



## The Dysart Days from my Memory by John Crotty

I expect to get many things wrong and anyone can put me right, memory plays tricks on you and sometimes the good is the bad and the bad is the good, anyway here goes.

I joined in 1953 straight from the army where I had spent two years from the age of 21 doing two years national service. I went back to my old employer and a lorry driver called Charlie Collins was working there and told me about the Grasshoppers club, so I went along. Charlie was only with us a few years and he went off with his wife June to become a pub landlord.

Roy Hopkins was captain and Charlie had said so much about me having played for the army that he put me straight into the team, a total disaster for the team and me, I lasted all of three minutes, having got out of the army in June. I had a great time doing nothing for 3 months and Roy swore I would never play for the club again.

I remember playing in Gunnersbury park and if the fifteen guys who had joined before you did, turned up they played and you watched, the club slowly grew and I got the odd game and we were playing all over the place where we could get a game, and all the travel was on bus and trains.

If I am right, we then got our own ground at the bottom of Long lane, Greenford, down the side of the White Hart pub where Bill Hattersly a very good second row lived who went on to join Harrow and later became a bearded fisherman on the Isle of Wight. Jimmy and Ted lived just up the road.

Anyway, I was working on dismantling the Festival of Britain Exhibition along the South Bank and a very large galvanised hot water cylinder was being scrapped and with the help of Don Robinson who got a low loader truck to take this to Long Lane where Eric Davis, Don and a few others built that bath!!!, I supplied an old gas boiler and an overhead tank and put together a hot water system, a bit basic but it worked. Don got all the building stuff; Eric was the governor and built the bath with quite a few helpers and I got the pipe and fittings.

It didn't last, it was broken into nearly every night and they nicked our beer, I must confess that I suggested putting a low voltage electric system on the windows and doors but someone sensible talked to the police and gave me a warning about doing such a thing. Can't remember who found the Dysart but that was next, so???? Don supplied the low loader again, we had to dig it out because the place was waterlogged and off it went to the Dysart where it was rebuilt all over again by the same group of players, somebody made it look good by bringing in a mirror to hang on the wall (must have been a three quarter) and remember Jim the landlord used to garage his car in the changing room during the week

I think the hero of all this was Bob Edmunds who used to light the boiler very early every Saturday to heat the water, light the taper, turn on the gas, stand well back and hope and pray. Later, even now I shudder at that boiler which would certainly have got me for manslaughter after Corgi came into being, of which I became a member. Don Robinson supplied the goal post in the form of very tall

scaffold poles with new ones each year and he always had a hell of a job getting permission to take a commercial lorry into the park through the Park Management, not like today.

Glyn Jones was the grounds man at the Guinness factory sports ground Park Royal and he was the guy who marked out our pitches, always done and perfectly so, he was also a very good front row man, bloody fit. Don Robinson, who was our secretary for the first 13 years was also a great servant to the club but seems to be totally forgotten, the Gentle Giant.

When we had guys playing for Middlesex and getting all the glory it was guys like Glyn, Don and Bob Edmunds who did so much for the club and would never play in the first team regularly that I thought of the Honours Tie, we had quite a few guys like them which without them the club wouldn't work and I think it was a small way to say thanks to them. You might like to know it was eight years before I got one.

Well I remember the married via singles which became a bit of a blood bath in the forwards and we gave them up in the end, Jack against big Jim and a few 'nasty' singles in the front row made for my type of game.

My wars at the Dysart with Jim's wife are the stuff of legend and always about those bloody sandwiches, I can't think of the name she had for me as I went in to complain yet again but we had to get along somehow.

Somewhere about here I ran the first of two sausage & mash Stag nights at the Star & Garter Pub on the corner of Kew Bridge (this side) its flats now, three comedians and three strippers, raised quite a bit of money for the Club. I seem to remember another at the Conquest Club later on but not by me.

I shall finish here because it seems that the history of the club apart from the playing side is being written out, so just what I remember from my early years at the club, I played for about 25 years with quite a run in the first team and enjoyed playing in all the other teams, just the great time I had and the life time friends Tinnie and I made. Always a Grasshopper.

### **John Crotty, 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2020**

I have at last had a word with Rosemary to express my sympathy over the passing of Roy. He and I go back quite a long way. When we first met in 1953, he was the Club Captain and it was my first game for the club. I had been talked up by Charlie Collins, we worked together, as an army player, I was but only for my unit and I lasted all of 2 minutes. Roy was disgusted and said I would never play for the club again. I got demobbed from the army in June and had a good old time up until November and that first game.

This is how we started and went on through our time at Grasshoppers, always disagreeing about everything, we worked together for a while but nothing changed and so it ended. The last lunch Glyn set up the other side of Beaconsfield was the last time I saw Roy and Rosemary and we argued over the best way back to Greenford, via the motor way or the A road; he won.

He was a good rugby player and good at golf, a passionate Welsh man, and a very nice man who I am glad to have known. Rest in peace old son.

### **John Crotty, 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2021**

*Fortis in animo*