



DIAMOND GEEZERS by Ian Whittaker

(to the tune of, and with apologies to - 'Oh father! oh father! I have to confess etc)

AEC Southall, like most works' sports teams,
relied on their 'ringers' to supplement their means,
but when these players sought to make their views known, -
"You can play, but not vote," to the door they were shown.

So, after the meeting in a nearby pub,
these players resolved to form their own club,
Gordon Hallows it was, who first voiced the idea,
as his words then sank in, well it all became clear.

A club for the players, democratic and equal,
founded Jan 1950, you all know the sequel,
the five other founders, well these are their names; -
Fred Hallows of course, the most famous of famed.

Hardworking sec, skip and chairman, recent president,
the most hallowed of Hallows, a Grasshopper gent,
Eric Davies, first captain, a real tough-guy prop,
Glyn Jones, dapper Welshman, fit, strong and non-stop.

Ray Robins, vice-captain, a good all-round chap
and the hooker, 'Bunny' Walker, always wore a scrum cap.
So thanks to the founders, ahead of their time,
the first **'DIAMOND GEEZERS'** in a very long line.

The captains that followed, I'll chuck out some names,
Welsh fly-half, Roy Hopkins, Jim and Ted Keohane,
and Jim who I've played with, a twinkling scrum-half,
matched his skills in the clubhouse, where his wit makes you laugh!

Peter Lewis, Graham Mitchell, Noel Quinlan, Dave Lane,
and this was the era of more famous names.
Jack Neate and John Crotty, Bert Visor, Brian Strong,
with forwards like these, how could you go wrong?

'Strongie' (Val's brother), a huge loose-head prop,
forced his way in at Richmond where he stayed at the top,
Bert Visor, a flanker who was always on time,
always on hand for a pass near their line!

Jack Neate and John Crotty, though by then past their prime,
would upset the Singles' locks time after time,
left 'Big Jim' and 'Wally', both seething with rage,

embarrassed to be bested by men twice their age!

And talking of lock-forwards left seething with rage,
reminds me of that time on a northern stage,
we went up to Yorkshire, Easter '67,
it wasn't what you'd call a tour made in heaven!

For we only had fourteen fit men on that tour,
our hotel, 'The Troutbeck' on the edge of the moor,
but though this was Ilkley, unlike in t' song,
Tour rules applied, so we kept our 'ats on.

At 'Brodlians' our 'Pine-tree' fell foul of the ref,
it wasn't his fault, as you can all guess,
Jack gave a false name, and the ref he saw red,
'Is that one 'L' or two, Mr Bollocks?' he said.

And the irony of this little scene?
Not only had this decimated our team,
But it wasn't Jack, it was Brian Strong
Who first swore at the ref, but the ref got it wrong!

We won the Business House sevens in Sep '66,
Next April to Lazards we made the short trip,
To play in Meads sevens with the same team,
We'd got to the final, we really were keen.

Tom Turnbull was entered in their kicking match
between semi and final we all stood to watch,
Tom won, then we lost, but here is the rub,
Tom told us where we went wrong back in the pub!

We're now well into the era of games in the park,
Of hot baths in the shed of the Arms of Dysart.
Glyn Williams was Captain for four famous years,
Built a side based on training, blood, sweat and tears.

The Colts' side had been running since 1960
And as players came through, all had to agree,
That this was the future for all rugby clubs,
Especially for those that were based in a pub!

The following are some who came through from the Colts
Alan Aldridge, fast winger, nicknamed 'Nuts and Bolts',
Neil Matheson, Dick Mabey, Bill Sandford, Bob Boyd,
'Nadger' Harries and 'Saullie', both half backs with poise.

Terry Cox and Bill Attree, 'Wally' and 'Whit',
Ian Richards and Phil Ive, Middlesex Colts skips.
Phil Welch, Malcolm Saul, county half backs,
Frank and Bob Taylor, whose friends call him 'Taff'

Then Ali and 'Bavey', Ken Norman, Nick Dance,
'Blod' worked on them all, he left nothing to chance,
Insisted all players should train through the years,

The results? They got better more players appeared.

We had Kiwis and Aussies, South Africans too,
Irish priests, Scots and Welshmen completed the brew,
And as we collected this cosmopolitan band,
Dick Briscoe brought hard men from nearer to hand.

A group of strong forwards from his judo club,
They's not played before, but they soon got the bug,
The first of these was Big Dave Delderfield
A fearsome sod who would never yield

'Big Doris of Roxeth', his strange nickname,
a sobriquet chosen by Jim Keohane,
then Pete Hobson, blond-bearded, built like a Norse god,
they brought him along, introduced him to 'Blod'.

And though Pete had the pace and the skills for back row,
'Blod' saw his physique, said "To prop you must go,"
so Pete got stuck-in, no protest did he voice,
he became a fine prop - well it was Hobson's choice!

Then Pete and Dave brought along a young bloke
they'd met at their club, a mighty strong oak,
and as they sought more exercise for him,
brought him to the Dysart, said "This is 'Big Jim!'"

And when the first team required a lock,
Jim Keohane said "You must pick this rock,
he doesn't yet know, much about the game,
but he's mighty effective all the same!"

"Runs straight up-field with big blokes hanging on,
but they cannot stop him, he's just like King Kong!"
and when in Paris, Jim became deranged,
well you've seen the film when King Kong breaks the chains!

Bob Chapman, a policeman, on occasions not jolly,
on the boat back from Rouen a great 'Buddy Holly';
and Karl Nicholls a wing, not a forward at all,
"I'll score de try if you gib me de ball!"

We're now well into the era of the big Easter tour,
with rugby now played on four days out of four,
two teams on each match day, colts' games in between
and sevens on Sunday, by God we were keen!

We won the sevens at Swanage, where both of our teams
reached the final in fine style, both played like a dream;
and while on the stage, collecting the crown,
Dave Walker called "Dead ants!" and both teams went down.

Then at Fleetwood and Brixham in consecutive years
we took more sevens trophies to Grasshopper cheers,
and who were the stars of the show once again?

the 'Fijian' internationals on top of their game!

Now some questions I'd like to pose at this time,
just odd things that spring into this brain of mine,
how did Barry McGevor, tall, pacey and lean,
play back row at Bodmin and still stay so clean?

And what was the reason, for it worries me still,
why at Torquay we all pushed the coach up the hill?
and if Adrian's stride pattern was so much on song,
why by Monday at Yeovil had it all gone so wrong?

And in Blackpool, of those who were having such fun,
who escorted the exotic dancers home?
and of those players who were there on that night,
who was it that set, their house alight?

And what of Roy Grace when he went on tour?
he said nothing to us, you couldn't be sure
he was going, well nor could his wife,
went out for a paper, came back four days later,
and in between had the time of his life!

And on tour in Rouen, who forgot to pay,
when they left in a hurry and the door went astray?
who crept under the table, alarmed at the rumpus?
who tried to escape? who took off their jumpers?

Who first said Will Arther had done enough?
a strong loose-head prop who was very tough,
great mauler, great spoiler, vast bastard you see?
and a past master at, self-publicity!

My room-mate at Scarborough was 'Mum's Little Soldier',
'Wiggie', 'Hornie' and Reilly were doing rooms over,
we knew they were coming, we were well prepared,
with a room-mate like Gary its them should be scared!

They burst in, "Who's that," I said (voice full of doom),
as they left, they said " Sorry 'Whit' wrong choice of room!"
and in the morning, who got the blame? -
not them but the hockey team, oh what a shame!

'Geezer' next night was late in you see,
been out on a 'bender' until half past three,
but without warning I woke him early next morning,
"Here Gary, a 'Penguin' and a nice cup o' tea!"

And who can remember that night in Cologne,
when the barmaid got angry and had quite a moan?
"Zie roussen!" she said to 'Big Jim' and me,
and I'd had a few, so I had to agree.

But Jim walked out and then round the corner,
went in the next pub, up to bar then to order,

confusing, same décor', same barmaid, same frown,
"How come you own all the pubs in this town?"

And who was in Holland when 'The Beast' got his name?
rampaging up-field he just couldn't be tamed,
blood and Dutchmen went flying, some ended-up crying
"Steady on Dave," I said, "someone will be maimed."

"What do you mean 'Whit', it's legal, I'm doing my best,
I can't help it if these blokes all bounce off my chest,
it's not my fault, if they come to harm,"
but you should have seen the bruise on his fore-arm!

The captains that spanned the years of these tours?
'Whit' did two years, then 'Taff' did one more,
and how many times, for it seemed like a score,
did Taylor get picked up on the way to a tour?

And who can remember on that Rouen trip,
his best mates all hid and gave him the slip?
and his arrival in Paris, now what do you think,
was it 'mal de mer', or was it the drink?

Then Phil Ive who was never affected by beer,
but on cider at Crewkerne went numb up to here!
a rattling good tackler at No 8 or flanker,
and a left hook to send you asleep for a year!

Phil Welch followed on and John Mill came along,
Phil said "Put him straight in, let's not wait too long,
he sounds like a bloke who really can play,"
but Dai Pring had him first, well he would have his way!

Phil moved to fly half when Birtles appeared,
and he played outside him where he stayed through the years
of the captains that followed - Ali, then 'Whit' again,
and after Birtles, of course, tours would not be the same.

And why was it that Terry was always so keen
for us to go naked, what did it all mean?
for you'd understand the reason for a nude half hour,
if he had been endowed like Blackpool Tower!

And Graham Roskilly, my brother-in-law,
when he came on at Richmond, was he quite sure
of the calls for the lineout, were they still the same?
well they were to Graham, "we'll have Rayners Lane!"

The next week we played against Stevenage,
the ref abandoned the game, just walked off the pitch,
"Are we all banned, what does it all mean?"
the answer came through, "That's right, the whole team.

John Ralph put our case against RFU,
Bob Weighill got stroppy, he took a dim view,

"it takes two to tango, there's only one way it can go,"
but the 'old farts' at Twickers had to change their own rule!

Reilly got fed up with Ali on field
he would rant, so he dropped him for Whit who then went to the panto,
and as this had earned the 'dropped bollock' award,
at the end of the season he fell on his sword!

After Reilly's first go, we had 'Scrapper' Horne,
who played every match with his cartilage torn,
and his mate Mike Wildridge thought it was a cheek,
that he got the 'Grasshopper' week after week!

Then Matt Gilmore who could play at flanker or hooker,
showed his best form at Scarborough where he pulled a good looker!
Paul Read was our skip, last year at Pyrene,
he was as good a prop as we ever had seen.

He died while at training, left the whole club in tears,
the space he left vacant put us back twenty years,
and when the leagues started at McFarlane Lane,
Reilly needed a tight head, well that was quite plain.

But when games kicked-off, we soon got on course,
got off to a flyer in London Two North,
we went up to Norwich on a cold winter's day,
they thought they were high class, they thought they could play.

Their prop was talking to Ali, as we walked in,
"he looks old, where does he play, he's a bit small and thin."
"He's our tight head, he's forty, there's four the same age."
Ali told him, then he told us, he had set the stage.

And this RAF prop wished he'd listened to his mother,
for she surely had said, "Don't judge a book by its cover."
He soon learned his folly, in the bar wasn't jolly,
worked over good and proper by our 'Buddy Holly!'

Matt Gilmore, now hooker, had another go,
then Bob Orish', now eight, did two years in a row;
my room-mate Gary Parnham - 91 to 93,
a **DIAMOND GEEZER**, I know all will agree.

Charlie Smith, we all know as a centre with class,
great timer of tackles, great timer of pass,
but his best position, where he played his best role?
at Sutton-Coldfield in a game of 'colt bowls'!

'Tricky Dickie', side-stepper with twinkling feet,
and Paul Murphy whose side-step was more of a treat
to those of a Maori sidestep persuasion,
he'd cut back to the forwards on most occasions!

Julian Edwards, a flanker who came from Marlow,
Jules Robinson another hard-tackling back row;

I don't remember the reason why they shared a season,
but together again in this song they can go!

Adrian Norris, an eight with pace, power and biff,
could play prop or play centre and taught at Whitgift,
would play after Christmas, score tries from long-distance,
a punishing hand-off was his special gift!

Paul Jeal as we know, a scrum-half with class,
who was the first one to whom Ali would pass,
"If you're No 8, then I'll be your best mate,"
be it Ali or Bob, he was right up their arse!

Dave Curry from Rosslyn, another back row,
who would bite the bullet, to prop he could go,
his wife a netball good-looker, her brother 'Quins' hooker,
and him a dead ringer, for Russell Crowe!

Number eights Gareth Eynon and Matt Nemeth,
are both high-class forwards they're among the best
that we've seen at in the lineout, well Gareth and Matt,
one leaps like a salmon, one springs like a cat!

And Steve Reffould, you know, his forte is tackling,
he's the bloke that you need when some centre needs rattling;
Russell Cowley, who's strong, hard-grafting and keen,
well you always need one ginger bloke in a team!

Jeremy Easton, our captain, what can I say of him,
a full-back who tackles, with vigour and vim,
he's currently on, his second go,
has been top try-scorer two years in a row.

And now I've completed my romp down the years,
a poem that's caused me some blood, sweat and tears;
and I've already told yer of 'Mum's Little Soldier',
he was one **DIAMOND GEEZER** in a very long line.

And to those that I've failed to mention this time,
you're all **DIAMOND GEEZERS** right here in my mind,
to leave you unmentioned, was not my intention,
it's just that I couldn't think up a rhyme!

Yes, you're all **DIAMOND GEEZERS**, broad-shouldered crowd pleasers,
you're all **DIAMOND GEEZERS** right here in my mind!

Ian Whittaker, 8th January 2010