

THE REBIRTH OF PWLL RFC IN 1954

A BÔNAU CABBAGE PATCH SUPPLEMENT



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My name is John Lloyd and I was known as John Denham so as not to be confused with 'John Lloyd the Coal' from Sandy Road.

As the nickname suggests I was brought up in Denham Avenue and lived there until I was 24 years of age.

Whilst recently browsing through a sports scrap book that my brother David had compiled I came across two newspaper cuttings from Pwll Notes in the Llanelly Star circa 1956, copies of which are shown below.

These notes show reports on two Pwll RFC matches of that time together with the selected teams for the forthcoming games.

The Pwll rugby team was re-formed at this time, 1954, by the warden of the local youth club Mr Jack Watts from Stepney Road, who was assisted in the running of the youth club with his deputy Miss Morgan, both of who worked at the Education Office in Coleshill Terrace.

The youth club was based in the school in School Road and met once per week, where classes were held in carpentry, with Mr Haydn Rees as the instructor, and his wife who was instructor in the needlework class. Also a gymnastics class, which I attended, was run by Mr Eric Edmunds.

Although the rugby team was started at the youth club there was not sufficient youth members attending there to form a team, so adult players from the locality were recruited to play.

None of our fixtures played were against other youth teams but against senior teams, although our side was made up of many under 18 year old players.

All our home games were played on either the Stradey Secondary Modern School pitch or the Grammar School pitch. This was due to the influence Mr Jack Watts had in acquiring permits from the Education Office.

Our team selection meetings were held in the back room of Jack's shop and billiard hall, in Bassett Terrace.

Most of our games were against teams situated west of Llanelly. In fact the only time I

remember crossing the Loughor Bridge was when we took the longstanding ground record of Penyrheol RFC.

These fixtures included the senior age teams, on a home and away basis of:

Felinfoel 2^{nds}
New Dock Stars 2^{nds}
Pontyberem 2^{nds}
Kidwelly 2^{nds}
Haverfordwest 2^{nds}
Tumble 2^{nds}
Llandoverly 2^{nds}
Hendy 2^{nds}

Laugharne 1^{sts}
Dynevor Stars 1^{sts}
Lampeter 1^{sts}
RAF Pembrey
Furnace 1^{sts}
Llandeilo 1^{sts}
Llanelli Wanderers 1^{sts}
Penyrheol 1^{sts}
Llanelly Academicals

The cuttings from the Pwll Notes in the Llanelly Star that are in my possession are as follows:

Rugby.—Pwll were away last Saturday to Llandeilo and, in spite of the fact that many last-minute changes had to be made, they almost succeeded in beating the home side. A late score gave Llandeilo victory by 11 points to nine. Scorers for Pwll were Les Ellerton, a penalty goal and a magnificent try, and John Lloyd, with a well taken dropped goal. The team to meet Tumble II at Tumble today is: W. Morgan; D. Evans, L. Ellerton (capt.), K. Phillips, J. Roberts; J. Lloyd, A. N. Other; C. Stephens, R. Jenkins, A. Besley, R. Evans, D. Cutler, Tony Evans, J. Pergrina and R. Perks. The bus will leave the Billiard Hall at 2 p.m.

Rugby Football.—The local youth club R.F.C. were successful in their home game against Haverfordwest on Saturday last, winning by 10 points to nil. In a keen game played in a high wind, the Pwll half-backs, B. Ibbitson and John Lloyd were especially prominent, the latter scoring a good opportunistic try. The other Pwll try was scored by Tony Evans who beat several defenders to ground the ball under the posts. B. Ibbitson converted both tries. Today the side are at home to Furnace and the following have been selected: Willie Morgan, Tony Evans, Ken Phillips, G. Jenkins, Les Evans, John Lloyd, Brian Ibbitson, C. Stephens, R. Griffiths, A. Besley, R. Perks, D. Cutler, Terry Button, Peter Jones and Alan

The players mentioned in the reports are:-

Willie Morgan, Maes yr Haf
Donald (Ducky) Evans, Sandy Road
Les Ellerton, Maes yr Haf
Ken Phillips, Raby Street
John Roberts, The Rank
John (Denham) Lloyd, Denham Avenue
Colin (Stebo) Stephens, Bassett Terrace
Rheinallt (Bunks) Jenkins, Sandy Road
Alan Besley, Townie
Roy (The Undertaker) Evans, Bassett Terr.
Don Cutler, Maes yr Haf
Tony Evans, Maes yr Haf
John (Pegs) Peregrine, Stepney Road
Ray (Perks) Williams, Raby Street
Graham (Kite) Jenkind, Felinfoel
Les Evans, Maes yr Haf
Brian Ibbitson (Ibby), Sandy Road
R Griffiths, (address unknown)
Terry Button, School Road
Peter Penry Jones, Coleshill Terrace
Alan ? (Surname and Address unknown)



As can be seen the team consisted of mainly Pwll residents.

Others to play on occasions were Warren(Lash) Leyshon, Sam Jones, David Marks, Wilf Button. Mike Seaman and Ian Davies.

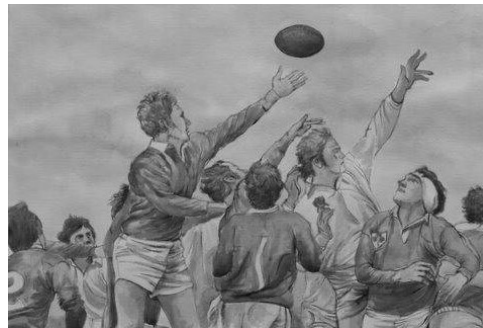
I apologise if I have omitted to mention others who contributed to the club.

The first match played was away to Dynevor Stars RFC, a well established Llanelly and District Club who changed their name to Pantyffynnon RFC at a later date.

The Dynevor side that day included two props who were brothers and were famously known throughout rugby circles as Tick and Tock. They were both shaped like the proverbial brick built Ty Bach.

The result of the game was a narrow defeat which was a creditable performance by a team who had never played together before and the spirits were high on the return coach trip home.

Some notable games that I recall are when we played Lampeter Town RFC away when John Roberts scored a brilliant try, scything through the Lampeter defence and touching down close to the posts.



The original colour of the jerseys that we played in was yellow, but it was decided that we dyed them to black.

On one occasion, when we played Laugharne at Stradey School, they turned up in black jerseys too, and neither team had a change of jerseys available, so in his wisdom, the referee decided that one side should play with their sleeves rolled up, and that's how the game was played.

I wonder if the British Lions ever had that problem.

We also had a fixture against the RAF camp side in Pembrey.

This came about when the Rev. Phillip Bowen, the camp Padre who lived in Denham Avenue, just a few doors from my house, approached me and suggested we arrange a match.

On the night of the game we assembled as a team at Jack's Billiard Hall and proceeded by coach to the camp.

On arriving at the Military Police Lodge we were met by Rev. Bowen, who boarded our bus and escorted us towards their playing field by way of the runway. But unbeknown to him there was an aircraft coming in to land on the same runway in the opposite direction to us.

On seeing this, the Rev Bowen screamed to our coach driver to "Pull over onto the grass verge," thus avoiding a major incident. It was a narrow escape, but we were able to laugh about it later.

As far as the match went we lost to a far fitter team, but I do remember being awarded a try even though I was tackled just short of the line, but the referee, the Rev Phillip Bowen allowed the try to stand. I don't think Nigel Owens would have awarded it. Who was I to contradict a man of the cloth and a near neighbour of mine.

After the game we were entertained by the RAF to a meal and many drinks in the NAFFI. A great night was had by all.

A comical incident that occurred was when we were travelling by coach to play Lampeter Town.

We were late leaving Jack's Billiard Hall so it was decided we would have to change on the bus.

We started to change just outside Llanybyther and the driver was instructed to 'put his foot down', which he did. This caused the bus to sway from side to side down the winding roads.

It was at one of those bends that Colin Stephens (Stebo) lost his balance and fell against the side window at the back of the bus, shattering the glass. I think this was the first time that "mooning" had ever been seen in Llanybyther. It was a cold and draughty journey home.

Another memory I have was when we travelled to Tumble to play a game against their second team.

This game was scheduled for 24th March 1956 but when we arrived at the ground there was no one to meet us and the changing rooms were locked.

It transpired that there had been a miscommunication with our fixture secretary and theirs.

This was the same day that Wales played France at Cardiff Arms Park and the Grand National was run at Aintree.

Wales defeated France by 5 points to 3 and an unusual incident happened at Aintree when the Queen Mother's horse, Devon Loch, unaccountably fell in the home straight when leading the race and only 40 yards away from victory.

The disappointment of not playing our game was tempered by listening to the commentaries of these events on the radio on the return journey from Tumble.



After a few seasons of playing on the fields of Stradey School and the Grammar School it was suggested we would try to have a ground of our own. A field at the rear of the Talbot Inn was acquired. I don't know how that came about or whose land it was, but that's what was arranged.



At this particular time we heard that the Scarlets were having new rugby posts at Stradey and that the redundant post were going to be transferred to the pitch at the Pwll End of Stradey which was commonly known as the Llanelly Wanderers pitch. This meant these existing posts were surplus to requirements.

So one Sunday morning Ray (Perks) Williams, Ken Phillips and I went to the home of Handel Rogers, the chairman of Llanelly RFC, in Gower View, and asked him if we could have the redundant posts to erect on the Pwll pitch.

He readily agreed this request so we proceeded to go to the Wanderer's field to take down the posts.

After much lifting and tugging we managed to get them down. At that time Ray (Perks) Williams who was a builder had an old war surplus ambulance for his work, so we loaded the posts and crossbars onto the ambulance and drove to Pwll where we negotiated the lane at the side of the Talbot Inn and onto the field and we unloaded them onto the grass, where they were left with every intention of erecting them at a later date.

In the meantime, the Llanelly Wanderers had agreed to play Pwll to open the new ground.

The field itself was rough with big clumps of grass all over it and it needed a lot of work to be done on it, and the posts still needed to be erected.

As the date of the fixture neared it was obvious that the field was not fit for purpose and with the agreement of Mr Edward James of the Wanderers the match was switched to their ground at Stradey Park.

The evening game was played in the mid week, a game we lost but with much credit for our performance against a more experienced team. Incidentally, the Scarlets played Felinfoel that same evening on the main field. An after match buffet was provided by the landlord of the Talbot Inn with both teams and supporters returning to the pub for a great night when two Wanderers brought their singing voices with them as they always do.

The field was never developed and to my knowledge the posts may still be there unless some enterprising timber merchant has cut them up and sold them for firewood.

We always had a smattering of supporters at our home games with Pete the Shop, Conrad Treharne and Celt the Village policeman who would turn up – in his uniform and riding his bike – to sort out any unruly away supporters.

Mr Hedley Evans would also attend and always had knowledgeable advice at the halftime interval as did Glyn Davies the secretary.

The coach for our away games was generally full of supporters with the anticipation of a good night socially post match.

Many of the Pwll players went on to be established and successful players in the strong West Wales rugby teams after leaving.

Les Ellerton returned to Burry Port RFC
John Roberts joined Bynea RFC, as did Don Cutler and Brian Ibbitson (Ibby).
Colin Stephens (Stebo) and Rheinallt Jenkins (Bunks) joined Felinfoel RFC.
John Lloyd (Denham) joined New Do9ck Stars RFC.

These are some of my memories as a fifteen year old outside-half, the youngest member of the Pwll team of 1954.

Though I was never a resident of Pwll I consider myself an associate member of the village having been born and lived in Denham Avenue for twenty four years, which is within the walled boundary of the Stradey Estate and only a couple of drop kicks from the castle.

All these memories of Pwll RFC are of hard fought games but wonderful fun and laughter off the field and firm friendships forged.



I dedicate these stories to all the players, officials and supporters who contributed to making it a happy team for the few seasons it ran for.

Sadly many of the names mentioned in this article are no longer with us but I will always treasure knowing and playing with them.

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(The photographs used in this supplement are representational and do not reflect the true likeness of any individual or location mentioned in the body of the text).