

'Best of Friends'

Up to 1874 there was only one club playing Rugby in Northumberland. By the Year 1882 Northumberland and Durham had a total of five clubs out of 132 clubs connected to the Rugby Union.

The first real reference to referees came in November 1888 when a meeting was held at the Royal Exchange Hotel, Newcastle for the purpose of choosing referees for the Challenge Cup Ties.

The Gosforth v Tynedale game to be played at Gosforth was to be handled by J. F. Ogilvie and the ties between Tynemouth v Northumberland at North Shields and Northern v Percy Park played on the following Saturdays were both to be officiated by Mr. Wm Cail.

Wm. Cail was undoubtedly a force to be reckoned with in Rugby circles. Not only was he a strong advocate for the game in sporting papers but he was a tireless worker for the administration being President and Treasurer for Northumberland County as well as a referee of renown. He achieved great success and honour by being elected President of the Rugby Football Union in 1892. *It is interesting to note that 100 years later another 'Northumbrian' in the person of Davie Serfontein achieved the same honour.* Yet Mr. Cail had his share of disasters. At the Northumberland A.G.M. held in April 2nd 1889 Mr Cail reported of a terrible experience he had refereeing a cup-tie at Hexham. He said *"Only the efforts of visitors and police prevented him from being thrown into the river."*

A newspaper reporter at the time commented upon the public's concept of the Rugby code in a conversation of one youth admiring an illustration of the passing game on a packet of cigarettes in a shop window.

"Geordie lyok ear at this football match."

"That's not football ye foul, that's rugby."

"Wey that's football isin't it?"

"Nout liket, ye see when a chap has the baal, another chap can hoy him doon".

"Aye".

"That's not aal either, 'cos when a chaps doon and winnit get up, ye can kick him till he drops the baal."

"Very rough like. Whats the referee dee?"

"Oh nout, he just blaase the whistle!"

Its a wonder that any one volunteered to referee; perhaps they were masochists?

A Mr. White in January 1898 complained to the Northumberland County Union of the treatment he had received in the hands of spectators at the Percy Park ground in the match Percy Park v Northern. Elsewhere in the area similar stories were abounding. A newspaper commented that the Barbarians had a disastrous time in South Shields. *"It was with great difficulty that a referee was secured for the fixture. At the last moment the Hon. Secretary of the Durham Society officiated; probably he will never volunteer again. Not only were his decisions hooted on the field but he was mobbed at the close. It is certain that the Barbarians will never visit South Shields again."*

But despite the set-backs the Northumberland and Durham referees were getting organised. In his Presidential year Mr. Cail attended a meeting to be held in Sunderland with the purpose of forming a joint referees Society. Mr. Boddy of Hartlepool was elected Secretary, Mr. W. Humphreys and Mr. C. W. Mountford represented Durham and Mr. H. Welford and Mr. J. Thompson represented Northumberland. The purpose of the first meeting held on November 1893 was to lay down the rules for the society but the Hartlepool commentator added it was *"to keep the position of the referees strictly amateur and if possible avoid making it a duty for gentlemen undertaking this office."* The question of retaining the amateur status of the referees was foremost in most Rugby mens' minds and frequent references were made in the pubs about the regulation of expenses for these gentlemen. In Durham and Northumberland the expenses were defined and consisted of third-class return fares and half a crown for hotel expenses. *"Hard lines this, for a man, after stumping up a considerable part of his expenses, to be jeered at for his services."* The new society formed a rule that all legitimate out of pocket expenses in addition to those named shall be allowed.

By 1895 a meeting of the Durham County Rugby Union decided that an independent Durham County be formed, thus terminating the Inter-County Northumberland and Durham arrangement. The Referees Societies therefore became Sub-Committees of their respective Societies. The split was an amicable one and to this day they have remained true friends, holding a joint-meeting at least once every season to date.

Both Societies have been fortunate in having dedicated, excellent Rugby men to lead and administer them.

Durham had outstanding Hon. Secretaries in Charlie Rood, G. Watling, B. Holt, George Nellist, R. McLaren Archibald, H. Brogdon, Alan Moulton, Selwyn Morgan and now Ken Eldridge. Northumberland were magnificently served by C.W. Gibson, C. P. Tanner, M. H. Southern, C. F. Pennock, J. W. Blakey, A. Christison, R. Bramald.

Other important appointment Secretaries in Durham were, John Runcie, Bill Jones, Selwyn Morgan, Arthur Broughton, Bill Cowley, Brian Harrison, Len Thompson and now John Hudson. Northumberland appointments, men equally dedicated were, C. F. Pennock, M. R. Moat, K. S. Lockerbie, F. J. Sheppard, S. A. Swift, J. Jackson M. Common, H. R. Gibson, J. M. D. Coulson C. Dykes, R. Bramald. Since the end of the 39/45 war there has been a greater emphasis upon widening the exchange system and we are indebted to exchange see S. Morgan, A. Stuart and Paul Renton in Durham and C. R. Markham, A. Christison, C. Dykes, D. Scatchard.

Links have been forged with the Northern Group with the Borders with Scotland, London, Herts, N. Midlands, E. Midlands and latterly with Ireland in an effort to broadcast the experience of the referees.

The two societies have also been well served by charismatic figures as Chairman.

Alan Bean led the Durham Society for 27 years. He was a referee of the highest order and was respected wherever Rugby was played. He proved to be an excellent motivator of men and was responsible for the writing of the definitive *"The Art of Refereeing"*. His bye words were *"Play it simple, play for enjoyment"*. Alan Bean was also an international referee of high renown and Durham produced international referees in Ned Holmes, Hartley Elliott and Harry Keenen. The last two referees have made fine contributions to the training and assessing of referees and their experience has proved invaluable. Everyone has marvelled at the energy of Hartley. He has been involved in Rugby for our 40 years and is still as keen today as he ever was. It was with great pleasure that he was accorded the honour of being made a life-member of the Durham Society in 1990 and he serves as an inspiration to all.

Northumberland have also had success at the top namely, Bernard Shills, D-Alan Brown, Norman R. Sanson all fine international referees. Bill Blakey, Ted Brough also had the honour of being an international touch judge. They also have accorded life-membership to Ken Lockerbie, Alan Christison, Charles Pennock, Ted Brough, N. Sanson, F. Sheppard, S. A. Swift, J. H. Trail.

Northumberland and Durham have continuously made a considerable input into the Northern group of referees Societies. Alan Bean, Hartley Elliott, Harry Brogdon were among the first officers of the group. Charles Pennock was Secretary of the group in the 80's, Bill Blakey and afterwards Alan Christison worked tirelessly and effectively as Referees Advisory Panel members. Alf Thynne, Jim Marr, Selwyn Morgan, Arthur Stuart, Ken Eldridge carried on the Durham tradition and from Northumberland there have been Charles Pennock, Bill Blakey, Alan Christison, Ray Parlett, Charlie Dykes, Ken Lockerbie, Jim Coulson making valuable input into Northern Group.

Charlie Dykes and Ken Eldridge have been responsible during the past few years for the organisation and processing of data necessary in the assessment of referees.

There is a feeling now that the North have just about got it right in the establishment of an order of merit and this is due in no small way to the contribution of our members. Ken Eldridge is currently the Hon. Treasurer of the Northern Group.

The two societies have always played a major part in the organisation of the Triennial Conference of Referees usually held at Hatfield College Durham. Currently a Durham man, John Pearson has been given the task of organising the next Hatfield. Joining Durham from Kent, eight years ago, John Pearson has reached County Panel status and has made a valuable contribution to the development of the Society. He has acquired a vast experience representing the RFU in Argentina,

in Bermuda and Yugoslavia as well as officiating throughout these islands, including the semi-final of the Pilkington Cup in 1991.

Pearson has followed in the paths of other Durham men who have reached County standard namely A. Bean, A. Brown, A. Christison, J. Denham, H. B. Elliott, R. Walton Forster, Ned Holmes, Edgar Holmes, S. Hudson, W. G. Jones, T. Judge, H. Keenan, R. Kirk, J. F. Marr, J. M. L. Mock, F. Robson, J. Sievwright, J. Straughan, O. W. Summonds, A. Swinburne, A. P. Thynne, K. Witherington. Ken Witherington had a distinction of having played County Rugby, coached County Rugby and refereeing County Rugby. It is small wonder that he has been invited to coach in Canada for 2 occasions.

Lyne Mock has the distinction of leading school boy Rugby in Durham for over 25 years. This feat will take some beating. Many promising rugby players owe their first successes on the field to this dedicated servant of the game.

John Denham, has carried his skills to Scotland and now referees at the highest level in that Country. This has helped to cross-fertilize ideas below and above the border and has promoted the Society well outside its own area.

Northumberland has had its successes too. County panelists were W. Wearmouth, A. I. Horsley, O. Kaiser, J. H. Trail, J. Spark, W. Longbottom, B. S. Mills, M. D. Oubridge, E. Nixon, A. E. Brough, M. H. Southern, D. A. Brown, J. W. Blakey, H. E. Cosans, C. R. Markham, A. C. Taylor, N. R. Sanson, K. S. Lockerbie, T. R. Parlett, M. Pearson, M. Common, J. Coulson.

The two Societies have always contributed to the changes made to the game. From Durham, Ken Williams, Ken Chivers, Neville Carswell and from Northumberland Mike Common have enthusiastically participated in the National Touch judge scheme. There have been many reports of referees acknowledging with gratitude their efforts in refereeing the modern game.

Yes, Northumberland and Durham have much to be proud of in their last hundred years. They have provided referees at the highest standard. They have provided administrators at the highest level within the Northern group but their greatest contribution has been in organising and administering the game of Rugby for the many clubs within their areas.

Praise is due to the often unsung band of enthusiasts:

Alan Bean, Tom Whitworth, Bill Jones, Alf Thynne from Durham and for Northumberland, M. D. Oubridge, G. D. Douglas, W. Wearmouth, J. H. Trail, P. W. Bates, M. H. Southern, A. E. Brough, D. A. Brown, J. W. Blakey, C. L. Powell, C. F. Pennock, F. Forster Smith, A. Christison, S. A. Swift and T. R. Parlett, who have lead, the Societies as Chairmen.

The Hon. Secs. from C. Rood to Ken Eldridge in Durham and Harry Welford to Rod Bramald in Northumberland.

The Treasurers from A. Boddy to Harry Brogdon in Durham, from William Cail to Geof Parkinson in Northumberland.

Northumberland have also lead the way via referees and ex referees in the implementation of youth development being the first County in the Country to do so with John Bates (Son of P. Bates - Ex-referee and County President.) leading the way as County Y. D. Officers and then regional Y. D. Officer.

Durham County currently handle in excess of 1,800 fixtures. Northumberland currently handle in excess of 1,450 fixtures per season.

These are the enthusiasts who have made these 100 years such a success. We salute each and every one of them and thank them for the unpaid hours of time that they have given to promote the game we all love so well; hoping that the foundations laid leading to tonight's centenary celebration will lead us into a successful second century.

SEPTEMBER 3rd 1930.

Extract from an address who was quoting a speech by the President of the English Rugby Union.

"If you are a referee I take off my hat to you, for you are either a player who cannot leave the game alone or a super enthusiast. The game is grateful to you. All decent sportsmen are your friends and players generally are your loyal subjects, although there are a few ready to take

advantage of your lapses.

If you can unconsciously impress upon the teams that you are in control, they will be too busy to attend to anything but the game. Keep them at it, and above all, don't tolerate talking. You are bound to make mistakes, but take consolation in the thought that 'He who never makes a mistake, never made anything else'.

Your chief trouble lies in the scattered few misguided excitable - the 'grandstand critics' - with the penetrating voices - whose knowledge of the rules is as biased as it is limited, and whose vocabulary of the game is confined to one or two ejaculations 'Offside' and 'Play the game referee' (a curious combination of extremes). The only advice I can tender is - 'be deaf'.

The suggestion to players applies to you, for if you would keep up with present day type of play you must be physically fit".

'No Side!'

Compiled and edited by A.P. Thynne (Durham) A.D. Douglas (Northumberland)

N.B.

It is not intentional that any persons should have been overlooked but records from both Counties are difficult to obtain and indeed Northumberland lost their records prior to 1945 due to a fire.

The compilers of this brochure would like to acknowledge the data provided by the late Alan Bean and Bill Blakey also Bill Swan/Northumberland Archivist and Ernie Dring of Hartlepool Rovers.