Among those who played for the "County" team then were the four brothers Murrie, whose father was a bank agent in Stirling, Carnegie Alexander, the late Lord Younger, Marshall M. F. Reid, a Scottish international player, P. Battison, Cyril Camp-

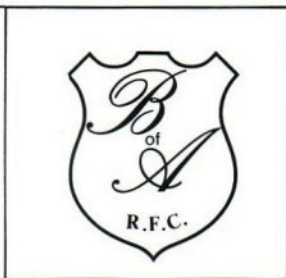
bell, the two brothers Moore, Tommy and Johnny, who were very similar in appearance and often mystified opponents as they both played half-back.

The dress of the players sounds amusing to persons accustomed to watching the trim rig-out of the modern ball game players. Then some wore knicker-bockers, some long trousers tucked into their stockings, with leather belts round their waists. Side-whiskers and long moustaches were all the rage at that time and we are also told that little bow ties were worn. Interest lapsed in the game after its initial novelty had worn off and the "County" and "Town" teams went out of existence about 1882 to 1883. Several years later, some other clubs, including the Osborne Club, were formed and the game was still continued in the Stirling area.

The Stirling High School Former Pupils' team was formed about this period, and although they had a cessation of activities for a time they are now the only town club playing regularly with the exception, of course, of the present pupils' team at the High School who also play on the same ground at Williamfield. The "F.P.s" do not play in the unofficial club championship of Scotland and come under the category of minor clubs. We cannot trace if at any time any of their players or former players played for Scotland but they have had a representative in an International Trial Match.



**The End of
an Era . . .**



**. . . and The Birth
of 'County'**

At a meeting held in the Golden Lion Hotel, Stirling, on the 16th May, 1946, members of Bridge of Allan R.F.C. joined forces with members of Stirling High School F.P. R.F.C. under the old name 'Stirling County' R.F.C.

As early as May, 1933 the Bridge of Allan Captain, Mr. E. G. Pullar said at their Annual General Meeting that he had a proposal to put of a very revolutionary character, namely that they should amalgamate with Stirling High School F.P.'s.

Three points in its favour were — removal of need of two clubs within three miles of each other to compete for members — participation might then be raised to run three fifteens whilst at present difficulties in running a second fifteen prevented some good players obtaining a regular game — both clubs would never reach a really high standard of play unless they combined.

Difficulties envisaged were — ground to be used, financial arrangements and the rivalry between the two clubs — but Mr. Pullar felt these could be overcome.

Mr. J. F. Jones further suggested that Grangemouth might also be included and a Stirling County team formed. After discussion it was decided to approach the F.P.'s on the subject to see if a joint committee could be appointed to go into the matter.

Then again on the 16th November, 1945, Bridge of Allan held a business meeting following the club's resuscitation after the Second World War and Mr. L. L. Huss from the chair put forward the

proposal that the club should amalgamate with Stirling High School F.P.'s because "if the two clubs continued to function there would be a scarcity of players and there would be no chance of improvement in the class of rugby."

Vice-captain, Mr. H. C. Kay stated that the majority of Bridge of Allan players were former pupils of the High School and that they were all of the opinion that the clubs should amalgamate. The Secretary, Mr. L. Hunter, was instructed to communicate with Mr. L. C. Middleton, President of the F.P. Club to find his views on the subject.

On the 18th April, 1946, Mr. Hunter attended a meeting of the F.P. Club at their invitation and encouraging prospects for the merger resulted. Within a month the marriage of interests was completed, including Strathallan Park as the playing venue.

As the F.P.'s had been full members of the then Scottish Football Union from 1904, arrangements for the change of name to Stirling County R.F.C. were made with the S.R.U. and full membership continued.

This historic move seemed as sensible then as it does today when one strong club tends to serve players best both on and off the field.

However the years of rivalry and local derbies must not be forgotten. Reference to fixtures, characters who emerged and some team photographs should lead to provocative reminiscence and understandable nostalgia.

Stirling H.S.F.P. in 1923



Back Row: D. M. Morton, A. Crawford, G. Drummond, L. Hunter, A. Mitchell, G. H. Currie, W. Black.
Second Row: A. Johnstone, G. T. Whurr, J. Allison, A. J. McDermont, H. M. Frater, J. Ferguson, J. Somerville, G. D. McLaren, N. L. Whyte.

Stirling H.S.F.P.

— after the Great War

Stirling High School F.P.'s resumed play in the 1920-21 season winning 12, losing 4 with 3 drawn, scoring 227 pts. with 58 conceded. A. J. Macnab had to leave for the Sudan after only a few games leaving J. W. Primrose as captain.

A. J. McDermont was his deputy and J. Allison became Secretary/Treasurer. In all, 40 players turned out for the 1st XV and the 2nd XV played 6 games.

There was no rugby available for the boys at school in Spittal Street but many attended F.P. training and with their encouragement a school team started in 1921-22.

At the '21 A.G.M. pleasure was expressed at the success of the club, the recovery from the sickness of war and the re-appearance of much of the pre-war vitality!

A typical 1st XV selection in the '21-22 season was, Ferguson, McDonald, Allison, McDermont, Rees, A. Grierson, J. Grierson, Cullen, Primrose, Harris, Morrison, Willison, Whurr, Willis and Todd.

In describing a 10-0 win over Rosyth on November 12, the F.P. correspondent wrote under the banner headline, PLANT'S BRILLIANT GOAL — "The field was open to his right and he commenced a solo run which evaded numerous attempts to bring him down and never halted until he had scored. He crowned a brilliant run with a brilliant goal kick." The visitors' star winger also got the 'treatment.' "It looked on more than one occasion like all Lombard Street to a China Orange that he would get through and he certainly had hard luck."

In the Spring of '22, the F.P.'s held Watsonians A2 despite the lack of camp followers! — "Though snow and rain had been heavy in the morning, it cleared for the game, but owing to the counter-attraction at Forthbank where King's Park were playing Stenhousemuir, the rugby supporters at Williamfield were small in number."

Socially this season finished with a dance in the Lesser Albert Hall to Steel's Orchestra of Larbert. The blue and white decorations in the ballroom were donated by Graham & Morton Ltd. and later a game between the 1st XV and W. S. Lawson's 'Has Beens' was organised. A fast, friendly game was predicted but the details of the actual outcome not reported.

New names appearing in October, 1922 were Sergeant Henderson, C. Brodie, J. B. Allan, A. Frater, H. Weld, E. Stewart, W. Denholm, and R. Drescher.

The New Year game against Kirkcaldy resulted in a sixth win for the F.P.'s out of the seven matches played since the first in 1910. The 1912 match was drawn. 1923 skipper A. J. McDermont played in both the '23 and '10 encounters and also scored a try in that first game.

In 1923-24 the F.P.'s arranged 18 matches under the presidency of J. T. Allison, as follows:— Dunfermline, Glasgow Tech. College, Rosyth, Bearsden, Edinburgh University A2, Cambuslang, Stewart's College F.P. 'A', Uddingston, Glasgow Accies 'A', Kelyinside Accies 'A', Kirkcaldy, West of Scotland 2, Hillhead 2.

In April, while reporting 9 won, 9 lost, 159 pts for and 115 against, the secretary J. Forgan intimated that the S.R.U. had ruled that the close season would not start until May 1st and made a plea for more to exploit the light evenings for practices — "to get the sort of training which corresponds to cricket net practice by improving individual kicking, fielding and dribbling skills to stand us in good stead for the 1924-25 season." (Quite a contrast to today's emphasis on team and unit skills training sessions under floodlights twice weekly!)

However in this first extended season other games were played including one against an Edinburgh select when High School boy Lewis

Middleton made his debut at scrum-half alongside guest, Scottish International J. M. Bannerman in the pack.

As it happened 1924-25 was not a happy season with only 7 won, 13 lost, 124 pts for and 219 against.

Loss of players like Jack Ferguson (to Rangoon), A. Grierson and J. Somerville (to London), W. Black (retiral), G. T. Whurr (to Cardiff) contributed to the poor form including a first defeat by Kirkcaldy in the New Year game.

Some new names cropped up among 1st XV appearances (with number in brackets): L. Whyte (20), J. Allison (18), A. Johnston (18), G. McLaren (18), G. T. Drummond (18), A. Somerville (17), H. Somerville (17), D. R. Morton (17), H. M. Frater (16), G. Hodge (14), R. C. Ormiston (13), D. T. P. Crawford (13), W. J. R. Crawford (13).

'Bridge' Born . . .

The following reports appeared in the Bridge of Allan Notes of the Stirling Journal in September 1925:— RUGBY CLUB FORMED — "At a well attended meeting held in St. Saviour's Church Hall on Thursday, Sept. 3rd, 1925, it was decided to proceed with the formation of a Rugby Club. Mr. N. J. McCulloch presided and after the object of the meeting had been fully explained, office-bearers were elected as follows:—

President:— Major F. J. Pullar. Vice-Presidents:— Rev. Canon McCulloch, Rev. Ian McDonald, Dr. W. H. Welsh, Dr. A. Morrison, Mr. J. Mackay MacGregor, Mr. R. Nelson, Mr. Jas. Rodgers, Secretary:— Mr. Eric Hayes, Treasurer:— Mr. R. G. Spittal, Captain:— Mr. N. J. McCulloch, Vice-Capt.:— Mr. R. Turnbull, Selection Committee:— Capt., Vice-Capt., Secy., Treasurer, Messrs. R. Haldane and W. Stirling.

Subscriptions were fixed at 5/- for honorary members and 3/- for playing members."

A further report stated: "On the 26th Sept., Bridge of Allan R.F.C. played their opening match when they tried conclusions with Q.V.S., at Dunblane. They gave a remarkably good account of themselves and were only beaten by a try and a penalty to nil.

It was undoubtedly a very creditable beginning for the Bridge side and with further practice and more cohesion among the forwards and threes coupled with closer packing in the scrum, even better results may yet be recorded."

Bridge of Allan R.F.C. 1927-28

Back Row: A. Gonnella, C. W. Spence, J. J. Walker, D. Macfarlane, E. Hays, R. Scott, A. Brown, N. J. H. MacCulloch.

2nd Row: J. N. K. Henderson, L. Hunter, D. J. Munro (Capt.), R. F. Turnbull, D. H. Harrison.

Front row: W. B. Stirling, J. F. Topping, J. Davie.



Years of Rivalry . . .

At the F.P.'s A.G.M. a fortnight after the formation of Bridge of Allan R.F.C. in September 1925, the first 'warning shots' precluding twenty-one years of intense but friendly conflict, rang out. Prospects did not look bright for the F.P.'s through possible loss of players and the open nature of the new club, so the following rallying cry went out. . .

"Nevertheless it behoves no one to lose hope and all should start training at once. Remember the club is not entirely confined to past and present pupils of the High School of Stirling as the Constitution allows for other gentlemen to be elected to the club by vote of members."

The good natured innuendo of this published statement, and its timing, is as evident today as it must have been then, and so the local competition began.

Two penalties by J. Allison and a try from D. R. Morton were enough for the F.P.'s to defeat the 'Bridge' at the Games Park on Oct. 10th, 1925. For this first local derby, F.P.'s were without H. G. Somerville and J. L. Wilson, while R. C. Ormiston unexpectedly appeared amongst the maroon shirted Bridge of

Allan side! The teams for this historic match were:—

F.P.'s — A. W. Somerville, Wallace, Morton, Johnston, E. L. Wilson, Allison, A. McLaren, Whurr, Hodge, Frater, A. M. Crawford, Drummond, Hunter, D. Somerville, Nisbet.

Bridge of Allan — Turnbull, Hays, Koch, Grant, A. N. Other, Chalmers, Rogerson, Haldane, Munro, Spittal, Ormiston, Meiklejohn, Watt, McLean, McIntyre.

On a lighter note, press comments on the F.P. 2nd XV match v Uddingston 2 later in October went as follows — "Both teams took the field with only 11 men . . . if one be an Eric Liddell or an Ian S. 'Flying Scotsman' Smith playing against a Blind Asylum XV it may be possible to get tries by running across and even backwards to get clear of opponents.

But even then, if the thing be persisted in, some of the blind are sure to get in the way—and even if they do not, the energy expended is really too much to make it worthwhile!"

In the return Derby at Williamfield in March 1926, the 'Bridge' were crushed

by 44-3. "Bridge" secretary Eric Hayes reported 5 wins and 6 defeats at their 1st A.G.M. in April 1926 and predicted a fuller fixture card for the next season, while the F.P.'s reported 12 wins, 8 defeats, 255 pts for with 163 against for the same period.

The end of the 1926-27 season saw the departure South of J. Allison, an F.P.'s stalwart for seven years, having served as Secretary for three years, Vice-Captain for one year and Captain for three years.

He scored 53 points in his last season when the F.P.'s won 9, lost 6 and drew 1. Frankie Palmer showed great promise during the year especially with dribbling. The B. of A. record of 10 wins and 8 defeats was achieved against the following sides:— Kelvinside Ac. (2), Dalziel (1), Hillhead (3), Uddingston (2), Westhall (1), Hyndland (1), Blairhall (2), Clackmannan (2), Glasgow Varsity C, Allan Glens (3) and S.H.S.F.P.'s (1), but did not include a win over their local rivals.

(to page 13)

(From page 11)

G. T. Whurr captained the F.P.'s in the 1927-28 season as did D. J. Munro for Bridge of Allan. The versatile J. N. K. Henderson achieved a record brace of tries in each of three successive games for the "Bridge" in helping them to record 10 wins, and 1 draw in 18 games. Other prominent players were J. J. Walker, E. Hayes and R. F. Turnbull.

A first victory for Bridge of Allan over the F.P.'s by 3-0 was recorded on Nov. 3rd, 1928. However the pushover try which decided matters was hotly disputed. Before bad weather disrupted play from January until April former F.P. scrum half G. McLaren (London Scottish) brought honour to the district by playing well in both international trials. His partner in the Rest was Harry Lind of Dunfermline.

The return F.P.-'Bridge' match was in April, and the F.P.'s got revenge 4-3 from a drop goal (4) from Crawford to a try by W. B. Stirling (3). The 1929-30 season saw two other close encounters between the rivals — a draw 0-0 in November and 6-4 win for the F.P.'s in the Spring.

Under the captaincy of Frankie Palmer the F.P.'s succumbed to the 'Bridge' 3-0 in an extraordinary match on November 22nd, 1930. The F.P.'s correspondent wrote, "The game was played in blizzard conditions and the players showed considerable hardness to turn out at all."

Bridge of Allan Captain Eric Pullar reported on the "most successful season so far" at the A.G.M. in May, 1932. Of the 26 games played, 21 were won, 2 drawn and 3 lost. Points for were 346 and against 106 while J. J. Walker was highest scorer with 80 points.

For the F.P.'s L. C. Middleton was top scorer with 39 points in a poor season of 9 wins and 11 defeats. Middleton's points included 10 conversions, 5 penalties and one drop goal.

Regarding ground conditions at Bridge of Allan, Major Frank Pullar (President) suggested that "they should arrange for the pitch to be cut by horse mower as this would give it a fine sole of turf for the next season."

The price of aftermatch teas was reduced from one shilling to ninepence and it was agreed that the match collection box would be taken round the field instead of expecting donations from merely placing it at the gate.

Mr. Lamont was presented with the 1931-32 photograph in recognition of his services as referee and the committee was charged with the responsibility of negotiating lease renewal for their ground which was a prime target for building development.

J. Learmonth's flashes of brilliance and J. Ferguson's kicking brought each 46 and 86 points out of 218 for the F.P.'s in '32-33 when a better record of 15 wins from 21 games was noted.

Improvement, which included a draw

and single point win over the 'Bridge,' was due in particular to the form displayed by G. T. Whurr on his return to the area and J. T. Horsburgh but also to the general team play of the likes of R. A. R. Grant, W. R. Muirhead, W. J. Calder, T. C. MacLay, J. C. Grant, J. H. H. Carruthers, W. B. Kemp, J. Muirhead and A. H. Brown.

The services of J. N. Dandie as referee were much appreciated. However the issue of amalgamation, raised by 'Bridge' skipper Eric Pullar at their A.G.M., was rejected by the F.P.'s. Mr. Pullar's team had 13 wins, 4 draws and 6 defeats with Jim Walker again top scorer with 35 out of the 172 points scored. Staunch defence kept the points against total for 'Bridge' to 129 and for F.P.'s to 97.

Feuing was a major problem for Bridge of Allan at this time and Major Frank Pullar stated that he had interviewed the Agents and had pointed out that they would ruin one of the best playing fields in the country if feuing was continued. Unfortunately he was unable to get any satisfaction — not even a clause in the lease guaranteeing not to feu beyond the strip facing Keir Street. However a further five year lease was agreed with an allowance on rent for any ground lost to property development.

On the field 'Bridge' had an 85% record in 26 matches, 236 for and 103 against and Jim Walker again on top with 68 points. The F.P.'s managed only 28% in 23 games with J. Muirhead ever present in a side which included W. A. Milne, Herbert Hill and three McLarens. Two defeats by B. of A. added to the season's miseries.

Jim Walker sustained a double fracture of a leg on the 8th September, 1934 and his absence was reflected in a season's record of 12 defeats in 25 games for 'Bridge' and although no record of F.P.'s fortunes under J. Ferguson can be traced, they dealt with the question of amalgamation in peremptory fashion. "No one was desirous of discussing the proposal so it was accordingly dropped."

John Muirhead captained the Williamfield side through '35-36 in fixtures which included Bellahouston Accies, Alloa, Grangemouth, Uddingston, Bearsden, Craigielea, 'Bridge', United Colleges, Lenzie, Ardrossan, Cartha, Kirkcaldy, Edinburgh Wanderers (2), Allan Glen's (2), and Albert Road Accies.

In his last year as B. of A. Captain, Eric Pullar reported a 52% record and dropping standards. The re-irial of Major Frank Pullar, the appointment of Dr. W. H. Welsh to the presidency and Robin Macfarlane replacing skipper Eric Pullar marked an historic A.G.M. for the 'Bridge' in May 1936. Deep appreciation of the Major's services and generosity was minuted as was great pleasure at now having such a famous International rugby player (8 caps 1900-02) at the helm. Eric Pullar's five years playing leadership had much to do with the success of the club during the period



G. B. Horsburgh

1931-36 and sincere thanks were accorded to him for his excellent work.

R. A. R. Grant led the F.P.'s in '36-37. Archie Walls appeared for them that year but was on the losing end of a 10 pts-8 score line against the 'Bridge' where Campbell Hope's great running was a feature.

Fewer than usual matches were played overall and Robin Macfarlane was disappointed with only a 50% record in his first season as skipper. Treasurer F. R. Stevenson drew attention to the fact that Stanley School had taken over the lease of the field and that the Rugby Club had sub-let it from them at a rental of £20 p.a.

Discussions on the Gymnasium and the Pavilion (which now belonged wholly to the Rugby Club because of the Cricket Club's disbandment) were about to start with the school at that time.

Running to the outbreak of war, Bridge ascendancy was maintained with a 3-0 win in March, 1938, an 18-3 win in October and victory by 3-0 in March 1939. However the F.P.'s had consolation over these three lean years when enjoying the reflected glory of George Horsburgh's nine caps whilst a member of the London Scottish club. Dr. W. H. Welsh was appointed President of the Scottish Rugby Union for 1938-39.

Before the union of clubs in 1946, reviving interest and negotiating purchase of equipment was quite a struggle for the 'Bridge'.

Whilst the procuring of a pitch from Strathallan Games Committee was achieved at a rental of £10 p.a., a gift of goal posts received from Airthrey Estate Ltd., and Mr. Scott worked wonders on the pitch and post construction, the 'Bridge' minutes show interesting restrictions to progress — "A permit was received for one rugby ball costing 43/- and an allocation of clothing coupons was granted by the Rugby Union," which allowed purchase of nine new jerseys to be held as club property and issued to players each week!