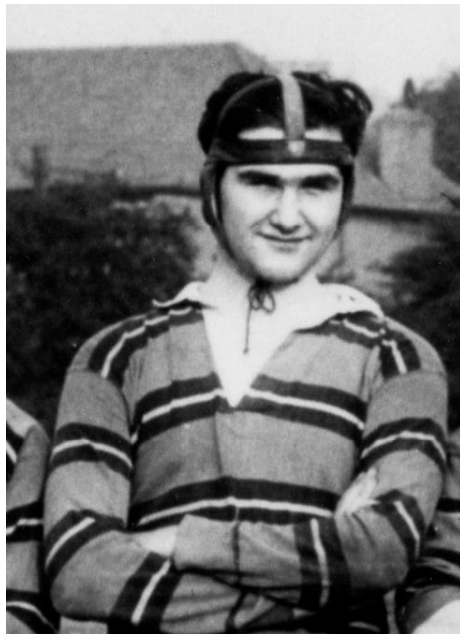




## Memories of Grasshoppers' Early Days

by Richard Perou



I was a school leaver who joined the Grasshoppers in 1955 with my friends. We were about 17 years old. I was recruited by a player, a Pole left behind after the war. I was a second row forward all my playing days, a member from 1955 until I left the area in 1962. This time covered the period from Gunnersbury Park until the Dysart Arms. I once came across the club while it was exiled at a company sports club. I had been playing for a Tonbridge side somewhere out in West London and we were making our way back home. Incidentally the Club owes me for a T-shirt that I paid for then and never got!

In those days the club had no home save the pub on Ealing Broadway where we ate, drank and sang after our game at Gunnersbury Park. Our habit then was to sit in a circle after eating and drink and sing.

In later years the great advance is when we took over a defunct cricket club next to the Brent in Greenford. The building was refurbished with a roman bath, showers and an immense hot water storage tank. Nothing else was needed. No

sewage, no heating. The toilets were primitive Elsans and had to be emptied. No volunteers, so pretty infrequently. The lack of heating led to the demise of the piano one Christmas Eve. It made a lovely blaze. The beer was too cold to drink and so was mulled with a red hot poker. To avoid a cold bath on Saturday, and to avoid Elsan duty, I made it my duty to get the boiler going on Friday night as I lived in the 'White Hart' on the other side of the river and would cycle across. We were tough in those days.

As to memories of others the chief one is of Bunny Walker performing his celebrated glass eating performance whilst on tour down at Tunbridge Wells at the old Tonbridge RFC. Of my age group Brian Neiner, Jack Wilcox, John Wilson, Alan Hodie are a few of the names but it was a long time ago and I have never been good at names.

There are other memories, principally of an Easter tour to High Rocks, Tunbridge Wells. Perhaps another time.

**Richard Perou, 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2021**

*'Fortis in Animo'*