

EDINBURGH NORTHERN
RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB



**E.N.R.F.C.
75TH ANNIVERSARY**

**1920 - 1995
FOREWORD**

THIS SEASON WE celebrate our 75th anniversary, and it gives me great pleasure to be the elected president at this important milestone in the history of Edinburgh Northern Rugby Football Club.

There have been many ups and downs during our long history but I am pleased to report the club continues to survive and prosper. Over the last few seasons we have been in the fortunate position of being able to field anything up to 5 teams on a Saturday- a record few, if any, teams at our level can equal. Indeed there are many senior teams who would give their right arm to have over 100 playing members.

Recent changes in the regulations of Rugby Football will put even more pressure on the smaller clubs, with the big getting bigger and the days of the small independent club becoming tougher. It will be the strong that survive the tide of mergers that is bound to occur - I strongly believe that at Northern we have the strength of spirit that will keep our club flourishing into the new millenium.

We have included in this anniversary booklet a very short chronicle of the history of our club, and just some of the many events that sum up Edinburgh Northern.

I am sure each and every one of you have your own personal favourite memories of life "In The Bunker"- these four walls could surely tell a few interesting tales!

I would like to thank the various members who have contributed to the production of this brochure, and all those involved in our 75th anniversary celebrations.

Ian Brechin
President

E.N.R.F.C. - A Brief History

1920 - 1939 T.Henderson

We make no apologies for reprinting (with some editorial changes) the following articles written for our Golden Jubilee, by the late Tom Henderson and long serving member Bernie Lodge, tributes to whom are printed later

AFTER 50 YEARS it is perhaps understandable that neither personal memory nor written record are at their best. The beginning is hazy but was undoubtedly partially or entirely the work of the Murdoch brothers, David and John. During our first season (1920-21) we played only 5 games and obtained the use of Warriston Park as our home ground. Unfortunately our tenancy was short lived. Pressure from the Education Authority was too great and we gave way to Boroughmuir School.

The first recorded A.G.M. took place at the Y.M.C.A., South St Andrew Street on 4th October 1921. The club officially gave itself a name and a constitution - Northern R.F.C. (the name Edinburgh was not added until several years later). Our title was simply derived geographically

In the early years we led a nomadic existence, moving from place to place in search of a home. We played at Canal Field, Fettes College, Murrayfield, and several other grounds until we finally settled down at Inverleith Park in 1926. Needless to say, those spartan years recognised no such thing as changing rooms and we were thankful for the trees for both shelter and privacy. Visiting teams from out of town changed at the Y.M.C.A. and travelled to Inverleith Park by tram in rugby gear - and ne'er an eyebrow was raised.

Indeed success was such that by the mid twenties we were forced to restrict admission to the club with a maximum playing membership of 20 !!!

The first club photograph was taken in 1926, and by 1928 we had added a second XV and were well on the way to completing our first decade. Recognition gradually dawned with the higher echelons and from time to time our players represented the Edinburgh and District Rugby Union.

At our AGM in March 1939 the club office bearers could not have guessed that the next season they would have a different job to do. War came, club funds were frozen and by and large junior rugby came to a halt.

EDINBURGH NORTHERN R.F.C. 1926



STANDING:

JIM BLACK, JOHN BELL, KENNY MURRAY, BOB WISHART,
JOHN MCCLELLAND, THOS. HENDERSON, CHAS. EDGAR
W HUGH DILLY, DAVID WRIGHT, BERT AYER, HARRY HOGG,
JOHN MURDOCH, DAVID MURDOCH, BILL STRANG

SEATED:

DAVID PARKER

TOMMY GRINSTEAD

AND AFTERWARDS...B.LODGE

AFTER THE WAR, a few of the pre 1939 stalwarts, notably Tom Henderson, Freddie Collins and Bob Scott (all of whom are now deceased) resurrected the Club and were ably reinforced in their efforts by several new enthusiasts, among whom were Jack Smith, Neil Mackenzie and Davie Forbes,

For several seasons the club's existence hung in the balance. There was an acute player shortage and results were poor. In addition our changing facilities were comparatively primitive. We shared the "bird cages" at Inverleith Park and every home game was followed by a walk to Glenogle Baths or, in most cases, rapid dispersal homewards.

In spite of these drawbacks, a tremendous amount of effort was put in by the members and we survived. The club regularly entertained English and Welsh clubs and almost invariably made the long trips south in return. Such adventure was considered quite a thing in these early post war years and often merited local press coverage. These trips, more than anything else, forged a club spirit which was undoubtedly the basis of our future expansion and gave us much badly needed publicity.

There are many more tales about our touring exploits later in this brochure, but I am sure that no member who participated in these early coach trips to Wales will ever forget the pleasures of being snowed in up on Shap Summit, stranded in Shrewsbury or sweltering in St Helens.

It was during the fifties that our fortunes began to change and the club became one of the strongest in the Edinburgh & District Rugby Union. If one player has to be singled out for his influence on the playing standards of the club in the mid-fifties, it must be Jim McLeod - scrum half "par excellence" and captain magnificent. His two seasons of captaincy were followed immediately by two more successful seasons under Marshall Bryce. It is worth noting that these four seasons 1954-58 brought us more honours and more District "caps" than all the remaining seventy-one seasons combined.

In January 1953, we said good-bye to the "bird-cages" and occupied our current premises, at the time a mere concrete shell. Due to the fact that the premises were still being held in reserve for civil defence purposes, we had to erect and dismantle our dressing rooms at the beginning and end of each season. The carpentry had to be seen to be believed !!

In 1955 the Northern "Sevens " tournament was born- just eight teams and one pitch. And the first name to be engraved on the trophy was that of Edinburgh Northern. The tournament is now one of the most popular on the calendar.

From 1958 onwards our membership increased steadily whilst our playing record declined rapidly (sounds familiar !!). We started a 3rdXV in 1957, a 4thXV in 1958, a 5thXV in 1964, and a 6thXV in 1966. We were incidentally, the first Scottish "junior" club to field regular 4th and 5th XV's.

In 1958 a party of twenty-five members boarded a Viscount aircraft bound for Dublin, en route for Dun Laoghaire, and Seapoint Rugby Club , yet another example of our groundbreaking activities.

By the early sixties we began to have doubts about the comforts of our pavilion and moves were soon afoot to improve the accommodation. Thanks to the far-seeing financial policies of our miserly treasurer, we had enough cash in the bank to do something about it and helped by a grant from the National Playing Fields Association, our pavilion was reconstructed. On 22nd March 1966, the bar was opened and we became the second Scottish "junior" club to go "wet" (Haddington pipped us). Two years later, when Drybrough & Co Ltd, with a generous loan enabled us to renovate the lounge completely, we finally threw off the mantle of austerity.

Fifty years were behind us when this article was written and another twenty five have now been added. The last paragraph read as follows.

What lies ahead? Shall we view the rugby scene with as much pleasure - or dismay- as those stalwarts of the 1920's do today ? How can we progress - as progress we must if we are to survive? We cannot even guess for the time is to far away.....How appropriate in today's situation !!!!



SEVENS

IN THE EARLY FIFTIES the only "sevens" tournament of note in the City of Edinburgh was the Murrayfield Sevens organised by the Edinburgh and District Rugby Union. Trinity Acads used to run a tournament at Bangholm but we did not compete. We did however play regularly in the Laswade 7's (held in September) and the Haddington tournament.

Until 1957 the District Union tournament was dominated by the "semi-senior" clubs - mainly Edinburgh City Police and Haddington. Northern members became a bit fed up with this state of affairs and at the half yearly general meeting in 1954 it was proposed that Edinburgh Northern should host a tournament for the "No-hoppers" who would play for a "minnows trophy". On reflection it was decided that the "minnows" tag was rather patronizing and would not go down too well, so on the 16th of April 1955 8 clubs fought for the Northern Shield for the first time. The shield was replaced by a cup in 1962. The following clubs were on duty that day : Edinburgh Northern, Corstorphine, Lismore, Moray House, Holy Cross, County Rovers (now defunct), Bruntsfield, and Kenmore (the last two clubs later combined to become Murrayfield RFC).

Appropriately enough the first name to be engraved on the trophy was Edinburgh Northern - as was the case in 1958, 1959, and 1966 - but alas not since.

In 1955 Northern was considered as one of the stronger "junior" clubs in the district , and were especially skillful exponents of "sevens". We reached the final at Murrayfield in 1956 and won the cup in 1957, beating, en route, Edinburgh City Police, who had been the winners for the previous 4 years. The triumphant seven were :- A.Bryce, J.Mcleod, I.Gordon, A.Archbold, M.Bryce, D.Dunsmore, and D.Stewart

Still on the Murrayfield sevens one particular tie is worth recalling. This was played in April 1954, whilst most of the club were on tour to Swansea to see the Wales v Scotland international which had been frozen off in February (incidentally this was the last international played in Swansea) . We left behind a token seven for Murrayfield. In an early round we played Grangemouth and after what must be a record 37 minutes the score was still nil-nil - the deadlock eventually being broken by a Grangemouth try. And all this with the temperature somewhere in the seventies.

Between 1955-1961 the sevens roll of honour read as follows :-

- 1955 — Winners Northern Sevens
- 1956 — Finalists Haddington Sevens
Finalists District Sevens
- 1957 — Winners District Sevens
Finalists Northern Sevens
Finalists Haddington Sevens
- 1958 — Winners Northern Sevens
- 1959 — Winners Northern Sevens
- 1964 — Finalists Northern Sevens
- 1965 — Finalists Northern Sevens
- 1966 — Winners Northern Sevens

Other tournaments we were regularly invited to were :- Currie, Heriot's Under 20's, and Haddington Old Crocks. In addition we have been ever presents at Penicuik (since 1965), Lismore (1974), Holy Cross (1978), and in recent years we have sent a social seven to Banff for an alcoholic weekend. Regretfully in none of these tournaments have we made our mark on the field, despite an excellent performance in the beer tent.

We have also appeared at Ross High Under 21's (1979-84), Bearsden, and Oban Lorne.

In the early 1970's the District sevens as we knew them, were supplemented by a all-embracing tournament which took in the "big guns". On one memorable day in 1976 at Raeburn Place, this led to a confrontation between Edinburgh Northern and a Boroughmuir side which consisted entirely of "International Players" of one kind or another viz: Bruce Hay, Bill Watson, C Hogg, Peter Millican (full "caps"), D.Watson, Mike Ballie (B"caps"), Norman Morrison (Schoolboy "cap")

We lost 0-46 !!! Ask Ian Brechin about it. He keeps wittering away Max Boyce fashion -

"I know because I was there"

But back to the Edinburgh Northern Sevens. By 1961 we had persuaded the Edinburgh District Council to let us have another pitch at Inverleith Park and in April 1962 we used two pitches for our tournament for the first time. The number of participating teams was therefore increased to 16. We then introduced a Plate tournament in 1972 and continued with this format for the next 13 seasons.

It was Alan Muir, who later became Club President, who first launched the idea of trying a "Hong-Kong" format for our tournament with 24 teams competing for 3 trophies.

In 1986, with some trepidation we used this format for the first time. It was an immediate success and continues to be so, but this success depends on a lot of hard work and preparation. Even now, no sooner has one tournament finished than a sub-committee is thinking ahead to the next season.

The first winners of the Northern Cup at the augmented tournament were Lismore, with the Inverleith Bowl going to Currie and the Pond Plate to Ross High.

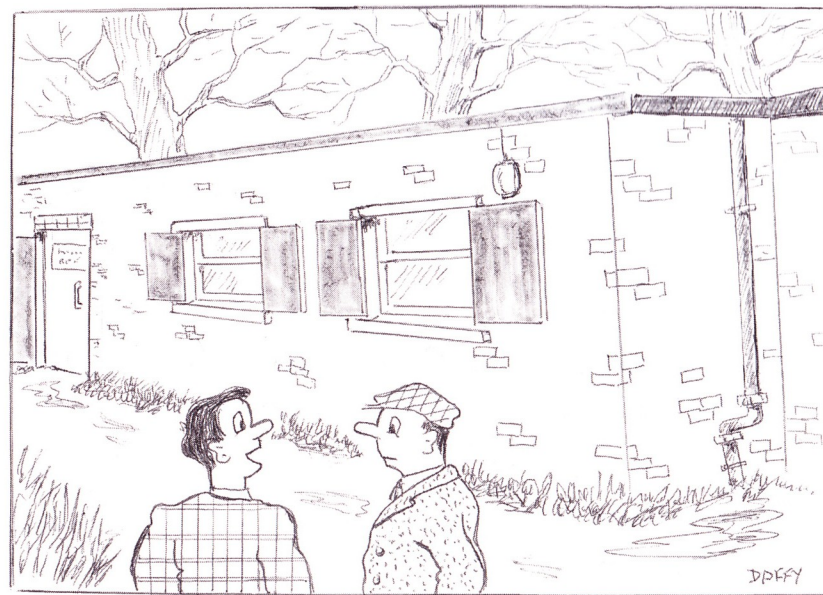
Although the 3rd Saturday in April does not give us a "clear field" (the main opposition being Hawick, Peebles, and North Berwick) Inverleith Park on that day is considered a very attractive alternative. From time to time we have induced some of the larger clubs, notably Heriots FP, Royal High, Edinburgh Acads, Edinburgh Wanderers, and Corstorphine to enter very strong teams.

Two years stand out - 1991 and 1995. In 1991 we persuaded the Stewarts Melville FP Seven who had won the 1982 Middlesex Sevens to enter our tournament almost "en bloc" - Dougie Morgan being the only absentee. Needless to say, in the guise of the Presidents V11, they won comfortably. These are the illustrious names :- Simon Scott, John Mackenzie, Douglas Wylie, Andy Blackwood, Alec Brewster, Jim Calder, and Finlay Calder.

1995 was notable for different reasons :-

Firstly the tournament was enhanced/marred by two streakers - both male from a guest touring side, St Georges Medical School London.

Secondly we had our largest crowd ever - The two facts we believe are totally unconnected !!!!



"AFTER ALL, THE S.R.U. HAD BEEN GOING FOR OVER A HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE THEY GOT MURRAYFIELD THE WAY IT IS NOW!"



"AND HERE WE HAVE A LETTER OFFERING SPONSORSHIP — FROM S.A.G.A.!"

MEMORIES OF TOM HENDERSON 1905-1989

from his son Gordon Henderson

ONE OF MY EARLIEST recollections of my father's connections with Edinburgh Northern RFC was when my mother asked me to cut yellow tape up into 3" lengths as she said she would at least like to get one flag finished for my father to take down to the Rugby club to see what they thought of it.

The year was 1947, and my father had asked my mother to make a set of touch flags, as the club was beginning to pick up again after the war. The flags were plain navy blue with the letters E N in 'Old Gold' in the centre, and my father had persuaded the Rover Scouts to make the poles and paint them.

In those days Northern held their monthly meetings in our home, at 13 Northumberland Street, and regular attenders included the late Bill Beattie, Neil Mackenzie, and a young David Forbes.

I also remember when my father used to hold parties in the house for Northern - and in those days they played games, drank tea, ate sandwiches and cakes, and still had a great time without any alcohol !!

There was no clubhouse as we know it today. Inverleith park had a large round building called the 'cages' and two narrow buildings to change in. Showers, even cold ones, had not been invented, at least not in Inverleith Park.

Initially Edinburgh Northern were allocated the last two rooms in the narrow buildings to change in. It was several years before they were promoted to the 'cages' in the round building.

After the match the players and officials went to a small tea room in Hamilton Place for tea and biscuits and then home for a hot bath.

Training nights were slightly different. After training the boys found their way up to the Rutland Hotel for a pint before going home for a bath.

I remember my father recruiting two new props, namely Charlie Drever and Russell Gillies, both now deceased. They made Norrie Baird and Walter Robb (two later props) look like 'Twiggy'

One year when Lismore held a 7's tournament at Firhill (their then home ground) father played for both the Northern seven and the County Rovers seven. County Rovers won the tournament. When the tournament was finished the teams went to the old farm 'Byre' to wash and change. There was one cold water tap running into a 60 gallon drum for 8 teams.- Those were the days !

Just after the war my father organised the club's first ever christmas dance at the Masonic Hall in Hill Street. Just Imagine, a rugby club dance without a drink ! But everyone did enjoy themselves.

On 1st April 1951, being my fathers 46th birthday, he played his last competitive game for the club, scoring two tries under the posts - unheard of for a forward in those days. However he did not hang up his boots - instead he went on to referee for several seasons.

I had the privilege of playing on two occasions with my father, once against Royal High F.P. and the other against Kenmore. I had already played at school level in the morning but as Northern were building up its 2ndXV and at the time short of players I was asked to augment the team in the afternoon. My father told my mother that I was big enough and probably stupid enough - etc,etc.

He was proud to be at the 60th anniversary of the club in 1981, as the only surviving 'founder member' and if he had lived, how proud he would have been today to see how far the club had progressed since 1921.

On a lighter note, in 1951 after Scotland had defeated Wales 19-0 I was walking with my father and his friend Jake Douglas from a club celebration at the West End Hotel, and as we turned into Queen Street, for the first time in his life, having had more than one glass of cider, my father was weaving on the road and was sick on the pavement saying " I wish this blinking pavement would stay still" That was the one and only time I saw my father in that state but the reason was a good one.

Those are the memories of my father, a good man, a family man, a business man, and an honest worker proud of his connection with Edinburgh Northern.

LEAGUE RUGBY

THE CHAMPION CLUB for Scotland was decided way back in 1866 when Edinburgh Acads claimed the honour - they didn't have many opponents ! However this was on an unofficial basis, mainly driven by newspapers, and we had to wait until the 1970's until the age dawned of S.R.U sanctioned League rugby.

Junior rugby in the East of Scotland mirrored the progress of the senior clubs. An unofficial league was first contested in season 1951-52 and this eventually led to the real thing in 1971-72.

Edinburgh Northern were in from the start but did not show up well in early seasons. They started to turn the corner in 1953-54 when fourth place was achieved with seven wins out of eleven games played. Even better results were gained the next year in Jim Mcleod's first year of captaincy. Only two league defeats in the season resulted in runners up place to Haddington. Two further very successful seasons followed for what was a vintage Northern side, before the club slid steadily down the league.

The sixties are best forgotten from a league point of view, and it came as no surprise when the club were placed in Division 2 of the new Edinburgh and District League in 1971-72. A poor performance held out little hope for the future but promotion was gained the next season with a record of P.7 W.5 L.2 leading to second place.

Northern only lasted three seasons in the first division before Willie Patterson's side were relegated in 1975-76, after winning only one league game. The slide continued until rock bottom was reached in 1977-78. The 1st XV won their first game of the season on Christmas eve, by which time all league games had been completed ! In true Northern fashion they also won on Hogmanay to ensure a happy festive season.

Steady , if unspectacular, progress was made until six wins out of seven games were recorded in Dave Hadden's first year of captaincy (1981-82). Due to league reconstruction further up the two District leagues were then amalgamated.

Much to everyone's surprise Northern proved invincible in the higher league. Despite losing three out of four warm up games, they won all league matches for our one and only ever "clean sweep". Dave Hadden led the side, who relied on the kicking of the non tackling stand-off Dave Silvester for many of their points.

However, it was their defensive record which in reality led to success - double figures were only conceded in one game.

The vital match of the season was fittingly played at Murrayfield. A large crowd witnessed a titanic muscular struggle with Northern winning by two penalties to one. Promotion was eventually clinched at the unlikely setting of Sighthill Park with a win over the now defunct Turnhouse club but the victory at Murrayfield must rate as one of our greatest ever performances.

Our debut in the National Leagues came on 1st October 1983 when the side travelled to Forfar for a relatively easy win over Strathmore, one of only two occasions during the season when no points were conceded. Good victories were recorded as Northern went six games without defeat, giving rise to dreams of Division Six. Successive defeats by Montrose and Earlston brought us back down to earth, but nevertheless this was our best showing in National League rugby to date.

Thereafter, a steady downward drift was recorded as the league winning side gradually broke up. Only a surprise victory at Clydebank (we slaughtered them 9-8 with a late Pete Hadden drop goal that drifted over/round a broken upright !) maintained our status in 1985-86. The reprieve was short lived and we were duly relegated the next season.

The District League was becoming progressively weaker due to a higher number achieving promotion than being relegated from National League Division 7. In spite of this we struggled to regain our National League status. Each season we KNEW we were better than the other teams in the league - we just kept losing two or three league games.

Justice (as our parocial point of view saw it) was eventually done in 1993-94. The league season did not start well when we lost 10-8 at Jack Kane Centre to Moray House. Northern did all the attacking but managed to lose 10 points during a rare Moray House breakaway. They scored a controversial try, captain John Alden disputed the decision, they kicked a touchline conversion, and then kicked the penalty from the halfway line. Thereafter the team swept all before them, culminating in a nerve wracking 6-3 victory over Heriot Watt University (the same score that clinched the league 11 years previously) - this side was far more attack concious than its predecessors -they were worthy league winners.



EDINBURGH NORTHERN R.F.C. 1st XV 1982-83

BACK ROW: C. OLIVER, D. HENDERSON, P. HADDEN, I. WILLIAMSON, D. DOHERTY, M. CUTHBERT, P. BONNINGTON, P. TINSLEY, G. ARBUTHNOTT, D. HAWES
FRONT ROW: D. NATTAN, J. McKECHIE, I. BRECHIN, D. HADDEN (CAPT.), D. HUME, J. SMITH, I. GRIEVE



EDINBURGH NORTHERN R.F.C. 1st XV 1993-94

BACK ROW: D. SOEDOR, D. THORBURN, G. SCOTT, R. FREW, G. ADAMS, B. FORBES, A. MILNE, J. HOWELL, J. McCANN
FRONT ROW: D. TILLER, A. DAVIDSON, P. LEONARD, J. ALDEN (CAPT.), D. HENDERSON, M. HORNER, P. McALLISTER

THE SOCIAL SIDE

ASIDE FROM ITS rugby playing abilities Northern has always been known as a sociable club where opponents on the field lay aside their differences of opinion of the laws to agree that the referee was in all probability raised in an orphanage.

The earliest record we have of Northern's social side is a receipt for £2/1/8d dated 23rd November 1922 and relating to an event put on in the former Y.M.C.A. in South St Andrew Street. Subsequent correspondence reveals a long running argument between club officials and the manager of the Y.M.C.A. when an invoice was tendered not only for the hire of the hall but also 3/6d for the replacement of a roller towel ruined by a club member. Correspondence grew accrimonious and the last record we have is the towel was returned to the club. Things Never Change.....

After this the club records are quiet until in January 1953 The "Bowling Green Pavilion" was occupied as our permanent home but it was not until 1964 that the pavilion was reconstructed as a purpose built (or at least semi purpose built) rugby clubhouse. Two years later the bar was officially opened on 24th March 1966 (just in time for the close season!!). Northern was the first Edinburgh junior club to take this step, after Haddington, the second in Scotland to have its own bar. The 5XV's fielded by the club that season doubtless brought in an income sufficient to gladden the heart of the Club Treasurer.

Whilst all this was happening, however, the club was pursuing other moneymaking situations with the social side. In October 1959 "Nokiton" described as "The greatest rugby dance of all time" was held as a joint venture with Corstorphine RFC and attracted a crowd of 1,379 to the Palais-du-dance in Fountainbridge where the revellers danced the night away to two bands and enjoyed the refreshments provided by the late bar, 40 feet in length, all for the princely sum of 5/- per person.

By 1968 the new lounge area in the clubhouse was ready and was officially opened by 3 local councillors. The club was now able to hold celebratory evenings such as Tramps Nights where club members and their partners and guests turned up in fancy dress. After a pause for consolidation, 1975 saw the clubhouse extension started and the following year saw the opening of the Tom Henderson Lounge. This increase in space allowed the club to host functions such as Burns Suppers, the first of which took place in 1976.

Just as important, however, was the establishment of the Ladies Section in recognition of the large part played by the ladies in (almost) all the activities of the club other than actually playing. In the previous year Northern established a mini-rugby section which took place on a Sunday and was coached by both players and parents and supported vociferously by many of the youngsters parents. Some of the products of these Sunday morning sessions still turn out for the club today.

In 1979 Associate Membership of the club was introduced and we gained our first lady member, Mrs Moira Fotheringham and the following year two members became engaged - to each other. The happy couple were Susan Otter and Steven Burden.

By this time the clubhouse had become the focal point for club activities and was being used for more and more events. Even the volunteer bar crews vied with each other to produce social evenings, - the Top bar crew and the Windmill bar crew being two of the main protagonists. Bad Taste parties (starring the Captain of the Belgrano and the late Grace Kelly) was followed by school days discos and Tarts and Vicars parties.

Since 1979 the Club Dinner has been held annually in the clubhouse and has featured many notable speakers and players. Not many clubs can boast to have entertained the last three British Lions Captains and tickets for the dinner have always been much sought after by non-members.

Rugby has always been a game where the desire to win has not overshadowed the belief that at the end of it all it is still only a game and Northern seem to have found the right balance between the playing side and the social side.



BERNIE

by J.W.Mcleod

HE USED TO WEAR A SCRUM CAP - not these hospital bandage types which keep forwards brains safe from contact with the outside world and in prime unused condition. No... His like may be seen in those old 1930's days when scrums packed 3-2-3, and when in photographs two players sat cross-legged in the foreground with their long shorts discreetly concealing their abilities.

A fearsome sight it was to see him in full rampage. "Feet! Northern! Feet!" he would cry kicking and thrashing wildly about him, greatly to the terror of old ladies exercising their dogs in Inverleith Park.

In one game against Llanelly Wanderers in the 1950's I remember him leading a magnificent foot rush from the half-way line. On this attack he actually had the ball in his sight and occasionally kicked it. On and on he drove... first over the 10 yard line where he made a shrewd 90 degree right hand turn towards the cricket square . Then with sundry team mates and opponents writhing on the ground clutching damaged parts behind him, he reached the 25 yard line. "Feet! Northern! Feet!" he roared, the bit (of scrum cap) firmly in his teeth (had they not been left soaking in the dressing room ?) - but he was unstoppable , right over the dead ball line, where he tripped over his feet and fell on the ball.

Rugby laws were never his strong point, the wild exhilaration of rucking and mauling being his preference.

His short lived refereeing career never recovered from the time he awarded a penalty, and, just like a real referee, he marked the spot and, much to the bewilderment of the players, pointed to a dog and a bitch enjoying a pleasant Saturday afternoon on the touchline.

When the new laws arrived in 1992, Bernie and I were in Brisbane Australia , and went to Scotland v Australia at Ballymore. It had been announced in the press prior to the game that in a pre match warm up game that the new laws would apply.

The game had already started when we took our centre stand seats, thirst fully quenched with XXXX. As the game progressed Bernie loudly pointed out some of the finer points of the new laws, saying " Ah you see that? Under the old laws you

couldn't do that" and other Sundry comments. Nearby Australians were amazed at this wealth of Scottish / Welsh rugby knowledge until it was announced that the new laws were NOT being played after all. Our international standing in rugby knowledge took a distinct nose dive.

However Bernie is usually a better source of information. For over 40 years Northern have relied on his wise counsel. The club were indeed fortunate when his work with the Customs Service brought him to Edinburgh in the early 1950's. He has helped us enjoy the good times but even more importantly has skillfully guided us through the bad times with a characteristic modesty.

I know of no-one else amongst Edinburgh's smaller clubs who is held in such kind and high regard as Bernie. The respect he has earned in the game in all its aspects - as player, club official, "Radio Forth" commentator on district rugby, and in general 99% reliability as an organiser.

The 1% where, sadly, his record falters, is in the respect of a 1950's tour booking he made for the club - at a Temperance Hotel.

But I forgive him, he was just a young player then, and of course he's a Welshman!



TOURING

A large part of the lore of rugby football concerns itself with touring and throughout its history Northern have been nothing if not enthusiastic, and at times intrepid, tourists.

In March 1949 it is believed that Northern became the first Scottish club to go on a tour after the end of the Second World War. The destination was London where Northern played Ilford prior to the England v Scotland clash at Twickenham. Although the tourists lost by 21-0 it was reported that "Northern did well with their scratch XV after a night travelling by bus. (The international side also lost by 19 points to 3)

Two years later Northern were once again on the road south. This time the opposition was Llanelli Wanderers, at that time in their first season, and again the match was played on the morning of the international at Cardiff. This particular fixture became a tradition for many years and the Inverstradey Cup now resides in the clubhouse of Llanelli. After the association with Llanelli Wanderers died Northern forged links with Old Illytydians, a Cardiff club, but sadly the fixture did not last many years.

Having toured in both England and Wales the next logical step was Ireland and in 1958 we began our long association with Seapoint RFC in Dun Laoghaire. The final circular of the 1960 tour from the pen of B.Lodge, Hon Secretary, makes interesting reading "Airfare £7/9/0" and "as we are travelling with Costorphine RFC members should be on there best behaviour (when being watched) so that Corstorphine will get all the blame." For many years visits have been exchanged with Seapoint and many friendships first made on the pitch still exist today. The W.C.Point trophy was hotly contested and in general the touring side normally conceded defeat - a tribute to the hospitality of the hosts the previous night.

Other tours included an easter tour to the Newcastle area in 1961 where our opponents were Vickers Armstrong RFC and Houghton RFC, and this trip was repeated in 1971.

But Northern do not only tour, they also act as hosts for other touring sides, and over the years we have entertained clubs from all the home countries and several from abroad. Clubs such as Newcastle Northern, Mountain Ash, Omagh, Taff's Wall, Guy's Hospital and the Bank of Ireland to name but a few have all sampled Northern's

hospitality as well as Licio Militar from Argentina and the Luxembourg national side, who were defeated in 1984.

In 1995 Northern spread its wings somewhat wider and became the first Scottish club to tour in the Czech Republic when 26 stalwarts led by Club President Ian Brechin and Club Captain John Alden used Prague as a base for a rugby trip. Strange to relate that this tour was not all visits to museums and art galleries, and two games were played (v R.C.Praha and R.C. Ricany) , one international match was attended and some of our members were also invited to turn out for the local expatriate side Prague Barbarians. The hospitality from our Czech hosts was quite overwhelming and in the words of one tourer " Anyone who can remember it wasn't there". We hope that we shall be able to maintain the friends made on that tour and that we may be the first Scottish club to play host to a team from the Czech Republic.



NORTHERN ABOUT TO DEPART ON THEIR FIRST TOUR IN MARCH 1949. SEEING THE PARTY OFF IS MISS DOROTHY MUIR, WHO WENT ON TO BECOME MARRIED TO JACK SMITH. PLAYERS IN THE PICTURE INCLUDE PETE WESTON, JACK SMITH, BILL BEATTIE, CRAIG FRAME, PHIL SPARLING, AND NEIL MACKENZIE

STATISTICAL APPENDIX

Our current team secretary, Neil Leitch, is infamous for producing an array of obscure statistics or "Fascinating Facts" as they are usually termed. No true club history is complete without a few records so here are a few potted details of our club.

PLAYING RECORD 1920-21 to 1994-95

Team	First season	Played	Abandoned			%Record
			Won,	Lost	or Draw	
1stXV	1920-21	1614	664	839	111	44.48
2ndXV	1929-30	1301*	562	674	65	45.70
3rdXV	1957-58	763	290	440	33	40.17
4thXV	1958-59	373	102	257	14	29.22
5thXV	1964-65	71	18	51	2	26.76
6thXV	1966-67	13	4	9	0	30.77
Colts	1979-80	6	0	6	0	0.00
Social	1983-84	9	6	3	0	66.67
Total		4150	1646	2279	225	42.37

* Record incomplete as no results are available for 1933-34,35-36,36-37,38-39

Best Seasons

Team	Season	Played	Won	Lost	Drawn	%Record
1stXV	1954-55	18	14	1	3	86.11
2ndXV	1983-84	28	20	8	0	71.43
3rdXV	1966-67	27	17	8	2	66.67
4thXV	1966-67	20	13	6	1	67.50
5thXV	1966-67	15	6	7	2	46.67
6thXV	1966-67	6	3	3	0	50.00

Honours: Edinburgh & District League 1982-83, 1993-94

Most capped player: I.G.Hunter 4 caps (Gordon played for Northern whilst at Royal High School. After leaving school he joined Selkirk)

No.of consecutive 1st XV appearances: 250+ by I.R.Brechin (or so he claims)

