



Grasshoppers RFC in the Swinging Sixties

By Glyn Williams

Firstly, can I say how nice it is to have the opportunity to pen a few words about my time as a Grasshopper Captain and 'Chairman'. Although it is now some fifty years since my first game with the 'Hoppers the memories of those happy times are still very vivid. Of course, fifty years ago things were very different. The 'Hoppers played its Rugby in Richmond Park and our 'Clubhouse' was a Garage at the Dysart Arms Pub, courtesy of the Pub Landlord, Jim Tyrrell.

Players' were heavily involved (perhaps more so than today) with the 'backroom' tasks of keeping the Club running. Of course we had our Committee and Club Officers' but all Players' had to muck-in with tasks such as cleaning the Baths, Dressing-Rooms and washing-up to name but a few. In addition, before starting the game, we had to walk half a mile to the pitch, erect the goalposts / corner flags and do the reverse at the end of the game. 'First-Aid' support consisted of a wet sponge and half a bucket of cold water and on a good day we sometimes had the company of a St. John's Ambulance man.

We always had a Referee for the first XV, but 'junior' Clubs had to provide Referees for lower teams. With the invaluable assistance of Roy and Dick Hopkins and D. Coleman-Smith we managed well but on odd occasions a team Captain would have to Referee and his team sometimes played a man short. Happily this was rare. You can imagine that by the time the team Captains' had ensured all the above tasks had been completed, they were often mentally 'shot' and hadn't even started to play the game.

Pitches had to be marked out weekly and in this respect we were very lucky because Glyn Jones (Hoppers Founder Member) was a Groundsman at the Guinness Company. Glyn would motor from Ealing to Richmond every Friday to mark out three pitches. What a great servant to the Club.

The 'Hoppers were very well organised and from Fred Hallows down we had people who were so totally committed and hard working, e.g. Don Robinson, Roy Hopkins, John Crotty, Glyn Jones, Noel Quinlan, Jimmy Keohane, Bill Sandford / Dave Golton, Doug Parker / John Waters, and last but by no means least Jack Neate and his 'Bagman' Bob Edmunds. These people were often Players, Captains and Committee men, all at the same time. Tasks included Finance, Fixtures, Recruitment, 'Press' releases, Refereeing, marking out Pitches and Boiler / Dressing room Maintenance.

So, how does all this compare with to-day? Well of course the game has changed so much. There were no Leagues, no Substitutes and we paid for and laundered all our own Kit. The fact we had to do so much in addition to playing was in many ways an asset, a 'Bonding' agent. Today, the Game is faster, Players' fitter and facilities better, but the core values of Playing Rugby are still very much apparent. i.e. Commitment to one's Club, the comradeship and a sense of belonging to something worthwhile.

One huge difference is the scale of things. Whilst in my time we ran four teams and a Colts side our overheads were minimal. Today, the cost of running and organising the present Clubhouse, meeting H & S requirements and maintaining player numbers to meet RFU demands must be truly daunting. Remarkably, many of the people who were around in my time are still serving the Club with distinction

to this very day. Many of these have been Club Captains' along the way with Peter Baveystock going from Colt to President in 45 years. (Well Peter was a Prop forward). Well done Peter - Congratulations.

For my part, when I visit the 'Hoppers and see how it's grown and see my name on the Boards I feel immensely proud to have made a contribution to a great Rugby Club. So, congratulations to the Grasshoppers, Staff and Members' on this 60th Anniversary. In addition, let us also remember with great affection those Members' who are sadly no longer with us. They too would be justly proud today.

Dysart Reflections 2020

The Dysart years are to date just one of the five major stepping stones in the Clubs incredible development and success over the past 70 years to date. During those years much was achieved, many friends were made. Whilst many of those are now gone, happily, many are still with us. Perhaps then, it is nice to reflect on an era that maintained the freedom of Spirit perceived by the Founder Members', moving the Club forward so as to precipitate even greater development.

The Dysart years produced much innovation, increase in Membership, and success on the field of play. Aggressive Recruitment policies were hugely successful, enabling a truly exceptional Colts Team to be 'floated', many of those Colts even today serving the Club with distinction. To name a few i.e. Peter Baveystock, Nick Dance, Ian Whittaker, Malcolm Wallace, Bill Sandford, Dick Maybey, Roger Norton, Bob & Frank Taylor, Tony & Malcolm Saull, Ali Damant, Neil Matheson, Alan Harries, Ian Richards, Dick Saunders, Alan Aldridge, Geoff Luckman Phil Ive, Phil Welch, Ken Norman, Phil Parker, Terry Cox, Graham Shears (Apologies for anyone missed out)

We also saw in the influx of our first 'Overseas' contingent. Kiwis, the Gurr Brothers, Cliff Vernal, Roger Parlane, Shepherd, John Warren, Bruce Goodall. Aussie Ron Clarke, & South African 'Rufus' Added to these our own 'Home grown' Players' none more successful in every sense than the Judo men. i.e. Dave Delderfield, Pete Hobson, Jim O'Neil, Karl Nicholls, Graham Shears, Brian Strong, Dick Brisco, and Terry Boyd. What fantastic service they have given the club over so many years.

Playing wise we had constant representation for the Middlesex County Club side. Taffy Taylor, Ian Richards and yours truly, playing for the team many times, all of us going with the Team to Europe. Ian and myself also played for the County Club side against the top American 'New York Old Blues'

Many Grasshoppers of those years went on to play at an even higher level and take high office i.e. Brian Strong, Pete Hobson and Taffy Taylor to Richmond First XV, Geoff Luckman & yours truly as a half back pair for Wasps First XV, and yours truly again for Buckinghamshire. Taffy Taylor became Captain of Basingstoke RFC, Ian Cameron Webb Reading First XV & Chairman, and Phil Ive for Tenby First XV. Yep! all started as DYSART GRASSHOPPERS

Perhaps the jewel in the Crown, although again not directly from Grasshoppers, JONATHAN DANCE. Jon played for the Hoppers for several years before moving (Home location) to Bracknell RFC. Jon was a huge influence at Bracknell and subsequently became President of Bracknell RFC, President of Berkshire and then President of the RFU - WOW!!!

Yes, at the time he was a Bracknell man, but he too started off as a GRASSHOPPER!

Let us not forget also, Pete Baveystock, Nick Dance and Ian Whittaker. What stalwarts they have been. Peter with Middlesex RFU, Nick & Ian with their unstinting Playing & Admin work over 55 years. All came to the Hoppers as Colts during the Dysart years. Also note the devoted service by Dave Delderfield and Pete Hobson with their work as Groundsman and Coaching respectively, Again, Dysart Stalwarts.

Honours Ties. In John Crotty's Memoirs, John has already eloquently outlined the unselfish work done by so many 'unsung' people at the Dysart. As such, and in order to recognise all those invaluable folk, be they Players or otherwise, John, when Chairman, introduced the Honours Tie.

Hammersmith Borough. Hoppers represented the Borough in a European Sports Festival in Belgium. We played two games and Roydon Hopkins had the honour of Refereeing both games.

Epilogue.

The Dysart years. A very difficult but never the less wonderful Era, a progressive stepping stone, and a hugely successful playing time for the Hoppers. Four Teams plus a Colts and the end result for the first XV playing record reading 'PLAYED 31 won 29, lost one, drawn one'.

Not bad for a PUB Team as many snobbish people called us.

In the end we were just too big for the Dysart location. Whilst the Club has much for which to thank Landlord Jim Tyrell, in the end Jim had to ask us to leave because our presence, when taking all into consideration, was adversely affecting his business.

The Grasshoppers then moved on to the PYRENE Facility and for the first time had its very own Pitches and secure Changing Rooms etc. Another stepping stone was about to begin, another hugely successful era in the Club's development.

Yes, it has been a long and eventful journey to get to the Club's present majestic location and Facilities.

Many throughout have worked tirelessly to get the Club there. God Bless them all for their efforts. I am sure I speak for everyone from those Dysart years when I say that we are / were proud to have done our bit along the way, and having done so, treasure the memories and Friends of that time.

Glyndwr Williams

September 2020

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