



HKP Rugby - The 1960s

Celtic Cornwall spawned rugged rugby in schools, towns in the county. The writer played for the Sir Humphry Davy School Penzance (see photo below 1955) The writer was captain of Cornish Public & Grammar Schools XV. I played in Pembrokeshire against my long standing friend Evan Evans. The Cornish team also played in Germany.



You Are In The Army Now



Straight out of school I joined the Grenadier Guards entering the Guards Depot Caterham dreaded portals on a Thursday morning to begin my two year National Service stint in 1958. Friday the next morning, my second day in the Army, I played in a trial rugby game. On the third day Saturday afternoon I played for the Guards Depot in an Army Cup game in Chatham against the former Army Cup holders the R.E. Regt. We knocked them out of contention

with my last second drop goal just before the whistle blew!

Every week there were matches against London and Police teams culminating in the semis of the Army Cup and the final of the Prince of Wales Rugby Cup for which I still have the medal.



After OCS at Aldershot I was commissioned into the Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry in the hope of playing more rugby in Cornwall. However, I was seconded to the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) Nigeria 'white mans grave' and posted to 1QONR in Abeokuta. I played in the Harcourt Sevens despite tetanus in the grounds. The Kaduna Police had a good rugby team with all local Nigerians. Returning to Cornwall after National Service I played again for St. Ives XV and played against all the top Welsh and Irish touring teams until leaving for Hong Kong.

HKP Rugby 1960s

Rugby has been played as long as horses have been racing in Hong Kong and rugby games were held in the 1870s and 80s.



Inaugural Match for the Norman Walker Shield HK Island Team



Back row: Norman Lelliot, Chris Dawson, Topper Brown, Bill Ross, Dick Boys, George Acheson and Geoff Woodhouse

Front Row: John Wilson (Ref), Jack Johnston, Neil Roberts, Don Bryan, Alistair McNiven, Brian Slevin and 'Gruber' Cullen.



Arrival in Hong Kong

On 4.1.1962 Brian Coak with Jim Hurst; Jim Finch; Alex Hamilton; Alan Ellis; Peter Murray; Dick Lidster arrived in HK Kai Tak as HKP P. I. recruits met by Jack Johnson who became our P.I. 4 Squad Instructor. At Kai Tak we were herded into a blue Bedford Police cattle truck for the ride to PTS Aberdeen. We crossed the harbour on the vehicular ferry in the early evening lights twinkling silhouetted against the Peak. A spell bounding sight!

The first four lads of the seven played rugby. They were quickly inducted into the HKP XV team. The first or second Saturday on arrival we played our first game at Boundary Street pitch. The young fab four added two forwards to the Police XV pack Alex Hamilton and Jim Hurst while the backs were strengthened by Jim Finch wearing No.10 jersey and myself as inside centre No.12.

Police XV Baptism

My own baptism for the police team. After tackling an opposition player too hard I ended up being taken off the pitch requiring three stitches above the left eye. No blood bin reserves in those days. Playing on the terrible RAF Kai Tak pitch was like concrete partly used for the plane apron parking. I always came away from this pitch losing much epidermal skin from the arms, knees and thighs hitting the bone shattering hard ground. The grazes often failed to heal by the next Saturday.

During PTS training it was possible for the four rugby recruits to play for the Police XV regularly until passing out and posted to divisions. Then we were hit by shift duties.

Many of the other players also found it difficult for the team to play regularly let alone find time to train together. There was only a small pool of players. So we played from Saturday to Saturday. Club was the best XV in HK and I recall beating Club in Happy Valley for the first time. Bill Riach had a great game and was over the moon. I was lucky enough to pick up a loose ball inside my own 25 and ran through my own team and the opposition scoring

a try without being tackled. Regrettably, I was never able to repeat the feat. Jim Hurst also scored.

When HMS Taranaki came into port we had some real opposition. The first time we played against the Taranaki ship's team I saw a number of swarthy dark tattooed players. They looked strong and fierce fellas. The opposition lined up across the pitch facing us and started the Hakka which I had never seen before. Quite intimidating! Some were Maori All Black players. I later found out that my opposite inside centre was an All Black.

HKP 1st XV 1962-1963

Back row, standing left to right: Jack Johnston, Brian Haigh, Jack Fidler, Peter Oakey, Jim Hurst, Terry Orsler, Topper Brown, Ray Cheetham, Alex Hamilton and Don Bryan. Front row: Bruce Dalling, Brian Coak (V.Capt), Neil Roberts (Capt), Bill Riach and Gwynn Lloyd.



Some of the fine rugby police lads I had the luck to play with not shown above but see the fine rugby players I played with and against in the Island v Mainland Norman Walker Shield fixture below, not forgetting our mascot 'Lulu' (my dachshund).

Black Dogs and Curry

After a match players rehydrated with sufficient San Migs before driving off in their TR2s exhausts booming avoiding the formidable 'black dogs' at night the scourge of traffic accidents in the NT. Apart from dining frequently on Indian curries one other quiet dining spot was Cherikoff's in TST.



I believe visiting the rugby players at their outpost stations for a curry the good fellowship helped to lift the rugby team and general police morale.

HKP Rugby Club, Pre-Leave Party for Neill Roberts, November 1961



Back table, left to right: Harry Brierley, George Acheson, Chris Fraser, and Peter Oakey. Front table, left to right: John Dunn, Ron McEwan, Terry Orsler, Toppe rBrown, Neil Roberts, Jack Johnston, Tony Gregan, Peter Scott, Alistair McNiven, Don Watson and Jack Hollis.

Norman Walker Shield Island v Mainland 1962 Island (hoops) Mainland (white)



Back Row - Left to Right

Norman Lelliot, Tony Gregan, John Wilkinson ? Don Watson, Andy Calderwood, Alec Purvis, Jack Hollis, Charlie Johnstone, Don Byan, Peter Scot. Tim Babington, Ray Cheetham.

Middle Row - Left to Right

Bob Burnaby, Ron McEwan, Brian Coak, Jack Fidler, Topper Brown, John Gaffney, Alistair Mc Niven, Taffy Lloyd, Norman Reynolds, Jim Hurst, John Wilson (Ref).

Front Row - Left to Right

Jim Finch, Alan Anstee, John MacDonald, Wally Keil, John Dunn, Wig Metcalf, Jack Johnston, George Acheson.



Police Camaraderie

The HKP camaraderie was always first class. "When camaraderie ends, crime begins," they say?

The good rugby times started to close in on me with new duty responsibilities. While posted to NB for three years it gave me a reasonable opportunity to play more regularly for the XV until the end of 1965 when posted as SDI Pat Heung in 1966.

Keeping rugby fit was increasingly difficult and the knocks seemed to come harder. Dora my wife, a Nursing Sister at QMH, got fed up patching me up after matches. The 1967 Riots then really upset the sport apple cart. I was prosecuting the riot cases at Central Magistracy. Surviving without receiving serious injury the time came to hang up my boots?

As more good rugby P.I. recruits arrived the team became stronger year by year.

The HK Rugby Football Union now has 49 men teams in 6 divisions and 15 ladies teams in 2 Divisions. The HKP RFC has three mens and one women's team.

HKP RFC Anniversary September 2013



Jim Finch



Brian Coak



Dedication

This page is dedicated to those lads who played their hearts out at Boundary Street with me but are no longer with us: They will not be forgotten!

