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MAIDSTONE FOOTBALL CLUB CENTENARY SEASON



**ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF RUGBY FOOTBALL
(1880-81) to (1979-80)**

Written and Compiled by Roger Craske
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*In memory of Bernard, friend
and mentor*

MAIDSTONE FOOTBALL CLUB CENTENARY SEASON

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B. J. HINKS

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MAIDSTONE FOOTBALL CLUB

APPOINTMENTS FOR THE

CENTENARY SEASON

1979-1980

President:	B. J. Hinks
Chairman:	I. Milsted
Hon. Secretary:	R. Spillane
Hon. Assistant Secretary:	C. Wood
Hon. Treasurer:	B. Bills
Hon. Assistant Treasurer:	A. Lock
Hon. Fixture Secretary:	H. Green
Hon. Assistant Fixture Secretary:	J. Sargent
Hon. Team Secretary:	J. Doe
Hon. Assistant Team Secretary:	M. Tomsett
Hon. Membership Secretary:	B. Fridd
Captain 1st XV:	T. Lock
Captain Mustangs XV:	I. Valentine
Captain 'A' XV:	R. McCormick
Captain Extra 'A' XV:	K. Murphy
Captain 'B' XV:	R. Dancer
Captain Nomads XV:	R. Reese
Captain Wanderers XV:	S. Pooley

SUB-COMMITTEES

	Chairman	Members
Development:	J. Jones	M. Gibson; B. Bills; A. Milsted.
Finance:	B. Bills	I. Baker; A. Lock; A. Dray.
Ground:	D. Payne	A. Osenton; M. Gibson.
House:	R. Beney	G. Milsted; W. Walker.
Publicity:	P. Waghorn	R. Vale; D. Diamond; B. Lovelidge.
Selection:	T. House	D. Diamond; R. Vale; J. Doe; H. O'Donnell; R. Reese; R. Craske.
Sevens:	G. Burr	A. Johnson; M. Gibson.
Social:	A. Dray	A. Lock.
Tours:	R. McCormick	H. Green; J. Sargent; T. Lock.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A century of making great strides forward



IT is a great privilege and honour to be President of Maidstone Football Club in its Centenary Season. Those of us fortunate enough to have been present at the 75th year celebrations, or even the Jubilee celebrations of 1930, have noticed the great forward strides made since those far-off days.

The club now regularly fields seven teams, our home matches played on three fine pitches within the Mote Cricket Ground complex, with extra facilities available in Mote Park when required.

Our small stand is still somewhat basic, but we look forward to filling it regularly when floodlights permit mid-week evening games. Floodlights will present an opportunity to extend and improve our already impressive fixture list.

WE enter our Centenary Season with our 1st XV as Kent Cup Champions, and with a thriving Mini-Rugby section at the other end of the club. In between, numerous hard-working committee members ensure not only excellent intermediate rugby, but also healthy finances and a good social side to the game.

These committee members expect, and receive, few thanks for their efforts. May I appeal to club members to respond enthusiastically to their efforts during the Centenary and in years to come.

I take this opportunity to thank all who have helped me during my long association with the club, and to wish the club continued success.

B. J. 'Skip' Hinks

INTRODUCTION

AT this period in the Club's history, no member with long-standing associations with Maidstone Football Club could be other than proud to be involved in the Centenary celebrations, of which this publication is but one small part.

Not only are we one of the oldest established clubs in the country, but additionally we enter our one hundredth season as Kent Cup holders, with the prospect of playing in the final stages of the National Club competition, and also as Kent Seven-a-Side Champions.

It was with such feelings of pride as well as a wish to put something back into the Club to which I owe so much, that I embarked on the following history of the Club. Naturally it was not possible to fully research all the earlier years, and I have relied heavily on the jubilee

publication of 1929/30 written by Mr. B. W. Haynes and Mr. E. H. Amies; and also the History of 75 Seasons, produced by Mr. W. T. Hunter.

In addition, I am grateful to Mr. Edward Craven for providing a wealth of original material particularly relevant to the inception of the Club. Mr. Alf Johnson and Mr. Malcolm Farley also assisted with written contributions.

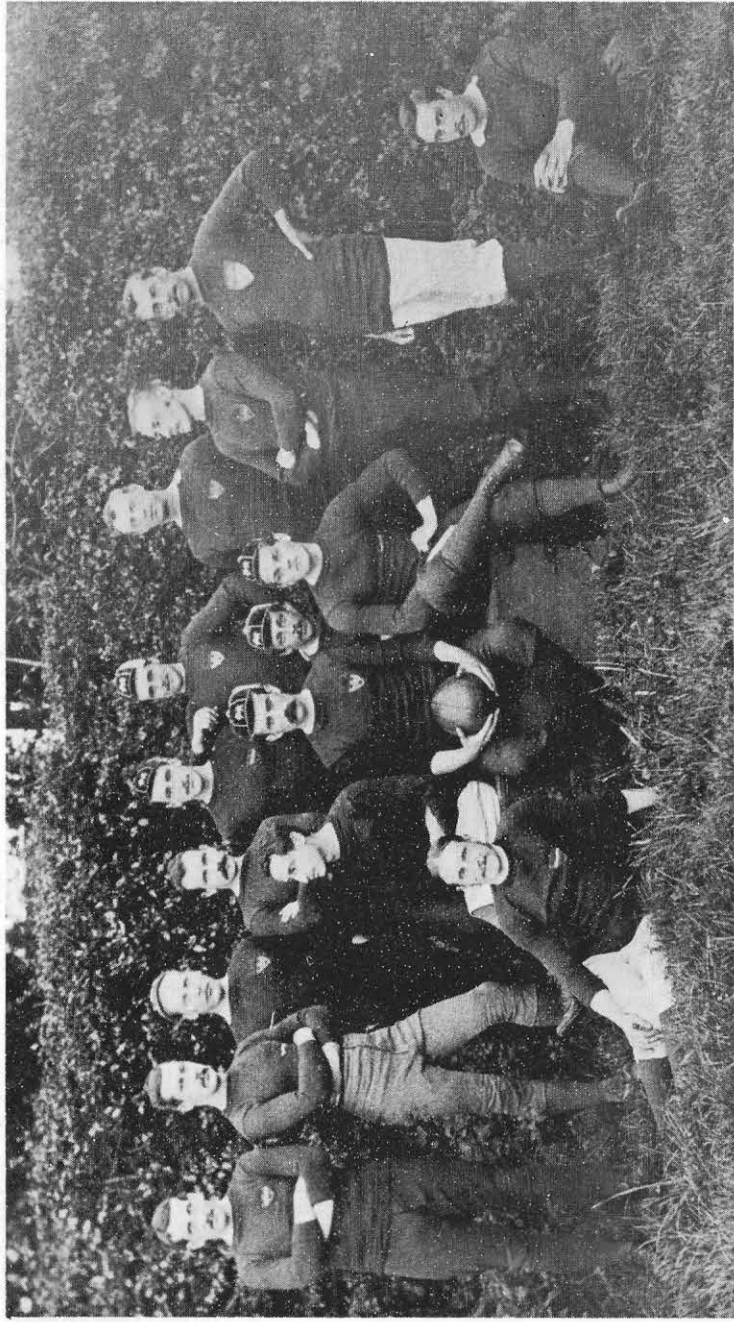
The account of the last 25 years is largely a personal recollection, and therefore any views expressed are personal ones. I am, however, grateful for the recollections and advice given by some senior members of the Club, as well as others with no formal Club connections who nevertheless have their own memories of the Club.

It is inevitable that I shall have omitted to mention some who have made substantial contributions to the Club. For this, I can only apologise.

'Let us hope that our Centenary celebrations focus attention equally on the past achievements, on the future potential of the Club and on rugby football as a worthy sport'

ROGER CRASKE,
NOVEMBER 1979

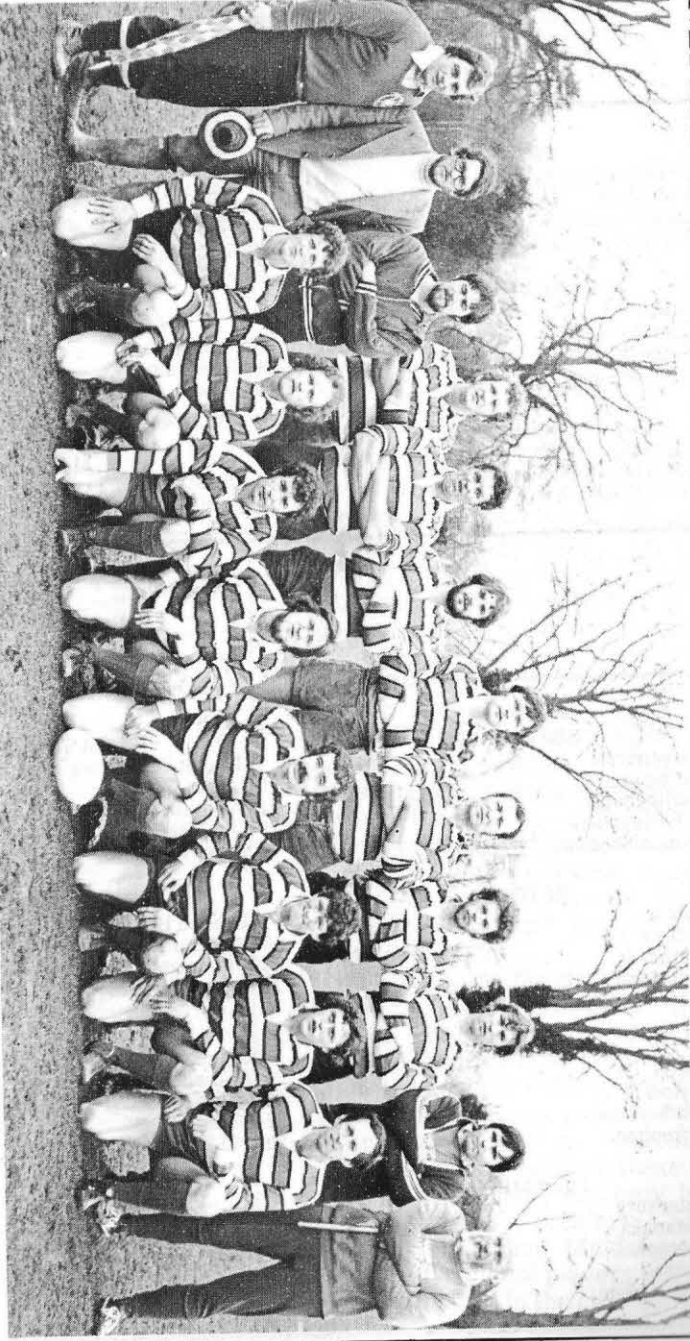
MAIDSTONE FOOTBALL CLUB 1880-81



Back (from left): A. S. Crawford, R. Monckton, C. R. Smith, H. Green, F. E. Hughes, K. McAlpine, P. Joslen, C. Tootell, H. Baxendale.

Front: C. H. White (on ground), W. W. Sedgwick, P. Dixon, C. Gibbs, L. Holmes, F. Baxendale (extreme right).

MAIDSTONE FOOTBALL CLUB, 1st XV 1978-79



Back (from left): D. Diamond (Coach), R. North (Capt), S. Knight, G. Gale, H. Osenton, A. Cushing, B. Etherton, A. Trotter, D. Clare, P. Toose, I. Baker, T. House (Chairman, Selection Committee).

Front: W. Hickling, S. Ellesmere, E. Stupples, N. Clark, T. Lock, P. Malynn, C. Harvey, S. Smiley.

FIXTURES

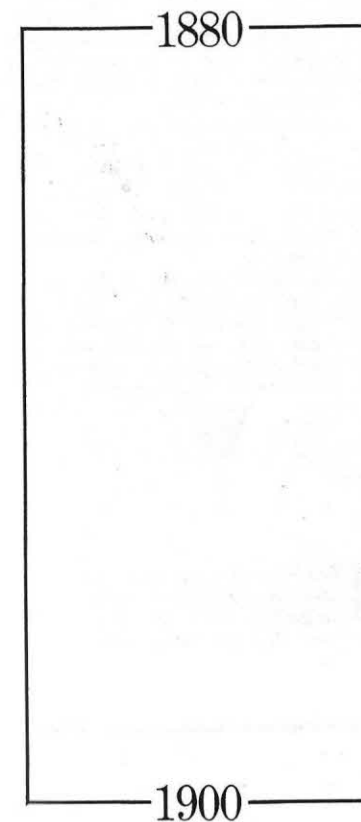
Season 1885-86

OCTOBER		JANUARY	
10 Old Merchant Taylors	H	9 Rosslyn Park	A
17 Sydenham	H	16 Civil Service	H
24 London Scottish	A	23 Eaton Rovers	A
31 Rosslyn Park	H	30 Sydenham	A
NOVEMBER		FEBRUARY	
7 Belsize	H	6 Kent Rovers	A
14 Kent Rovers	H	20 Harlequins	H
21 Harlequins	A	27 London Scottish	H
28 Civil Service	A		
DECEMBER		MARCH	
12 Eton House	H	6 Old Merchant Taylors	A
19 Royal Naval College	A	13 Belsize	A
26 M. H. Coke's XV	H		

Season 1979-80

SEPTEMBER		JANUARY	
8 Maidenhead	A	1 Thanet Wanderers	H
9 Harlequins	H	5 Upper Clapton	H
15 Warlingham	A	12 Woodford	H
22 Old Alleynians	A	20 Old Merchant Taylors	H
30 London Scottish	H	26 Park House	H
OCTOBER		FEBRUARY	
6 Staines	A	2 London Hospital	H
13 Purley	H	9 Westcombe Park	A
20 Southend	H	16 Old Emanuel	A
27 Tonbridge	A	23 Streatham/Croydon	H
28 Golden Oldies	H		
NOVEMBER		MARCH	
3 Sidcup	H	1 Gravesend	H
10 Marlow	A	8 Askeans	A
17 Civil Service	H	15 Guildford & G	A
24 Beckenham	A	22 Osterley	A
		29 Old Paulines	H
DECEMBER		APRIL	
1 Canterbury	A	4 Lille Tour	A
8 Sevenoaks	H	5 Lille Tour	A
15 Thurrock	A	12 Blackheath	H
22 Havant	A	19 Kent Sevens	
29 London Irish	A	26 Middlesex Sevens Prelims.	

The formative years . . .



UNTIL the past six months there has been only scant evidence of the first season's rugby played by Maidstone Football Club. Our own club records, from an annual meeting held at the end of the 1881-82 season made reference to games played during the previous year and this remained the basis for celebrating our Centenary in the season 1979-80.

It is thanks to the kindness of Mr. Edward 'Tubby' Craven that we now have firm evidence of one of our first matches. 'Tubby', a former pupil and Master at Sutton Valence School, played for the club in our Jubilee Season in 1929-30.

Quietly sipping his pint one evening in the Queen's Head at Sutton Valence, he overheard some club members talking of the Centenary. He is a noted local historian, and custodian of some ancient school records, and magazines, and his interest prompted him to extract from these some priceless references, not only to the early matches between Sutton Valence School and Maidstone, but also of many school players who later played a full part in the club's life.

The first school match against Maidstone in 1880 is well-documented thus: ".....against Maidstone we were beaten by two goals and two tries to nothing; but then we (the school) played against great odds. Full grown heavy men that are accustomed to play together, will as a rule be able to put to rout the same number of boys. Almost all the work that was to be done on our side was done by the forwards, our backs scarcely once getting possession of the ball, but our strenuous efforts were useless; owing to the weight of our opponents we were, for the first time, 'run in' in this match."

There is no doubt that rugby was played in and around Maidstone well before 1880, but it is likely that Maidstone teams were informally drawn from neighbouring areas, rather than from an established club with regular fixture lists.

For example, the late Mr. A. H. B. Hallows recollected playing when he first came to Maidstone in 1868. Also a Mr. G. B. Blackett remembered playing in the town in 1870, but the fact that the side he played in wore the colours of their various old schools or colleges reinforces the view that the Maidstone Club had no formal existence at that time.

Before the foundation of the Rugby Union, no definite code of rules existed, and the earliest established clubs laboured under difficulties as many of their members had not acquired a practical knowledge of the principles of the game. I would suggest that such difficulties remain with most players to this day.

Mr. Blackett was instrumental in getting the Marlborough rules, under which he had played at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, adopted in Maidstone. These were similar to those in use at Rugby School, which formed the basis of the code drawn up when the Rugby Union was formed in 1871.

The Maidstone "representative" sides, drawn from the area, played several fixtures in 1875, as Mr. Herbert Green's diary clearly shows:

Jan 9 v Kent Wanderers, at Wrotham
Feb 13 v Tonbridge, at Maidstone

Oct 23 v Tonbridge School, at Tonbridge
Oct 30 v Sutton Valence School (Lost, 2 goals to nil)
Nov 6 v Worcester Training Ship (Match Drawn)
Nov 20 v Ashford, at Ashford (Won, 4 goals to nil)
Nov 27 v Blue Mantles
Dec 18 v Sevenoaks

The Kent Wanderers side, as the name suggests, was a club that played at grounds where sides could be raised to oppose them. Both Mr. Herbert Green and Mr. F. G. Lawrence remembered playing for this team, and it is possible that the Maidstone Club owes its origin to Kent Wanderers.

Mr. Green's diary of fixtures includes rugby-playing schools as well as town sides. It is probable that the opposing town sides were, like Maidstone's, informal collections of rugby players from their neighbouring villages. While the result of the match at Maidstone on February 13 against Tonbridge is not recorded in Mr. Green's diary, it is surely inconceivable that the home side lost!

Such reminiscences show that the game was played in Maidstone in the 1870s, but from 1880 the history of the Maidstone Club can be definitely traced. We are greatly indebted to Miss McAlpine who kindly lent the club an invaluable book of newspaper cuttings which she had preserved.

They record reports of the meetings and many matches played by the club during the period that her brother, the late Mr. Kenneth McAlpine, was so actively and prominently identified with it. It is from these records, the old photographs reproduced and fixture lists presented to the club by Mr. E. H. Amies and Mr. Herbert Green, that we are able to give details of the first decade of the club's existence.

The first official record of the club's first season, 1880-81 is a reference made in a report of the following year, from which we learn that there was a balance of cash in

**Kenneth McAlpine,
who was
instrumental in
founding the Club
and officiated as
Secretary and
Captain.**



hand amounting to £3.19s.0d, a highly satisfactory financial state of affairs. There is in addition an extremely interesting photograph of the first Maidstone club side, reproduced at the front of this publication.

The club colours were at this time a dark blue jersey with the Borough Arms on the breast, while the cap which several are wearing was dark blue velvet with gold piping and tassel bearing the lion of the Borough Arms. This photograph was taken at the ground where the club then played, owned by Dr. Monckton, who generously allowed the club the free use of it for many years. The enclosure was situated between Rocky Hill Terrace and the Tonbridge Road.

From 1880 until 1886 the Maidstone club developed and prospered, both on and off the field. To a large extent this was due to the efforts of Mr. Kenneth McAlpine, as Secretary and Captain. The fixture list grew impressively to include, apart from local towns, leading London sides such as the Middlesex Wanderers, Harlequins, Richmond, Eton House, Rosslyn Park, London Scottish and Old Merchant Taylors.

From a results point of view Maidstone appear to have acquitted themselves well, in each season winning the large majority of matches, even against the top London clubs.

It is through newspaper reports that we are able to capture something of the flavour of the game in those distant days. A few extracts follow:

The Maidstone Journal — Maidstone v Richmond: January 5, 1884

"Played at Richmond. It was originally arranged that Maidstone should play the 2nd XV, and Hull the 1st XV of Richmond, but owing to the Hull match falling through, Maidstone were pitted against the first team of the leading club in England. To make matters worse for the visitors their full-back, Schneider, failed to put in an appearance, and at the last moment F. E. Hughes was prevented from playing. The

The formative years . . .

details of the match need little notice, as owing to the superiority of the home team, the unceasing rain and consequent state of the ground, a runaway match resulted in favour of Richmond by six goals and one try to nil. McAlpine ran in one for Maidstone, but the umpire, thinking he had gone into touch, ordered the ball to be brought back. For the losers, Dunning and Joslen, forwards, and Gibb and Hopkins, backs, played very pluckily in an uphill game, while for Richmond, Kitson, Shearman, Arber, Somerset and Clifton were in grand form."

The club fared better the following week, as the Maidstone Journal reported: **Maidstone v Tonbridge: January 12th 1884**

"Played at Maidstone in glorious weather. The visitors kicked off with the hill in their favour, but up till half time neither side had scored, although the Maidstone backs several times menaced the visitors' line. After half time Hughes, gaining possession, took the ball behind the Tonbridge line, but the kick proved unsuccessful. This was the only substantial advantage gained by either side, and Maidstone won a very closely contested match by a try to nil. S. Joslen and P. Monckton deserve special praise. For the visitors Simpson, Le Fleming and Curtis played best.

"**Maidstone Team:** R. Raggett — back; K. McAlpine (Capt); F. E. Hughes, J. M. Gibb — threequarters; S. Joslen and C. Mitchell — halves; H. Green, L. Green, P. Monckton, J. Emery, F. Joslen, H. Baxendale, J. Ostrehan, C. R. Smith and F. Lendon — forwards."

From the above team sheet, some may wonder whether our faithful Fixture Secretary, Mr. Harry Green, is in fact a reincarnation of the prominent forward of the 1880s. This has been difficult to substantiate. It seems likely that they are one and the same gentleman, and that Mr. Harry Green is now some 130 years old.

There was rather more literary elegance in the Sporting Life report of the **London Scottish v Maidstone match on February 28, 1885:**

"Played at Lee, and after a pleasant game,

resulted in favour of the home team by two tries to nil. Maidstone kicked off from the lower end of the field, and play was for some time confined to neutral territory. The home forwards, however, worked the ball down the field, and the visitors' goal was for some time endangered, until relieved by Earl and McAlpine. Near the half-way line Constable secured the ball from a throw in, and after a brilliant run through the opposing backs grounded it between the posts; no goal, however, resulted. On resuming, the play became very fast, and the men outside the scrummage on both sides had plenty of work. A rush of the Maidstone forwards, led by Dodds, followed by a pretty piece of dribbling by McAlpine, momentarily jeopardised the Scottish goal, but the ball was again taken down the field by Harvey, Lindsey and the home forwards, who played well together, and at half time it was well within the visitors' twenty five. The play in the second half was of a similar interesting character, although the ball was more frequently in Maidstone quarters. The brothers Green, and McAlpine, strove hard to turn the tables on the Scots, but Constable and Pettigrew did such good service for the home team that hostilities were again carried into the visitors' camp, and from a scrummage near the goal line, the ball was passed out to Gore, who just succeeded in crossing the line far out. The place kick by the same player, though a good one, missed its mark. Beyond a touch in goal and causing their opponents to touch down several times in self defence, nothing further of interest occurred, and the match resulted in favour of the London Scottish as above stated. It is only fair to add that Maidstone played throughout two men short."

This was the second record of the club playing a top side with 13 men. Obviously there were difficult transport problems in the 1880s, but it is inconceivable that our present worthy Team Secretaries, Mr. John Doe and Mr. Mick Tomsett would send the club to play Richmond or London Scottish with two men short.

The following season the **Sporting Life** was able to report a notable victory:
Maidstone v Harlequins: November 21st 1885

"Played at Chiswick on Saturday, 21st. The

game was a good one throughout though the home team were somewhat overmatched behind the scrummage. Sutherland, Cloudesdale and McAlpine played splendidly for Maidstone, the first-named obtaining two tries each, and McAlpine obtaining one; Only one, however, of these was converted. The home team failing to score, Maidstone were left victorious by one goal and four tries to nil.

"**Maidstone Team:** J. F. Earle — back; K. McAlpine (Capt), F. Sutherland and T. G. W. Cloudesdale — threequarters; S. Joslen and T. W. Price — halves; C. P. Disbrowe, W. F. Menzies, J. G. Gibson, M. Green, F. Lawrence, H. M. Cutbush, H. Baxendale, E. Rice and C. E. Roper — forwards."

The observant reader may have noticed that this team sheet is the second showing nine forwards in the team. The formation of the 'scrummage' is not recorded, but teams in the 1890s are shown as comprising the present-day eight forwards, two halves, and five backs.

During the 1880s, Maidstone club supplied two players to the county side, K. McAlpine and C. P. Disbrowe. The County Championship was not instituted until 1890, but friendly fixtures were arranged. The composition of the teams in the Kent v Middlesex fixture of November 25th 1885, gives a good indication of the prominent clubs at the time:

KENT: K. McAlpine (Maidstone), C. G. Taylor (R.N. College, Greenwich), W. G. Ludgate (R.N. College), P. W. Burroughes (Queens), H. Wood (Queens), G. Standing (Blackheath), E. J. Moore (Blackheath), J. Bowen (West Kent), H. Comer (London Hospital), H. T. Cleveland (Queens), H. M. Randall (Guys Hospital), C. P. Disbrowe (Maidstone), G. W. Moore (R.N. College).

MIDDLESEX: W. Williams (Harlequins), S. H. Baker (Kensington), C. L. Kell (Old Internationals), W. E. Blackwell (Middlesex Wanderers), T. M. Frames (Clapham Rovers), F. Watts (Harlequins), J. E. Hammond (Blackheath), W. G. Clibborn (Richmond), W. O. Northcott (Richmond), W. J. Payne (Clapham Rovers), C. R. Stuart (Old Cheltenham), E. H. Laurie (Marlborough Nomads), A. H. Carnick (Kensington), H. R. Ladell (East Sheen).

Membership of Maidstone Football Club had increased substantially during the 1880s, and although we have no record of second team fixtures at this time, there were annual matches of the Captain's and the Vice-Captain's teams. Total club membership appears to have been in excess of 50.

'Tubby' Craven's Sutton Valence School records give reports on the promise of several schoolboys who were later to play for Maidstone. One P. Vidler was described as "a heavy forward; wants pluck and spirit, being at present generally out of the way when wanted." And P. Tyler was another heavy forward who "does not play up to his weight, and has a strong tendency to screw."

Brian Bills, our present long-suffering Treasurer will be envious of the club's financial situation during this period. From the solid base of a £3.19s.0d balance in hand in 1881, the following year produced a £10 surplus, sufficient to consider the purchase of a "moveable dressing-house". At the end of the 1883-84 season an increase in the club's balance of 3d is recorded! Perhaps this demonstrates a Micawber-like attitude towards income and expenditure, but clearly members paid their subscriptions more readily in those days.

The end of the club's first era came when Mr. Kenneth McAlpine resigned as Captain at the end of the 1885-86 season. As previously stated, he was the driving force behind the club in those early years both on and off the field. The occasion was marked, and tributes paid, at the Annual Supper at the Royal Star Hotel in March 1886, when Mr. McAlpine was presented with a handsome rosewood spirits case, lined with maroon velvet, containing three decanters silver mounted, the stoppers being quaint Chinese figures of carved ivory. It is worth quoting from the minutes of the committee in relation to the event:

"The Chairman rose and said that the pleasing duty devolved upon him to present their Captain, Mr. McAlpine, with the handsome testimonial which adorned the table before him. For many years Mr. McAlpine had been Captain of the club, and taking the fortunes of war, it had been his lot to score both victories and defeats. However, in the hour of victory he had never been exultant, nor in the hour of defeat

The formative years . . .

had he been despondent. The good qualities of Mr. McAlpine and his long services to the club had not been unregarded by the members as the handsome testimonial he had the gratification to present abundantly showed. The game of football was a noble and manly one. It enabled them to meet their opponents with decision, and to act in emergency with tact and determination....."

Although Kenneth McAlpine maintained his close connections with the club, until his death in 1923, his departure as Captain seems to have been the foreboding of "evil times". The ground on which they had played for many years, by the kind permission of Dr. H. Monckton, passed into the hands of builders, and apparently great difficulty was found in obtaining another.

The club continued until 1888 under the captaincy of Mr. S. Joslen, playing some games on the Maidstone Grammar School enclosure in Lock Meadows. But another blow was dealt when the school changed hands and the club lost the services of two masters H. Price and C. P. Disbrowe, both prominent players. Shortly afterwards the school adopted Association rules.

There are no records of the club's activities during this period, but after 1888 it fell into abeyance for a time. Amateur Association Football claimed some of the rugby players, who had found their rugby confined to a few scratch games.

The years 1890 to 1900 were perhaps the least active of all the 10 decades of the club's existence. But it was nevertheless notable for the emergence of family names which were to have a long and continuing relationship with Maidstone Rugby Football Club.

After five years of inactivity, 1893 saw a determined effort to revive the club. Due largely to the vigour of Mr. W. Harding Bensted as Captain and Mr. Walter H. Day as Honorary Secretary, a ground was secured at Postley Fields, and a regular fixture list arranged.

In the following season a fresh ground was found in Little Buckland, and a year later we shared accommodation at the new Athletic Ground. Our co-tenants were a soccer club, Mid Kent Rovers, but because the tenancy

agreement did not allow rugby on the Athletic Ground during very wet weather, the club retained the use of the Little Buckland enclosure.

Mr. B. W. Haynes had succeeded Mr. W. H. Bensted as Captain, and thus the names Day and Haynes were linked as prominent club officials for the first time in 1894. The strength of these families' continuing association with the club can be fully recognised when one sees that in the Jubilee Season 1929-30, the Club Captain was Mr. Philip Haynes and the Honorary Secretary was Mr. W. (Bill) Day, Junior.

The reconstructed fixture list was to an extent less strong than previously, but provided a Kentish base from which to progress. The following list of fixtures was arranged for 1895-96:.

1895

Oct

- 5 : Christ Church F.C. at Blackheath
- 12 : St. Thomas' Hospital 'A', at Maidstone
- 16 : Royal Engineers, at Chatham
- 19 : Sutton Valence School, at Maidstone
- 23 : St. Bartholomew's Hospital, at Maidstone
- 26 : Middlesex Hospital, at Maidstone

Nov

- 2 : Queen's, at Greenwich
- 9 : Sheerness, at Sheerness
- 16 : Hampstead, at Maidstone
- 23 : Thanet Wanderers, at Ashford
- 30 : Sheerness, at Maidstone

Dec

- 7 : Royal Veterinary College, at Maidstone
- 14 : Queen's, at Maidstone
- 21 : Wasps 'A', at Maidstone

1896

Jan

- 11 : Tunbridge Wells, at Maidstone
- 18 : Croydon, at Maidstone
- 25 : Christ Church, at Maidstone

Feb

- 1 : St. Thomas' Hospital 'A', at Lambeth
- 8 : Royal Engineers, at Maidstone
- 15 : Tonbridge School, at Tonbridge
- 22 : Catford Bridge 'A', at Maidstone

Mar

- 7 : Sutton Valence School, at Sutton Valence
- 21 : Sidcup, at Maidstone
- 28 : Harlequins 'A', at Maidstone

The first rugby match played at the Athletic Ground was between Maidstone and St. Thomas' Hospital 'A'. The hospital club was among the best in London at the time, retaining the Hospitals' Cup for ten consecutive

years between 1888 and 1897. The South Eastern Gazette reported:

".....a very interesting game being witnessed by a fairly numerous assemblage of spectators. The Mayor of Maidstone, Mr. G. F. Baker, kicked off, and the visitors started well, Jones opening their account by obtaining a try..... Then Haynes, by a brilliant run, obtained a try and converted this into a goal with a well-judged kick..... The medicos continued to play with great dash, but were unable to improve their position, while just before the call of time Adair registered another try for Maidstone, who won on their merits by 2 goals and one try (13pts) to 3 tries (9pts)."

There were two other notable matches during that season. The first was between the club and the Royal Engineers in the semi-final of the Kent Country Cup. The Royal Engineers won 8-0, and met the Metropolitan Club in the final.

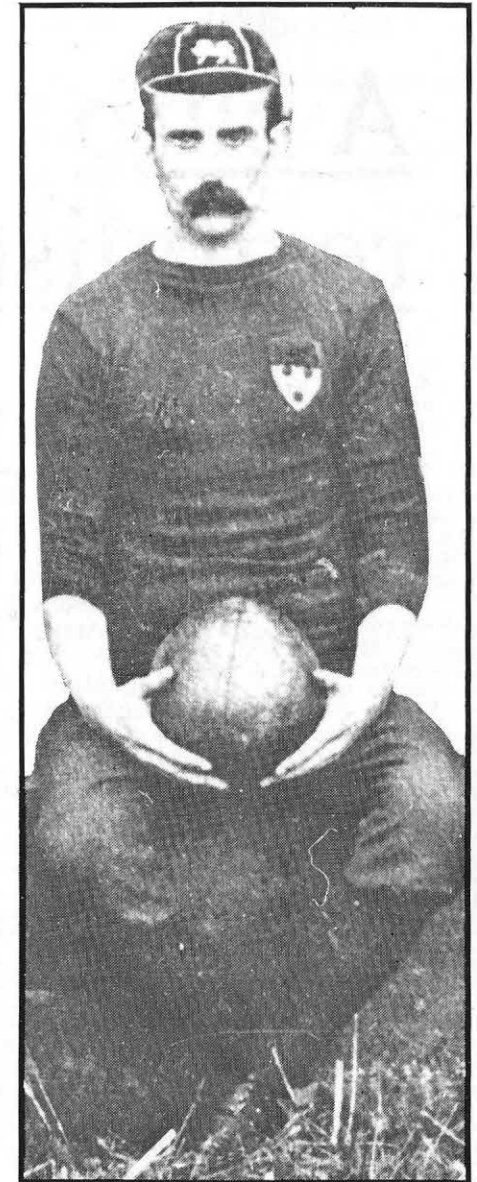
The other match was arranged between Kent and Surrey second fifteens, substantially to promote rugby in the Maidstone area. The club had five representatives in the Kent side.

Twenty-three matches were played in 1895-96, with ten victories, ten defeats and three draws. It was the custom to award three 'cups' each season, and for this year they were gained by B. W. Haynes, J. E. Edmonds and W. H. Whitehead.

The following season saw an improvement in the playing record, the club winning 14 of the 21 matches, scoring 200 points against 120. This season also saw two changes in the club colours.

The dark blue jersey was replaced with the Kent grey and maroon, believed to be originally the colours of the Clapham Rovers Club, which had been disbanded. It was found subsequently that after being washed, the Kent grey degenerated into a dirty white, and it was decided to adopt a red and white stripe in future. These remained the colours until 1928 when a thin black stripe was introduced.

Very little is recorded of the seasons between 1897 and 1900. Firstly an alarming typhoid epidemic broke out in the town, and nearly all home matches were cancelled for three seasons. Then the South African War deprived the club of the services of many members who joined the Imperial Yeomanry Units, so that the club's temporary suspension lasted until 1905.



The style of kit has changed somewhat since the formative years, as can be seen from this picture of P. Dixon (Captain) in the 1880-81 season.

The formative years . . .

A club revitalised

1905-1939

AS recorded, the Club's activities had been suspended in 1900 following the serious typhoid epidemic and the call to arms for the South African War.

Largely due to the efforts of Mr. E. H. Amies the Club was re-formed in 1905. The decision was taken at a meeting held in a 'pair-horse charabanc', returning from a scratch game at Sutton Valence School. The meeting established new Officers of the Club under the President, Mr. K. McAlpine, and the Club Captain Mr. E. H. Amies.

The following account of the Club's first match in this new period of its history is taken from the *Maidstone and Kentish Journal* of November 2, 1905.

Maidstone v Sutton Valence School

"The first match of the revived Rugby Union Club was played at the Athletic Ground on Saturday afternoon, in beautiful weather. When the teams lined up, it was obvious that Maidstone were far the heavier, and the first few minutes' play clearly demonstrated this. Science was not much in evidence, but after some scrambling play Maidstone scored through Meade far out and Haynes landed a beautiful goal. Maintaining the pressure, in spite of manful play by the boys, Langaard

1905-1939

came through with a try. Preston just before half time grounded the ball in a good position and Haynes was again successful with the kick. On the resumption one or two bouts of passing among the school backs were seen, but from a penalty Langaard dropped a nice goal. At this period the Maidstone backs got going, Clements being conspicuous, and Trigge scored a try which Haynes again converted with a capital kick. Langaard, who worked like a Trojan all through, next got a try right under the posts for Haynes to add the major points, leaving Maidstone winners by 27 points to Nil. Whitehouse, Smythe, Clements and Haynes were conspicuous for Maidstone, and Liprott for the visitors. There was a fair attendance of spectators."

In the season 1905-06 wins are recorded against London Scottish 'A' and Wasps 'A', among seven victories in twelve fixtures.

IN each of the succeeding three seasons the captaincy changed; from Mr. A. S. White to Mr. S. W. P. Goold, and then to Mr. H. J. Tubb. In 1908/9 Mr. Wm. Day, Junior made his first appearance for the Club. He joined from Mill Hill School, and over many seasons showed versatility in several positions outside the pack, and scored many fine tries.

To give some idea of his long playing association with the Club, Mr. Wm. Day, Junior, celebrated his '21st Birthday' for the Club by turning out for the 'B' XV in December 1929.

Records of Club fixtures and some results become available again from the 1909-10 season. That year saw the addition of London Welsh 2nd XV and Westcombe Park to our fixture list.

The London Welsh 2nd XV fixture was played at the Athletic Ground and resulted in a draw, each side scoring one placed goal (5 points).

Middlesex Hospital and King's College Hospital joined the fixture list in 1910. Maidstone's threequarters were outclassed by the Middlesex backs in a 24-5 pts defeat; but in the King's College match, with William Day at full-back, the backs played well to give us a 31-0 pts victory.

The results of the matches in 1910-11 were:

Played 19. Won 8. Lost 11. Pts For 202. Pts

Against 249.

Mr. F. D. Thomas skippered the Club from 1911 until 1921, during which time not only did the fixture list improve, but the playing results also. In the season 1912-13 fixtures included Guy's Hospital 'A', Richmond 'B', London

Scottish 'B', Rosslyn Park 'A', Old Millhillians 'A' and Wasps 'A'.

In the 1913-14 season, the last before the Great War, 12 of the 18 fixtures were won, with a points advantage of 356 against 189. Two matches are well-documented in this season.

In the first match of the season the Club defeated Sidcup at the Athletic Ground by 35 to 8 points. The forwards dominated completely, and the Maidstone half-backs F. D. Thomas and Wm. Day were outstanding.

At Christmas, again at the Athletic Ground, Maidstone defeated Tonbridge by 23 points to 3. J. W. Parks at centre scored two tries and kicked a conversion; and the tackling of R. Batchellor, H. W. Proctor and A. H. Thomas among the forwards was said to be excellent.

AT the Annual Supper, held at the Star Hotel, this most successful season was marked by tributes to the Captain, F. D. Thomas, to William Day and Finlay in the three-quarters, and to Miskin, Robinson and Proctor among the forwards.

There followed a further break in the annals of the Club between 1914 and 1919, during which time it is recorded that without exception all players responded to the Rugby Union request to join the forces of the Crown. The Athletic Ground became a drill ground, and the Club's posts, flags, balls, etc, were loaned to troops garrisoned in the town.

1919-1939

Following demobilisation at the close of the Great War, the Club were fortunate that those who had worked hard to build a successful rugby club to the 1914 season returned to take up their former duties.

F. D. Thomas resumed the Captaincy; The brothers J. H. and Wm. Day were Joint Hon. Secretaries; and E. H. Amies continued as Hon. Treasurer. The fixture list took a couple of years to rebuild, but the solid base of support augured well for the Club's future.

It was unfortunate that the skipper, F. D. Thomas should be forced to retire with a knee injury in 1921, having skippered since 1911. A first class scrum half, he seems to have been particularly strong in defence, and unselfish in attack. He also had a gift to leadership which extracted the best from his side.

The 1922-23 season saw a marked upturn in the playing strength of the Club. Of 24 games, 17 were won and only 4 lost, with a points ratio of 399 against 124. Two newcomers had a

beneficial effect in the backs, W. D. Jenkins who joined from Swansea, and E. D. Cochrane, a full-back from Trinity College, Cambridge and Rosslyn Park.

THE following season, under the Presidency of Mr. B. W. Haynes, such was the popularity of the Club that a regular 'A' XV was formed and in 1924-25 a 'B' XV also.

In addition, this season marked the first year in which a Club Tent was provided for members during Cricket Week at Mote Park. Financially, the Club was operating on a shoestring, and the balance at the end of 1924-25 was 5s-1d.

Although there is vague reference in Club records to a touring side to Brussels and Antwerp in 1923-24, it seems certain that the first tour by the Club was at Easter 1926 when a side went to Paris to meet the British Rugby F.C. composed of British players resident in Paris.

The Paris Times newspaper carried the sports page headline "Invading Ruggers Look Fit Team." More details of this historic occasion are given within these pages.

The 1927-28 season saw a new policy in respect of the Club's senior Officers in that it was decided to elect a fresh President and Captain every year. For that season the President was to be Mr. E. H. Amies who had previously filled every other Office in the Club; and the Captain, Mr. Gordon Duncanson.

The fixture card begins to have a more familiar ring about it, including matches against Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, Thanet Wanderers, Beckenham, Sidcup and Park House, as well as the 'A' XV's of Blackheath, Wasps and Guy's Hospital. There was also another Easter Tour to Paris, in which we were again defeated.

The playing record shows how the Club was developing in depth:

	P	W	D	L	F	A
1st XV	23	11	4	8	211	168
'A' XV	23	11	0	12	193	219
'B' XV	7	1	1	5	32	96
Wed XV	10	4	0	6	107	99

Three Maidstone players were selected for County Trials. The **Morning Post** stated:

"Maidstone contributed three good players in L. H. Adams, a tireless scrum-half; E.W.D. Weston, a sound scrummager, and P. F. Haynes, a full back of judgement and attainment who is also a good place kick."

E.W.D. Weston went on to representative honours with the Army, while P. F. Haynes was selected for the Kent v United Banks match.

THE following season 1928-29 is notable for the introduction of the now distinctive Maidstone rugby shirt, by the insertion of the narrow black stripe between the red and white stripes of the jersey.

Incidentally, team photographs since the turn of the century show no one wearing the Club honours cap. I believe our Constitution still allows the Captain to award honours and should he wish to exercise his authority in this respect, the cap of Mr. Kenneth McAlpine, so prominent in founding the Club, is well preserved as a model.

This season also saw the retirement of Mr. J. H. Day from the post of Hon. Treasurer. He had been Hon Secretary from 1913 to 1922, when he became Hon. Treasurer, and served most capably in both posts, as well as being in the forefront of social activities.

Jubilee Season 1929-30

The fiftieth anniversary of Maidstone Football Club's foundation was celebrated in suitable fashion with the Annual Dance at the Corn Exchange and culminating in a grand Jubilee Dinner held at the Royal Star Hotel on March 22, 1930.

The Dinner is well documented in the Jubilee publication written and compiled by Mr. B. W. Haynes and Mr. E. H. Amies, from whose work I have drawn much material for this book.

It had been decided to make an exception of the Club rule, and Mr. B. W. Haynes had been re-elected President for the Jubilee Season to mark his distinguished service to the Club; with the Captaincy going once again to his son, Mr. Philip Haynes.

MR. Haynes, Senior, presided at the Dinner and several stirring speeches were made recalling the foundation of the Club, and the continuing need to play to the spirit of the game, rather than with victory as the predominant aim. Mr. Lance Monckton, who had been Hon. Secretary in 1882 felt that the game was getting a little orthodox and stereotyped. Now they had a hooker, first, second and third line forwards and two wingers, whereas in his days it was largely a game of forwards.

The Captain urged support for the Club from the younger members: "Let's carry it on for another fifty years, and I hope that in another 50 years there will be some of us present to

celebrate the centenary of the Maidstone Club."

From a playing point of view the Jubilee Season had not been so successful. There were 71 matches played by the Club in total, but the 1st XV record suffered from the absence for most of the season, through injury, of their Captain Mr. P. F. Haynes.

With somewhat unfortunate timing the Annual Maidstone v Tonbridge match for the coveted 'Tin Cup' had been arranged for the day of the Jubilee Dinner — unfortunate because Maidstone lost. The following account of the match appeared in the **Kent Messenger**:

Maidstone v Tonbridge

"Maidstone played their return match with their old friends from Tonbridge on Saturday, at the Athletic Ground. The home side had high hopes of regaining possession of the 'cup', which seems to have become an important item in connection with the annual contests between these neighbouring clubs, but they had to admit defeat by three tries (9 points), to one dropped goal (4 points).

"Mr. H. E. B. Wilkins, a prominent official of the Kent Rugby Football Union, and a member of the Rugby Union committee, officiated as referee.

"Neither side was at full strength, Maidstone lacking the services of Feaver at full back, Amlot at right wing three-quarter, and Farmer and Steer in the pack. The resulting rearrangement amongst the forwards seemed to have upset their work, as there was an evident falling off in their play as compared with the form seen in recent games.

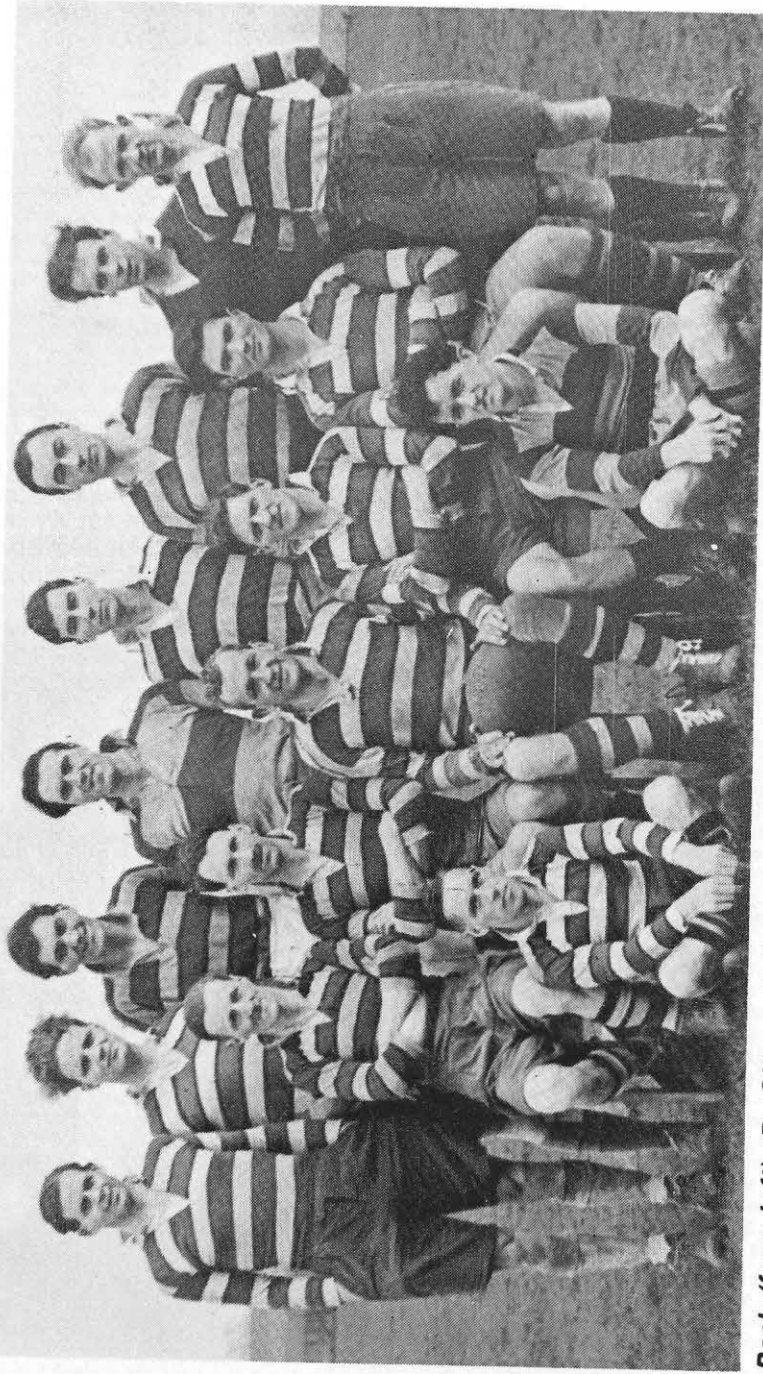
"In the opening stages of the game, Tonbridge showed up well and kept Maidstone largely on the defensive. However, the home side resisted well the strong efforts made by the Tonbridge backs to get through. After about 15 minutes' play Maidstone settled down to better combination, and some good gootwork by the forwards, combined with good touch finding by Adams and Wills, enabled them to force the visitors back to their own territory. Although both Smith and Wainwright strove hard to open up attack, slowness in heeling and poor handling by the backs frustrated these efforts, added to which the marking of the Tonbridge backs was always very keen.

"Continuing to hold their opponents in their own half, Maidstone eventually succeeded in opening the score, when Smith essayed to drop a goal. The ball struck one of the Tonbridge

Mr Philip Haynes, who was Captain of the 1st XV in the Jubilee Season and President from 1960 to 1963.



MAIDSTONE FOOTBALL CLUB 'A' XV 1947-48



Back (from left): D. Oliver, G. Peter, J. Harrison, B. Martin, L. Graves, L. Underwood, G. Banks, R. Harris.
Seated: J. Walker, R. Rylands, H. Higgins, D. Davies, A. Hill.
On Ground: T. Bowditch, A. Pudney.

1905-1939

players and bounced back, and Smith is to be commended on his quick action in gathering it and repeating the effort, this time to meet with success. Soon after this Maidstone failed badly when they allowed a fairly simple movement amongst the Tonbridge backs to result in Nango, their left wing three-quarter, running down the touch line for half the length of the ground, and to score far out. This reverse for Maidstone was solely due to ineffective tackling, as several players were allowed to gain ground and make their pass that ought certainly to have been stopped. Both sides failed to add to their score, and half time was reached with Maidstone leading by one point.

"The second half was strongly contested, each side in turn making strenuous efforts to add to their score, but with Tonbridge three-quarters displaying a better combination and ability to give and take their passes than their opponents. Eventually the visitors went ahead, following a well-judged cross kick by M. W. Smith, which certainly caught the Maidstone left wing out of position and gave Bates a fairly easy journey to cross near the corner. The kick again failed, and both sides continued to make strong efforts to secure a winning hold on the game.

"A further try by Tonbridge, through Heath, following a spell of hard scrimmaging on the Maidstone line gave them an added advantage, but the home side played gamely to the end, the last few minutes being marked by a grand cut through by Adams, who just failed to get over near the posts before being brought down. Unfortunately for Maidstone this player, who has played with such conspicuous and consistent success for the past few seasons, is shortly leaving the town."

THE Jubilee Ball held at the Corn Exchange was also a huge success. It was reported in the *Kent Messenger* that: "At the nineteenth dance in the programme, at three o'clock in the morning, the custom of these occasions was observed, when the rugger ball which had been suspended from the ceiling was brought into play, and the evening wound up in a lively scene."

The end of the 1930-31 season saw Maidstone again on the Continent, when they played a triangular tournament between Boulogne, Thanet Wanderers and Maidstone. The Club was successful in beating Boulogne by 3 pts to Nil, and Thanet by 12 pts to Nil, and received a

very fine trophy in the shape of a model sailing ship.

Playing membership was again on the increase and on some Saturdays five XV's were fielded. F. E. Foreman was a very popular Captain, as was his successor E. W. D. Weston at a time when a fixture list was slowly but perceptibly becoming stronger.

In 1932 the Club was honoured with staging a County Match, the first club outside the Metropolitan area asked to do so. For the occasion the soccer pitch at the Athletic Ground was borrowed.

The strength of the side at this time was particularly in the pack though K. W. Feaver was making a name for himself at full-back, subsequently gaining County honours; and L. A. Hedges, Captain in 1933/34, was a really strong-running three-quarter.

The King's School, Rochester provided several good players at this period of time. This season was also notable for the fact that, for the first time for many seasons, the Club had a credit balance at the bank — of sixpence.

The 'Tin Cup' was regained by Maidstone in February 1934. The *Tonbridge Free Press*, under the heading "Come Landlord, Fill the Bowl", describes the occasion in grand terms:

"This trophy, like the America Cup, remains in the possession of the holders until the challengers are successful in winning it on the holders' ground; but although this is a "private" affair between Maidstone and Tonbridge; it is a matter of some moment and attracts a good crowd of supporters to the scene of the contest."

According to the article, a certain landlord in Maidstone promised that if Maidstone won the cup he would fill it up twice with beer. What he didn't know was that the cup holds two gallons.

Tonbridge led at half time through tries by Taylor and Burch, but tries by Foreman and Dakers (2), one converted by Greig, gave Maidstone victory by 14 points to 6.

The years 1935 to 1938 saw a change in the trend of Maidstone play. While the forwards were still very strong, the standard of back play improved enormously.

L. S. Dougal, a very fine centre, was Captain for three years and he had with him in the cen-

1905-1939

tre Robin Bateman, an ex-Scottish trials player whose great experience and tactical skill was of enormous value. L. S. Daniels, a West Country player was on the wing with W. Greenwood and the Smith brothers available also, one can see it was a fight to obtain a place.

Season 1936-37 was probably the most successful of this era, with 20 out of 26 matches won; 348 points were scored and only 89 against.

The pack of that year must have been one of the weightiest ever, with H. B. Higgins, W. Steer, H. F. Greig, Dr. Noble and D. F. Grant, the last three averaging nearly 16 stone per man. H. F. Greig was particularly stout, and Mr. John V. Harrison recalls an occasion when Greig was tackled by two people simultaneously in an effort to get the ball. Apparently Greig slowly toppled over, to break the arm of the lower of the tacklers.

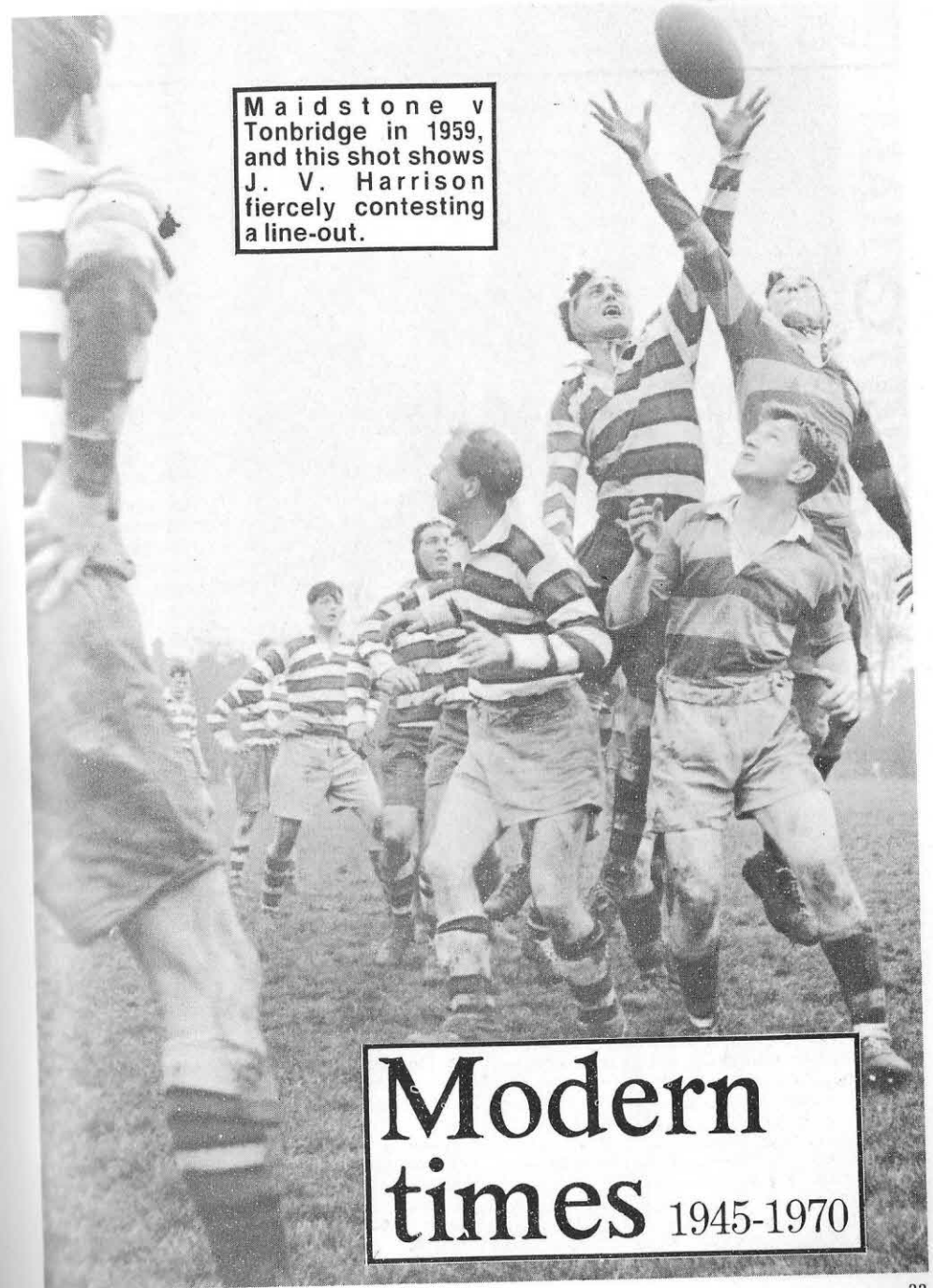
Mr. H. 'Basil' Higgins made his mark in several ways. Commencing play at the same time as Mr. Philip Haynes, he went on to be a notable skipper of the 'A' XV. He followed his playing career by taking up refereeing, not as the Club referee which was the practice at the time, but with the Kent Society of Rugby Football Union Referees which was formed in 1950.

He refereed the Kent Society's first fixture, and later recalls officiating at an Aylesford Paper Mills v Rochester match in which Dr. Norman Parkes was hooking for Rochester. Apparently 'Doc' Parkes was a rather volatile player, and was recommended by Mr. Pat Jenkins, father of the Kent Society, at an early stage in his hooking career to take up refereeing in order to stay on the right side of the Laws. 'Doc' Parkes soon, of course became an outstanding international referee.

G. R. Shirley succeeded L. S. Dougal as Captain for the 1938-39 season and was a most successful and popular leader. He was selected and played for Kent later in the season and was complimented on his great courage by the County Officials for continuing to play against Cornwall after having his nose broken in the early stages of the game.

This was the last season before the war, and once again so great was the response of Maidstone to the call of the country that the Club lapsed almost completely during 1939-45. Much thanks are due to Miss Boorman, one of Mr. Wm Day's staff for collecting some subscriptions and maintaining contact with members during this period. This enabled the Club to start off with a credit balance after the war.

H. B. Higgins, who made his mark in several ways, and became a notable skipper of the 'A' XV in the 1947-48 season.



Maidstone v Tonbridge in 1959, and this shot shows J. V. Harrison fiercely contesting a line-out.

Modern times 1945-1970

1945-1970

ONCE again a war had put a brake on the momentum of Maidstone Football Club. During the 1939-45 war the Club lapsed almost completely, but fortunately for local rugby Mr. William Day, Junior, was demobilised early in 1945 and quickly called a meeting of all rugby players in the district.

It was at this meeting that the Old Maidstonians R.F.C. decided to join forces with the Club, and this single fact is surely responsible for the thrust which built up over the next 20 years, because the creation of one town side undoubtedly led to a strengthening of the united Club, both in quantity of players and quality of play.

Since that time Maidstone Grammar School has fed many of its best players through to the Club although, of course, the greater dispersal of boys to careers after further education more recently has stemmed the flow a little. Not only the best M.G.S. boys have joined the Club; for the type of rugby played at Club level is so different from schoolboy rugby that many who were less successful at school often adapted well to the Club game.

In addition, the link with M.G.S. is not confined to the playing field because we have been extremely fortunate that successive sports masters and Headmasters have co-operated in affording training and changing facilities when necessary.

For some time after the war Alex Stewart assisted the Club in so many ways, and it is pleasing that Ron McCormick and Des Diamond particularly are continuing to link the Club and the School. In recognition of our relationship with the School, members of every M.G.S. 1st XV were given honorary membership status in Maidstone Football Club.

It would be remiss to mention the links with Maidstone Grammar School without acknowledging the support we have received from other schools in the district. Sutton Valence School provided many players, both staff and pupils, at the earliest stages of our

existence, and continue to do so. The King's School, Rochester, has also provided many players, particularly since the 1930s.

It is surely encouraging that other local schools which have recently introduced rugby into their sports lessons are also beginning to supply players. To foster these developments, and as insurance for the future, perhaps the Club should arrange mid-week fixtures with schools at a level suitable to their need.

Despite the merging of the two local rugby clubs, it was difficult to raise even one team in the season following the war. However in the 1946-47 season two teams were fielded, the 1st XV Captain being J. M. Robertson and the 'A' Team Captain, H. B. Higgins. The team photographs of this and the following season show many familiar, if somewhat younger faces — Alan Firmin, John Greenwood, 'Sandy' Kitchen, John Pocock, Alex Stewart, Maurice Froud, George Wood, Gerry Banks, 'Binki' Harris and John V. Harrison. With a nucleus of such men the future of the Club was secure.

'J.V.H.' was playing regularly until very recently, so his playing career spans one-third of the Club's lifetime. He has played over 500 games for the Club, completed almost all of them, and may find it difficult to resist a game or two in the Centenary Season.

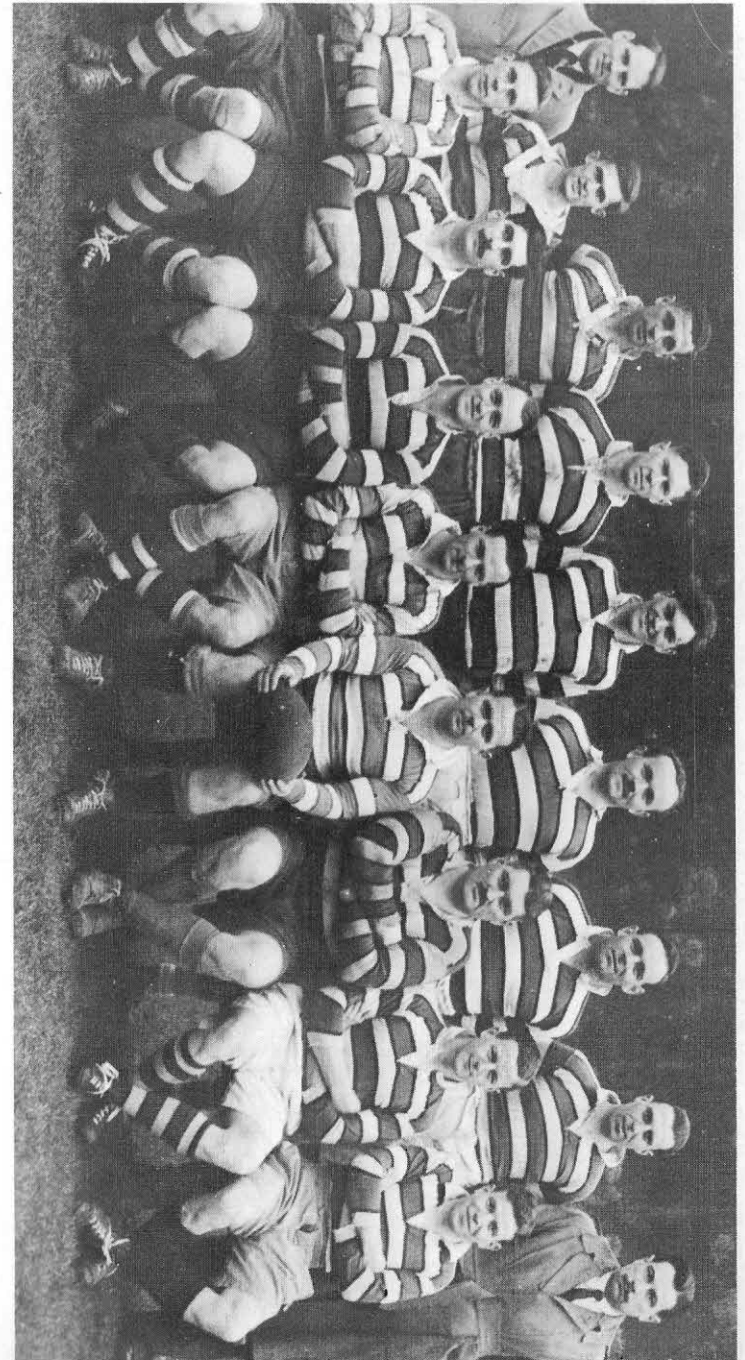
The Club then settled down to another steady process of building-up and by 1949-50 three or four sides were turning out each Saturday.

Another setback occurred when we lost the use of the two pitches at the Athletic Ground. We had used the two narrow pitches since 1895, with training lit by the street lighting from the London Road.

This difficult period engendered rather low morale, but was considerably improved when, in 1949, the Club managed to obtain two quite good pitches in Mote Park, together with changing accommodation and tea facilities. Thanks are due to Mr. William Day, Mr. Sandy Kitchen and Mr. Bill Hunter for seeing us through this transitional period.

In 1950-51 Mr. William Day finally relinquished his posts as Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer, an occasion suitably

Back (from left): A. Stewart, J. Sewell, A. Firmin, W. Greenwood, J. V. Harrison, S. Kitchen, A. N. Other, R. E. Arnold, J. Pocock.
Front: G. Hawkins, H. Strudwick, G. A. Davis, F. Stewart, J. M. Robertson (captain), H. Greig, F. Boorman, G. A. Wood.



MAIDSTONE FOOTBALL CLUB 1946-47

1945-1970

marked by a presentation at the Annual Dinner of 1951-52 attended by Mr. H. Cleaver, President of the Rugby Union.

The seventy-fifth season 1953-54 produced the best results up to that time. Under Des Payne's Captaincy, the 1st XV lost only two of its thirty-one fixtures, scoring 467 points against only 68 points. Des Payne and Brian Bills were also playing for Kent, as had Alan Firmin a couple of seasons earlier.

The nucleus of that side were to see the Club through to the end of the 1950s. Charles Hitchcock became Captain in 1955 and Ian Milsted, our present Chairman, in 1958-59 to 1961-62.

The era was marked by outstanding back play. In one season the two wingers Mike McBrien and Roy Lawrence scored 40 tries between them, and the two centres and stand-off, Brian Bills, Charles Hitchcock and Ian Milsted regularly played for the County. The centres were feared by all opposition, Brian Bills with his aggressive disregard for opposition tacklers earning his nickname "Basher" and Charlie Hitchcock with his electrifying speed. Charlie was also a prodigious place-kicker.

Of course any set of backs needs the ball and the pack of this era, feeding scrum-half John Barry, featured strong front-row men such as Ted Gray, Brian Lovelidge, and the hooker H. 'Bert' Marsh. The towering second-row had John V. Harrison and 'Bruin' Earl, who is unique in the Club's history, having earned an England Trial.

'Bruin' Earl dominated the line-out for many years into the 1960s, and the writer is grateful to him for advice given when travelling to away matches in the side-car of his motor cycle.

Notables in the back row of the late 1950s were Dennis McDonald, Brian Fridd and Hugh Mattinson. Brian Fridd's superb 'reading' of a game, which enabled him to arrive at the right place at exactly the right moment without appearing to hurry, won him the Captaincy of the 1st XV in 1962. Hugh Mattinson's cover tackling was clinically-efficient, for which at least one stand-off half had cause to be grateful.

Another major event of this era was the opening of the present 1st XV pitch in October

1957. Major improvements to the pitch, and the new stand was provided by Mr. William Day, and named the William Day Memorial pitch in memory of his great contribution to the Club.

The occasion was marked by a match between Maidstone and Kent, the Kent side being led by H. M. Inglis of London Scottish and Scotland. Mr. Arthur Marshall, President of the Rugby Football Union officiated at the opening ceremony.

The 1958-59 season was notable for fine team records throughout the Club. Ian Milsted's 1st XV won all but one of their 26 fixtures with a points ratio of 524 against 54; and Harry Green's 'A' XV had the distinction, unique in Club history of winning every one of their matches. Peter Ewing, Harry O'Donnell, Mick Spillane, Bert Pierce and Tim Higgens were all prominent members of the successful 'A' XV.

A more social event of the 1958-59 season was the introduction of the internal Club Sevens into the calendar, at the instigation of Mr. Eddie Doggett, our former Steward. This delightful domestic event fell into disuse a few years later, but has been revived as the Geoffrey Fletcher Sevens.

Mr. Geoffrey Fletcher, who died in 1974, had long been associated with the Club as a player, official, and also as landlord of the Market House Inn which for so many seasons was a centre for Club meetings. We are pleased that Mrs. Edna Fletcher continues to keep in touch, and annually presents the Geoffrey Fletcher awards to the winning Club Seven.

The last Old Crocks match took place in 1959; and one would have thought there was scope for its revival.

The 1960s saw more frequent changes to the Captaincy of the 1st XV. After four seasons of highly successful results under Ian Milsted, Brian Fridd took over in 1962-63 to be followed at two yearly intervals by John Jones, Martin Sharp, Ron McCormick and Tony Grenfell.

The record during this period shows a slight fall from those of previous years, but this is no reflection on the skippers, each of whom brought his individual personality to bear on the

Des Payne receiving the 'Tin Cup' from the Tonbridge skipper in the 1950-51 season.



1945-1970

team's and the Club's efforts.

What was changing was the composition of the fixture list. Slowly disappearing were those games against rather weaker Kent clubs' opposition, and also those matches against the second strings of the top London Clubs.

In their place came fixtures against rising provincial clubs, such as Cambridge, Upper Clapton, Kenilworth and Clifton. At the same time the turnover of players was increasing due to business career reasons.

Mention has been already made of Brian Fridd's ability to 'read' a game which earned him a regular place in the Kent team. What has not been acknowledged is the quiet contribution 'Spindle' had made firstly as Assistant Hon. Treasurer for twelve years, and also as the only Membership Secretary the Club has had, since 1968.

John Jones was Captain of the 1st XV for two seasons from 1964-66. John joined us from Streatham/Croydon and, such was our respect for his knowledge of 'engine-room' rugby and his powers of leadership, he became the first 'non-local' to be elected Captain.

The training sessions took on new degrees of coaching and planning, and the efforts paid dividends in results. His first season 1964-65 showed only two defeats in 26 matches, both of those in the post-festive weeks after Christmas.

The main ball-winners were Jamie Starkey at hooker, supported by the skipper and the immensely strong Doug Riches. The line-out men were Martin Sharp and the bulky George Waddington-Feather.

'Spindle' Fridd and Hugh Mattinson still dominated the back row, and behind them at scrum-half was the diminutive Welshman, Malcolm James. Malcolm, who so tragically died a few years after leaving the area, had great strength despite his size. He played to his forwards and earned their protection. His skill in tidying-up poor situations earned him County Honours, and glowing Press reports about his courage.

John Jones used these skills to the full to control the game. It was unfortunate that injury prevented John from skippering longer, or mak-

ing as full a contribution as Coach as he would have been capable. To his credit, he now plays a full part in coaching at Mini-Rugby sessions.

Martin Sharp skippered from 1966 to 1968, having been a regular member of the side for seven seasons, and continued the development of the 1st XV. He had an infectious enthusiasm for the job and insisted that others showed similar keenness. Emphasis was laid on training, and those who could not or would not attend, whatever their ability, had no place in the top side. Organisation and loyalty paid dividends in results.

A natural successor to Martin Sharp as Captain was Ron McCormick, and his two seasons saw us through to the 1970s. Ron's policy was to run the ball at every opportunity.

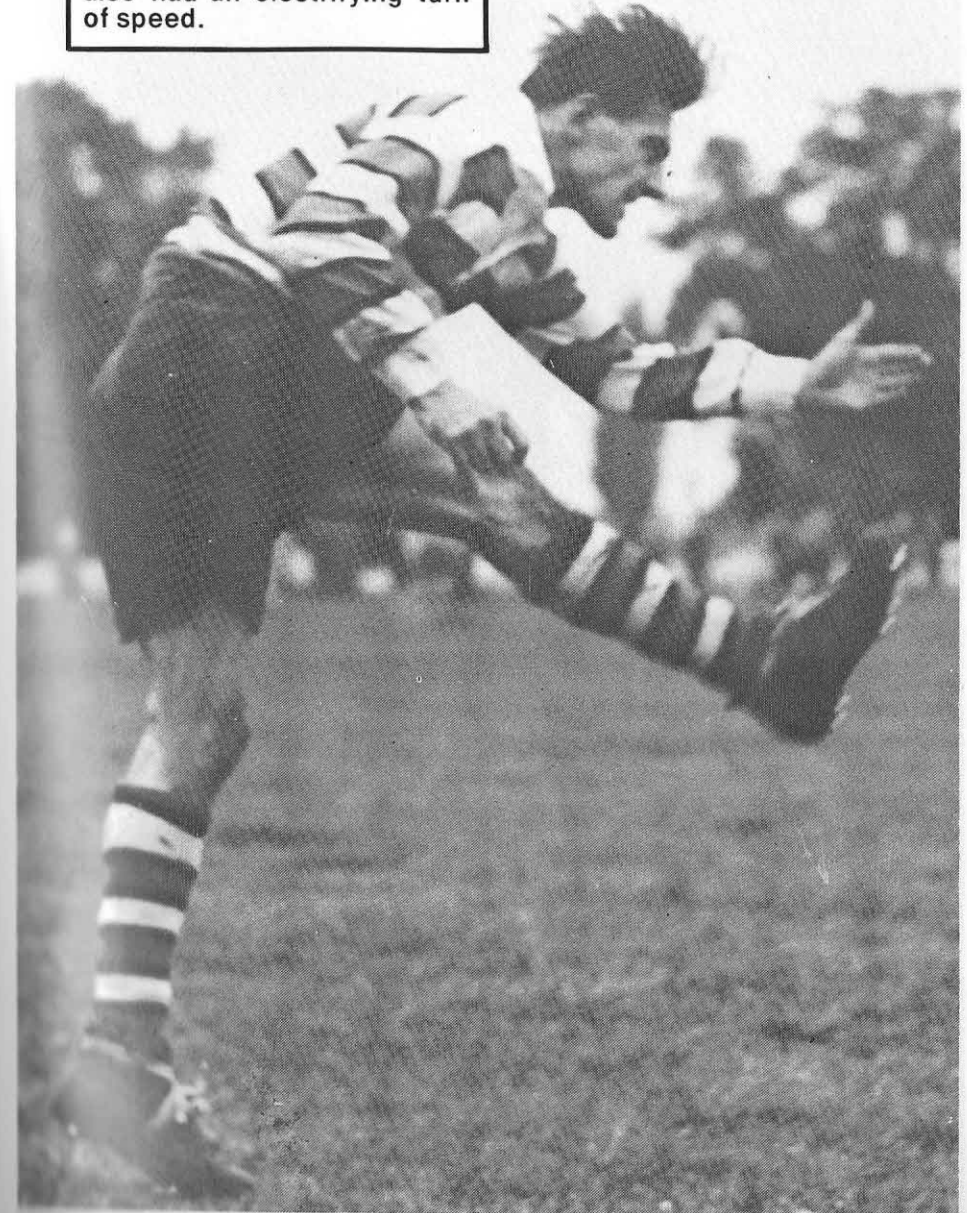
The Club was blessed with a number of Welsh schoolmasters at the time, most of them fast threequarters, so it was essential to provide good ball whenever possible. Perhaps the best of these was Roger Richardson, a solid runner who possessed a devastating tackle which shook his opposite number. The team developed the scissors, dummy scissors, and the "crash-ball" to use Roger's power to the full.

Both Ron McCormick and Roger Richardson played for the County, Ron being rewarded particularly for his consistent performances and one hundred per cent effort in all features of play. The policy of open-rugby led to the side scoring over 600 points for the first time in the Club's history, in 1969-70.

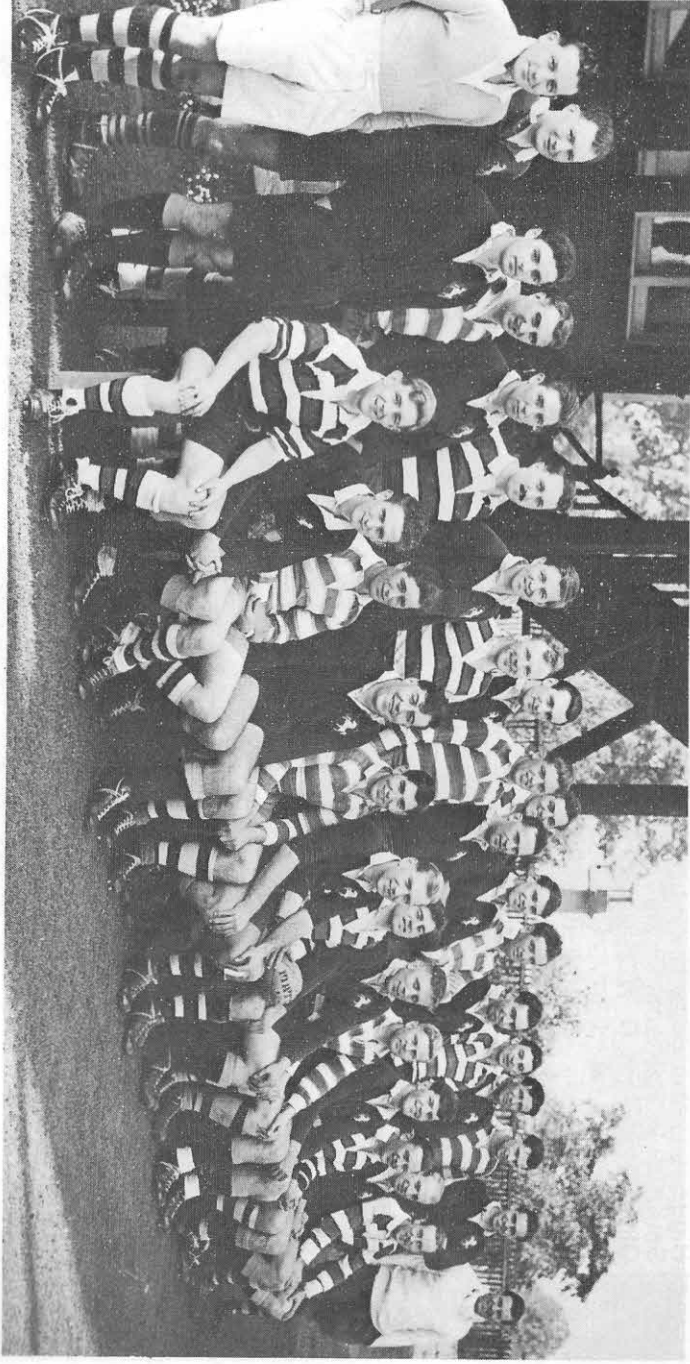
Overshadowing this last season in the decade was the death of Bernard Hinks following an injury in an 'A' team game. Tributes were paid throughout the County to a man who symbolised what good club rugby was all about.

Throughout the 1960s, the stability of the Club organisation laid the foundations to move into our Centenary decade. Brian Bills, our long-serving Treasurer was improving the financial base, and the enthusiasm of Mr. Jim Robertson, the President, spread throughout the Club to produce good playing results right through to the junior sides.

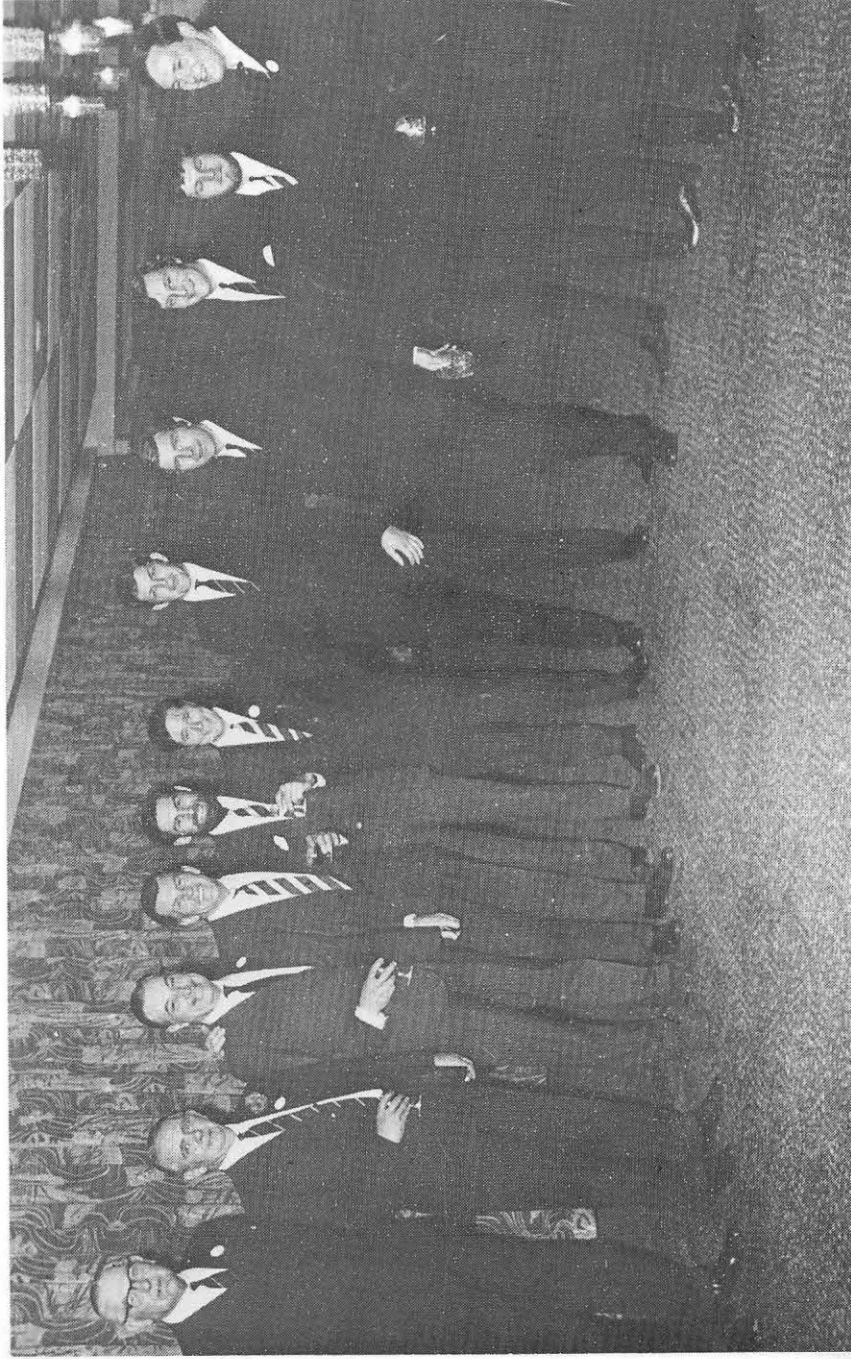
The classic style of Charlie Hitchcock, who was a prodigious place-kicker and also had an electrifying turn of speed.



The opening of the William Day Memorial Pitch in October 1957

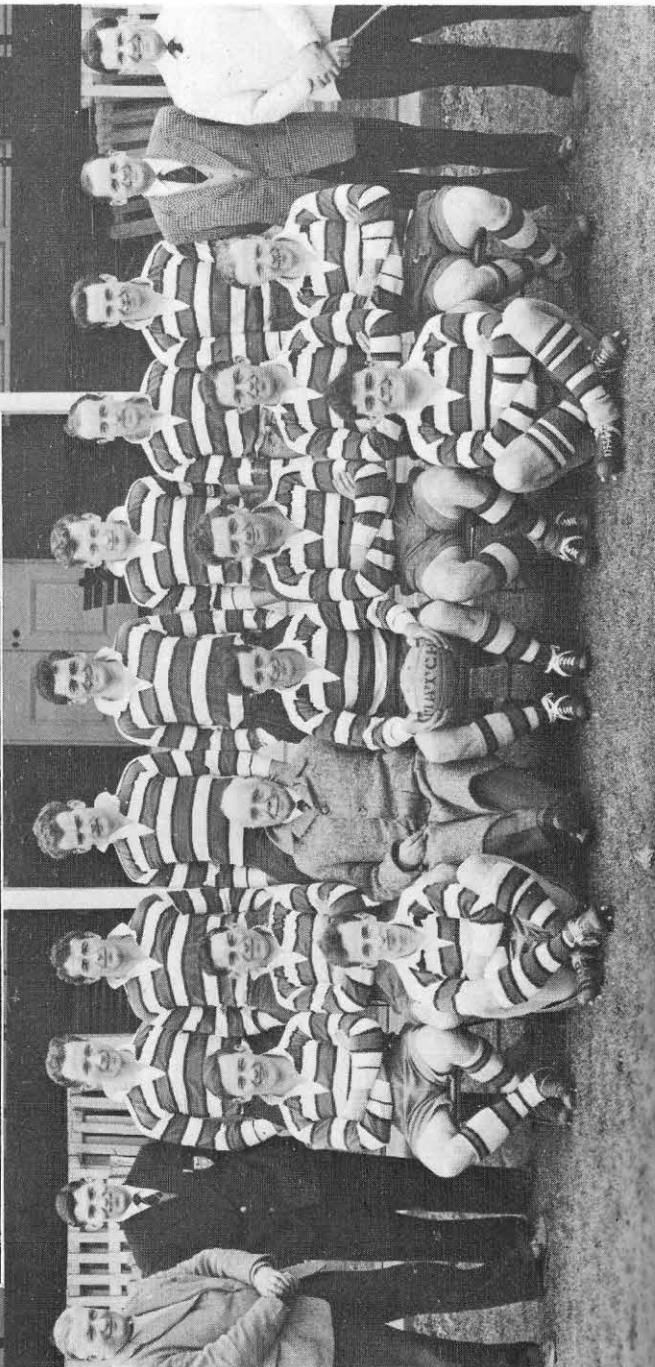


The Maidstone players are (back row): S. Robbie, R. Cole, H. Mattinson, B. Fridd, J. V. Harrison, G. Earl, G. Davis, B. Hinks, D. Payne (Touchludge).
 Front: R. Montgomery, I. Milsted, B. Bills, C. Hitchcock (Capt), P. Thomas, J. Barry, H. Marsh. To the left are Dr. Norman Parkes referee, and Mr Roy Mercer in Kent colours.



Eleven Maidstone Football Club captains. From left: P. Haynes, J. Robertson, J. Pocock, D. Payne, C. Hitchcock, I. Milsted, B. Fridd, J. Jones, M. Sharp, R. McCormick, A. Grenfell

The team for the 1958 - 59 season. Standing (from left): G. A. Higgins (Team Sec), B. F. J. Bills, R. Johnson, B. Lovelidge, J. Smith, J. V. Harrison, D. McDonald, H. Marsh, A. Johnson, D. A. Oliver (Hon Sec), D. W. E. Payne (Team Sec).
 Seated: J. A. Barry, C. C. L. Hitchcock, Dr. L. H. Taylor (President), I. Milsted (Captain), G. G. Earl, B. Fridd, H. Mattinson.
 On Ground: B. E. Pay, E. Gray.



The Geoffrey Fletcher Sevens

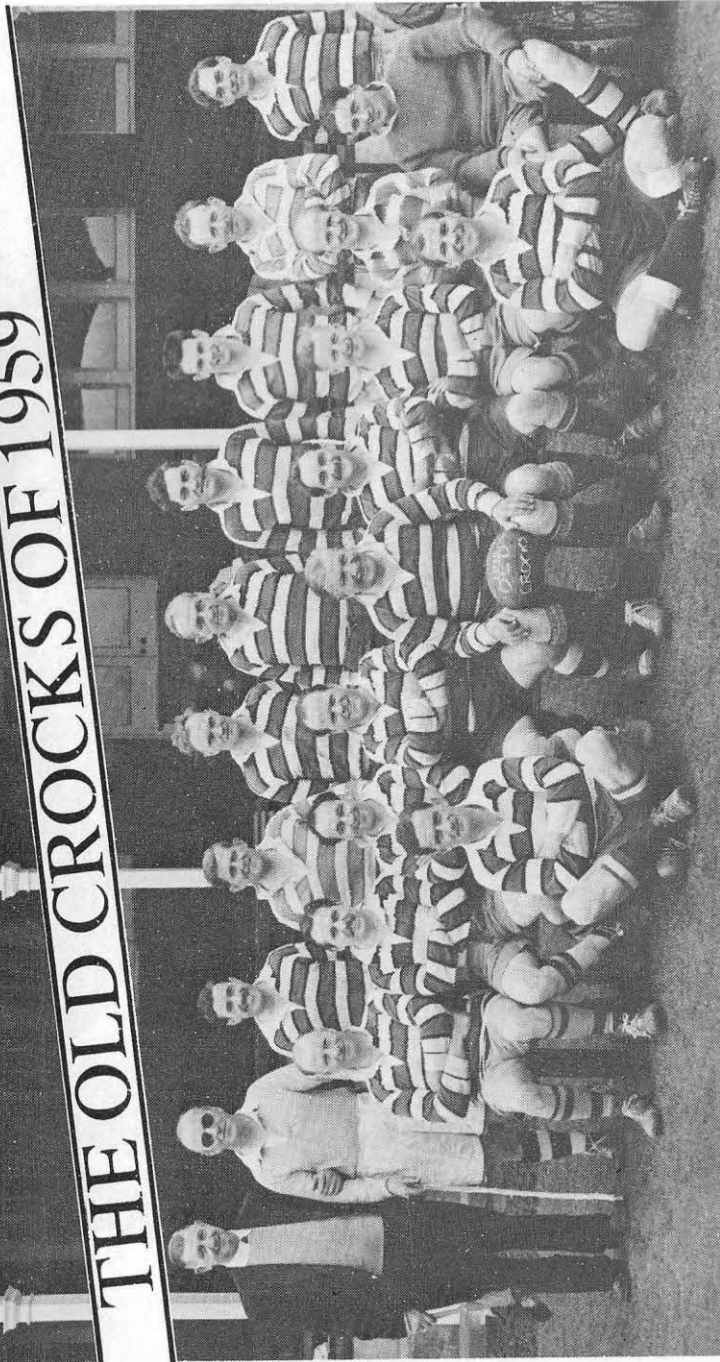
Right: Mr. Geoffrey Fletcher, after whom the Club Sevens are named.



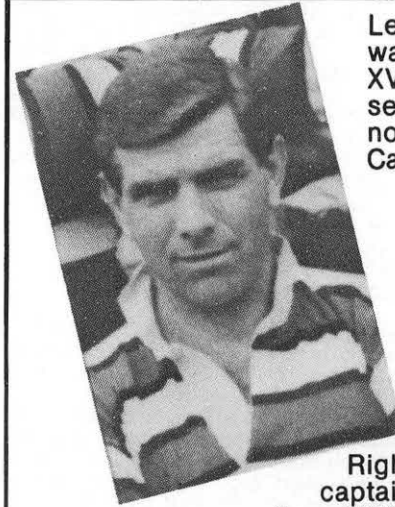
Below: The Geoffrey Fletcher Sevens — definitely outsiders for the Final. From left: Harry O'Donnell, Peter Waghorn, Mick Tomsett, John Doe, Dave Bowers, Jeff Smith and — dormant — Alf Johnson.



THE OLD CROCKS OF 1959



Back (from left): Skip Hinks (Touch Judge), R. K. Lewis (Referee), D. Parker, I. McGillivray, P. Ralph, B. Higgins, J. V. Harrison (Kent), P. Hinks, D. Still, A. Pearson. Seated: A. Barr, G. E. Fletcher, R. Bojamma, M. G. Froud, G. A. Higgins (Captain), O. W. Pierce, F. Boorman, R. Harris, A. Milsted. On Ground: I. King (England), Squire Wilkins (England).



Left: J. P. Jones, who was Captain of the 1st XV for the 1964 - 66 season. He was the first non-local to be elected Captain.



Right: M. R. Sharp captained the 1st XV from 1966 to 1968 having been a regular in the side for seven seasons. He had an infectious enthusiasm for the job.



Left: Roger Richardson, powerful centre in the 1960s. He had a devastating tackle, and Roger's power was used to the full.



Right: Malcolm James, the diminutive Welshman who had great strength despite his size. He tragically died a few years after leaving the area.

On to our century

AS if to build up to a crescendo in the Centenary Season, the Club have achieved unprecedented success during the 1970s. Instead of relying on the reputation as one of Kent's strongest clubs, the records of Maidstone teams clearly demonstrated the fact to the rugby world. And right through the Club, from the 1st XV to the Wanderers, the facts have been convincing.

Tony Grenfell's Captaincy of three seasons from 1970-73 continued the trend towards open rugby. His team of 1971-72 scored no less than 839 points, and his own contribution was to be prepared to play enthusiastically himself in almost any position to allow the best combination as a team.

During 1970 and 1971 two new pitches were prepared, with the help of the Royal Engineers unit based in the town. Behind the scene much assistance was received from Mr. Alan Firmin and Mr. Jim Worley, after whose names the pitches have since been named. This proved a master-stroke of planning, as it meant that we now had the best playing facilities in the

County, which soon attracted the Kent County R.F.U. to invite Maidstone to stage the Kent Sevens tournament.

Organised by Martin Sharp, the experiment in 1972-73 was so successful that this has become a major regular event at Maidstone, which we are proud to host. Our lower sides now have excellent playing surfaces, which encourage good rugby throughout the Club.

By 1971-72 Maidstone were regularly fielding six teams, with Roger Richardson and Alan Spice in the County XV. The following season saw Maidstone in their first Kent Cup Final, and gave us our first major taste of competitive rugby.

The Kent Cup had existed for many years, of course, but we seldom featured in the latter stages of the competition. On this first occasion we were beaten by a narrow margin by our keen rivals Sidcup. The manner of defeat was perhaps more important for, creditably as Maidstone played it was clear that Sidcup's experience of 'tight' Cup rugby was greater than ours, and their superior organisation on the field of play was evident.

The same season saw us hosting the Kent Sevens Tournament for the first time, and in that type of rugby also, it was clear that unless we approached the task more seriously, even more professionally, we would not win competitions.

There will, of course, be those who regret this modern approach, but the fact remains that if we want to win competitions we must prepare and plan thoroughly, and play accordingly. Be assured that rugby as it was always meant to be enjoyed is still played, particularly by the lower sides.

The following season, 1973-74 saw two notable changes. Ian Milsted had been Chairman of the Selection Committee for seven years, and was elected Chairman of the Club. He was succeeded on Selection by Terry House who has remained in post since then.

It must have been particularly pleasing to Terry to see almost unbroken success during his term of Office, though satisfying the ambitions of an increasingly large number of fine players remains a problem.

The other change was to the Club playing colours, with the introduction of all-red socks to replace the hooped colours. Those who believed that red socks either made them run faster, or merely appeared to have that effect, had made the change for themselves in previous seasons. Our Welsh members, of course, already had their red socks, so much pressure had come from that quarter.

The sharp lessons of the previous season had



Tony Grenfell, who was Captain of the 1st XV from 1970 to 1973.

been quickly absorbed, and Jim Tinsley's team of 1973-74 duly won the Kent Cup in an historic 4-3 victory against Sidcup. The forwards in particular were outstanding on the day. It was a triumph for the whole Club, players and spectators alike, and the players appreciated the tremendous support they received from the touchline. Celebrations continued into the night.

Having inspired the Club to this unprecedented success, it was a pity that Jim Tinsley decided not to take a second term of Office as skipper, for he was a most popular leader. It fell to his successor Terry Lock to prepare for the following season which was to include the opportunity to enter the National Knock-Out Club Competition, the John Player Cup.

To qualify for the first round proper we had to beat the Hertfordshire champions Fullerians, and training commenced in early June to ensure fitness for the encounter. For the first of what was to be many occasions Terry Lock's thoroughness in preparation for key matches paid handsome dividends. In a close match Maidstone won through, to gain the honour of receiving the mighty London Irish in the John Player Cup 1st Round.

The great day arrived on 10th November

1974, and surely no-one present will forget the occasion. Maidstone took the field against a London Irish side containing the Irish Internationals Mick Malloy, Ken Kennedy and Pat Lavery, and four County players. The Maidstone pack put on an inspired performance and the backs tackled as though their lives depended upon it.

The Irish, as can happen to any top side playing "minnows", were finding it difficult to counter the sheer enthusiasm facing them.

To the delight of a large crowd of between two and three thousand spectators Maidstone led well into the second half, and at 16-10 if Ian Valentine had had an ounce of luck a try in the corner would surely have put us into an unassailable lead. It was not to be, however, and the handicap of two enforced substitutions in the front row, one crucially at hooker, began to take its strain.

London Irish gained increasing possession, and the Maidstone cover was stretched to breaking point. A converted try brought the scores level, and a dropped-goal by Mike Heal sealed the match for London Irish, at 16-19. It had been a wonderful performance by every one of Terry Lock's side, and we were proud to be members of the Club.

At this time the quiet influence of Des Diamond in coaching the 1st XV was beginning to pay dividends, particularly in the Sevens game. Although the highly successful sides of the 1950s had produced some good Sevens teams, once failing by a whisker to beat the Harlequins in the final qualifying round of the Middlesex Sevens, we had little reason to be proud of our Sevens' performances in more recent years.

The teams for most tournaments were often decided at short notice, and some incongruous combinations had taken the field in Maidstone colours. Smaller local teams such as Betchanger and Snowdown showed that with preparation a Seven from a junior club could compete on almost equal terms with the senior clubs.

Des Diamond was to be the hub of a new Club approach to the Sevens game, and in 1974-75 our Seven reached the final of the County Tournament, as well as at Canterbury and Dover. The seeds had been sown for a new Maidstone assault on Sevens.

Season 1974-75 also saw us in our third successive Kent Cup Final, against Canterbury at the United Services Ground, Chatham. If there was complacency within the Club, it was mainly among our supporters who sat back in the stand and waited for the expected victory. Canterbury's supporters lined the touch to urge

their players on.

In the game itself Canterbury played the inspired rugby, while Maidstone struggled to find form. It was the reversal of our experience against London Irish, and the match had slipped away before the Maidstone support realised that they should have been on the touchline throughout. Canterbury fully deserved their victory on the day.

One other notable Committee change in that season saw Des Payne stepping down as Team Secretary, an Office which he had held since 1957. Des had been responsible for some 2500 teams and 37,500 players during his time as Team Secretary, and continues to serve the Club as Chairman of the Ground committee, and in numerous other small ways. Our gratitude and admiration are considerable.

Season 1975-76 was another excellent one. Of 169 games by all Club sides, only 44 were lost. And to provide material for the future, Colts and Mini rugby made their debuts at the Mote. Malcolm Farley has separately described the Mini-Rugby Section of the Club, but it is appropriate to record here the contribution made to the life of the Club by the army of youngsters on Sunday mornings, and their accompanying parents.

The season also saw the revival of our links with the Iris Club of Lambertsart which should surely not be allowed to lapse again as it did in the 1960s.

Ron McCormick resumed the Captaincy of the 1st XV in 1976-77, and the fact that his previous first season as skipper had been eight years previously illustrates how long Ron maintained peak performance. The 1st XV's record of only four defeats in 29 matches was the best since John Jones' side of 1964-65. Peter Mack's 'B' XV lost only three matches, and none of the top six sides lost more than six matches during the season.

Mini-rugby continued to flourish, and there was a festival of over 200 young players at the Mote one Sunday morning.

The 1976-77 Kent Cup found us in the same half of the draw as Blackheath, and the resulting semi-final between the sides at Beckenham repeated the 16-19 London Irish score of two years previously. Though the score was the same, the performance showed the narrowing of the gap between Blackheath and Maidstone in playing terms.

Terry Lock's return as Club Captain brought us to not only our fifth Kent Cup Final in seven seasons, another narrow defeat by Blackheath, but also the momentous occasion of Maidstone's first appearance at Twickenham in the final stages of the Middlesex Sevens. Vic-

Inset: R. Richardson and H. Osenton.
Back (from left): D. Payne (Team Sec), T. Parnell, G. Gale, A. Scott, P. Croke, H. Fox, T. Lock, S. Smiley, P. Charlton, T. House (Touchjudge)
Front: P Ehrhart, K. Moore, S. Ellesmere, B. Hinks (Pres), J. Tinsley (Capt) N. Clark, R. McCormick, I. Valentine.



1st XV, 1973-74: KENT CUP WINNERS



The 1st Round, National Knock-Out Competition against London Irish in November 1974. Andy Scott and Terry Lock win the line-out.

tories at Beckenham against Orpington (34-0); Old Citizens (36-0); Beckenham (24-10); and Blackheath II (22-18) brought to fruition hours of practice by a strong squad led by Terry Lock and coached by Des Diamond. The team for the great day was: Terry Lock; Simon Knight; Malcolm Andrew; Mickey Abrahams; Chris Harvey; Shaun Ellesmere; Doug Clare; and on the Replacement Bench, Paul Malynn; Keith Moore; Eddie Stupple; and Bob North.

The specialised knowledge of Des Diamond had produced a team which included Simon Knight a hooker, when his normal position would be full-back; and Malcolm Andrew whose regular Saturday side was the Mustangs or 'A' XV, but whose positional sense, handling ability and fitness made him ideal for the seven-a-side version of the game. Quietly savouring the occasion as Touch-judge was Terry House, receiving just reward for years of Club service.

The squad couldn't have felt lonely running out on to the sacred turf of Twickenham as the solid band of followers on the South Terrace lent vociferous support throughout. The match

itself was somewhat one-sided, as the strong Harlequins seven proved to be just that bit faster in all spheres of the game, and indeed went on to win the tournament beating Rosslyn Park 40 points to 12 in the final. Our defeat by the Quins was by 26-6, but Simon Knight's second-half try under the posts at the South Terrace End gave us one ecstatic moment. The whole day was memorable, and served notice that Maidstone had 'arrived' on the national rugby scene.

Our ninety-ninth season, 1978-79 ensured that Maidstone Football Club entered the Centenary season on the crest of a tidal wave. It was unfortunate that skipper Bob North should have been cruelly denied the greater part of the season through injury, but he saw his side, led once again by Terry Lock, win every major competition in the County.

The Kent Cup Final gave us a sweet moment

to savour, as there was not the slightest element of fortune in the 3-0 victory over Blackheath at the United Services, Chatham ground. Terry Lock's preparations for the match had been particularly thorough. Any Blackheath threat was quickly stifled, and it was Maidstone who launched the dangerous attacks. The offensives paid-off because eventually Blackheath committed an error within target distance, and full-back Steve Smiley coolly landed the decisive angled-penalty.

The hoodoo had been comprehensively laid, and from now on we need have no apprehensive feelings in meeting any top-class opposition. The result of this Kent Cup victory opened the door to the John Player Cup once again, and a clear-cut defeat of Henley in the Qualifying Round ensures that we meet London Irish again in the First Round of the 1979/80 competition, this time at Sunbury.

The Kent R.F.U. Sevens Tournament was also won, this also for the first time, as was the preliminary Beckenham section of the Middlesex Sevens. Our second consecutive visit to Twickenham was to be just a little disappointing, as neither the London Irish side nor Maidstone, this time including Steve Smiley and Andy Cushing, produced good Sevens

rugby. However we led well into the second-half, when the Irish elected to kick a long penalty to snatch victory by 7 points to 6.

1st XV RECORD

	P	Won	Dwn	Lost	Pts For	Pts Against
71-72	35	27	0	8	839	373
72-73	35	26	0	9	727	288
73-74	26	18	0	8	475	213
74-75	35	20	2	13	415	284
75-76	28	19	1	8	545	227
76-77	29	25	0	4	548	203
77-78	33	23	2	8	538	229
78-79	23	18	0	5	373	171

Much of the credit for the recent years' successful record goes, quite correctly, to the Captains of the Club. It is they who blend, prepare, and motivate their teams to produce the results. However, over the past ten years some players have made outstanding contributions to successive Captains, and it would be incomplete not to mention just a few of them.

It is difficult to recall who was full-back before Steve Smiley because for ten years his



Jim Tinsley with 'good ball' about to tease his countrymen, London Irish.



The Maidstone team in the Middlesex Seven-a-Side Finals at Twickenham, 1976-77.

place in the 1st XV has hardly been at risk. Described once in the national press after a courageous performance in a County match as a "slightly mad Irishman", Steve's consistency at full-back has been remarkable.

Shaun Ellesmere has equally-long associations with the Club, and continues to provide thrust and solid defence in the threequarter line. Keith Moore and 'Hank' Hankinson come in the same category. In the second-row Graham Gale refuses to concede possession of his place, or the line-out ball. The sort of player who will only give up when he can't find the Ground.

Paul Ehrhart is in the same mould, although a broken leg prematurely ended his playing career after ten years as first-team and Kent hooker. Paul has recovered to take up the whis-

tle, an object lesson in putting something back into the game.

Throughout the Club there are players such as these who provide the consistency necessary for a Club like Maidstone Football Club to reach the top and stay there. For if it were not for strong competition for places from the Mustangs and below, we should surely lose the 'edge' required to progress.

We enter our Centenary Season as County Champions in both forms of the game. What remains to be achieved is in the hands of the Club members, both playing and non-playing. Our present skipper Terry Lock has no doubts, as his T-shirt announced to the coach party on the occasion of our first appearance at Twickenham — MAIDSTONE ARE THE BUSINESS.

BERNARD HINKS

'Any Club would be fortunate during 100 years of existence to have in their midst such a true leader of men'

PROFILE OF A CLUB MAN

BERNARD HINKS

NO account of the Club's life would be complete without recording the contribution made by Bernard Hinks, our President's son, who died following an 'A' XV match in November 1969. Many people have given service to the Club over longer periods of time — Bernard's spanned a brief 17 years — but few made such an impact.

'Bernie' Hinks' playing ability was not particularly outstanding. As a wing forward, normally blind-side, or as a No. 8 he played a classical containing game, though without the real pace that marks the very best players. He therefore accepted the Captaincy of the 'A' XV in 1958, the second team at the time; though as his influence blossomed, some thought he should have stayed available for the 1st XV for longer.

It was as Captain of the 'A' XV for seven seasons that Bernie showed his true qualities, and made a lasting impression on so many of us. Firstly, there was never any question of his being worth his place. He was sufficiently ubiquitous to play in the back row, second row, or even scrum-half. Perhaps more importantly, he was able to inspire the rest of his side to play above their natural capabilities, and therefore to win games which might otherwise have been lost.

The style of captaincy was quite unique, although succeeding Mustangs skippers tried to emulate it. Before the game, in the dressing-room pre-match chat Bernie did not attempt to exhort the side to maximum effort in all departments of the game for 80 minutes. Rather, he would circulate among his side, giving individual advice and giving specific objectives for players to attain on the field.

It is worth mentioning the difficulty Bernie had circulating in this way, because he was also pre-occupied in changing into his own playing kit in his own inimitable fashion. For some reason, he wore an old raincoat to the match, even on sunny days. And he would continue to wear this raincoat until he was fully changed — how he managed the rugby shirt no-one knows!

Out on the field Bernie was quick to sum up the strengths of the opposition, both from a skill and a physical point of view, and he deputed selected members of his team to deal with their threats. He was dedicated to victory, and would 'play the laws' to their limits.

In the season 1959-60 a diminutive Welsh scrum-half, Malcolm James, joined the Club

and spent a season in the second team before going on to 1st XV and County honours. His great strength was the ability to 'work the touchline' (direct kicking to touch was allowed) until some 20 yards from the opposition line when he would set his backs in motion. Bernie used this talent for the tougher games, but the deprived threequarters didn't object because the tactic was deployed to such good effect.

Motivation on the field was also achieved in a personal fashion. Bernie believed in the maxim 'praise individually but...ck collectively', and he would roam the field giving individual encouragement throughout the match.

Off the field, back in the bar, young players were always made welcome. It is so easy to join the 'hard core' of the side and expect the rest to integrate themselves — but Bernie always looked after the newcomers, because they represented the future.

There were lighter moments, of course. One recalls the third Lille Tour in 1959 when Bernie and Harry Green led the touring party. They were due to give a television interview following the main match, and were primed with the questions that would be asked in advance of the programme. Some coaching in the French language ensued, given by the same scholar who, on arrival at the team's hotel on the first evening, ordered himself a rare steak and found that he had ordered 25 pieces of blood-red horse meat for the entire touring party!

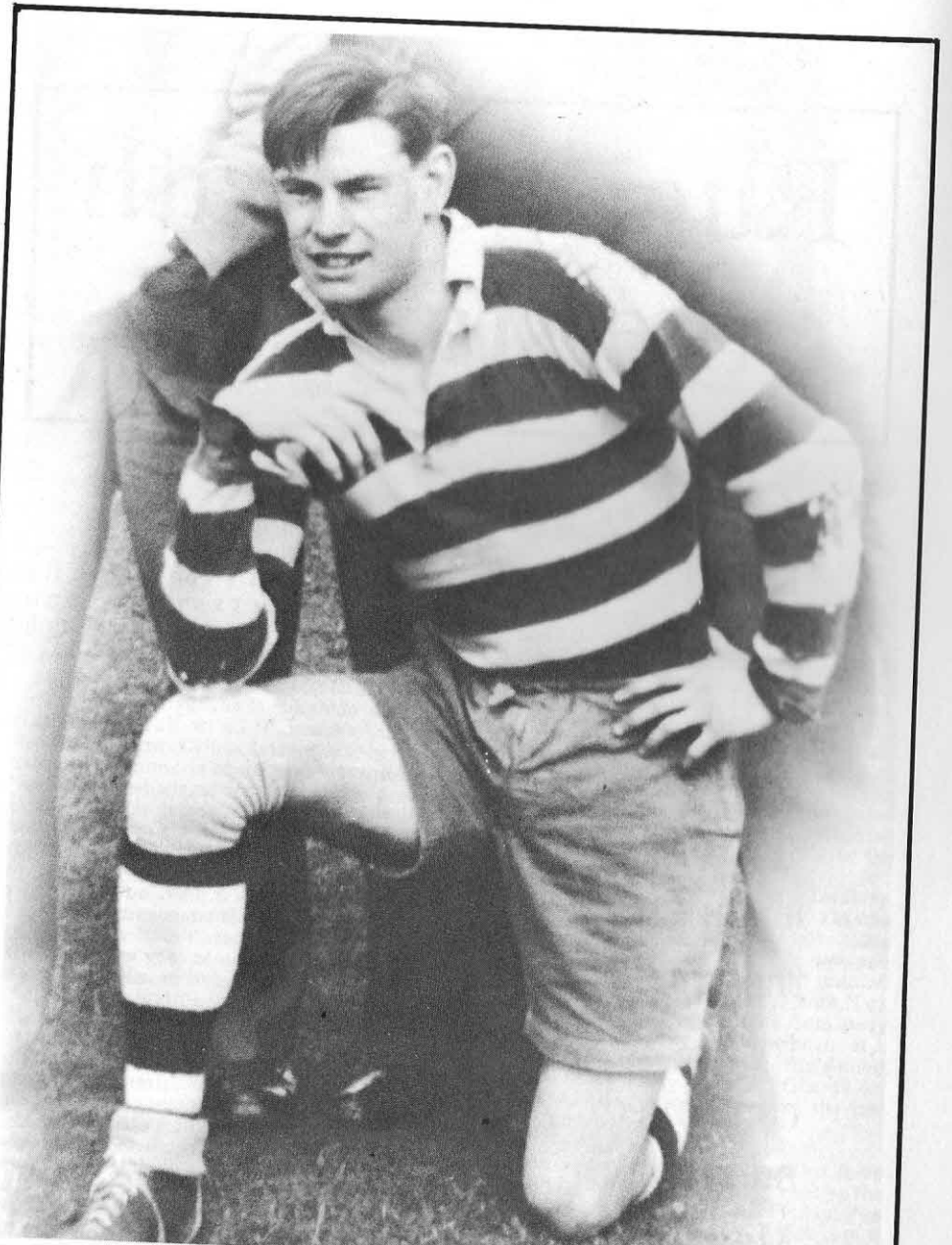
The French coaching was of equally limited use, because the television programme was shortened at the last minute due to some local news event. The result was that the interviewer asked fewer questions, in a different order, and Bernie and Harry's well-rehearsed answers were totally incomprehensible.

Bernie's later playing seasons were spent mainly in the 3rd XV, although he was frequently drafted into the senior sides when injury or unavailability left gaps. There was never any doubt that 100 per cent effort would be given. The start of a new chapter in the Club's history was cut short by Bernie's untimely death.

In the 1969-70 season, the Club for the first time appointed a Coach. It was a significant initiative for the Club, and Bernie was the choice. Whether he would have been prepared to sacrifice his own game to watch the 1st XV every Saturday is doubtful, but we were cruelly deprived of the benefits of his further service.

Any Club would be fortunate during 100 years of existence to have in their midst such a true leader of men.

We had Bernard Hinks; and we have been fortunate.



The late Bernard Hinks, Maidstone Football Club's official coach, who died from head injuries received in a match in November 1969, after 17 years as a regular player.

Rugby beneath the stars . . .

'The strength of the lower sides is surely the key to the continued success of Maidstone Football Club'

'I'VE picked Peter Bonny — he can run. The other three-quarters can handle themselves' — Steve Pooley, Wanderers' Skipper, at Selection Committee meeting.

The reputation of any rugby club rests largely with the record of its 1st XV. The fact that in any season several matches are won or lost by controversial decisions or momentary lapses in the closing minutes counts less in terms of others' perception of the strength of the club than the 1st XV results in the Sunday newspapers, or the 'Won, Drawn, Lost' columns on Tuesday morning.

An Extra 'A' XV skipper, on the day of the annual Maidstone-Sidcup encounter was heard to comment: "It doesn't matter if the bottom five sides lose today, as long as the first team wins." In terms of club prestige, he was undoubtedly right.

Perhaps only neighbouring players know the real strengths and weaknesses of a club, and one constantly hears praise for what other clubs call Maidstone's "strength in depth". Even teams who consistently give the Mustangs a hard-fought match and would dearly like a crack at the 1st XV, acknowledge that lower down the fixtures they would be really struggling.

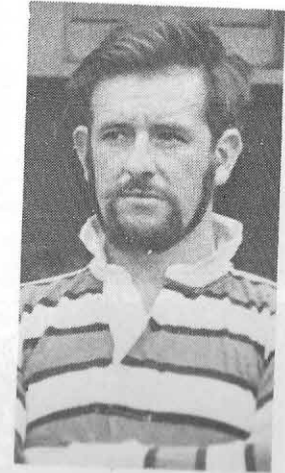
The strength of the lower sides is surely the key to the continued success of Maidstone Football Club, particularly over the past 30 years. In view of the fact that over 80% of us never play for the 1st XV, it is only proper that the Captains and some of the characters of those sides should be recorded.

THE MUSTANGS ('A' XV till 1966) Captains since 1955

H. L. GREEN	1955 - 58
B. J. HINKS	1958 - 64
T. P. ENGLISH	1964 - 65
B. J. HINKS	1965 - 66
R. EDWARDS	1966 - 67
R. WATERS	1967 - 69
N. NISSIM	1969 - 71
T. FOREMAN	1971 - 74
R. CRASKE	1974 - 76
A. OSENTON	1976 - 77
P. WATKINS	1977 - 78
R. McCORMICK	1978 - 79
I. VALENTINE	1979 -

RECENT PLAYING RECORD

	P	W	D	L	Pts for	Pts against
73/74	30	21	1	8	646	261
74/75	28	19	1	8	473	228
75/76	30	23	0	7	650	263
76/77	28	21	1	6	563	190
77/78	27	16	1	10	327	239
78/79	29	22	1	6	559	194



Nick Nissim,
Mustangs Captain,
1969-71.

The Mustangs, re-named from the 'A' XV in 1966, have recently been playing up to 14 opposing 1st XVs in a season — and acquitting themselves well. In leading the side in the Centenary Season, Ian Valentine has a heavy responsibility. To some extent it is the most onerous post in the club, in that the skipper must inspire his side to produce not only good results, but also players fit for the 1st XV. And, however well he plays personally, he cannot in normal circumstances play for the top side. Ian has a wealth of experience brought from the 1st XV, is widely respected, and will undoubtedly be a successful skipper.

Ian Valentine follows a long line of successful Mustangs' Captains, perhaps the most notable of whom was 'Bernie' Hinks, of whom much has been recorded elsewhere. 'Bernie' led the side for seven seasons from the late 1950s to the mid 1960s.

Dickie Waters was from 1967 to 1969 surely the best dressed skipper of all time. A hard-running and hard-tackling centre, Dickie remained immaculate throughout the match, and invariably left the field with not a hair out of place.

There followed, until 1971, two seasons of Nick Nissim, prop, and an unforgettable character. Nick was a soccer exile, and it is said that he only took up rugby at around the age of 30 because the highest soccer authorities in the land had decided that Nick's natural aggression

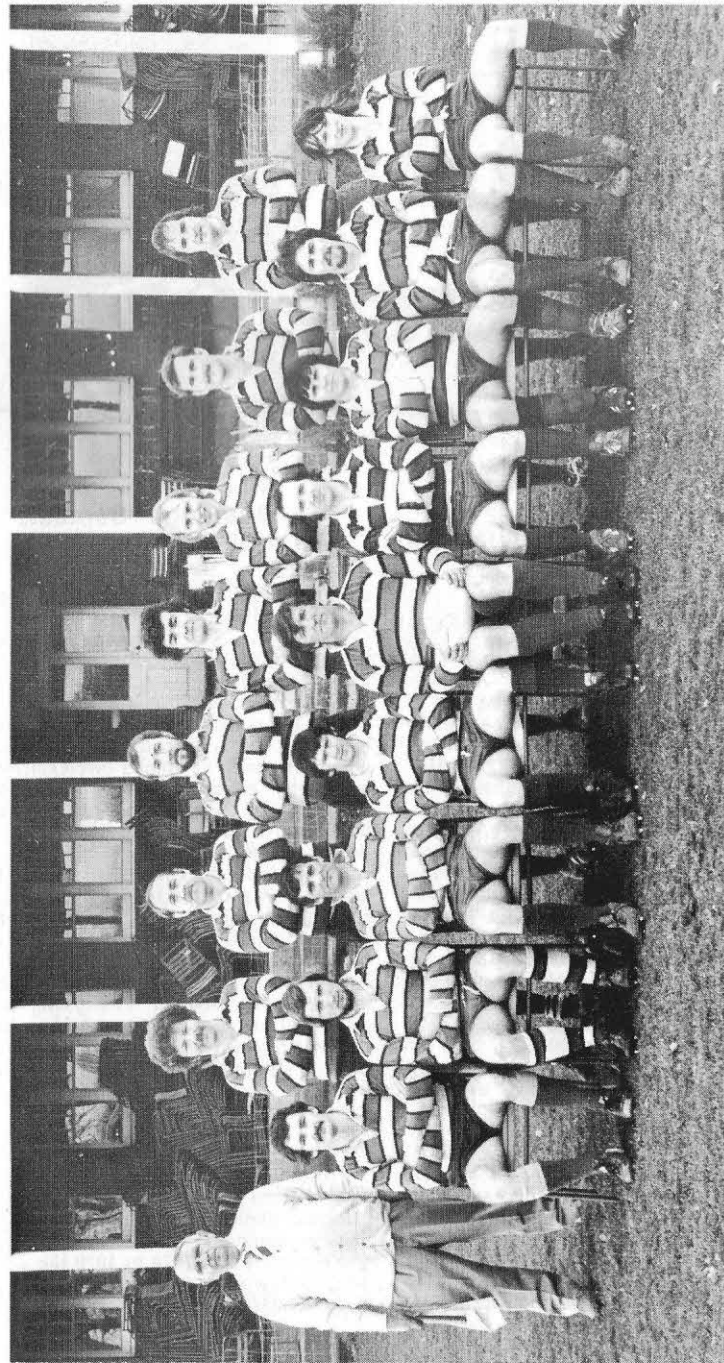
with his hands was no longer to be tolerated on the football field.

Playing with Nick one quickly recognised the force of the F.A.'s argument. All that Nick knew about rugby, which wasn't a great deal, had been learned from Bernie Hinks, and he sought to lead the Mustangs in the same manner. As a stand-off half, he was ideal to play under. He hadn't reached threequarter play in his rugby education, and totally delegated responsibility for that facet of play, dedicating his forwards to producing "good ball" for the backs.

Off the field, Nick is memorable for his flamboyant disregard for spending money. On one occasion, realising that he had left home without his kit, he bought a complete new set, boots included, on the journey to the ground. The beer kitty was always healthy, with Nick invariably "in the chair". Returning from away games, attendance of the complete team at a convenient pub was obligatory. He would enter the pub and immediately order 17 pints, 15 for the team, and two for himself while the rest were being poured.

Terry Foreman led the Mustangs for three seasons, during which time he built up the pattern of play which remains today. The side was dedicated to running the ball, and it paid handsome dividends both in enjoyment and results. From 1974 to 1976 the author was permitted two blissful years captaining the side. Despite his somnolent presence, the team con-

MUSTANGS 1976-77



Back from left: J. M. Robertson, I. Castle, B. Sedgewick, M. Johnson, C. Quirk, W. Walker, P. Walker, P. Watkins, A. Spice. Front: G. Norton, A. Dray, C. Sanderson, R. Edwards, A. Oseinton (Capt.), W. J. Tinsley, I. Baker, S. Knight, G. Reese.

continued to play adventurous rugby, and continued to keep the County's stronger junior sides one step removed from the 1st XV.

Since 1976 the captaincy has changed annually. Alan Oseinton, who had joined the club as a mountainous fullback, had converted to second row from where he led the side in rampaging fashion. Alan was so successful that he declined a second term of office, to pursue first team ambitions.

Paul Watkins took over briefly but had to move North with his job. Besides being a solid prop forward, Paul had the additional asset of a lovely wife who was a physiotherapist. In consequence there was a noticeable increase in real or imagined injuries in the Mustangs when Angela Watkins was on the touchline.

Ron McCormick has just completed his tenancy, and in the Centenary Season will lead the 'A' XV. It is surprising that of 1st XV skippers in the past 25 years, only Ron McCormick and Jim Tinsley have made large contributions to the lower sides.

It is a compliment to Ron that he should be willing to pass on his great experience in this way. He is the only man to skipper each of the first three sides, and he has ample rugby left in him to continue right through to the Wanderers' captaincy in due course.

We wish Ian Valentine good fortune as Mustangs' Captain in our Centenary Season. As long as the Mustangs endeavour to play open attacking rugby, they will continue to provide good material for the 1st XV.

It would be remiss to have an account of Mustangs rugby without mentioning the services of Jim Robertson as touch-judge. Far from retiring quietly from the club Presidency in 1972 to watch matches from the relative comforts of grandstand or motor car, Jim has become the regular touch-judge at Mustangs' home games. With typical unselfishness, and often shunning inclement weather, Jim Robertson is always willing to run the line. Our grateful thanks are due to him.

THE 'A' XV (Extra 'A' XV till 1966)

CAPTAINS since 1955

R. Bojamma	1955 - 56
D. C. Davies	1956 - 58
H. L. Green	1958 - 60
H. O'Donnell	1960 - 62
D. T. Parker	1962 - 63
H. Marsh	1963 - 64
P. Ewing	1964 - 67
M. Tomsett	1967 - 69
R. Vale	1969 - 72
K. Davies	1972 - 75
R. Clarke	1975 - 78
A. Lock	1978 - 79
R. McCormick	1979 -

RECENT PLAYING RECORD

	P	W	D	L	Pts for	Pts against
73/74	26	21	1	4	548	172
74/75	30	20	1	9	587	200
75/76	29	18	2	9	512	283
76/77	24	18	1	5	374	103
77/78	26	13	1	12	393	220
78/79	25	17	0	8	510	221

QUOTE: "He tends to run round players instead of going through them." Selection Committee Report.

Perhaps the 'A' XV is the level at which players can best enjoy the combination of competent club rugby and a social atmosphere. Many ex-first team players find the 'A' XV has the attraction of a fairly settled side, within their slowing capabilities, but without the pressures of arduous training commitments. It is also a good proving ground for new players of reputed high pedigree, and the level at which good but casual university players will come home to in the vacations.

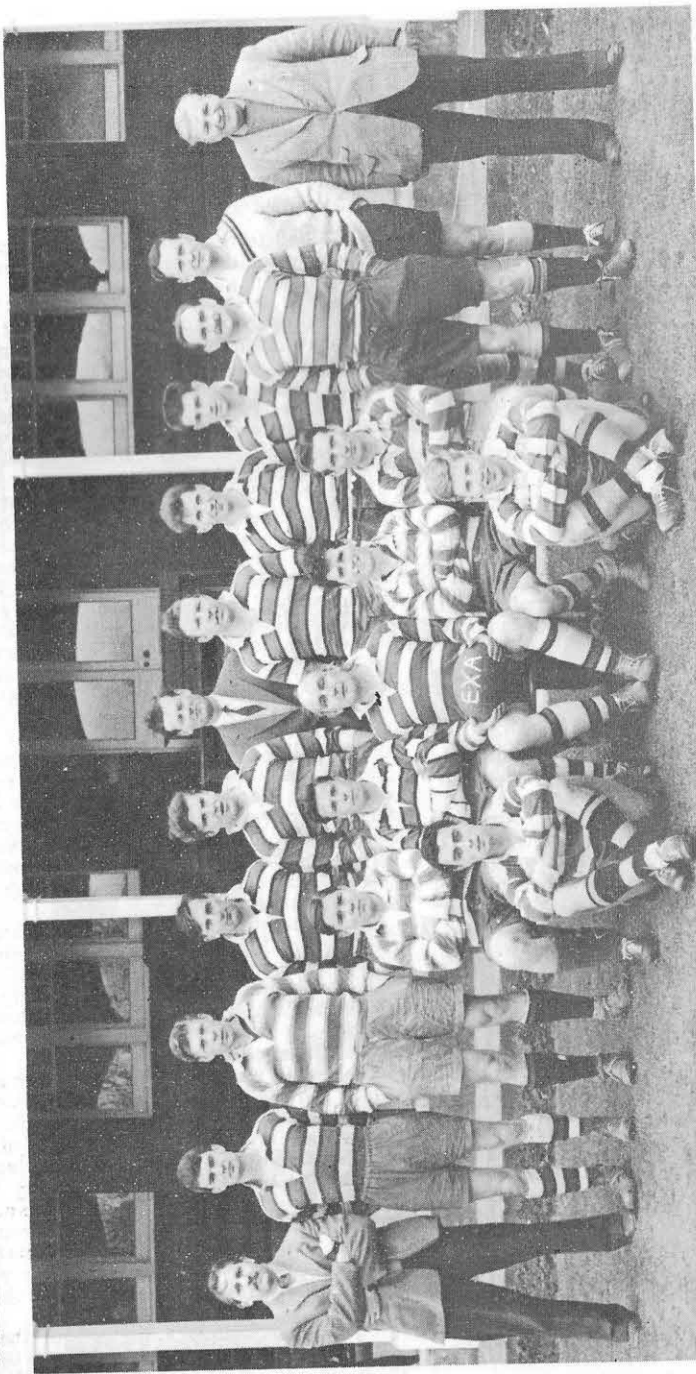
Particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, most 'A' XV skippers had first-team experience. Mr. R. Bojamma had enjoyed a reputation as a hard-tackling fullback. 'Boj', as he is affectionately known to us, obviously spent some time during quiet moments at fullback studying the laws of the game, as he later achieved high stature in the Kent Society of Referees with an almost verbatim knowledge of the laws.

Succeeding D. C. 'Taffy' Davies — a popular player and a drop-goal expert — in 1958 was the charismatic Harry Green, possibly now better known as our energetic Hon. Fixture Secretary for the past 20 years, or for his battle cry: "They don't like it up 'em", from the point on the touchline nearest the beer tent at important cup matches.

Harry had previously skipped the 2nd XV, but it was as 3rd team captain that he achieved a unique distinction. His side of 1958-59, known as he Extra 'A' XV at that time, is the only team in the club's history to win every match in a season. Others have been unbeaten, but not with a 100 per cent record.

The season was a personal triumph to Harry Green, and one vividly recalls the final game of that season. The match was a tough one, against Rosslyn Park 4th team, but despite the fact that he had severely damaged his leg in a previous game Harry insisted on playing. With leg in plaster, he staggered from line-out to scrum issuing tactical orders like a wartime General. In true schoolboy magazine fashion, the try to clinch the record-setting victory was scored in the last five minutes of the match.

Harry O'Donnell, a stalwart of the all-conquering side succeeded Harry Green. He was a very competent stand-off half.



Back (from left): Geoff Fletcher, Griff Pierce-Roberts, Peter Ewing, Mick Spillane, Reg Pay, Dick Ford, Johnny Pay, Mike Swaffer, Peter Hinks, Bert Pierce, Referee, Tim Higgins. Front: Ben Lyons, Michael Beaves, Harry Green (Capt), Harry O'Donnell, Michael Morling. Seated on ground: Roger Craske, John Cranmer.



D. T. Parker, Captain of the Extra 'A' XV, in the 1962-63 season.

but because of his all-round ability was equally at home at centre threequarter.

Mr. David Parker was captain in 1962-63, and must be rated the most gentlemanly player ever to wear a Maidstone shirt. David was as neat and tidy on the field as off it, which kept him remarkably injury-free. When forced to leave the area he continued to play for Dover, captaining their 4th side at the somewhat advanced age of 50.

The following nine seasons were skipped by forwards. Herbert 'Bert' Marsh led from hooker for one season during which, one imagines, the opposition did not win a single scrum. Peter Ewing and Mike Tomsett quietly led successful sides for five seasons, and Ray Vale was similarly successful in more voluble fashion. A man of words by profession, Ray lectured the referee on the pitch almost as much as he does today from the touchline.

Keith Davies brought a touch of Welsh wizardry to the scrum-half position, and combining this with astute selection methods led the side in its most successful seasons.

From 1975 to 1978 Roger Clarke had a less settled team. Selection was a particular problem, in that very often there were several good players available for one position, and none available for another. Changes between the side selected on Monday night and the Saturday match were numerous.

Battling against the transient nature of his side, Roger produced an excellent playing record. Tony Lock, a rather underrated player who covers almost as much ground as his brother, skipped last season, and will undoubtedly continue to play a leading role in the pack under the captaincy of Ron McCormick in the Centenary Season.

Match Report, 21st March, 1936: Maidstone Extra 'A' v Old Maidstonians 'A'

"10 players, plus 2 spare O.M.'s transferred on field

No referee; no skipper; no team list; No instructions; no lemons; no game — almost;

No pay — freewill offering of one shilling; Maidstone: 1 try — 3 points; O.M.'s: 3 goals, 1 dropped goal, 2 tries — 25 points."

THE EXTRA 'A' XV ('B' XV till 1966)

Captains since 1955	
D. C. Davies	1955 - 56
T. F. Bowditch	1956 - 59
A. Ireland	1959 - 60
A. J. A. Pearson	1960 - 62
H. Marsh	1962 - 63
M. Tomsett	1963 - 65
D. A. Owen	1965 - 68
M. Hamill	1968 - 69
B. Beechey	1969 - 70
P. Sime	1970 - 72
J. Forrest	1972 - 74
F. Ovey	1974 - 77
K. Murphy	1977 -

RECENT PLAYING RECORD

	P	W	D	L	Pts for	Pts against
73/74	28	24	0	4	569	155
74/75	30	25	1	4	578	123
75/76	27	21	0	6	582	141
76/77	26	21	0	5	537	139
77/78	25	18	0	7	459	193
78/79	27	18	1	8	553	280

Fortunately the predicament in which the skipper of the Extra 'A' XV found himself in the 1936 match, reported above, is unlikely to recur today. The problem is more likely to be too many players, than too few.

QUOTE: "He kept sinking balls down the full back's throat" — Selection Committee Report.

Thirteen captains in 25 years suggests particular pressures on 4th team skippers. That may be so, but these pressures are probably found in selection and bar activities rather than on the field of play. Such is the standard of players in real terms and more particularly relative to other clubs' lower sides that winning matches is seldom the problem. The record listed above bears this out.

What is often at stake, however, is motivating players who might otherwise be

seeking higher team rugby with more junior local sides. Selection becomes the main art. For a difficult fixture the selection of someone known to be unavailable, whilst 'forgetting' to mention the availability of an 'occasional' star player is one tactic.

The late selection of a 1st team player returning from injury... Having a look at a promising youngster for "just one more week"... These are all acceptable selection ploys for a side which otherwise would be mercilessly plundered by more senior skippers to fill gaps arising during the week.

The captains listed represent a wealth of experience. David Owen was a particularly shrewd skipper, adding a touch of Welsh eloquence at Selection Committee. Mike Hamill scored 220 points himself in one season alone. Peter Sime was playing the same stand-off game in 1970 as he does today; which means quietly effective, without covering every blade of grass, and scoring the occasional try.

The versatile Fred Ovey had probably the longest pass in rugby, in the warm-up session before the referee's whistle commenced the game. During the game itself the pass was somewhat shorter!

Since 1977, Kevin Murphy has led the Extra 'A' XV from fullback, from which position he is able to exhort his troops to great deeds, whilst himself conducting an interesting dialogue with the spectators. Long may Kevin continue to do so.

THE 'B' XV : NOMADS XV : and WANDERERS XV

Captains 'B' XV

C. I. Griffiths	1959 - 61
T. A. V. House	1961 - 65
P. Waghorn	1965 - 69
R. Reese	1969 - 70
P. Williams	1970 - 71
D. Laughton	1971 - 74
P. Mack	1974 - 78
R. Dancer	1978 -

NOMADS XV

J. Saunders	1961 - 62
H. Owen	1962 - 63
L. Crawforth	1963 - 68
B. Beechey	1968 - 72
E. Williams	1972 - 74
B. Warner	1974 - 78
R. Reese	1978 -

WANDERERS XV

T. A. V. House	1965 - 66
G. Drew	1966 - 67
A. Ireland	1967 - 68
S. Pooley	1976 -

RECENT PLAYING RECORDS

'B' XV						
	P	W	D	L	Pts for	Pts ag
73/74	25	20	0	5	669	144
74/75	26	20	1	5	476	153
75/76	26	19	2	5	523	194
76/77	24	20	1	3	496	103
77/78	25	17	0	8	378	159
78/79	24	13	0	11	338	242

NOMADS XV

73/74	18	11	1	6	325	161
74/75	23	15	1	7	360	164
75/76	25	18	1	6	531	226
76/77	22	17	0	5	428	154
77/78	23	11	1	11	385	263
78/79	20	12	1	7	315	165

WANDERERS XV

75/76	4	1	0	3	56	107
76/77	20	8	1	11	209	237
77/78	17	5	0	12	169	376
78/79	17	6	1	10	176	226

QUOTE: "I've spoken to my team, and every one of them refuses to play for any other side" — Nomads skipper at Selection Committee, after a particularly good victory.

Obviously the above submission to the Selection Committee was received with a certain amount of disbelief as well as laughter, but the skipper was echoing the dream of all lower side skippers — the dream of having the same team two weeks in succession.

The skipper carefully selects his side on Monday evening, only to see it decimated by the requirements of senior sides by Saturday morning. If you want to recognise the Nomads or Wanderers Captain in the clubhouse before the Saturday matches, he's the one with a small book and pencil, looking anxiously at the door, and asking incoming spectators if they have brought their kit.

This is the level of the real rugby enthusiasts, characterised by an interesting variety of shirts, the long walk out to the Mote Park pitches, returning in the evening to cooling, if not cold, showers. It is to their eternal credit that they not only continue their efforts season after season, but also produce successful results.

The captains listed all played a higher grade of rugby before ploughing back into the game the benefit of their experience. Terry House gave four years to the 'B' XV, and another to the Wanderers, which ensures that his selectorial duties are carried out with equal empathy for senior and junior players.

Peter Waghorn succeeded Terry in the 'B' XV ten years ago. He would still acquit himself well at any club level of rugby.

David Laughton, skipper between 1971 to 1974 is notable for his shrewd assessment of players, and the dry Northern humour with which it is delivered. The 1973/74 'B' XV record is the club's best in the last 10 years; match results averaging around 27 pts. to 6.

Peter Mack was fiercely competitive as 'B' XV captain for four seasons, and produced excellent results. His own contribution as hooker was considerable. One recalls an occasion when Peter forgot his boots and, playing the first ten minutes in smart brown shoes before his wife dutifully arrived with boots, took three scrums against the head. Surrounding himself with the experience and guile of such players as Bert Bignall, Colin Robbins, Peter Sime and David Pares there was every incentive to win the ball. Reg Dancer continues in similar vein, whilst preparing for a new British assault on the Tour de France.

QUOTE: "If we'd had a few more backs we might have done better" — Selection Committee Report.

Of Nomads captains, Laurie Crawforth and Brian Beechey provided 10 years of calm stability, while more recently Brian Warner produced a fine record despite his belief that there was a club conspiracy to ensure he had fewer than 15 players each week.

Final mention of club captains must go to Steve Pooley, long-suffering skipper of the Wanderers. To get a Wanderers side to an away game is no straightforward exercise. Selecting reserves for the lower sides is essential, but invariably results in either too few or too many at kick-off. The problems fall to Steve and with good humour he solves them, even refereeing his own match on occasions. With such service we need not fear the future.



Mr. Terry House, Captain of the 'B' XV from 1961 to 1965, Wanderers XV in 1965-66 and currently Chairman of the Selection Committee.

Thanks are due...

WE should record our appreciation to the many folk without whom our regular Saturday afternoon entertainment would not be complete, nor even perhaps possible.

The Mote Cricket Club have been more than merely our landlords for the past 30 years. Such people as Philip Haynes, 'Sandy' Kitchen, Bill Hunter and John Pocock forged the initial links between the two Clubs from their joint membership, and many of our members today have connections with the Mote.

There have been differences of opinion at times between the two Clubs in the past, as between any tenant and landlord, but it is pleasing to report that relations at present are both cordial and constructive. With improvements to the William Day Memorial pitch and the reconstruction of the Alan Firmin and Jim Worley pitches, we have playing facilities second-to-none in Kent, attracting County games as well as more recently the Kent Sevens Tournament. Long may our relationship with the Mote Cricket Club continue, to our mutual benefit.

Inseparable from the Mote connection are the services of the Groundsman and Steward. Malcolm Bristow has been Groundsman at the Mote for almost 20 years, and keeps our pitches and surrounding areas in prime condition. And in the Clubhouse in recent years we have been fortunate indeed to have the services of Bill and Phyllis Sloman, the Steward and his wife.

Since 1950, the Kent Society of Rugby Football Union Referees have provided referees for the vast majority of our games, and we have every respect for their qualities. Perhaps the most notable of their membership is Dr. Norman Parkes, who rapidly rose to the ranks of the International Panel in the 1950s.

'Doc' Parkes refereed his first games at Maidstone and recalls enjoying the prospect of good quality rugby on his many return visits. Of former Maidstone players, Basil Higgins was a founder member of the Society and 'Boj' Bojamma and George Wood were prominent with the whistle in the 1960s.

In more recent years Mr. Roy Mercer and Mr. Robert Horner have been frequent visitors, with Robert accompanying the Maidstone touring party to the United States. Society members are always welcome at the Mote, officiating at matches, or merely calling in for a pint on the way home from neighbouring games.

Particularly over the last decade, good relationships have developed between the Club and Maidstone United Football Club. Through the goodwill of United's Chairman, Mr. Jim Thompson, we have benefited with training and medical facilities, as well as using their spacious team coach for important away matches. May the close ties continue, for if we are ambitious we could learn from United's efficient organisation.

To keep the Club in touch with the town we publish match reports and fixture details in the local press, the Kent Messenger. In recent years the KM has taken a more active interest in Rugby Football and have introduced a Merit Table for Kent clubs which we are proud to have headed last season.

In addition, the KM has given us every assistance with this publication and I would personally like to thank Norman Smith for his invaluable help with production.

A word to the Club supporters. We are grateful for the support of Vice-Presidents; of those who quietly drift up to the touchline most Saturdays, as well as to the more vociferous followers such as the Corner Club who also assist with fund-raising social events. Support strengthens both endeavour on the field of play and the financial position of the Club in the Clubhouse.

Finally, lest any wife or girlfriend should read this while her beloved is chasing an oval ball round the park, we thank you for the support you give us on the touchline, in the tea tent, or providing sustenance in the Clubhouse or at social gatherings. Preparing food for eighty ravenous visitors each week is a thankless and arduous task, but essential to the Club. Without you, it would be a dull place indeed.

Mini rugby



Doug Nightingale coaching at Mini-rugby.

BY MALCOLM FARLEY

IT seems only fitting that in this commemorative publication of the rugby Club's 100 years of existence, mention should be made of the Club's latest baby. I refer, of course, to that bunch of enthusiastic lads, proud fathers, willing helpers and Sunday lunchtime drinkers known as the Mini Rugby Club section.

I think this just about sums up the attitude of Mini Rugby as it exists here at Maidstone, but

let me enlarge a little on the aims and hopes of the section.

'Mini' started in Maidstone at the beginning of the '76/77 season. It was initiated by Jeff Smith who, together with Des Diamond and Ron McCormick, conducted the first two or three training sessions. Next on the scene was Brian (Basher) Bills, closely followed by Malcolm Farley and by the end of 1976 it was decided that 'Mini' was here to stay.

As the concept gathered momentum, more and more helpers appeared on the scene and a more sophisticated organisation began to evolve. Jeff, Brian and Malcolm took charge of coaching aided by John Jones when com-

Maxi enthusiasm

mitments allowed. Mick Atkinson accepted the Treasurer's post and Don Fisher and Wally Bennett took responsibility for fund raising with the result that by the beginning of the 1977 season we were able to purchase sixty red and white shirts.

For the uninitiated, Mini Rugby is played by lads between the ages of 7 and 13, and a team consists of nine players — four forwards, two half-backs and three backs. The four forwards consist of two in the front row, one second row binding the front row, and one wing forward. It is, therefore, possible to teach the basic principles of hooking and front row play, the importance of binding properly and the techniques of back row play (the second row player becoming the No. 8).

Similarly, the half backs can be taught their tasks and the backs can either be used as two centres and a wing, or two threequarters and a full back employing the tactics associated with these positions. Furthermore, the senior age group are taught the loop, scissors and dummy-scissors, and how to ruck and maul, whilst the younger players are taught the basic individual skills.

With our wealth of willing helpers any newcomer to the game is welcomed and taken to one side to be taught basic skills to enable him to join the main groups. Kicking is discouraged and fly-hacking is strictly illegal.

The game is played at the Mote every Sunday morning throughout the season and when the weather is particularly bad we are afforded the use of the Maidstone Grammar School Sports Hall by kind permission of Dr. Pettitt, the Headmaster. Matches are arranged with other clubs, usually on a tournament basis with a total of three clubs involved at any one venue.

At Maidstone we believe that the object of the game is to promote fun through rugby because, as can be appreciated, the lads that turn up are of mixed ability but of similar enthusiasm. Therefore, in order not to stifle this enthusiasm all players are given a chance to shine on match days and while taking size into consideration we try to avoid stereo-typing players into positions. Unfortunately, this attitude works against us when playing clubs who believe in playing their strongest and biggest side, and our results on paper are not very encouraging. However, the spirit of the game is maintained.

So much for the embryo stages, but what does the future hold? The prime consideration is to promote the game of rugby and we would like to feel that in doing so we are providing the club with a new generation of players, but as I stated earlier, the maximum age for Mini Rugby is 13 years, so what do we do to keep these players within the Club? The answer would appear to be obvious — run an under-15 side, but this has proved to be more difficult than it would at first appear.

At this age the lads of greater ability have become obvious and have moved on to senior schools, where they are probably playing for their school side and as such playing twice during the week and again on Saturday. They have, therefore, to be particularly enthusiastic to turn out again on Sunday. Add to this the fact that we now want a 15-a-side practice and it becomes obvious that it is very difficult to get enough bodies.

However, we hope we are producing players with some idea of the game for advancement at senior schools and as 1978-79 was the first year that a complete squad of Mini players had moved on, it was gratifying to note that the four Mini players who went to the Grammar School — Shaun Farley, Hamish Gale, Edward Jones and Tim Smith — were all regular members of the U.14 XV.

The baby of the Club having been born, we hope to go from strength to strength. Last season we had some 75 or more boys on our books, many of them being encouraged by proud parents. This in itself has a pleasing side effect as the boys are collected after opening time, and Sunday lunchtime is becoming a social event at the club.

We are also seeing more ex-players return to the club with their offspring and in many cases these ex-players can be persuaded to don a track suit once again and re-live part of their mis-spent youth. So, as things are progressing, both the social side and the playing side will hopefully be fortified by the Sunday morning brigade.

Finally, a word of thanks to all the helpers who have not been mentioned before. A tremendous amount of work goes into the organisation and I'm sure it is appreciated by the lads themselves. Also a word of thanks to the Steward and his wife who manage to keep sane whilst it's all happening.

Keep the support coming.

'Invading Ruggers look a fit team' ...



The first French Tour-Maidstone and the British Rugby Football Club of Paris, 1926.

... The French connection

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

IT is surely on the Easter Tour that the true nature of rugby football manifests itself. Nowhere else are club members drawn together in such close comradeship with the twin purposes of enjoying hard games and representing the Club both on and off the field of play.

In practical terms it is never possible to send the 20 or so best players on tour, but often this becomes a strengthening rather than a weakening factor, because very different qualities are called for on tour. The ability to survive the hosts' hospitality till the early hours of the following morning, and then be capable of playing competently is more important than pure playing ability. For to deny oneself the hospitality solely to be in prime condition for matches would be a negation of the touring *raison d'être*.

Thus the tour often presents an opportunity for players from lower sides to fully represent the Club, and senior members are often surprised at the quality of their performances. By the third game of the tour these lesser mortals have become integral parts of the team.

To illustrate this, one recalls returning from a tour of the Lake District to face, the following day, the might of Blackheath 1st XV at the Rectory Field. The Maidstone side was, of course, the normal 1st XV, but after our heavy defeat one had the feeling that the team spirit built up by the touring party in the previous four days might have served Maidstone better on that particular occasion.

Club tours have taken place all over England and Wales. There was a joint-tour to the West County with Tonbridge in 1928, and we have visited Bournemouth, South Wales, Cumberland and Yorkshire on other occasions more recently. This has given the Club the opportunity to make the acquaintance of some really good sides such as Ilkley, Upper Wharfedale, Harrogate and Workington.

There is a hardy band of men, led by Mr. David Hole and Mr. Reg Dancer who think that

a tour to anywhere other than Southend isn't really a tour at all. This is presumably because travelling time can be minimised and thus drinking time maximised.

However, the tours which always stand out in the memory are those when we cross the Channel to remind our French friends of Waterloo and other British victories, and to try to salvage some of the reputation of English rugby following yet another disastrous England performance in the International Championship.

The first such Tour was Easter 1926, although the opposition was the British Rugby Football Club of Paris. The following extract from the Paris Times of April 3, 1926 indicates that this was a serious affair, but what the reporter omitted to say was that, in the best traditions of the hosts "knobbling" the visitors, the British Rugby Football Club had arranged for the Maidstone party to visit the Moulin Rouge on the night of their arrival, and the Folies Bergeres on the evening before the big match.

Paris Times — April 3, 1926 Invading Ruggers Look a Fit Team

"The squad of Rugby players and officials of the Maidstone Rugby Football Club were met at the Gare du Nord in Paris last evening by Mr. Cyril F. Rutherford, President of the British Rugby Club of Paris, and a delegation from the local club. A continuous round of entertainment has been prepared for the visiting players while in Paris, culminating with the charity Rugby match at La Courneuve tomorrow afternoon, when two all-British teams will meet for the first time in France, for the benefit of the Hertford British Hospital.

"The advance sale of tickets for this match indicates that a great crowd will be on hand. Special trains have been arranged to run from the Gare du Nord to La Courneuve, and stewards of the British Rugby Club, wearing red and white rosettes, will direct the crowds both at the Gare du Nord and at La Courneuve, and also on the way from the station to the field.

"The visiting team took the time for a short limbering-up practice today, and impressed the local observers as being in excellent physical



The first Tour Party to Lille, Easter 1955.

condition. Mr. W. J. Day, Hon. Secretary of the Maidstone Club, predicts that his charges will furnish good competition for the Paris Britshers.

"The British Rugby Club will be without the services of W. G. Paul, the fast three-quarter, who has gone to Scotland for the Easter holidays, which fact necessitates a considerable shaking-up of the local team's backfield. Screaton moves in as scrum-half, with Powell at fly-half, which sends Stranger out to centre-three-quarter, where his stinginess with the ball will be less noticeable and his speed and dodging ability will be more use to his club.

"The noted international Rugby referee, Mr. C. I. Leysbon, will have the whistle for the match, which is to start at 3.30. Tea will be served in the stands between the halves."

Not surprisingly the Maidstone side was slow to make an impression on the game. G. Lowe scored a try in the first half which was converted by A. Williams who also kicked a beautiful penalty goal. G. Loe and T. C. D. Stranger scored unconverted tries in the second half, to give the British Rugby Club a 14 points to nil victory. However it was a clean, fast game, more closely contested than the scoring might suggest.

A second trip to Paris was made two seasons

later, with a similar result, after which it appears, tours were confined to English soil.

The revival of our French connection took place in the mid 1950's, when contacts with Monsieur Frank Palmer of the Iris Rugby Club de Lambersart were first established. The Iris Club were not strong at that time, so other matches were played in the region.

The organisation of the tour itinerary was in the capable hands of the late Mr. Alex Stewart. Three tours took place, the last at Easter 1959. By this time, an established part of the tour was the visit to the Ricard aperitif factory, followed by a champagne buffet at the Town Hall, on the morning of the first match. However, despite this deliberately excessive hospitality, provincial French rugby was as yet undeveloped in Northern France, and we were able to win matches quite comfortably.

On the social side of the 1959 Tour one recalls Alex Stewart becoming wedged on the underside of the Customs barrier following breakfast on the boat of champagne on cornflakes. A senior full-back went absent-without-leave on the proceeds of a cafe collection made in a flat cap, only to return for the final match to play a solid game until the opposition found him vulnerable in his tired physical state to the high-ball. One recalls a superb meal given by

our hosts in what had appeared to be a roadside cafe. And on the return journey, there is the vivid recollection of a Customs stamp being firmly imprinted on a most unusual part of Harry Green's anatomy.

For some unaccountable reason, French tours lapsed until in 1974 Keith Davies organised a side to play in Dunkerque during a British Week. There cannot have been many matches where the teams have had to await the arrival of the match ball carried by a lady parachutist!

Ironically it was due to the difficulties in arranging an Easter Tour to Germany, which led to the re-establishment of our links with the Iris Club of Lille. The possibility of such a tour fell through in February 1976, and Alf Johnson and Harry Green made hurried arrangements with our old friend Monsieur Frank Palmer to visit Lille.

The following year saw a Lille party in Maidstone and the pattern set for a link which

we all hope will be permanent, with the clubs acting as hosts alternately. The friendships made are both on an official and personal level. Frank Palmer and his charming wife, Joan, are the key to the entente cordiale. But younger playing members of the Iris Club now seem like old friends, and make separate visits for England v France matches at Twickenham, and our own appearances at the Middlesex Sevens' Finals.

Rivalry on the field of play is now intense, as both Lille and Maidstone have strengthened the quality of their play. Since the resumption of regular exchange visits, the home side has won on each occasion in the premier match of the tour. It is possible that the first host-side to lose will be the Club which has not sufficiently prepared the social arrangements for their visitors. Ron McCormick is the Tour Manager these days, and it is worth the long journey to



Two muddied characters — John Harrison and Mick Tomsett after the defeat at Upper Wharfedale, Easter, 1962."

Terry Lock and Daniel Debousse, opposing Captains in Lille, 1976. Terry is asking for the French word for 'tails'.



Lille just to hear his vocal rendering of "Craven A".

To celebrate the Centenary Season it was felt necessary to extend the horizons of normal tours, and make an ambitious visit to the New World. Mr. Alf Johnson master-minded the tour in an extremely professional manner.

It was decided to tour the Eastern Coast of the USA. Following contact with the English and American authorities, an ambitious 10-match programme was devised, covering five clubs in USA — Connecticut Yankees, Monmouth, Boston, Charles River Rats, and New York. It was expected that a tour party of some 40 people would be needed providing a first and second team, together with a referee, an official team coach, administrators and general tourists. Final agreement was given by the Government.

After a year of fund-raising as diverse as producing a 12-track record to fattening a pig for sausages; as holding a Race Evening to pro-

moting a Mervyn Davies night, a tour fund of some £12,000 was assured, which included individual players' contributions of about £200 each.

The final party of 41 immaculate tourists assembled at the Clubhouse on the morning of 26th May. The charter flight from Gatwick to New York was by DC 10, and the day before our departure a similar plane had crashed at Chicago with a loss of over 340 lives.

The international withdrawal of the DC 10 subsequently led to disruption of our flight arrangements home.

However, the tour was, to say the least, an immense success. The party quickly settled down to become involved in the stated principle of playing attractive rugby, combining pleasure and business interests to the benefit of British/USA relationships and projecting the goodwill and friendship of the County Town of Kent.



Daniel Debusse (Iris) exchanges trophies with Ron McCormick; Easter 1977.



The 1979 USA touring party at Charles River in Massachusetts.

The 1st team won four games and lost one, including prestige victories against the formidable clubs of Boston and New York. The 2nd team, bearing the brunt of injuries sustained during the period of two weeks, won two games and lost three. If the 1st team took the honours for skill and application, then the 2nd team took the credit for dedication and sheer guts.

Off the field it goes without saying that all tourists had a good time, and suitable records of their individual and group achievements have been recorded elsewhere. For this reason it would be invidious to comment upon selective people or events.

However, mention should be made of two tourists who were the only members of the tour party not bona fide members of the Club. First was Colin Reece, a truly accomplished guitarist/singer. Throughout the tour he appeared as a hub to the wheel, engendering a remarkable spirit of comradeship through the singing of traditional and folk songs. The second was our guest referee, Robert Horner,

who brought balance to the party, and provided us and our hosts with fairness and firmness on the field of play.

Some instant recollections:
 "One wonders why Maidstonians brought out aggressiveness in American dogs; one wonders even more why they had the opposite effects on American women."

"Of all the exhibitionists on the tour, and there were many, each with his own idiosyncracies, 'M.J.' (no relation to 'C.J.') must be the exhibitionist of exhibitionists."

"Being stopped by Boston Police for following an American down a one-way street, I was asked: "If that guy drove into the Charles River would you follow him?"

"The outstanding thing has to be the women. Can I emigrate, please?"

"It's been fun watching people getting merry most evenings while I was still sober. I could tell a few tales on them" — Harold the Pure.

Who would be on the committee?

We must
record our
thanks to
those who
have served
the club
so well

LIFE is fairly easy for a player. All that is required is to arrive at the ground with Maidstone rugby kit and sufficient cash for the team beer kitty. Somebody will have notified you of the time and place of arrival; a ball will be provided; opposition will be available; a first-aid kit will be on the touchline, with slices of orange for half-time.

At the end of the match you return to the pavilion where a warm shower will be awaiting; and after cleaning up, you will be served with a thirst-quenching beer. Perhaps there will be a dance in the evening. You won't even need to know the Laws, because a referee will be provided to point out your errors.

Some people go through their rugby careers in this fashion, and criticise organisation of the Club if one of the elements is missing. Fortunately these people are in the minority, and the majority of players are prepared to put something back into the game and the Club. The opportunities are many and the tasks varied, as will be seen from the list of current appointments in this book. In fact, during the Centenary Season there will be a total of 36 people occupying posts in the Club, some in more than one capacity. It is incumbent upon us to record our thanks to them and to some of those who have served the Club so well in the past 25 years, or more.

PRESIDENTS

Maidstone has been fortunate that its Presidents have all shown an active interest in the Club, rather than remain mere figureheads. Dr. L. H. Taylor held the Club Presidency for six years from the 75th year, before Mr. Philip Haynes succeeded in 1960. The Haynes family have a long history of association with the Club, Mr. Philip Haynes' father having been Captain in 1895 and President for four separate periods between 1923 and 1947. Mr. Philip Haynes had himself captained the Club and played for Kent, as well as being Chairman of the Club in the 1950's.

Mr. W. T. (Bill) Hunter presided from 1963 until 1968. Mr. Hunter had served as player and officer of the Club since 1932. He had been Hon. Assistant Secretary, a fine Treasurer for 10 years, and continues today to take a strong interest in the Club. Our debt to him is considerable.

Mr. J. M. Robertson was a delightful President between 1968 and 1972. The first post-war Captain in 1946, Jim was a fine player. A man of sympathy and generosity, Jim continues his association with the Club as touch-judge for the Mustangs.

Mr. B. W. 'Skip' Hinks, our President for the last eight years, did not himself play for Maidstone, but through his sons Bernard and Peter has a permanent link with the Club. We are honoured to have 'Skip' as our Centenary President.

CHAIRMEN

The Club has only had five Chairmen in its history, the post being created in 1951. Mr. Philip Haynes, later to become President, held the post for three years, and Mr. E. L. (Ernie) Stinchcombe for the following six years, till 1964.

For nine years Mr. Alan Firmin took the Chair, at a time in the Club's history when finances were particularly difficult. In Committee Minutes Alan is recorded as saying: "I don't understand much about money". That statement could be said to be somewhat misleading. In fact, very few people know the full extent of Alan Firmin's generosity to the Club — and that is the way he would prefer it to be.

Mr. Ian Milsted our current Chairman, brings a similar sense of practicality to the post. As a Committee member of the Kent County R.F.U. as well as Chairman of the County Selection Committee, Ian has for seven years brought an invaluable breadth of experience to the crucial task of uniting all Club activities, and steering the Club in the right direction. He has proved as good a Chairman as he was a player.



Mr. Bill Hunter, President, 1963-68.



Mr. Jim Robertson, President 1968-73, and currently touchjudge to the Mustangs.



Mr. Alan Firmin, Chairman of the Club, 1964-73.



Mr Ian Milsted,
Chairman of the
Club.

HONORARY SECRETARIES

Considering the constantly arduous and time-consuming nature of the job, it is surprising that we have had only six Hon. Secretaries over the past 30 years.

1951-56:	Mr. S. A. 'Sandie' Kitchen
1956-60:	Mr. Doug Oliver
1960-63:	Mr. David Parker
1963-69:	Mr. Hugh Mattinson
1969-74:	Mr. John Jones
1974- :	Mr. R. C. 'Mick' Spillane

All of the above gave equally distinguished service to the Club. The amount of correspondence undertaken on behalf of the Club is enormous, and little appreciated by the membership. Some of them also served at different times as Hon. Assistant Secretaries, and I have no doubt they would themselves give credit to their own A.S.'s for sharing some of the burden of office. Notable among the Hon. Assistant Secretaries were Mr. Laurie Crawford, and the present incumbent Mr. Chris Wood. 'Timber' Wood's phlegmatic approach to apparent crises has a rather soothing effect on Committee proceedings, and his Minutes are always worth a second glance to appreciate the deliberate mistake. Perhaps you can see what I mean:

General Committee Meeting — November 1975

"A member had asked about the possibility of padding the rugby posts. After considerable discussion it was agreed that this precaution was not widespread, and in any case the Club had not lost a post yet."

HONORARY TREASURERS

Competing with the Secretary's post as the most time-consuming duty in the Club must be that of the Treasurer. Hardly the post for the faint-hearted when you realise that the expenditure of the Club has risen from £19.10s.8d. in 1883 to £8,786 in 1978! This is a heavy responsibility indeed, and great thanks are due to Mr. Brian Bills, now in his 11th year as Hon. Treasurer for guiding us during a period of particularly heavy inflation. 'Basher' Bills' dour insistence of keeping expenditure within the limits of likely income would commend itself to many a Chancellor of the Exchequer.

We have been equally fortunate with previous Hon. Treasurers, as this list shows:-

Hon. Treasurer: Mr. W. T. 'Bill' Hunter, 1951-60; Mr. R. M. 'Binkie' Harris, 1960-63; Mr. Doug Oliver, 1963-68; Mr. Ray Smith, 1968; Mr. Brian Bills, 1969-present.

Hon Assistant Treasurer: Mr. R. M. 'Binkie' Harris, 1959; Mr. B. 'Spindle' Fridd, 1960-72; Mr. Roger Craske, 1972-78; Mr. Tony Lock, 1978-present.

Mr. Bill Hunter, whose service as a Club Official spanned from 1946 as Hon. Assistant Secretary to 1968 as President, has many fond memories of the Club. One particular journey to an away match is recalled, in the days when teams always travelled by Maidstone & District bus. Apparently the M & D were on strike at the time, but the Club managed to acquire the services of a bus and driver with the origin of the bus obliterated.

The 'illegal' bus proceeded to Wrotham Hill, where pickets had erected a barrier. The bus turned-off along the Pilgrims Way to avoid problems, with pickets on motor cycles in hot pursuit. Eventually the motor cyclists succeeded in overtaking and blocking the path of the bus, whereupon two stout members of the travelling team alighted from the bus and threw the pickets' motor cycles in the ditch, so that the bus and team could proceed. One can imagine such an incident today provoking a National Strike!

'Binkie' Harris played through this era as a full-back in the 'A' XV, and we are pleased to see him constantly on the touchline today. 'Binkie' obviously played behind a successful pack and set of backs, as it appears he needed to wear shorts over his knees to keep warm.

HONORARY FIXTURE SECRETARIES

It is difficult to remember anyone other than Mr. Harry Green arranging Club fixtures, as in the Centenary Season he enters his 21st year in the post of Fixture Secretary. Constantly striving to improve the standard of fixtures, Harry Green has guided us through the difficult transitional period from playing the second teams of many top London clubs to playing the first teams of good provincial clubs such as Marlow, Upper Clapton, Guildford and Havant.

This has only been possible because Harry, living close to London, has kept in constant touch with other fixture secretaries and thus spread the association of Maidstone with good quality rugby. A great deal of effort goes into the acquisition of an attractive new fixture, particularly as they are often made several years in advance.

Inevitably, in terms of travelling, some fixtures are less attractive to players in lower sides than to most first team players, but only by undertaking such journeys will the Club's overall playing standards improve, and Harry Green deserves the players' support. We have every reason to be grateful for that chance meeting of Des Payne and Sergeant Major Harry Green at Chatham Barracks in 1946.

Notable Assistant Fixture Secretaries have



Mr. Hugh Mattinson,
Hon. Secretary, 1963-69.

been Mr. Clive Griffiths and, currently, Mr. Jeremy Sargent, whose support I know Harry Green has increasingly valued over the past 11 years.

HONORARY TEAM SECRETARIES

QUOTE: "On further consideration I have decided not to play for the Club this year, because after playing in the practice games I realised I should be neither use nor ornament to the Club until I developed a little form." N. R. Ollewell, 1924.

Can you imagine sitting quietly at home by the fire on a cold Friday evening, relaxing with the family after a hard week's work. The telephone bell shatters the peace, and demands attention. On the other end of the line is the Mustangs' winger, unluckily dropped from the 1st XV the previous week, who has suddenly developed a cold and can't make the long trip to Osterley the next day.

The John Doe and Mr. Mick Tomsett have no need to imagine this scene — something similar happens to them each week in their duties as Hon. Team Secretary and Hon. Assistant Team Secretary. Despite their titles, this is essentially



Mr. R. C. Spillane,
currently Hon.
Secretary of the
Club.



Mr. D. A. Oliver,
Hon. Treasurer
1963-68.



Mr. B. F. J. Bills,
Hon. Treasurer of
the Club since 1969.

a partnership operation these days, to share the burden of ensuring that up to seven full teams turn out for the Club every week.

The repercussions of such a telephone call are numerous. Should John Doe try to persuade the 'A' XV winger to travel at short notice? Or should he move up the Extra 'A' XV winger already committed to travelling, do likewise right through the Club, and finally ask a casual Wanderers' player to make the long away-journey? The tactics of the decision vary according to the circumstances, but of course the effects are such that it could be argued that the Team Secretaries have as much influence on the composition of sides taking the field as the Selection Committee itself.

John Doe and Mick Tomsett have worked together for five years now, but before them other long-suffering Team Secretaries held the posts. Mr. Des Payne, currently the longest-serving official in the post was Hon. Team Secretary for 16 seasons, many of them in harness with Mr. John Harrison, and before them Mr. G. A. 'Tim' Higgins. Des tells of an amazing variety of reasons given by players for non-availability. There's the fellow whose wife was having a hair-do, so he couldn't have the car to get to the ground. There was even a naval officer whose ship had problems staying afloat in a dry-dock!

However genuine the reason, the effect is the same in all cases. Several people will be inconvenienced, most of all the Team Secretary. So think twice before crying-off; then think again.

Just in case you are not cut-out for one of the 'major' posts mentioned above, but would still like to help in some way, there are numerous Sub-Committees on which you may serve.

THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

Composed of skippers, Team Secretaries and a few elected wise men, they have the weekly task of deciding the fate of each and every player. Led in recent years by a firm but democratic Mr. Terry House, let no-one doubt their integrity and hard work. It is rumoured that rather a lot of additional reading is required to serve on the Selection Committee. However, it seems that such literature is largely composed of pictures, and is only available for viewing after the important decisions have been taken!

The Social Committee always welcomes assistance, none more than Mr. Paul 'Bomber' Andrews, who for so long has shouldered the main burden of entertainments work with an amazing collection of records, amplifying equipment and flashing lights. 'Bomber' may have naturally broad shoulders, but his contribution has been marvellous, particularly when arranging the highly successful summer barbecues in the late 1960s, in co-operation with Terry Foreman and Paul Ehrhart.

Ground Committee: Somebody has to ensure that the ground arrangements are in order every Saturday, for County and Cup Matches. The unglamorous jobs include making sure that corner-posts are in good order, that match balls are correctly inflated; that pitches are roped-

off. Few notice the efforts, but all would feel their absence.

Stalwarts in the duty have been Mr. John Harrison, the late Mr. Alex Stewart, Mr. J. 'Pip' Barr for nine years and Mr. Des Payne for the most recent five years. Des Payne pays tribute to Alex Stewart's enormous contribution to the Club in many capacities from the War until his death in 1973. Alex served on several Committees including the Bar, Ground, and House committees, and also chaired the Selection Committee. His interest stemmed from being educated across the road at Maidstone Grammar School; and then from teaching at the school and seeing pupils through from schoolboy into Club rugby. Alex also organised several Tours including the initial ones to Lille. His attention to detail epitomised the dedication with which he approached every task.

This leads us to the Tours Sub-Committee which since its inception in 1974 has been chaired by Mr. Ron McCormick. Ron's organisational style contrasts somewhat with Alex Stewart's, but his optimism and firm belief that "everything will be alright on the night" has not yet been misplaced, and even heightens the enjoyment.

The frequency with which membership of the House Committee has changed over the years indicates the onerous nature of the job. It really expanded from responsibility for manning the bar, to include liaison with the Steward, stocktaking, letting facilities and security on match days. This means that you are often on the premises after everyone else has gone home. Mr. David Bowers endured the Chairmanship for three seasons, two longer than anyone else, and deserves our thanks.

Another time-consuming task is that of publicity. Maidstone is a leading Club in the County and to maintain this position and attract better fixtures it is important that this fact is publicised in the local, County, and national Press. Mr. Ray Vale has just completed five years as Chairman of the Publicity Committee and is stepping down only to join the Kent R.F.U. Committee where his knowledge of the County network will be useful. Ray has given many voluntary hours ensuring that reports get to Press on time and we should be grateful to him. Internal publicity, in the shape of newsletters, has been carried out for many years by Mr. Brian Lovelidge. A thankless task, as getting newsletter contributions from members is almost impossible.

An area where good publicity for the Club has been well-deserved comes by way of our hosting the Kent County R.F.U. Seven-a-Side Championship each year. The initial staging of the Tournament in 1973 was masterminded by Mr. Martin Sharp. What was undertaken as an experiment has become a major event in the



Mr. Harry Green,
Hon. Fixture
Secretary since
1960.



**John Doe, currently
Team Secretary.**

County calendar, thanks to the efficiency with which Martin controlled the first tournament. His blueprint served Mr. Peter Waghorn well and also the present Chairman of the Sevens Committee Mr. Geoff Burr. Geoff must be congratulated for organising last year's Tournament so well that we enter our Centenary Season as Kent County Sevens Champions.

All the committee work described above is essential for the smooth-running of a club the size of Maidstone Football Club. The tasks are hard work, and you will get few thanks for your efforts. But if you have enjoyed playing rugby with Maidstone, what better way of putting something back into the Club and the game, than by helping out behind the scenes?

Terry Lock

THE CAPTAIN'S TALE...

The first game I played for Maidstone Football Club was against Thanet Wanderers in September 1971, and we lost 22-9. The last game I played was against New York in June 1979, and we won 19-16. In many ways those two results represent the development of the Club over the last few years.

There have been, for me, many memorable moments in the intervening years - my first Kent Cup Final in March 1973 when we lost to Sidcup 8-3; revenge a year later; the London Irish match of 1974; beating Blackheath in last year's Cup Final; and, best of all, the Twickenham appearances.

However, not all has been undiluted joy. Being dropped for the only time after the Thanet Wanderers match of 1971; the gruesome experience of the Canterbury Cup Final at Chatham; and a couple of drubbings by Purley are the black spots.

The personal memories are also vivid. Shaun Ellesmere's face when he made a brilliant interception on our 25, and then realised he had an open field in front of him; Harold Osenton watching a flock of parakeets in an Old Dunstonians match; Roger Richardson sliding on his backside through mud, gig-

gling all the way, to score in a Dover semi-final; Nigel Clark parting with his breakfast during a match at London Hospital; and, sadly, Paul Ehrhart's broken ankle against Southend.

I have always thoroughly enjoyed playing rugby at Maidstone, not merely because we have been successful, but with our tradition of excellent threequarters we have tried to play open rugby. Also, we are lucky enough to have an excellent pitch on which to play freely.

However, apart from the rugby, there is the varied mixture of people in the clubhouse after a game. Three quarter teachers may predominate, but groups of forwards can always be found expanding their alternative philosophies of life.

Looking to the future I am sure that we all want to make Maidstone the centre of the best rugby club in the south - east outside London. Flood - lights will help in this direction, though personally I think it will be impossible for a "second - class" club to break through until a system of leagues or merit - tables is established. Until then all we can do is to keep winning our matches.

Finally, a few words of thanks to all the Committee men of the Club who do such a valuable, if at times onerous task and most particularly to the Club Coach, Des Diamond, whose assistance over the last years has been invaluable.



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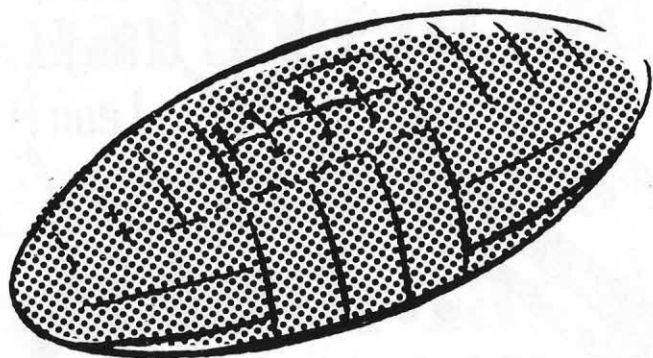


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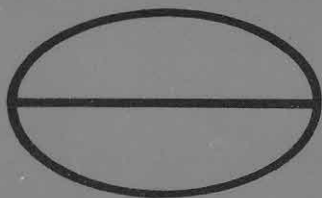
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