

Persevere

1921

2021

Leith Rugby

100 YEARS

LARFC 1921/22

CENTENARY BALL

Saturday November 27

Kimpton Charlotte Square Hotel

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS



6.30pm

Arrival & Welcome

7.15pm

Master of Ceremonies Entry

7.25pm

President's Toast

7.30pm

Dinner

8.55pm

Leith Rugby @ 100

9pm

Auction & Raffle

9.10pm

Captain's Thanks

9.15pm

Centurion's Presentation

9.30pm

Get This Party Started

10pm - 1am

Live Music

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

Hello and welcome to Leith Rugby's Centenary Ball.



It is fabulous to see so many of you turn out for one of the biggest nights in the club's history. I am surprised that some of the current players have managed to scrub up so well for such a fancy setting, and even more surprised that some of the former players didn't get nosebleeds when travelling out of EH6.

This night has been 100 years in the making and is an impressive milestone that not all rugby clubs reach. There have been many ups in Leith Rugby Club's history and some periods which were a little more difficult. Tonight is an opportunity to celebrate all of these times, with a thought for all those who have gone before us, helping make Leith Rugby Club what it is today.

In amongst all of the food and the dancing, I would like to draw your attention to a couple of things happening tonight. First is the raffle and auction in aid of a couple of great causes. The first of which should need no introduction and is our Leith Hawks youth section. Second is in support of Flora's fight against neuroblastoma, Flora is former player Jamie Gentleman's daughter who was diagnosed with Stage 4 High Risk Neuroblastoma, funds raised go to finding a cure and funding treatments for children with this disease.

There is also a merchandise stall here with some of the examples of our centenary merchandise. From commemorative bricks that will cement your place in Leith Rugby's history to woolly hats that will keep you warm on the touch lines. Simply use the sign up sheets to indicate what you would like and one of the team will be incontact to process your order.



Finally I would like to say thank you to the team who have pulled this event together, it has been no mean feat in organising us all to get here tonight. I hope you have a great night and hope to see you all on the dancefloor.

Jim Smith, Club President

CAPTAIN'S WELCOME

A very warm welcome to every Leither along tonight.



It's fantastic to see you all along this evening, at the Kimpton, Charlotte Square Hotel for the Leith Rugby Centenary Ball. It promises to be a very special night of food, music, dancing and more than a little reminiscing at the bar.

Tonight, members, players, supporters and friends of the club, old and new, come together to celebrate 100 years of a truly extraordinary rugby club. We come together to celebrate the achievements of the last 100 years and look forward to our club's ambitious future.

This great club was formed in 1921 following a grant from Leith Acadmicals F.P association and it's fitting that, a century later, the club finds itself calling Leith Academy home after many happy years at Hawkhill.

Ours is a club that is constantly evolving and growing with our centenary year being no exception. With 3XVs competing in leagues for the first time in many years, 2 home pitches allowing our teams to compete side by side and an ever expanding youth section, Leith Hawks, it really is an exciting time for the future of Leith Rugby.

I'd like to thank everyone who has helped organise, run and make our season of celebration a reality, especially our centenary committee. It's been a truly monumental effort by all involved and you've done an amazing job!

I hope every Leither has a great night tonight and enjoys celebrating 100 years of this amazing club that I am privileged to captain as we move into our next 100 years!!

Neil Paterson, Club Captain



TONIGHT'S MENU

Starter

Carrot & Red Lentil Soup

Main Course

Roasted corn fed chicken supreme, colcannon potato, roasted carrots, tarragon and Dijon cream Sauce

Dessert

Salted Caramel Cheesecake, popcorn, toffee

Vegetarian/ other dietary requirement options also available

CENTENARY JERSEY NOW AVAILABLE

£48



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NO ORDINARY LEITHER #1

Heard the one about the Leither teaching the kiwis to play rugby?

Okay, so George "Kitch" Christie emerged from Leith Academy and went on to coach the Springboks to the 1995 Rugby World Cup in South Africa and without detracting from such a monumental feat that was really his home - school days excepted. So, setting Kitch's Academy link apart has there ever been a Leither with a more exalted coaching journey than Dennis Bowes?

What's more it is one that continues upwards to this day in his adopted New Zealand. A Leither, from Pirniefield, teaching the kiwis about rugby? Wow.

What, though, were the circumstances that took "our Dennis" from playing junior cricket on the Links (more of which later) to the International Rugby Academies' advanced coaching programme rubbing shoulders with the likes of Eddie Jones and Steve Hansen via a lengthy spell at Quarryholes where he aspired to captain the Edinburgh District Union XV as well as our club? The main catalyst was a spell in Ireland, as Dennis explains:



"I was offered a good junior construction management role in Dublin and, as usually happens, found a local rugby scene and one that happened to be similar to Edinburgh. I was asked to play for the Barnhill club and despite having retired in Scotland due to a neck injury was too dumb to listen to my body! So, I played a few games of All Ireland rugby then found my way into coaching with (ex-All Black) Mike Brewer who was in Ireland at the time.'

"At some point I was interviewed for a head of rugby role at the National University of Ireland with a high performance rugby programme run in conjunction with the Irish Rugby Union. This allowed me to mix with top coaches, among them Declan Kidney, Michael Cheika, Connor O'Shea, Alan Gaffney, Andre Bell and Joe Schmidt. Joe was a big help telling me 'find your own style, study the game, then share and learn with like-minded people'.

"This led to the International Rugby Academy in Palmerston North where I learned from 6.30am until 9pm with a dozen ex-All Blacks and coaches from around the Southern Hemisphere. Talk about in at the deep end as all the players involved were in the advanced category some of whom went on to play Super Rugby and secure pro contracts abroad. My coaching group included Murray Mexted, Ofisa Tonu'u, Blair Larsen and the late Australian coach, Greg Smith. On the back of this I was invited to shadow Manu Samoa for a match against Ireland at the Aviva Stadium and in 2015 I was invited

back for a three week pro coaches programme in New Zealand under Eddie Jones and Steve Hansen. This took things to a new level and Eddie Jones was great value, funny but ultra planned and prepared. He was coaching Japan at the time and had just recovered from a stroke. I found him to be very driven which is what you'd expect from someone regarded as a coach burner who wears out those who are not of a similarly organised mindset. We got on. Eddie seemed to appreciate my open, up-front approach and we shared a few wines and stories. His advice to me? 'You must have a point of difference to be successful and then lots of luck (because) the further you go the less jobs there are and the more cut throat it becomes; everybody wants your job!'

"It was on Christmas Day, 2015, that my family and I decided to emigrate to New Zealand and soon after I was asked to help out at a rugby club in the North Harbour Union after making some new friends whilst fishing! Straightaway I was struck by how differently clubs are run with nothing like Leith's social scene and loyalty. Most players believe they are heading for Super Rugby or the All Blacks and if not selected invariably try their luck elsewhere.

"In 2017 I was asked to coach premier club Massey linking up again with Ofisa Tonu'u and on the back of this assist the North Harbour wider and B team in the National Provincial Championship. This involved a fringe pro group with eyes on contracts and in 2019 our coaching team were nominated for an award in North Harbour after finishing runners-up in the domestic competition. Currently I have a role in the Auckland premier competition with Wairamata and enjoy being assistant coach for the Province's under-21s who include the son of that great flanker, Michael Jones. I see his dad a fair bit.



"All of this I owe in no small measure to Leith Rugby – my rugby journey, my worth ethic and how to make friendships. This all helps when I am asked 'how does a Scot coach kiwis? Well, they challenge you on the detail so much that you must know your stuff and your delivery must be on point.

"I get challenged EVERY time I coach in New Zealand but I just back my knowledge and walk towards it. Sometimes I've to pinch myself, however, in recalling how this journey started not just on Leith Links – but at the Franklin cricket club. It was 1985, I was 16-years-old. A cricket cross-over game was arranged between the cricket and rugby clubs and in the bar afterwards Stuart Clarke asked, In his inimitable up front style, why I wasn't playing rugby and that effectively threw down a challenge that was accepted.

"At my first training session I met the great Donald Bremner and off I went to train with the under-18s where friendships were forged that would be lifelong – Eddie Watt, Brian Archer, Bruce Ward, Graham Welsh, Keith Aitchison etc. One match in that colts season stood out – Peebles and the 'battle of Quarryholes'

"It ended with us being hauled before Frank Sibbald, club president, who told us our fighting had been disgrace but, truth be told, the dressing down helped to bond us! After another season in the under-18s I progressed to the 2nds and I loved playing alongside Ian and Gordon McGee, Dougie Main, Peter Welsh, Ian and Colin Polson, Bob Kerr, Kenny Law, Mikey Welsh, Phil Boubert, John McMaster, John Murphy, Keith Scotland and Pete Mitchell. It was a great start to senior rugby and under coaches Jim Smith and Brian Samson training was awesome.

"One player I could never upstage was my second cousin Peter Welsh who beat me to so much open play in the back row and I just couldn't see how this old guy could do it. I swallowed my pride and asked Peter whose simple answer was 'cheat, go where the ball is going to be, run positives lines to the ball, not go the long way round.' Game changer and I was soon in the 1st XV which besides a higher standard of rugby got me free socks!

"There was Tam Welsh, Mikey Welsh, John Welsh, Neil Clarke, Bruce Ward, Gordon Fuller, Craig Wishart, Jim 'Skelf' Smith and Gordon Anderson at full back. Our forwards were so awesome the wingers never got the ball but Fuller and Skelf just whinged and moaned all the time until we won. That pair drove us and in one game poorly tapped line-out possession saw Fuller volley the ball back at the pack shouting 'I don't want that shit. You f***** deal with it!'



"By this stage I had the rugby bug and big time! But in the company of the likes of Tam Bennett, Shuggie Rodden, Bob McCrodden, Stewart Copeland, Paul Wilson (Dolly), Derek Greenan, Derek Thomson and Keith Smart (who I coincidentally bumped into in Auckland not long ago, small world!) we formed the basis of a team that once went a full year unbeaten at home in league and cup even making the quarters of the national trophy where we faced a Boroughmuir side who sneaked a hard fought win with their sprinkling of internationalists.

"Against that background Edinburgh District Union came calling and I was proud to play alongside Tam Bennett, Keith Smart and Ted Hardie with Ian Jeffrey operating as assistant coach. 'Jiff' had already taken over as Leith coach using experience gained with Selkirk and the full South of Scotland team and was a good fit for us. On a personal level though I was finding the need for more work to cover bills and working nights as a doorman at Buster Brown's was hardly conducive to quality rugby training. I ran out of steam then had two seasons away with Royal High before I found myself on a Leith tour to Belgium and the Dendermonde 10-a-sides.

"I'd missed my old mates and new guys such as Richard Organ, Paul Allison, John Milton, Paul Rowling and Colin Wilson were great fun too. I even co-coached with Rob Storie who visited us in Auckland during the last Lions tour. Great memories and as I have said I owe a massive debt to Leith Rugby and maybe one day I can contribute back to those who helped guide me? Some of those – Andrew Paterson, David Ritchie, Gordon Anderson, Jim and Margaret Smith, they're all still involved today - and from across the world I can still see the club is flourishing thanks to some amazing people. Some of whom I take this opportunity to apologise to given my antics at times when I was younger. But we had fun....."

PAST PLAYERS' DAY SATURDAY DECEMBER 4



Leith Rugby
v
Hawick Linden
2pm



NO ORDINARY LEITHER #2

Heard the one about the Leith banned from ever setting foot in a rugby union club again?

When it comes to asking any Leith rugby player, past or present, to “show us your medals” not many could emulate George Kennedy when he produces a couple from Stirling County sevens and a CBE for services to the medical industry and exports. There again, George Kennedy is no ordinary Leith - and certainly not in a sporting context.

How can he be after crossing the rubicon that existed between amateur Rugby Union to join pro League side Hull Kingston Rovers in the 1960s?

Now 81-years-old, George, born and raised in Duke Street, was happy to discuss a remarkable rugby life and what shone through was his love of the blue and white jersey as he easily reeled off the Leith side that reached three Stirling County sevens finals, winning two, before his decision to, er, “go north” as the phrase has it.



“There was Bob Munro, Jimmy Ballantyne, Andy Alcorn, Les Scott, Rab Green, Ian Mothersole and me on the wing” recalled George, adding: “That was a very decent sevens side and another highlight for me was playing for the club in the old Murrayfield sevens when I found myself up against Wanderers’ Arthur Smith as he was about to become captain of the British and Irish Lions. An absolute hero of mine was Arthur and I was thrilled when I scored a try against him.”

Scoring tries came easily for George during his nine year Leith career from 1955-64 and he recalled notching five in a match against Jordanhill. “The following week my opposing winger was named in the Glasgow XV and I never got anywhere near the Edinburgh team sheet which was disappointing but maybe showed the way our club was regarded at that time.” One exception was the aforementioned Munro. “Bob and I did have a discussion about moving to (open club) Edinburgh Wanderers with a view to trying to get more representative recognition but couldn’t bring ourselves to leave our pals at Leith.”

Munro did make it to the Edinburgh side and George recalls: “There was a Gala prop, Tom Elliot, who told me more than once he couldn’t believe he was actually keeping Bob out of the Scotland team – he was that good, extremely mobile with an outrageous trade mark dummy.”

The decision to turn professional appears to have come out of the blue.

"My family had moved south and I was on my own in Edinburgh so when I received a call from Hull KR I thought I'd take up the offer of a trial.

"As it happened I scored a 'hat-trick' of tries and went straight into the first team but it did strike me that if I had mucked up I had burnt my bridges with Union.

"And, sure enough, a letter arrived the next week from the SRU saying that for playing for a Rugby League club I was banned from setting foot in any Rugby Union club ever again.

"Leith's next match was against Royal High; I had to watch from over a hedge!

"It was comforting that when I left Leith my teammates clubbed together and bought me a tankard."



Three seasons with Hull KR followed before a spell with Keighley and during that period George struck up a friendship with League great Clive Sullivan. "We'd train together and even cross the border to take part in the pro sprint meetings, including Powderhall, where they made me give a 20 yard start in my heat. I got through one round but no further whereas Clive was actually timed at 9.3 secs for the "100" on one occasion which was phenomenal."

It was in 2000 that peace broke out with the SRU who had banned George from both playing and supporting. "Bob Munro knew I'd had some success in business and through my company, Smiths Industries, I sponsored the annual SRU Golf Day at Dalmahoy.

"Initially few were aware of my Rugby League background but when word leaked out the SRU President spoke at the dinner after the golf to say I had been duly re-instated and was eligible to play Rugby Union for Scotland again.

"I was 60 years old at the time but it was nice to get some kind of closure on a sad episode when I'd been banned!"

George Kennedy CBE (Princes Charles made the presentation at Buckingham Palace) is more than welcome at Leith Rugby always as one of our more talented - and certainly colourful - ex-players with a tale or two to tell.

f / florasfight

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Hogmanay Party



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