

THE STORY OF THE YEARS

1876 - 1899.

*"it is not important to win but to take part;
In life it is more important to play our part bravely than to conquer."*

The Durham County Rugby Union may with every justification be regarded as having come into existence on 10th October 1876, when a preliminary meeting of the organisers was held to discuss "ways and means." This was followed on October 31st by the first recorded meeting of Club representatives under the chairmanship of P. B. Junor, when there were present:- G. Hateley (Houghton), J. H. Twining (Durham University), J. D. Walker (Bensham), W. S. Young (Westoe), R. Young (Sunderland), G. M. D. Trotter (Stockton) and J. H. Brooks (Darlington).

The only business was the election of Durham School to membership of the Union but it may well be imagined that a full, if somewhat academic, discussion took place regarding the organisation of the Union's affairs. To appreciate the position fully it must be remembered that the Clubs were few in number, and not too well established; that there was as yet no Union in existence in Northumberland; and that the Yorkshire-Lancashire strongholds appeared considerably more distant than they do to-day.

The only recorded official at this time was J. H. Brooks of Darlington who retained the Honorary Secretaryship from 1876 to 1980, Darlington as befitted the first Club to be formed in the County (1863) took a leading part in the earliest councils, and together with Sunderland (formed 1870) inaugurated the first annual club tours into Yorkshire. These two Clubs also provided the majority of the players for the County XV, and almost certainly the "sinews of war."

The Committee of those days met at rare intervals, and on September 20th 1877 the attendance was four, when P. G. Junor was formally elected Captain as will be seen from his biographical sketch elsewhere. County matches also were rare events in the early years and since the game was largely influenced from Yorkshire it is not surprising that the initial matches were invariably with that County, although a match was played against Northumberland (possibly the Club of that name) in 1876. Howbeit, in 1877-78 there is mention of " trial matches " being held and " county " football was beginning to grip the imagination of the Committee.

The first reference to more distant Counties comes in 1878 when a match with Lancashire was played at Whalley Range, Manchester. This "excited very considerable interest," but neither players nor scorers are mentioned by name in current Press reports, and the most prominent feature of the game appears to have been the hot dispute which arose over one of Lancashire's tries. Northumberland and Durham played as a combined team on this occasion, the Counties' representation being approximately equal.

Great developments commenced in 1879 when the Committee included J. Eden, J. W. Sowerby, J. T. Todd, H. Hill, J. J. Kayll, W. Hallimond, Hutchinson, and C. Kidson. The Hartlepoons Club was elected to membership; "conversations" took place regarding the inauguration of a Challenge Cup Competition based on the Yorkshire organization, and the Clubs appear to have become genuinely "County conscious." The results of the hard work of the pioneers bore fruit in the following season when the Northumberland Union was founded and the first official match took place between these Counties. At this stage too, we have the first mention of a Selection Committee while the General Committee began to hold frequent meetings and transact business with regularity. Among other items of importance which appear in the Minutes may be noted the creation of the County constitution in which each Club in membership was allowed its representation (the Committee being limited however to twenty members), and the adoption of maroon as the County colour. Mr. Arthur Laing (Sunderland) was elected the first "Chairman" (later to become the first President) with Mr. J. T. Todd his vice-chairman.

Prior to this season the County XV seems to have been selected somewhat autocratically and in the main from the Darlington, Durham City, Sunderland and Houghton Clubs and from Durham University. The creation of a Selection Committee affords clear evidence of the growing influence and playing strength of the other Clubs in the Union and it is not surprising to find that the two County XV's of 1880-81 were drawn from as many as ten clubs.

The commencement of the Challenge Cup Competition in season 1880-81 appears to have increased the popularity of the game in truly remarkable fashion and new clubs sprang up as a consequence in every direction. Though helpful to the development of the game in its initial stages it is very much open to doubt whether the Cup Competitions (increased to five in later years) still remain genuinely beneficial.

Season 1881-82 saw a radical change in the disposition of the County XV with the introduction of a third threequarter, and this innovation probably marked the decline of the old "rough and tumble," and further development of the more open game in accordance with the principles already in vogue in Scotland and the South of England and as originally introduced by Junor and Boyd. County victories were rare at this stage -

not one of the matches played between December 1876 and February 1884 was won - but the foundations of later strength were being soundly laid.

The Hartlepoons Club had become members of the Union in 1879-90. In 1883 they amalgamated with a junior club, Hartlepool Rovers, which sprang straight into fame and has ever since contributed magnificently to the strength of the Union both on the playing field and in administrative affairs. It is only fitting that the first member of this Club to be honoured with a County Cap should have been Arthur Hill, whose career as a player extended from 1879 to 1890 and who subsequently rendered long and invaluable service to the Union in various official capacities.

The period 1883 onwards is memorable not so *much by* reason of successes gained as for the wealth of outstanding Personalities, and it would be worth a long journey to see in action a composite XV of players of the 'eighties including say, H. B. Tristram (Eng.); F. W. Purves, F. R. Simpson and H. Brooks; C. H. Newman (Wales) and E. A. Douglas (Camb. Univ.); A. Hill, J. W. Sowerby, W. H. Towers (Wales), W. L. Oakes, C. H. Elliot (Eng.), B. Cox, F. E. Pease (Eng.), R. Barwick and W. Yiend (Eng.).

With the scanty material at our disposal, it was found impossible to deal at greater length with the achievements of the players during the 1880-90 period. We are, in consequence, compelled (very regretfully) to leave the amplification of their undoubted merits to the rather cold columns devoted to match results. Several are, of course, mentioned in biographies.

Internal development naturally brought greater outside activity in its train - Cumberland were new opponents, met in 1883; Lancashire appeared in the official fixture list in 1884; and although Cheshire were not included in Durham's programme until 1887 the "Northern Group" was now firmly established.

Durham County became a member of the Rugby Football Union in 1882, and in the following year the Hon. Secretary (J. A. Blackwood) attended the annual general meeting, together with a meeting of County representatives convened to settle the already difficult question of players' County qualifications. Apparently there was no regular representation upon the R.F.U. Committee until 1885 when J. T. Todd's long service as player-administrator was marked by his election to the governing body. One well known authority suggests that C. Kidson was the first North Countryman to have a seat on the R.F.U. Committee, presumably in the late seventies (he died in 1881). No confirmation of this is however forthcoming from Rugby Union headquarters.

Several unfamiliar names appear among the Clubs in membership at this time-the list including Crook, Humbledon, Seaham Harbour, and Gateshead Institute (all long since defunct), as well as Boldon which with Sunderland Rovers was represented on the General Committee.

No minutes are available for several seasons after 1884-85 and it is therefore difficult to single out the important developments of the County's domestic economy. 1888-89 was however a memorable season-marked by the adoption of scoring by "points," side by side with the institution of the County Championship (first system) which was virtually decided by the award of the R.F.U. Committees This season also saw the arrival of F. H. R. Alderson whose very considerable achievements are detailed in the section reserved for biographies.

The decade 1890-1899 is marked historically by the great " split " over payment for broken time which almost ruined the Yorkshire and Lancashire Unions. That they have long since more than recovered all their old prestige is common knowledge, but it is not so well remembered that it was largely the North East Unions which kept the amateur game in a flourishing state while the Counties of the Roses were slowly and painfully recovering.

An analysis confined solely to the last ten years of this period, reveals: 43 matches played, of which 19 were won, 21 lost and the remaining 3 drawn.

The host of stalwarts of the Tudhoe Club, then at the zenith of its short history of 21 years, include those hard battling forwards: A. Stephenson, A. J. Troupe, T. J. Lindsay, T. Faulkner, and T. Stitt; collectively they appeared 80 times in the maroon colours. A couple of grand " halves " in F. Marston and F. Hindle, with, respectively, 22 and 10 County appearances, together with W. Wainford (10) and J. Gordon (22), both polished three-quarters, and Walter Taylor at full-back (see later period). These and many others too numerous to mention, rendered meritorious service to the County, and incidentally assisted their club in four successful Cup Finals.

Most of the other great personalities who came to the fore during these years, are referred to in the biographical section, i.e., W. Yiend, John Hall, F. C. Lohden, R. F. Oakes and G. C. Kerr, all internationals (and all forwards, be it noted), W. H. Bell, the brothers Crow, G. S. Legard, S. Morfitt, C. Y. Adamson, J. T. Thompson and E. W. Elliot.

Among others whose achievements demand special mention are: T. Burt, who made 20 appearances; H. Walker, 16, and later 4 for Yorkshire; J. Wheatley of Houghton, Sunderland and Hartlepool Rovers, and J. Geenty of West Hartlepool, were four renowned forwards.

Likewise, the career of C. T. B. Wilkinson is of interest, an old Etonian who came to Hatfield Hall, Durham University, without previous experience of Rugby football, he soon outstripped most of his contemporaries and as a forward he played for the "North" in 1890.

Among the backs we have W. E. Kassell, who came from Hull, he was a very reliable "centre"; J. J. Gowans of Westoe, a burly, strong-running "wing," who went from Harrow to Cambridge, where he secured his "Blue," playing twice against Oxford, and he also gained eight Scottish international caps. Though frequently selected, Gowans played only in four County games preferring to assist London Scottish. He was also a first-rate wicket-keeper, and would have secured his cricket "Blue" but for a damaged hand.

James Jollie Gowans rose to the rank of Lt.-Colonel in the war, having previously gained the D.S.O. in the Boer War. His remaining five brothers all gained distinction in naval and military service; two of whom, F. J. and T., each played in one County match. Colonel Gowans died in South Africa in April, 1936, aged 63.

THE HALCYON ERA, 1900-1909.

(In collaboration with G. E. Carter.)

*"What idle progeny succeed
To chase the rolling circle's speed
Or urge the flying ball?"* *(Gray).*

What is this ten-year era to which we dare give so high sounding a title? A glance at the tables and "graph" on pages 202-203 will, we venture to think, provide ample justification for our temerity and free us from any charge of undue flattery.

In addition to holding a ten-year monopoly of the Northern Group Championship, Durham was champion County of England six times (once joint-holders with Devon, following two drawn games), and "runners-up" the remaining four seasons. During this wonderful period we scored 740 points to our opponents 293.

Including J. E. Hutchinson, who played for Durham City and Northumberland County, these years produced no less than eighteen Internationals, of whom nine were forwards, six were three-quarters, two appeared at "half" and one at full-back; it will be seen that every position in a Rugby XV figures in the list. We should mention that we include Bob Poole in our calculations, for whilst he secured his England cap in 1896, he continued playing for the County right up to 1903.

There is no question of our being extravagant in our estimate of the prowess of the players who so raised the prestige of Durham Rugby. In addition to international honours, they achieved no less than 81 North, South or Trial caps, and from this illustrious brotherhood, we provided England with two Captains in the persons of Bernard Oughtred and Jack Taylor.

Their versatility is displayed in that C. Y. Adamson, E. W. Elliot, N. S. A. Harrison and A. L. Scott-Owen played cricket for Durham County; and, their playing days over, saw Messrs. A. G. Murrell, G. E. Carter and G. E. Summerscales rise to high office in the Councils of the Union. This legislative sequence would be incomplete should we omit to mention that Harry Coverdale has been, for several years, a colleague of Bob Oakes, on the International Selection Committee.

Five names appear amongst those who have taken part in Overseas tours: C. Y. Adamson, A. Ayre-Smith, E. M. Harrison, F. E. Chapman and W. A. Robertson; the first four of whom were "natives," the last claiming Dundee as his birthplace, and as "Dundee Robertson" he will always be known in local Rugby circles-by the way, no one appears to be able to provide an adequate reason for "Dundee's" selection for an *English* trial in 1912! We must also add that S. Horsley (Captain 1903) and C. E. Pumphrey secured their "Blues" whilst up at Cambridge.

April 7th, 1900, is a red-letter day in the history of Durham County Rugby; by our victory over Devon at Exeter, 11 points to 3, we won the County Championship for the first time. It had taken us 23 seasons to achieve this distinction, yet throughout "shadow and sunshine, the same spirit endured." A proud day, too, for Walter Taylor, this true product of Tudhoe who had the honour of leading the team to final victory; and may not we derive additional gratification from knowing that, with probably two exceptions, the men who achieved this honour were Durham born.

Season 1901-02 is memorable for several reasons: all matches played were won (not since 1873 could this claim be sustained), and for the first time in our somewhat chequered career, we registered zero points to a meagre 19 scored by our opponents. In the final against Gloucestershire at Kingsholm, Gloucester, J. T. Taylor gave one of the finest individual exhibitions of centre three-quarter play, which left even the most jaundiced of West Country critics "silver-tongued in admiration".

This season witnessed the illustration of a player's rapid rise from club to international status - J. Jewitt, after playing two or three games for Hartlepool Rovers was selected for the County against Cheshire and Northumberland only; nevertheless, he twice got into the North side and completed the sequence by securing a place in the English XV v. Wales. Contemporary press comments, and others, were convinced it was a case of mistaken identity: J. Auton, and possibly another forward, having much stronger claims.

Two of the main, factors of the strength of the team this season were Taylor's value as a tactician and goal-kicker - he scored 11 of the 15 goals despite the fact that he missed two matches through injury - and E. J. Joicey's strong and determined running. Mention of this grand half-back justifies us in quoting the opinion of one of the soundest critics of Rugby known to us. Writing at a later date, this authority echoed the true feelings of most North Country followers in these words:

"Joicey's consistently good displays both last season and this have, in the opinion of most of the recognized critics of Rugby, fully earned him the highest honours of the game. Why he has been left out of the North side is quite beyond comprehension. Perhaps he is fated to be listed in Rugby annals as the best 'uncapped' half of his time."

It was during this season also that we had the unpleasant experience of losing a senior club, "hook, line and sinker," for South Shields joined the Northern Union (later League); their efforts to discover the "New Jerusalem" failed lamentably, and by 1904 they were labelled "defunct" !

Durham's record for 1902-03 was very similar to that of the previous year; all matches being won, save the non-championship fixture against the Rest of England at West Hartlepool.

A tit-bit of this match was the surprise occasioned by B. S. Wellock, who came to us from Yorkshire, overhauling Tommy Simpson, the Northumberland flyer, when the latter was going all out."

This meeting with the "Rest" was unfortunately marred by an excessive amount of rough play; the spectators also got somewhat out of hand and are charged with giving expression to partisan views. This caused us much merriment! Coming so very late in our researches, it worried us not at all. Analyse some of these *facts*, they are all hurdles safely negotiated.

1866. "We settle our own differences, thank you."

1876. "Recorded as drawn; one try disputed."

1886. The Senior Cup withdrawn from competition.

1896. Rugby Union appoint Referee, the two Counties concerned failed to agree upon an official satisfactory to both sides.

1906. " The postponement only taking place at 1 o'clock on the Saturday, although the strong frost had endured solidly for 48 hours, caused the visiting County Executive to be somewhat outspoken regarding unnecessary inconvenience and expense – and rightly so. Several instances of poor staff work are to be found in the Northern Group about this time."

1916. Spot of bother with Hitler's predecessors.

1926 International Captain threatens to lead his team from the field, should certain practices not cease forthwith !

1936. This book inflicted upon a long-suffering Rugby public.

Who now dare dispute that the game forever will remain far greater than any individual? Great stuff - this Rugby!

We return to season 1902-03. The " points for " rose to 108 and by a strange coincidence, once again our opponents could not pass the 19 mark, and it is as well to record that we were without the services of J. T. Taylor for four out of the seven matches played. We rejoiced, however, in the return of Charles Adamson after three years' absence abroad, followed by a short stay in Bristol, where he rendered good service to the club of that name.

This season brought to a close the career of Bernard Oughtred, so far as Durham County was concerned; owing to removal to Hull, his future lay with Yorkshire. We deal with the achievements of these two outstanding personalities in the biographical section.

The closing down of the Iron Works at Tudhoe can, in addition to the resultant distress which was caused in that area, be chronicled as a tragedy for Durham Rugby, seeing the demise of the Tudhoe club resulted directly therefrom. J. Gordon had already migrated to Hamsteels and this season saw the end of Jack Carmedy's career. Collectively, Carmedy, Stephenson and Frater had appeared in sixty-odd matches for the County; they were true exponents of all that is best in scrummage work.

The season terminated with an exceedingly " close call " in the Final v. Kent at West Hartlepool. Shortly after half-time J. T. Taylor dropped one of his usual goals, and on to this slender lead Durham grimly held until close upon time, when Kent scored wide out, the kick at goal missed by the proverbial hair's breadth.

Season 1903-04 was not quite so spectacular as those immediately preceding, but for a forward pass, almost under the goal posts, the result of the first match (against Yorkshire) would have been reversed. For the rest, we leave the tables section to tell its own story, save a passing comment on the Final v. Kent, again. Bearing in mind Durham's good fortune in last year's Final, perhaps it was but poetic justice that Kent, who had the assistance of E. T. Morgan, the famous Welsh three-quarter, should triumph in this encounter at Blackheath. Admittedly, not more than two points divided the teams at " No side," and some enlightenment might be derived from press comments, made previous to the game, upon the dropping of H. Measor from the position of full-back; there was no one afield capable of converting either of the two tries Durham registered, at least one of which was in an easy position. Now Measor had, throughout that season, kicked no less than 58 goals (of all denominations) for club and county, scoring 130 points by the " boot " alone. It was " all Lombard Street to a china orange " he would have popped at least one of those kicks over the bar. Strange how many of these victories and defeats hung upon the slender thread of FOOT-ball!

The succeeding seasons of 1904-05 and 1905-06 call for little comment; though it is as well to record that the Final v. Middlesex in the former season was contested in a sea of mud against a team comprising several internationals, most of whom were importations, whereas Jack Taylor alone of the Durham team possessed an international trophy. The conditions being all against handling, the Durham forwards took charge and succeeded in winning through; successful place-kicking was practically impossible.

The Final with Devon at Exeter in March, 1906, in which Durham were well beaten, is remembered nevertheless for the unfortunate, yet severe, injury to Charles Adamson during the first few minutes of the match (he took no further part in the game), and also for a grand exhibition of wing three-quarter play by Harry Imrie, which was thoroughly appreciated by an enthusiastic and admiring crowd, who were equally generous in bestowing applause upon victor and vanquished alike. The Durham players of this generation retain nothing but friendly memories of their encounters with Devon.

The first "All Blacks" visit earlier in this season is dealt with in a later section.

We were undefeated in Championship matches during 1906-07. This season will ever remain memorable for those homeric contests with Devon; they provide a glorious example of "two sides mingling together subdued by the great goddess Thirst, like the English and French by the streams in the Pyrenees." Following the replayed final-tie at Exeter, the teams dined together and the committees of their respective Unions decided there should be no further match, whatever higher authority might say to the contrary. They were determined to hold the County Championship jointly, after two such glorious fights—two tries only being scored in 160 minutes' play. The almost fifty years history of the Championship contains no other occasion of a joint holdership.

The Exeter crowd again gave Durham a truly magnificent reception; Harry Imrie's crashing touch-line runs thrilled the onlookers.

Season 1907-08 was one of comparatively low scoring, Charles Adamson's wonderful goal-kicking being responsible for 27 of the 60 points scored.

The Cumberland match was staged at Winlaton, the only occasion the County have played there; against which the elements protested strongly, for a fierce gale blew so hard that, from an attempted "drop-out" the ball, after crossing the "twenty-five," was carried back behind the dead line.

The Cheshire match could not be played owing to fog; no rearrangement was necessary as the result could have no bearing upon Durham's position at the head of the Northern Group.

The Final v. Cornwall at Redruth was played on an ideal " cricket Saturday," a real scorcher ! Durham were handicapped in having to field three wing men in the three-quarter line (Fred Chapman's absence being sorely felt); and this section of the team failed to cope with the strong Solomon and Bennetts combination (later internationals). Durham also lacked the services of T. Hogarth, an international forward. Cornwall well deserved their victory, though luck came to Charles Adamson, the Durham Captain, in a distorted form, in this his final county match.

The 1908-09 season witnessed the last success of Durham in the County Championship. It is also to be remembered for the visit of the Australians and for the necessity of a deciding match v. Cumberland, to settle the Northern Group leadership.

The game with the Australians at Hartlepool afforded ample evidence that preconceived plans, fitness and excellent physique are essential factors to success. Our visitors brought nothing new to light by way of tactics, but they certainly proved that a team composed of fifteen thoroughly fit men is invariably able to hold its own, and more, against fifteen units, no matter how individually skilful these units may be.

The first meeting with Cumberland was another of those gruelling contests which have distinguished these encounters. The result 4_3 in favour of Cumberland vividly recalled the Whitehaven match of 1904. The replay at Durham witnessed one of the most spectacular dropped goals in the annals of local Rugby. Cumberland were leading six points to three, when right on time, Dan Ellwood dropped a goal from half-way, giving Durham a single point victory—and as a result the vexed question of the value of a dropped goal caused much discussion and not a little abuse!

The Final v. Cornwall at Hartlepool justified (more or less) those " prophets " who, twelve months previously, maintained that, had Durham's original selections been available at Redruth, the result might have been reversed. In this second encounter, Jack Taylor's steadiness and usual accurate kicking, allied to Chapman's brilliant running and swerving, together with Coverdale's versatility (this was Coverdale's only County appearance; he scored seven of the twelve points registered), stood out as dominant factors of a team that was thoroughly well together. A victory by twelve points to nil fully compensated for the previous season's defeat.

A summary of Durham's encounters, with the remaining five members of the Northern Group throughout the glorious ten year era reveals a truly noble record and emphasizes her superiority.

Opponents.	P.	W.	L.	D.	Points.	
					For.	Against.
Cheshire	9	8	1		110	33
Cumberland	12	9	2	1	160	25
Northumberland	10	10			171	52
Lancashire	11	10		1	126	34
Yorkshire	10	8	2		110	71
	52	45	5	2	677	215

It will surprise not a few people to learn that, in those days Gold Medals were presented by the County Union, to the players who contributed to the winning of the County Championship; this practice no longer obtains. Matthew Hall, the Westoe and County forward, sailed for Canada before the completion of the 1906-07 season; twelve years later, following his service with the Canadian Forces in France, he was presented with his trophy by F. W. Marsh, the Honorary Secretary (*vide* R. Ayre).

These great years produced some sterling full-backs; starting with Bob Poole as the last line of defence, to be followed in turn by J. Hogg, who incidentally won a North cap, and N. C. Neilson, though slight of build, occasionally figured in this Position as well as at centre. The latter years found this onerous and frequently thankless job safe in the keeping of Dan Ellwood. These men aggregate 102 County matches, of which Poole and Ellwood claim 72.

There appears elsewhere in this book a list of players who have fourteen or more County appearances to their credit. In no way do we wish to labour this aspect of the game, or to overburden this chapter with figures of a similar nature; we may, however, be excused the mere mention of the fact that, this era produced in G. E. Summerscales, J. T. Taylor and G. E. Carter, three players who took part in no less than 141 County matches.

Of the outstanding three-quarters of the period, C. Y. Adamson, E. W. Elliot, N. S. Cox, J. T. Taylor and F. E. Chapman are dealt with in the biographical section. Mention has already been made of H. M. Imrie, who secured two international and two North caps and who played 23 times for Durham; and also of Walter Taylor, who was equally at home either at full-back or on the wing; his ten years of service comprised 29 matches.

Jack Gordon of Tudhoe, and latterly Hamsteels, has to his credit a County career extending over seven seasons, during which he played 22 games and displayed his kicking ability by converting nine tries and dropping a couple of goals.

B. S. Wellock, who came to West Hartlepool from Yorkshire, was a real "flyer" on the wing; not always did he find favour with the selectors during seven years' service, but fourteen outings and nine tries are the measure of his usefulness.

Philip Clarkson of Sunderland, and, we believe, occasionally of North Durham, was equally at home as a half-back or on the wing. He is credited with seventeen games and seven tries; and possesses the added distinction of being the first man to cross the line of the famous 1905 "All Blacks." He played in the North v. South match of 1905.

N. C. Neilson of Durham School, Sunderland, Winlaton Vulcans and Northern, had a lengthy though somewhat broken career extending over eight seasons with a total of seventeen matches. Injuries frequently accounting for his absence. He is numbered amongst those who fell in the war.

W. E. Heal of the Rovers must have kept himself pretty fit, seeing there is exactly eight years between the first and the last of his twenty games for Durham. In one season for his club he totalled 135 points; his County record is ten tries.

No fifteen that does not possess reliable half-backs can expect to travel far along the hard road that leads to success in Rugby. Durham commenced her halcyon era with W. Moffet (who died in 1935) and H. Gibbon; the former was a very sturdy fellow, an all-round athlete, and together they made an excellent combination which largely contributed to the initial success over Devon in 1900. Unfortunately injuries dissolved this successful partnership before the close of another season. We have already made reference to the sprightly E. J. Joicey. For two seasons in the mid-period, H. Wallace of West Hartlepool gave excellent service, including two finals and a really first-class exhibition against the original "All Blacks" of 1905.

Concerning Oughtred, Knaggs, Thompson, Sivewright and Pickersgill—see biographies.

TO ALL FORWARDS.

*"Wot makes the forward's 'cart to break, what raises of 'is gall?
It isn't getting up to line nor chasing o' the ball;
It's the everlasting shovin' and the universal call—
PUSH, BLAST YE!"*

"Bear you always in mind, the fundamentals of Rugby are sound scrummaging. Forwards are the basis of our game; their clash and counter-clash are as the Ark of the Covenant. See to it that you maintain them." Thus, spoke one of the greatest authorities on the game, and one whose name was to be known far outside the world of Rugby. This was thirty-odd years ago and to this day it remains a truism.

Durham has always produced rattling good forwards. We felt there would be a good deal lacking were we to attempt individual biographies--the two Georges, Carter and Summer-scales are the exceptions to this rule.

The great years saw the advent of those veritable hosts from the West Hartlepool Club, the names of Auton, Bradley, Duthie, Emerson, Havelock, Lewis, Moule and Waller readily come to mind; incidentally they were the sheet anchor in West's "ascendency over their illustrious neighbours, the Rovers, during which their club figure in eight cup-finals in nine years. The Rovers, not to be outdone, supplied the County with, amongst others, such stalwarts as Boylen, Brittain, Carter, Hogarth and Pedersen. Durham City entered the lists with R. and J. Elliott (they are not brothers), W. H. Phillips and G. E. Summerscales. Amongst others too numerous to mention, are M. Hall of Westoe, J. Smith, Hartlepool Old Boys, and C. J. H. Stock of the University and Sunderland.

A certain critic, generally considered the soundest of his day, records as follows:

"There is no doubt that the Durham pack is the best section of the team. Once these forwards settled to the business in hand they left very little to be desired."

We are well aware of having done but scant justice to these warriors. We can only plead that "the knowing was not there."

Throughout these fruitful years, the affairs of the County Union were safeguarded by a sound and far-seeing body of men. The office of President was ably filled by the following:-W. H. Bell and A. Hill (after their triumphs upon the field of play); H. E. Ferens who, from 1899 up to the time of his death in 1933, gave loyal and outstanding service. J. B. Johnson and T. F. Wilson, the latter of whom played both Cricket and Rugby for the County and who also occupied the office of honorary treasurer for twenty-odd years. The arduous duties which always fall upon the shoulders of all honorary secretaries, were shared by J. L. Parkinson and F. W. Marsh. For thirty years from 1895 Messrs. Bell, Hill and Ferens in turn represented our County upon the Rugby Football Union.

1910 - 1914.

*"Attempts to keep the nation fit
Show laudable ambition;
Rugby playing points the way,
Keep therefore in condition."*

The famine did in truth follow the feast. Durham's placing in the Northern Group dropped with considerable suddenness from the proud position of leaders to that of third, fourth, third and fourth again; to be

retrieved by determination and skill in 1914 when she once more headed the table.

As Jimmy Dingle's year " this season will go down in the annals of local Rugby; he scored sixteen tries in seven matches. Durham registered 165 points to her opponent's 66, but crashed " rather badly to the Midlands in the final.

A photograph of this season's XV is reproduced, and it is with sorrow mingled with pride that we have to record the death on War-service of no less than seven of these gallant fellows.

1919 - 1936.

The post-war record divides itself naturally into two periods, the first being marked by a long run of defeats which made old-timers sigh for the great days of 1899-1909, and the second seemingly almost the realization of their fondest dreams. So well defined are these periods that it will be convenient to deal with them separately.

1919-30.

The resumption of County football in 1919 found the Union faced with innumerable difficulties; not only was the pre-War organization scattered, but the clubs also were sadly denuded of experienced players. Reference is made elsewhere to those who had made the supreme sacrifice during the Great War, but sight must never be lost of the great number who had left the best five years of their young manhood in that nerve-shattering and body-maiming inferno by land, sea and air, and who returned to our playing-fields at best ill-fitted for the needs of our strenuous game.

Fortunately for this Union there were wise and loyal men ready to plan the necessary reorganization, notably H. E. Ferens, T. M. Swinburne, W. N. Nicholson, A. G. Murrell, G. R. Scott, W. J. Purvis, G. E. Carter and G. E. Summerscales, and with the opening of the 1919-20 season matters were already on a stable footing.

There have been very few subsequent changes in the personnel of the Union - W. J. Purvis having given continuous service of invaluable character in the exacting post of Hon. Treasurer since 1919, while G. E. Carter (who took over the Secretarial duties from F. W. Marsh in 1920) was succeeded by the present Secretary in 1924. The Referees' Society has been most ably organized by the Rev. Bertram Jones, R. O. Jenkins, K. E. Dunn, and C. W. Rood, whilst the County has represented on the Rugby Football Union by H. E. Ferens (who was President of the R.F.U. in 1925-26) and E. Watts Moses (1926 to present time).

The lamented deaths of T. M. Swinburne and H. E. Ferens in 1930 and 1933 deprived the County of two of its most distinguished and popular administrators whose services had been of incalculable value through many difficult years.

Reference to the tabulated results published elsewhere in this volume will show that there was little to enthuse over in our share of the County Championship between 1919-28. The most " successful " season was 1921-22 when two matches were won and a third drawn, but during the years 1919 to 1928 we were successful in only ten out of fifty matches, and indeed between the Cheshire match at Hartlepool on December 13th, 1924, and the corresponding fixture on December 8th, 1928, we must record eighteen defeats, one drawn game, and one abandoned owing to heavy snow - not a match was won! This refers to Championship matches only.

At least let it be recorded however that enthusiasm was never lacking on the part of players, committee or spectators, and the days of gloom were relieved by many fine exhibitions of dogged pluck and good sportsmanship. Personalities there were, too, in number, and the following come readily to mind:- C. V. Forslind, W. H. R. Alderson, G. Scott Page, A. M. Gelsthorpe (a distinguished soldier, and now a Missionary Bishop working in West Africa) W. Hill, A. C. Waddy, John McNall, H. Dawes, R. L. Clark, H. L. Lister, J. T. Webster, T. Short, A. A. Traill, G. S. Conway, J. G. Askew and H. A. Clayton Greene.

1919-20. The only pre-War players to participate in the Championship matches were F. E. Chapman, W. Hartas, W. Fenwick, A. M. Gelsthorpe, C. Pickersgill, and J. P. Sivewright, with the result that the selectors had to build up almost a new side. The results were not unpromising, and the victory over Cheshire at Birkenhead was a particularly fine performance. Twenty-eight players took part in the Championship matches, of whom twelve belonged to Hartlepool Rovers!

1920-21.

This season saw a genuine " missionary " effort when a Durham County XV visited Chesterfield to play a team raised by J. T. Todd, then prominently identified with the Derbyshire coalfield, and formerly a President of this Union. He later became first President of the Derbyshire R.U., which originated as the direct result of this match and has since become part of the " Combined Counties " of Notts., Lincs., and Derbyshire. With rare breaks due to the visits of Dominion teams, the Derbyshire match (played home and away in alternate years) has since served as a very valuable " final trial." On two occasions these games have been coupled with fixtures against other Midland counties, vs. Warwickshire (1929-30) and Leicestershire (1933-34).

The turning-point in Durham's fortunes was reached in 1928-29 when the points for (2g) and against (4g) came within reasonable compass, although only one match was won and a second drawn. This season was marked by the captaincy of B. Aarvold and the " discovery " of a new generation of players including J. Brooks, W. Gillespie, R. Powney, J. T. Roddham and S. D. Taylor, to whom much of the subsequent recovery was due. This gradual progress was accelerated in the following season when

C. D. Aarvold, A. C. Harrison, C. P. B. Goldson, A. McLaren and F. Nicholson made their first appearances, together with those stalwarts J. Storey, W. B. Allan and D. Lascelles. The points for and against were again within a reasonable range (32-55). One match only was lost by a margin exceeding four points, whilst the victory over Yorkshire, at Durham, is memorable as our first success over the neighbouring County since 1921.

During the whole of the lean period it was abundantly clear that the great need of Durham football was skilled leadership - with the exception of G. S. Conway, no outstanding player had been available to develop tactics, and it was all the more galling to know that C. D. Aarvold, J. A. Adamson, J. G. Askew and R. W. Smeddle were tied to their 'Varsity XV's and unable to help their own County. Three members of this Durham School quartette (later to be joined by W. T. Anderson) had a great influence on University and International football, and it is worthy of record that Adamson and Askew were the respective full-backs in the oxford v. Cambridge matches at Twickenham in 1929 and 1931. These five players totalled sixteen appearances in this match over a period of eight years.

In **1930-31**, for the first time since the War, the County scored more points than its opponents, while three matches were won. Lancashire, as on so many occasions, proved the toughest opponents, and our unexpected and stirring victory at Liverpool on a ground which resembled a lake was a tremendous incentive to Durham hopes of recovery. It is worth noting that John McNall played his greatest game for the County on this occasion and contributed very largely to the result. Although the defeat might have cost them the Group Championship, Lancs. took their disappointment in magnificent spirit, and no one who was present will ever forget the send-off which they gave Durham on our departure from Lime Street Station, also their genuine pleasure at our revival after years of misfortune.

Unhappily the team played badly against Cheshire and lost the privilege of meeting Lancs. and Yorks. in a triangular contest to decide the Group Championship. Only nineteen players were called upon during the season, of whom eleven appeared in every match.

1931-36.

With the nucleus of the previous season's young team augmented by E. C. Mercer and W. T. Anderson, under Carl Aarvold's captaincy, 1931-32 opened in promising fashion. The whole programme of matches aroused tremendous enthusiasm in the County, and it ultimately proved necessary to make provision at Blaydon for " gates " of 10,000 at the semi-final and between 11,000 and 12,000 at the Championship final.

Heavy scoring proved the rule in all matches save the final, and it is doubtful whether the County's total of 156 points in Championship matches has ever been exceeded. While the open back-play proved very

popular with the spectators, it must also be recorded that the forwards played with tremendous dash and many of their combined rushes proved irresistible. The team never appeared in danger of losing a match (prior to the final), except to Yorkshire, but it would be difficult to decide which victory gave the greatest pleasure. The Cheshire game at Birkenhead will probably live longest in the memory of Durham's special train load of supporters who witnessed it, nor will they readily forget the amazing transformation which occurred in the second half. Durham appeared lucky to lead at half-time by five points, having been on the defensive practically throughout, securing the ball only from one in ten of the fixed scrums. After the interval the forwards gave a brilliant display, and with the backs (particularly Mercer and Harrison) at the top of their form, Durham won by 24 points to nil, to receive a memorable ovation in which the Cheshire XV took a leading part.

Warwickshire had afforded indications of their strength when met on tour in 1929, and they proved to be popular visitors to Blaydon in the semi-final. A fast, open game played under splendid conditions revealed North Country football as far superior to that of the Midlands. The home score of 33 points to nil included 6 goals, and it was generally conceded that Durham won a most spectacular game with something in hand. The result gave reason to hope that the Championship would at last return to its former home; alas, such hopes were to prove vain.

Despite intensive preparations, the Blaydon enclosure was severely taxed by the attendance of approximately 11,700 at the Final. The weather, whilst dull, favoured fast, open football and the disappointing character of much of the play must be ascribed to the importance of the occasion. The visitors, having the advantage of successful appearances in the two preceding Finals, were the better side on the day; Durham failed to produce their best form and Gloucestershire ran out winners of a grim struggle by nine points to three. The only change from Durham's semi-final XV was MacNay for Smeddle (injured).

Eight players took part in all seven Championship matches (C. D. Aarvold, A. C. Harrison, E. C. Mercer, C. P. B. Goldson, R. Powney, D. Lascelles, F. Nicholson and Alex McLaren), while three other forwards missed one match only. The greatest anxiety of the selectors lay with the full-back position, which was occupied by three players before J. G. Askew became available, while changes were also found necessary at stand-off half and right-wing three-quarter. In the latter position R. W. Smeddle signaled his one appearance for the County, in the Semi-final v. Warwickshire, by scoring two tries and kicking four goals. The fact that, of the 24 players who took part in the Championship matches, thirteen appear in the list of scorers, affords ample proof of the all-round strength of the County in what may justly be regarded as one of Durham's greatest seasons.

1932-33. C. D. Aarvold, Anderson, Goldson and Askew were unavailable this season, while Mercer played in two matches only. A grave weakness developed at centre three-quarter and to this must be ascribed the disappointing results achieved. Three matches were lost (although by narrow margins) and the only one of note was that against Yorkshire at Morley, memorable for the magnificent display by D. Lascelles, who, playing his last game for the County before his departure for the East, was literally inspired. Goldson played for Hampshire this season and was a member of the XV which won the Championship for the first time. Durham was honoured with the first English Trial match, which was played at Sunderland.

1933-34.

With the return of Aarvold, Anderson and Goldson, and the inclusion of J. A. Adamson at full-back, hopes of the Championship again revived. The only set-back was an unexpected draw with Cumberland at Kendal (Harrison missing his first match for the County in five seasons), while the victory (by 17-nil) over Yorkshire under appalling weather conditions was the largest since 1901. The Group Championship was in doubt until the last, the issue depending upon the Durham-Lancs. match at Sunderland. Unfortunately, a last-minute change was necessitated by an injury to Clough (right wing), while the visitors were at full strength. Lancs. obtained a lead of nine points in the first fifteen minutes, but Durham replied with eight points before the interval. A tremendous struggle ensued in the second half, but the Lancs. defence held out and a single point decided the Group Championship. Lancs., subsequently lost unexpectedly to East Midlands in the semi-final.

1934-35.

The retirement of C. D. Aarvold from serious football caused great regret among all North Country enthusiasts but the memory of his inspired leadership still remained with a large nucleus of the team. Six of the backs played in every match this season, and with more thrustful centres the team might well have equalled the record of 1931-32. As it was, the only defeat was by Lancs., who narrowly won at Manchester and subsequently carried off the County Championship. It is perhaps opportune to comment at this point upon the long succession of close results in the Durham - Lancs. matches, not more than four points having separated the scores on any occasion between 1926 and 1935 (except in 1931-32), during which period Lancs. had been at least Group Champions on six occasions.

The outstanding event of the season was the match played at St. Albans on behalf of the Durham Distress Relief Fund, organized by the High Sheriff of Herts. Durham, with C. D. Aarvold and B. R. F. MacNay once more in the fifteen, opposed a team which included thirteen internationals and succeeded in winning a fast and enjoyable game by 11 points to 5.