

**A CLUB MATCH OF SEVENTY YEARS AGO.  
RUGBY AT DARLINGTON, FEBRUARY 23RD, 1866.**

We have upon occasion, found it necessary to tilt at our friends of the Press. By way of amends we reprint this unique account, the earliest relating to modern Rugby that came our way - It was extracted from the late Tom Watson's wonderful "scrap-book," and whilst it has no bearing upon Durham County Rugby, and is, strictly speaking "outside our terms of reference," it is really such a "gem" that we feel our digression to be justified.

" The match between fifteen of the Durham Grammar School Club against a like number picked out of our own, came off on Saturday afternoon with great success, in Mr. Harris' park at Woodside, so frequently and so kindly placed at the disposal of the votaries of this manly and arduous sport. The weather was brilliant, though a trifle too cold for bystanders, yet there was attracted as spectators a considerable number of ladies and gentlemen, who were all interested in the several struggles.

The Durham men having arrived by the one o'clock train were escorted to the Fleece, and entertained at luncheon by their intended opponents; used to training for the river on which they are so renowned, their shyness of beer and pastry was suggestive. Shortly after two they marched to the ground, and as one of the players on the other side was late as usual, we had time to gauge their admirable condition, for seldom has a tougher or more clean made lot in hard, clear health been seen, than the fifteen young gentlemen who came to do their best.

When they stript for work (football certainly is grand sport, but it can hardly be called play) so lithe and liny were they, with not an ounce of superfluous fat upon one of them and lots of sound muscle, some of us could not help exclaiming, ` By jove we'll get a licking, what fine, active fellows. They'll beat us in wind.' One was quite a little chap, but he did play well and proved himself a thorough game chicken.

But it is past the half-hour, the goals are ready and the bounds staked out. The sides are placed, Darlington west and Durham east, with the sun in their eyes, and the game was commenced at 2.40. Being unfurnished with the names of the strangers, we are unable to particularise, as otherwise would have been most pleasant, those who strove so bravely and with such untiring pluck. But one youth soon caught the ball, and ran with it a-muck, doubling like a hare, in turn he was overmatched, and then such a struggle ensued that the heap of active limbs on the ground, no heads were visible, reminded one of nothing human. At last it is extricated, and the cry is ` Well done little Dick,' for young Benson sent the ball far

away, Tom Watson following with a rush. Capitably the tables were turned again, and 'out of bounds' caused a temporary pause. Then they were at it again, the Durham men in their green and gold caps with white flannel trousers tucked-up like knickerbockers, making a rare defence, and a rush forward beyond the starting point. A cry 'That's unfair,' as one of ours was tripped up, occasioned the Durhamite to come to grief in his turn, and he lay motionless and blown for some time. Unfortunately, he wore a mauve shirt and appeared unfairly spotted throughout the day, but it would be well if the rules decided upon had been stringently observed.

In the club here, tripping and 'hatching' are properly forbidden, both are dangerous and there is no occasion to make what should be sport and is always severe work, more risky than it is. However, tripping was persisted in by the city club, and as two can play at any game, we think, if anything, they came off second best.

It is impossible to follow out each contest seriatim, so rapidly were the alternations and so glorious was the play on either side. The first and second goals were made by Webster, and the third by Watson and the fourth went to Durham, so that Darlington won the day.

Besides those named J. H. Backhouse, C. Fry, J. Mewburn, Dawson, Kinch, J. C. Shewell, Armitage, MacFarlane, Hall, Walter Pease, Coulty and Richardson took part. It would be invidious to say who was the better of his neighbour, as all did rare service, and never was match better fought out, the balance being so even that the scale until the finish of each tussle, seldom under half-an-hour, kept shifting ever and anon between hope and fear.

Happily, so far as we hear, no one was seriously hurt, but the blows and falls and melees were really frightful, though nothing could be pleasanter than the good feeling on both sides when all was over before six o'clock.

The club here, though in its infancy, musters no less than 80 members."