



The History of Kirkcaldy Rugby Club



November's object is our third venture into local sport following in the footsteps of Raith Rovers and Kirkcaldy Cricket Club. This month sees the history of Kirkcaldy Rugby Club related by John Methven who has an unrivalled connection with the club stretching back well over 70 years.

Guest authors work exceptionally well with our sporting objects as not only do they produce excellent factual, interesting and informative accounts, but there is a bonus! The bonus comes in the form of the love and passion they have for their sport and their clubs which shines through in abundance. This brings a depth of feeling and warmth to their narratives which cannot be easily mistaken or overlooked.

We have in the past acknowledged that, in both previous sporting narratives, in John Litster and David Potter, we had the best and, quite possibly, the only authors capable of doing justice to their subjects. That is now a hat trick – we are convinced no one else could provide the history, highlights and detail, which John Methven has marshalled together for object number 29. To sit with John and hear immediate

and accurate details/reminiscences of Kirkcaldy and Scottish rugby over eight decades is astonishing and impressive.

John was born in what was then the new Forth Park Maternity Hospital in Kirkcaldy. He was born to Markinch parents but, at the age of four, the family moved to Leslie. His family were heavily involved in Methven's Pit which was founded by John's grandfather. It was a drift mine which was situated just inside Balbirnie Estate, north of Glenrothes, and employed around 50 men.

After completing his primary education, John travelled by bus to attend Kirkcaldy High School. St. Andrew's University was his next stop to study Modern History and Geography. It was the latter subject which would provide John with a lengthy career in teaching.

After completing his education, John taught Geography at Cupar's Bell Baxter High School, Hawick High School, and finally Kirkcaldy High School. At both Hawick and Kirkcaldy John was the Head of the Geography Department.

Initially, although John had no more than a casual interest in rugby, he along with friends, attended his first international match at Murrayfield in 1948. Scotland won the game 6-3. That casual interest changed in October of the same year when he watched his first Kirkcaldy

Rugby Club match – as the result of leaving Starks Park early following, what he described, as a dismal Raith performance!

It is now 74 years since he attended his first match and in the intervening period John has been immersed in the club's activities and history, holding positions including; President, Director of Rugby, Match Secretary, Fixture Secretary and Club Secretary. He has also produced the match programme since 1978 in which time it has seen its development from little more than a team-sheet to the glossy production of today. The five year period he was living and working in Hawick did not detract from John's work for the Club – it simply continued. To record the Club's appreciation of his unstinting efforts John was installed as Honorary Vice President.



John Methven has not just served Kirkcaldy rugby. In the years between 1992 and 1998 John served as the Midlands District Secretary. The Midlands District was formed by players from Fife, Angus, Perth, Kinross and Clackmannan,

and they played against the other Scottish Districts. His final years in that position saw the rise of professionalism and the re-emergence of the team as the Caledonia Reds. Eventually they merged with what is now Glasgow Warriors. Always looking to the future of the game John served as Secretary to the Border Schools Rugby Union and, on his return to Fife, with the Midlands Schools Rugby Association.

John also served on the Championship Committee which was a body charged with the setting up of league rugby in Scotland back in 1973.

In terms of publications John, along with the late George Ballantine, produced the booklet celebrating Kirkcaldy Rugby Club's centenary. That was followed by another designed to celebrate the Club's promotion to Division Two in 1989/90.



Turning to the national team, John has amassed a collection of programmes which cover every home international Scotland have played since 1912. It also seems that John has, normally due

to health, only missed three Scottish Internationals at Murrayfield since 1952. He has lost count of how many Scottish away fixtures he has attended and to this day is a season ticket holder for both Glasgow Warriors and Edinburgh Rugby and faithfully attends their matches. His is a life devoted to rugby, especially Kirkcaldy Rugby where his daughter Ann is currently President.

In a way it could have been all so different. John's grandfather and his four sons emigrated to America – but returned home in 1923. Kirkcaldy Rugby is all the richer for his grandmother failing to settle away from her native heath!

As we move onto John's narrative, can anyone doubt that John Methven is the right man for this story?

In the Beginning

Kirkcaldy Cricket Club had just finished its 1873 season when their members gathered in a hostelry to discuss the season just finished. One of the topics raised was as to how they would engage themselves during the winter months.

One of the possibilities mentioned was the relatively new game of football according to

rugby rules. This was nearly a decade before association football took root in the town.

Rugby had been played in east central Scotland since the 1850s with records of an 1864 match in St. Andrews between the University and Edinburgh Academicals. What gave rugby a major impetus was the playing, in 1871, of the first international match between Scotland and England at Raeburn Place in Edinburgh. The game was won by Scotland.

Clubs had sprung up in many parts of the country including Fife. During the 1870s and 1880s rugby appeared in a host of Fife towns including; Leven, Burntisland, Markinch, Cupar, St. Andrews, as well as Kirkcaldy. With the explosion of interest in Association Football most of these primitive clubs withered almost as soon as they were born. However, Kirkcaldy survived and in 2023 celebrates its 150th anniversary.

Out of the informal chat amongst the cricketers came an advertisement in the Fifeshire Advertiser of the 27th September 1873. It was short and to the point stating:- "A meeting of the members of Kirkcaldy Cricket Club and also those who are favourable to the formation of a Football (Rugby) Club will be held within the George Hotel on Wednesday, the 1st October, at half past seven o'clock".

The motion to form a rugby football club was passed unanimously and Kirkcaldy Football Club was formed. In the same year the Scottish Football

NEW GAME IN KIRKCALDY.—Cricketers cannot play at cricket always, and we are glad to see that the Kirkcaldy Cricket Club have also resolved to betake themselves to football. An excellent ball has been procured for the club, and play will commence some of these days in the park at Newtown.

Union came into existence. Kirkcaldy secured admission to the Football Union in 1885. So, out of that inaugural meeting in the George Hotel came an association between the town's cricket and rugby clubs which was to last until 1958. The first recorded match was an away fixture to Portobello which Kirkcaldy won by 121 goals and 12 tries to nil!

For the first twenty years of its life Kirkcaldy Rugby Club struggled to find suitable playing

facilities. The club started life in Newton Park, a recreation ground bounded by the railway and present day Ava Street. It



was said to be "a good touch kick from the Beveridge Park gates". The ground, for a short spell, was also an early home to Raith Rovers.

By the 1880s, with the town expanding, playing space was contracting. Also in this decade

association football was growing throughout Scotland and Kirkcaldy was no exception. There were any number of teams in the town and

FOOTBALL NOTES.

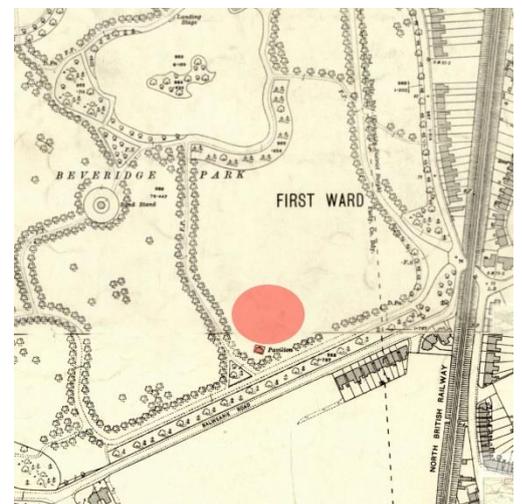
That the game of football has become thoroughly popularised in the Lang Toun, is not far to seek. The enthusiasm displayed last season, and the excellent arrangements for the forthcoming season speaks volumes for itself. The association game, inaugurated sometime ago by the Kirkcaldy Wanderers, has now developed itself so much that we have nearly a score of promising young clubs. Handicapped to a certain extent by the want of a public park or recreation ground, several of our more ardent players have had to adjourn to the beach. The step lately taken by the Kirkcaldy Wanderers and the Kirkcaldy Rugby Clubs in amalgamating with a view of obtaining the Newton Park, is, I am sure, a step in the right direction.

Newton Park was required for other purposes – including eventually the building of Ava Street. This severely restricted the Club's activities and at times the only space available was on Kirkcaldy beach at low tide! The future looked bleak,

but Michael Beveridge's generous gift of a public park changed everything.

The opening of the Beveridge Park in 1894 brought a transformation in the fortunes of the Rugby Club. Both cricket and rugby had seasonal use of a dedicated space. Very quickly another meeting was held and a reformed Kirkcaldy Rugby Football Club regained admission to the Scottish Football Union in 1894. From 1905 until 1958 they shared a pavilion. By current standards its facilities were little more than basic.

One of the oddities of playing rugby in Beveridge Park was that until the 1960s the goal posts had



to be erected and dismantled before each game. Kirkcaldy Town Council's fatuous answer as to why this was necessary was that pedestrians might walk into them, especially in darkness.

Until they obtained their own grounds at Dunnikier, Kirkcaldy High School and later Balwearie High School made use of the Beveridge Park pitches causing substantial wear and tear. With only minimal maintenance being applied they were often unfit for play. The main rugby pitch lay in the outfield of the cricket ground with the square occupying the site of the present grandstand. In the 1950s the main pitch deteriorated not helped by on one occasion the animals of a travelling circus depositing huge quantities of excreta, killing grass, and making the ground unusable for play for a two year period. Other sites for pitches had to be found and used in the park.

Being in what was an open field the Club found it impossible to charge admission for home games. Changed days to the 1990s when Kirkcaldy's status in Scottish Rugby had risen substantially with paying spectator numbers often approaching 1,000.

The Rugby Club secured sole use of the previously jointly owned pavilion in 1958 when the Cricket Club moved to Bennoch. There had

been suggestions that the Rugby Club would follow but financial constraints ruled that out. There was also an alternative suggestion that the club move to the new High School grounds. That idea had little support on account of its location and a suspicion of poor drainage.

Other clubs in the district were by the 1960s acquiring social premises complete with a licenced bar. In the absence of their own licenced premises the Club used the Dunnikier Arms Hotel, known universally as the "High Level", for after match drinks and social events. The Club looked at various sites in the town but unfortunately all had their drawbacks. It had been assumed that the Town Council would not allow licenced premises in a public park. However, to most members' surprise, no



objection was raised. The lower part of the pavilion was converted into a tearoom with the upper area into a lounge. Changing now took place in the recently build council pavilion. The drawback

to this was that the building was designed for football teams and too small for rugby teams.

No sooner had the old pavilion been transformed than plans were being drawn up for a new changing room annexe. There was not a lot of money available and the bulk of the work was undertaken by club members free of charge.

The dissatisfaction with the old pavilion grew and before long a new clubhouse was planned. Estimates of around £30,000 seemed daunting in 1975 but after some hard work through loans, gifts and fundraising, the target was reached. The new clubhouse was officially opened by Sir John Orr, President of the Scottish Rugby Union, on the 21st February 1977.

Another major development reached its conclusion on the 1st September 1991 with the opening of a 250 seat grandstand and a floodlighting system which was upgraded in 2008. Once again, the plaque which commemorates the opening of both is housed in the clubhouse and is reproduced here.

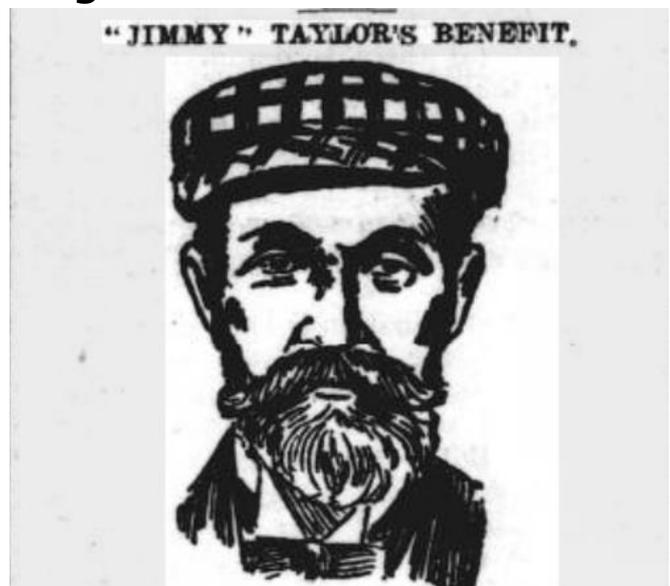


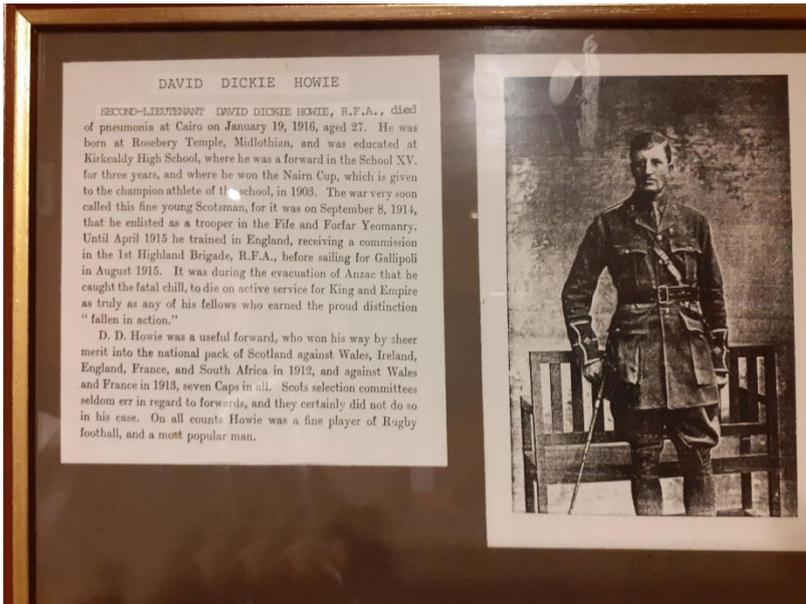
Even with these developments the main pitch was still open making charging difficult. It took a lengthy period of pleading and persuasion before Fife Council agreed to allow a 5 feet high beech

hedge to be planted around the field. It took several years for the hedge to reach the permitted height but most certainly has added to the amenity of the park. It also provides homes for bird and insect life.

Some Personalities

From the earliest days one individual stood out in club affairs, not a player but a groundsman. This was one Jimmy Taylor (1848-1947). Jimmy was one of the town's worthies who served both the rugby and cricket clubs. In all, Taylor acted as groundsman for the rugby club for 40 years. A caricature taken from the Fife Free Press of the 12th July 1913, on the occasion of a benefit match offered by the cricket club, is shown here. His duties in the earliest years are not known but, after the move to the Beveridge Park, he would most likely be responsible for grass cutting and marking the pitch. Once the new pavilion was built he would clear it out after games and have it ready for the next week. For a spell he also acted as groundsman for Raith Rovers who were formed in 1883.





Kirkcaldy's most prominent player of the first fifty years was David Dickie Howie (1888-1916). A member of a well known farming family, David was educated at Kirkcaldy High

School. He played rugby for the School 1st XV, as a forward, for three years. In 1903 he won the Nairn Cup, awarded for the School's champion athlete. Joining Kirkcaldy in 1908 he was Club Captain when first capped



for Scotland against France in 1912. Altogether, David won 7 caps which would have been greater but for an injury in 1913. On the outbreak of war in 1914 he enlisted in the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry. Sadly, he died from an infection in Egypt in 1916. A plaque to his memory and several photographs are featured on the walls of the clubhouse and are reproduced here.

His brother Robert (Bob) (1898-1992) was by far the best known Kirkcaldy player of them all. Bob also played for Edinburgh University while studying there. He played in the same team as Eric Liddell of Chariots of Fire fame. Capped 7 times, between 1924 and 1925, he was also a member of the



British and Irish Lions side which toured South Africa in 1924, playing in the test matches. He famously played in the international match against England in 1925 which opened Murrayfield. The team went on to win the Grand Slam that season. The week after the England match, Bob played in the first ever seven a side tournament won by Kirkcaldy. Afterwards, he served a term as President of Kirkcaldy Rugby Club before being elected to the Scottish Rugby Union Committee. Living to a grand age, his life was devoted to family and farming at the Grange, situated between

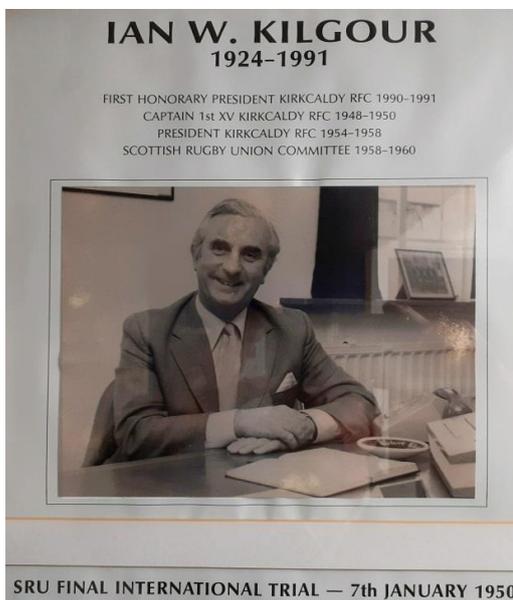


Kirkcaldy and Burntisland. Once again a plaque and photographs are prominently displayed in the Clubhouse and are reproduced here. The plaques are matching and are a fine tribute to two excellent servants.

It is difficult to imagine that although between them the brothers played 14 times for their country their father, a grim farmer, never watched them play even once, saying "Rugby an' fermin' will no agree. An' a ken which'll pit mair sillar in yer pooch".

It was Strathmiglo born George Thom who became the third Kirkcaldy player to be capped for his country. He was aged 20 when in 1920 he won his four caps. His was a very contracted International career – his debut against France was on New Year's Day 1920 at the Parc des Princes. His last test was just over two months later when he played against England at Twickenham. He also had a fairly short life dying in British Columbia in 1927 at the age of 37.

The leading light in Kirkcaldy Rugby in the post-war period was Ian Kilgour (1924-1991), player,



KIRKCALDY CAPTAIN IN FIFE SELECT

Ian Kilgour, Kirkcaldy Rugby Club 1st XV Captain, will play alongside internationalists L. R. Currie and A. M. Thomson in the Fife team to meet Perth and Angus at the Midlands district rugby trial at University Park, St. Andrews on Wednesday.

Gordon Cooper and Alastair Murchie, another two Kirkcaldy players, are listed in the reserves.

FIFE—I. Ross (Howe of Fife) (capt.); I. Howieson, W. Neil (Dunfermline), B. Rosenberg, J. Swan (St Andrews Univ.); J. C. Michie (Howe of Fife), I. McKinlay (St Andrews Univ.); I. Kilgour (Kirkcaldy), J. Brauen (Dunfermline), T. White, A. M. Thomson (St Andrews Univ.), L. R. Currie (Dunfermline), G. C. Skel (Howe of Fife), H. Scott (St Andrews Univ.), J. Greenwood (Dunfermline).

Reserves—L. Slater (St. Andrews) (full back or three-quarter); G. Cooper (Kirkcaldy) (stand-off); A. Murchie (Kirkcaldy) (back row); J. Bell (Howe of Fife) (first or second row).

Captain, Official, including President, and he was the District Representative to the Scottish Rugby Union. Ian was in the team which resumed playing after World War II and by 1948 was in the North of Scotland side which played the South. The following year he made it to the final trial for the 1955 Five Nations team selection. Ian was a travelling reserve. In other times, when replacements and substitutes were permitted, Ian undoubtedly would have been Kirkcaldy's fourth cap. Ian's playing career came to an end in a curious manner. In the post-war years Kirkcaldy had an annual end of season fixture against the Co-optimists, Scotland's leading invitation side. To mark Kilgour's contribution to rugby he was chosen to captain the Co-optimists against his own club!

A near contemporary of Ian Kilgour was Bill (W.J.S.) Clark (1920-1996). Clark's playing career did not reach the height of Kilgour's but his contribution to the well-being of the club is remarkable. He was a steady fullback from 1938 until 1953, war years excluded, when he spent 4 years in a German Prisoner of War Camp in Poland. After stepping down from 1st XV duties in 1953 he spent several seasons playing in the II and III teams. Playing days done, Clark took up the Club Secretaryship and later the Treasurer's post. In his later years, he was a

familiar figure in the club premises and was always ready to help out. This included a stint as Club Groundsman in his early 70s.

While Kirkcaldy were prospering on the field, a looming crisis threatened the very existence of the Club. Annually the Club paid a modest sum to the local authority for rates. In 1983 the basis

on which the rates were determined changed. Instead of paying around £100 the club faced an annual bill



Alex Kilgour.

“Over the moon” after long fight

UNDERSTANDABLY, Alex Kilgour, one of the leading campaigners for rating equity was “over the moon” at yesterday’s news.

For Alex, it is the culmination of 3½ years of campaigning that began when Kirkcaldy Rugby Club received a rates bill for £5500.

Then treasurer of the club, Alex began to investigate the apparent anomalies between rating north and south.

He discovered that a similarly-sized club in England, paid just £500—a revelation that trig-

gered a campaign for rating reform for Scottish sports clubs.

As he explained last night, Alex teamed up with another rating reform campaigner, Bill Mann, of Glasgow Western Baths and Glasgow Accies, and they found themselves swept along at the head of a wave of public support.

The campaign led to rating relief for Scottish sports clubs, but the ultimate goal remained parity with English clubs.

“I am just extremely delighted that at long last it

looks like we will definitely be getting a fair comparison with clubs in England.

“It is going to make a tremendous difference to clubs throughout Scotland and for Scottish sport as a whole.

“It can only be better for all sports and money saved can be used for improving facilities for a better future.”

Ironically, Kirkcaldy Rugby Club, which was for so long at the centre of the campaign, was de-rated some time ago and so will remain unaffected by the changes.

of about £5,000. In spite of extensive fundraising, these monies came from individuals who could not be asked to pay every year. In stepped the recently appointed Club Treasurer Alex Kilgour (son of Ian) who saw the iniquity of asking an amateur sports club playing in a public park to shoulder this level of burden. Kilgour, bristling with energy and enthusiasm, took his campaign to the highest levels. His tactics included lobbying government ministers at Westminster and even approaching Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister of the day. Alex Kilgour became a familiar figure on television, preaching his cause to reporters. Scottish Office ministers hardly had a day without some form of contact from Mr Kilgour.

Victory eventually arrived when Fife Council called a special meeting to announce that amateur sports clubs operating on public land would be removed from the need to pay rates. This was a major triumph for Alex and his associate Bill Mann (Glasgow Academicals). Many years later, Bill Mann, calculated that, in the decade following the abolition of rates, Scottish sport had saved eye watering sums possibly as high as one billion pounds largely through the efforts of Alex Kilgour. Alex was awarded Honorary Membership of the Club.

Terry Trewartha had a long and illustrious connection with the Club. Being a Bell Baxter scholar, it would have been more normal for to play for Howe of Fife. However, securing a post as a PE teacher at Kirkcaldy High School saw Terry become a player who was associated with the team from National League



Division Four in 1973 right through to Premiership Division One in 2000, the year he finally retired. Terry had four separate spells as 1st XV coach and in some instances was player/coach. In one of these spells the Club won the Third Division Championship with a 100% record in 1978/79.

Andy Henderson was both a player and a coach prior to leaving the Club for pastures new in 2003. At that point Henderson had played more games than anyone else for Kirkcaldy Rugby Club. His record has since been overtaken by Greg Wallace who currently holds the record for most appearances.

David Sellar was an outstanding loose head prop and was another product of Kirkcaldy High School. As a former pupil he played against the school 1st XV in 1967. This annual fixture of the 1st XV against a former pupils team was the highlight of the school's rugby year. The 1967 contest is remembered as the game where Gordon Brown received the injury which eventually left him blind in one eye. Although not making a huge number of appearances Sellar was a truly gifted player and one of the best who ever pulled on the jersey. He was also accomplished in and excelled at playing the seven's game. A PE Student he moved to

Loughborough University, who at the time boasted the outstanding college rugby team in Britain. David, now retired, still lives in Kirkcaldy.

Quintan Albert Sanft was another who flashed across Kirkcaldy's rugby skies like a comet. An outstanding and gifted player he came to Scotland with the New

Zealand Schools Team which played the Scottish Schools in 1995. New Zealand won the game comprehensively. A few years later his name appeared on an Agent's List and he came to Kirkcaldy before leaving for Biggar. Returning to Kirkcaldy, he featured as 1st XV player and coach to the team making a massive and lasting impression. He later combined his workload with taking on the role of the Club's first Development Officer. In the team's hour of need he featured in a match when, over the age of 40, he still showed his finely honed skills. Quintan married a Kirkcaldy girl, who was also a rugby international, and the couple and their three children still live in the town. He is accepted as a strong candidate for the position as Club's best ever player.

Danny Herrington came to Kirkcaldy from Hillfoots and then Dundee High School where he won a cap for Scotland 'A' against New Zealand 'A'. A tight head prop Danny was a Bricklayer to

trade and had a magnificent physique which stood him in good stead. His ball handling was first class. As well as being an excellent player, Danny fitted exceptionally well into the Club's social activities. His wife was a forceful seller of raffle tickets and not many refused her 'invitation' to purchase. Sadly, Danny died at a relatively young age after being diagnosed with cancer.

The Fixtures and the Competitions

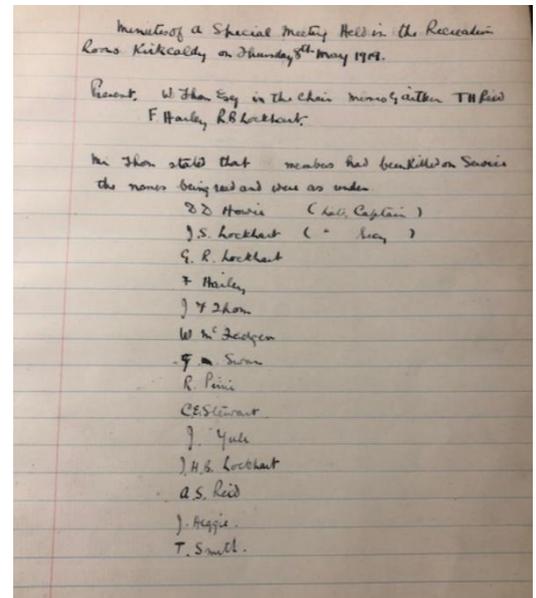
The Midlands League and what are now termed friendly fixtures provided much of the staple diet of Scottish Rugby Clubs from the the early 1870s until the outbreak of the Second World War. It was local cup competitions which lit up many a season. In terms of league rugby it was organised on district lines. Kirkcaldy were in a district with clubs drawn from Fife, Perth Angus, Kinross and Clackmannan.

Kirkcaldy were champions of the Midland League on several occasions. This gave them the right to challenge their league counterparts in the north for the North of Scotland Cup. Kirkcaldy first won this cup in 1898 with further successes in 1902 and 1908. Writing in Kirkcaldy Rugby Club's centenary book, Bill McIntosh, captain from 1926-1930, wrote of the disappointment in losing the finals of 1927 and 1930.

Rugby in Scotland generally closed down in 1914 at the start of World War I. Kirkcaldy Rugby Football Club was no exception and they suffered gravely from casualties. There must have been serious doubts as to whether the Club could continue for the 1919-20 season.

• On the 8th May 1919 a Special Meeting of the Club Committee was held in the Recreation Rooms, with W. Thom Esq. in the Chair. Those present were Messrs. G. Aitken, T.H. Reid, F. Harley and R.B. Lockhart. Mr Thom stated that the following members had died in the service of their country and read out the following names;-

- D. D. Howie
- J.S. Lockhart
- G.R. Lockhart
- F. Harley
- J.F. Thom
- W McFadzen
- G.M. Swan
- A. Pirrie
- C.E. Stewart

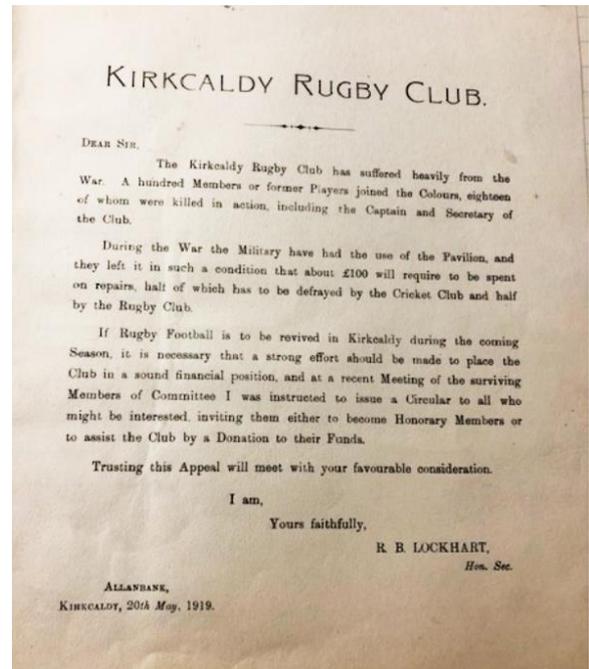


- J Yule
- J.H.B. Lockhart
- A.S. Reid
- J.Heggie
- T Smith

It was then agreed that a circular be sent out to highlight that, of the 100 members or former players who had joined the forces, 18 had lost their lives.

On top of that the Military had had the use of the pavilion during the conflict and had left it in such a poor condition that essential repairs were required.

The circular was in reality an appeal to assist the Club secure a strong financial position, thereby ensuring their continuation. Individuals were invited to join as Honorary Members or make a donation to the



KIRKCALDY RUGBY CLUB.	
FIXTURES 1919-20.	
Kirkcaldy Rugby Club, now that most of the members are back to civilian life, will resume its activities this winter, and a meeting is to be held in September to elect office-bearers. Meanwhile Mr R. B. Lockhart, hon. secretary, has arranged the following attractive list of fixtures:—	
Oct. 4th—Practice game	Kirkcaldy
" 11th—Trinity	Kirkcaldy
" 18th—Edinburgh Wanderers 'A,'	Edin.
" 25th—Royal High School F.P. 'A'	Kirkcaldy
Nov. 1st—Dundee High School,	Dundee
" 8th—Watsonians 'A.'	Kirkcaldy
" 15th—St Andrews Univ.	Kirkcaldy
" 22nd—Edinburgh Univ. 'A'	Kirkcaldy
" 29th—United Services,	Edinburgh
Dec. 6th—Grange,	Kirkcaldy
" 13th—Trinity,	Edinburgh
" 20th—Stewartonians 'A.'	Kirkcaldy
" 27th—Panmure,	Dundee
Jan. 1st—Stirling High School,	Kirkcaldy
" 3rd—Watsonians 'A.'	Edinburgh
" 10th—	
" 17th—Royal High School 'A.'	Edin.
" 24th—United Services,	Kirkcaldy
" 31st—Edin. Academicals 'A'	Edinburgh
Feb. 7th—Edin. Wanderers 'A.'	Kirkcaldy
" 14th—Edin. University 'A.'	Edinburgh
" 21st—Dund. High Sch. F.P.,	Kirkcaldy
" 28th—St Andrews Univ.,	St Andrews
Mar. 6th—Panmure,	Kirkcaldy
" 13th—Stewartonians 'A.'	Edinburgh
" 20th—Grange,	Kirkcaldy



Club. The team did indeed re-start and a copy of the fixture list for season 1919/20 is shown here. The first competitive game of the season was against Trinity and a snippet from the Fife Free Press lists the men who would feature in the first game after the conflict. The Mackintosh mentioned in the team list is assumed to be the same man who is mentioned above and went on to captain the team for several seasons.

A memorial sits in pride of place in the Clubhouse remembering those who fell in the Great War. The current memorial, dating from 2014, lists the 14 members who did not return and also records 2014 as being the centenary of the outbreak of the "War to End Wars". Even the briefest glance at the names shows the Lockhart family had paid a heavy price. Rather poignantly, it was a member of that family who signed the appeal letter.



No explanation can be offered for that letter stating 18 lives having being lost when only 14 names appear on the memorial.

The above mentioned Midlands League did not

resume after the Second World War. Scottish rugby, apart from the Border League, was competition free – hence games being in the friendly category. Kirkcaldy while having no league to compete in were quickly off the mark as the attached snippets show. All come from the Fife Free Press and show a notice that a

KIRKCALDY RUGBY CLUB. TO RESUME

Preparations Going Ahead

After being six seasons in abeyance due to the war, Kirkcaldy Rugby Club, one of the oldest in Scotland, is getting ready to resume its playing activities this coming season.

Several old stalwarts are already back from the Forces, and with the addition of some promising newcomers it is hoped the club will make a good come-back.

Preparations are now being made and a meeting is being held in the Y.M.C.A. Upper Hall on Monday evening, when it is hoped there will be a large turnout of those interested in the club.

meeting was to be held in the Y.M.C.A. Upper Hall to get preparations under way. Another tells of a trial game being played and mentions the return of a few pre-war stalwarts. Finally the Fixture List is shown and makes mention of the players who will be heading to St. Andrew's for the first game. Nostalgia will be in evidence for readers at the mention of the team bus leaving the iconic Fidelity Garage at 1.45pm.

There was a throwback to the Old North of Scotland Cup in 1989 - 50 years after it had last been contested. It had been won in 1939 by Panmure from Dundee. They had retained the trophy, presumably in their cabinet, but in 1989

RUGBY.

KIRKCALDY TEAM FOR ST ANDREWS
 The following team will represent Kirkcaldy Rugby Club against St Andrews University at St Andrews this afternoon—R. Cook; J. Halley, Hugh Binnie, Stewart Menzies and Geo. Goodman; A. E. M. Dickie and G. M. Dickie; G. D. Halley (capt.), J. Hutchison, J. Dewar, Ian Binnie, W. Smith, J. D. Stewart, R. Buchanan, W. Bell.
 The bus will leave the Fidelity at 1.45 p.m., and there will be room for a few supporters to travel with the team.

KIRKCALDY'S FIXTURES.
 The following is a list of Kirkcaldy Rugby Club's remaining fixtures:—

Oct. 27—Edinburgh Univer. 3rd	Home.
Nov. 3—Practice	Home.
" 10—Donibristle	Home.
" 17—University Col. (Dun.)	Home.
" 24—Edinburgh Univer. 3rd	Away.
Dec. 1—R.A.F. Perth	Home.
" 22—Morgan Acad. F.Ps.	Home.
" 23—Leuchars R.A.F.	Home.
1946.	
Jan. 5—R.A.F. Perth	Home.
" 12—University Col. (St. A.)	Home.
" 19—University Col. (Dun.)	Away.
" 26—Boroughmuir F.Ps.	Away.
Feb. 2—Donibristle	Home.
" 3—Watsonians	Home.
" 16—Morgan Acady. F.Ps.	Away.
" 23—RNATE, Rosyth	Home.

In addition, Kirkcaldy Rugby Club have an away fixture with Leuchars on 2nd March, and a home game with the same team on 12th April. The remainder of the dates in March and April are so far blank.

presented the trophy to the Scottish Rugby Union Museum.

There was little change in the composition of the Kirkcaldy fixture list through to the 1960s. They

played mainly against the same Midlands sides that they had competed against in the old league and also against 2nd XV's of the so-called Edinburgh senior clubs. In Edinburgh terms Kirkcaldy was a junior club. Only rarely did they venture out of this pattern such playing the annual New Year's Day

game against Stirling County.

In 1938 they did travel, for the first time, to Glasgow to play Cartha. This fixture came about after a Kirkcaldy man moved to Glasgow for work reasons and joined Cartha.

In the mid 1960s, Kirkcaldy playing standards gradually improved. This was translated into a more substantial fixture list. The Edinburgh second teams disappeared with Aberdeen and Border teams now appearing on it.

Another reason for the changes was the opening of the Forth and Tay Road Bridges which helped to mitigate the travelling from Fife. It was said at one time that anyone wishing to be Match Secretary had to have an intimate knowledge of

NE'ERDAY GAME

For their New Year's Day fixture Kirkcaldy Rugby Club 1st XV. entertain Stirling County at the Beveridge Park.

The 2nd XV. away game with Perthshire Accies having been cancelled, the selection committee have introduced several of the second string into the team, which reads:—
W. J. S. Clark; J. Hutchison, J. C. Hunter, J. W. Russell, J. Davidson, S. Menzies, G. Penman, G. D. Halley, A. Diack, A. D. Murchie, P. Leslie, D. Adie, I. Kilgour, A. Guild and A. W. Hannah.
Reserve:—G. M. Dickey, E. Fancey, J. Wardlaw, J. Todd.
Kick-off is at 11.30 p.m.

railway timetables between Kirkcaldy and both Edinburgh and Dundee!

Rugby in Scotland was in a buoyant state. New Clubs sprung up in most districts and existing sides were able to field additional fifteens. Kirkcaldy fielded five teams on a memorable day in October 1966. This trend continued through the next decade with Kirkcaldy apparently on an upward path.

In the September of 1966 Kirkcaldy had another first – this time playing under floodlights. A match had been arranged in the Midlands Cup between Perthshire and Kirkcaldy on the South Inch. A kick-off at 5.50pm meant that many players could not get away from their work in time – hence the game was switched to Howe of Fife's Duffus Park with a later start.

The old unofficial championship was attracting more and wider criticism. Ambitious clubs found trying to gain entry was well nigh impossible. At the 1966 AGM of the Scottish Rugby Union a delegate from a Glasgow club suggested the Union investigate the possibility of some form of competitive rugby. The result – he was slapped down in no uncertain terms! It was to be a long stony road before a system of league rugby came into being. Eventually, at the 1972 annual meeting, a motion requiring the SRU to organise

a national league system was proposed and passed. Kirkcaldy Rugby Football Club found themselves in the fourth division which comprised of twelve teams. There were five leagues in total with the fifth divided into west and east sections. These were the national leagues and below that were several district leagues that fed into divisions – a form of pyramid allowing teams to truly develop.

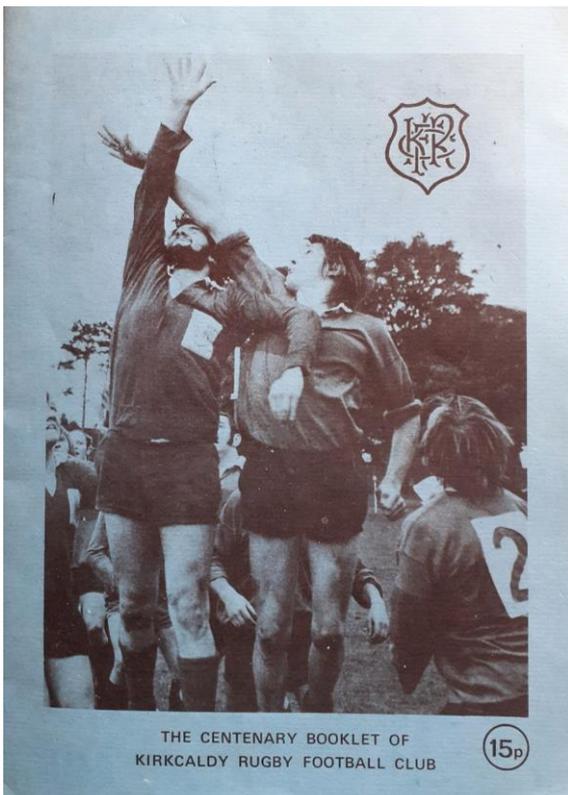
So, it came about that Kirkcaldy travelled to Troon for their first national league game against Marr and returned with a 6-3 win. League rugby was not plain sailing for Kirkcaldy in that first season, ending in the lower reaches of the table. It was a long unrelenting stay in that division as they watched many of their old rivals move upwards and onwards.

It was in 1973 that Kirkcaldy Rugby Club celebrated their centenary. There are five major points to mention, although many smaller functions took place over the year. The first was a match against the illustrious Hawick RFC one of the greatest names in border and league rugby. This challenge match took place prior to the commencement of the new



league championship which Hawick duly won in 1973/74. A poster advertising the match is reproduced here. Secondly, a celebratory dinner was held in the Station Hotel in October 1973. The guest of honour was Charlie Drummond, a celebrated Melrose and Scotland player, who won 11 caps between 1947 and 1950. He was soon to be installed as the President of the Scottish Rugby Union for the season 1974/75.

The celebrations continued into the following year, when, in the March, Kirkcaldy Town Council hosted a Civic Reception for the Club. It was all rounded off with another challenge match between the 1st XV and a team mainly composed of former players.



A booklet outlining both the history of the Club and celebrating the centenary was produced by John Methven and the late George Ballantine. An illustration of the cover of the booklet is shown here.

In 1978-79, their sixth season in the Division they at last achieved their aim of promotion. Even then they made it hard for themselves – losing the first two games of their

eleven match programme to Musselburgh and Aberdeen University. The omens had been good before the league season started – as they strode triumphantly through six friendly games undefeated. They were installed as everyone's favourites for promotion. The defeats in the first two games effectively meant that they had to win their next nine games. There had been eight straight victories before travelling to Motherwell to face the in-form Dalziel. Backed by hundreds of supporters, they edged a nervy game by two penalties to nil and secured the second promotion place behind the winners Musselburgh.

At the heart of Kirkcaldy rugby for over 40 years Harry Moultrie (1920-1992), Head of Physical Education at Kirkcaldy High School, transmitted his love for the game to countless boys. He was an outstanding 1st XV stand-off for a decade after the war. After his playing days were over, he served the club in various capacities including President from 1963-1967. Most of all he is remembered for his time on the Selection Committee. No matter the level of the game 1st XV or 4th XV his booming voice could be heard with many of the phrases associated with him:-

“Red mist, forwards, red mist”.

Harry Moultrie's work in Kirkcaldy High School helped to increase the playing strength of the club as former pupils, who had learnt the game at school, carried on at Beveridge Park.

By the 1970s rugby came into other secondary schools and Balwearie High School became a fruitful source of players as rugby declined at the High School.

The year 1996/97, while not winning any promotions, was one of the finest in the Club's long history. The team reached the semi-final of the National Cup competition only to lose to Melrose in a controversial tie at Galashiels. The Midlands Cup was retained and four sevens competitions were won – Midlands, Howe of Fife, Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy's own competition. It was also a season when no fewer than nine members of the first team squad appeared for Caledonia Reds in the Heineken European Cup matches.

The season 1998/99 saw the Club almost make it to the First Division but, in the end, they had to settle for third place. However, the place in the sun was not to be denied and in 1999/2000 Kirkcaldy achieved the improbable dream of reaching the peak of Scottish club rugby – Division One. The team finished the season as

runners-up to champions Boroughmuir – but that was enough to clinch promotion.

Striving for this day since the formation of the leagues, Kirkcaldy opened their first season in the top division, on the 2nd September 2000, with a trip to play Glasgow Hawks at Old Anniesland. Although beaten 56-15 the team were not to be denied.

A week later, on the 9th of September at the Beveridge Park, Kirkcaldy beat Currie by 28-23.

The team remained in the top league that season, but sadly it could not be sustained and relegation followed in 2001-02.

While it was a short stay in the premier league – the history books show that the fine old club made it to the top.

International Travel to Far Flung Places

For nearly 120 years Kirkcaldy Rugby Club had rarely ventured out of Scotland to play a fixture. That all changed in 1990 when a party of players and officials travelled to

Siberia
to play
three
fixtures
in

Companies queue up to sponsor Kirkcaldy

THREE MAJOR companies are negotiating with Kirkcaldy Rugby Club with a view to sponsoring them on a tour to the Soviet Union this summer (writes **OUR RUGBY REPORTER**).

The club are to break new ground by becoming the first ever western sports club to visit Siberia.

Rugby is the region's most popular sport and there are reports of crowds regularly exceeding 20,000 for club matches.

Kirkcaldy intend to bring out a special brochure to record this historic occasion.

An announcement on a sponsorship deal is expected within the next few weeks.

Rugby



Fife team face warm reception in Siberia

KIRKCALDY Rugby Club should be fit and raring to go when the new season gets under way.

They've organised a series of pre-season games ... in Siberia!

The 5000-mile trip is the brainchild of Alex Kilgour, of the Sporting Partnership in Kirkcaldy, and one-time treasurer of the club.

Krasnoyarsk, a city nearly 3,000 miles east of Moscow. This tour came about the previous year when a Soviet Students Team visited Scotland and made contact with Kirkcaldy officials proposing that the Kirkcaldy team travel to Russia. Sponsorship and extensive fundraising made this possible. Once again, it was Alex Kilgour who played a major part in setting up the venture which attracted national media coverage. Before this tour Kirkcaldy had struggled in the bottom half of the old Second Division. From the 1990/91

season Kirkcaldy became a serious contender in this Division, leading eventually to promotion to the top league. Who says travel does not broaden the mind?

Innovations - Children, Youths and Women's Rugby

From the mid 1970s the SRU encouraged clubs to run youth sides (16-18 years old) aimed at boys who had left school. Kirkcaldy were slow to react but picked up towards the end of the decade. In fact by 1980 they had a full complement of youth sides backed up by a mini rugby programme (later renamed "Wee Blues") for primary age boys and girls.

The success of this initiative soon arrived with the Kirkcaldy under 18 team twice winning the

National Under 18 Championship at Murrayfield. They vanquished Melrose in 1981 and Grangemouth the following year.

The youth section had expanded rapidly and became the primary source of players for the senior teams. The leading figure in Kirkcaldy youth rugby in its early days was Tom Whyte (1943-2004), coach of the successful Under 18 teams and later of the 1st XV itself. Tom came to Kirkcaldy from Prestonpans as a young man and soon became a regular in the 1st XV. His playing career came to an unfortunate end in 1967 when he suffered a horrendous leg break in a game against Boroughmuir. This led to his spending more than a decade on the sidelines before the arrival of youth rugby in Kirkcaldy. His was an unrivalled enthusiasm for the game and with his low gravelly voice he always made his presence felt. After he finished coaching he became the 1st XV manager in which he brought his own dedication to the post. Sadly, Tom's life was cut short when he contracted motor neuron disease which brought about his untimely death in 2004.

Yet another playing innovation came a decade later with the formation of a women's team. Women's rugby had been established elsewhere in the UK and in the Southern Hemisphere. An international match between Scotland and

Ireland which was played at Raeburn Place on Valentine's Day 1993 created enthusiasm for women's rugby. The game spread rapidly over the Forth and Kirkcaldy formed a women's side in 1994. The side continues to flourish and several players have won international honours and a number of cups have adorned the trophy cabinet. Last season, Kirkcaldy won the National League title and, through its promotion of the women's game, has become a hub for girls' rugby in Fife.

The 21st Century at the Beveridge Park

Towards the end of the 2001-02 season the Club secured the services of New Zealander, Mike O'Donovan, who held the post of joint First Team Coach with Andy Henderson. Their efforts were widely appreciated to the extent that, in 2003,

Henderson was lured away to be Head Coach at Melrose. By this time future international Rob Dewey had moved from Madras to Kirkcaldy where he proved a real asset before moving onto Heriots and then joining the professional ranks with Edinburgh Rugby. He was capped by Scotland while with Edinburgh.

Unfortunately, the Club had to dispense with the services of O'Donovan through financial constraints which saw a rapid downward spiral in playing fortunes. Relegation to the third tier

inevitably ensued and four seasons were spent at that level.

From the mid 1990s intake from the youth section declined with numbers falling. The 4th XV had gone and the 3rd XV had an intermittent existence. Although the club appointed a full time Development Officer in the form of Quintan Sanft support from local secondary schools was negligible and this was reflected in the youth teams. Nevertheless, a good senior squad was assembled and, after a close fight with Gala and Peebles in 2007-08, the team just missed out on a return to the second division. However, promotion was only delayed for a year with the third division championship won in 2008-09.

A positive first season in the Second Division was followed by relegation in the second, despite a late rally. At the same time the 2nd XV dropped out of the National Reserve League set-up and now find themselves in a Midlands Division where the opposition is more congenial.

At the Club's 140th anniversary, the 1st XV was in the Regionalised Championship "B" Division, the old third division. Although there had been further player losses, a more encouraging movement of young players into the senior ranks had been welcomed. The Committee accepted that it would take time for the players to gain the

necessary experience but felt that the prospects for further advancement were good.

The 2020s, Coronavirus and the Future

The 2020s, the decade in which the club will celebrate its sesqui-centenary has posed a new set of problems. First, the rapid spread of the deadly coronavirus wiped out the latter stages of the 2019-20 season without the usual promotion and relegation issues being sorted out. The SRU made strenuous efforts to re-start in the Autumn of 2020 but the arrival in Scotland of an even deadlier strain saw not a single club game being played, although the Autumn tests and the Six Nations took place behind closed doors.

Most clubs saw a drift away from rugby when a regular programme of fixtures resumed in 2021. No longer could Kirkcaldy field four or five teams and at the start of season 2022/2023 the Club struggled to field a 2nd XV. Kirkcaldy were by no means alone in their predicament as clubs up and down the country faced similar challenges.

As the club edges towards its 150 years there is always the hope that theirs will be a brighter and better tomorrow.

The 50 Objects Team is grateful to John for giving his time and enthusiasm so willingly in the production of this story. We always knew that

John was the only man for the job – and so it proved.

What we did not expect, and possibly had no right to expect, was just how dedicated John would be in its production. He has given us many hours of his time both at his home and in the clubhouse. His study is a shrine to; Kirkcaldy rugby, Scottish rugby, and sport in general. His collection of artefacts and photographs would do credit to a museum.

We only have one criticism of the story and that is John has not included himself in the Personalities section. From where we stand, John Methven has been and still is Kirkcaldy Rugby.

A Selection of Team Photos from the Clubhouse





...and an interesting caricature to finish with

