

The Day “The Dock” Played The “First Canadian Rugby Team” to Tour Wales

by John Ll Lloyd

On Saturday, 12th April, 1958, New Dock Stars RFC, affectionately known as “the Dock”, played against Balmy Beach RFC, Toronto. This was the first Canadian rugby team ever to tour Wales and I was delighted to be selected at outside half. The game was played on the old field, in the shadow of the GWR engine sheds, on a beautiful, sunny, Spring afternoon.

After a light lunch, I left home in Denham Avenue and caught the service bus to Llanelli railway station. I walked along New Dock Road and Dolau Road, under the railway bridges and past the Dock Hotel, to join up with the team. The regular Dock dressing rooms were on the first floor, of an old building in Biddulph Street, which was accessed by climbing a very steep, fixed, timber stepladder. The ascent was a challenge but, on the descent, people took their life in their hands. If the Health and Safety Executive had been in existence they would have locked the door and thrown away the key. But this was typical of most dressing rooms at this time, long before the affluence of clubhouses and similar facilities. The committee deemed that these facilities were not suitable to host the Canadian visitors so, we changed at the more modern locker-rooms of RTB Machynys Works.

After team photographs were taken on the lawn outside the office block, we walked the short distance to the ground where a big crowd awaited us. I think work at the engine sheds must have stopped completely because all the employees were standing behind the goals at that end of the ground. On the way to the ground, I was approached by a small red-haired boy, about seven years old, who wanted my autograph; this was a new experience for me. That young lad grew up to be the Rev Eldon Phillips who tells me, he still has that autograph.

The Dock team on that memorable day was:

Barrie Ruddall, who hailed from Seaside, at fullback, a tall, slim athletic player with a good turn of speed, who could play anywhere across the backline.

Roy Davies, on the wing, who occasionally played in the centre, gave sterling service to the club, and served on the committee for many years. A Dock man through and through.

Henry Cross captained the team, an excellent footballer with equal measures of attacking skills and defensive strengths. He was also a very good left-footed goal kicker. Henry had the distinction of playing for Llanelli at cricket as a left-

arm spinner, for the Reds as an outside-left and for the Scarlets as a centre. A remarkable sporting record which, to my knowledge, has only been achieved by one other sportsman - Phil Bennett.

Ray Rees, the other centre was, a strong, powerful, player with good handling skills and an eye for the gap with a siege gun kick. Ray joined Dock from Llanelli Wanderers having previously played for Furnace United.

Walford Evans, a speedy finisher, who knew where the try-line was, played on the wing. This was Walford's last game for the Dock, having chosen to retire from rugby.

John Ll Lloyd, I played at outside-half. Committee man, Myrddin "Muzz" Davies, worked in the Glanmor Foundry where I was an apprentice draughtsman, and he persuaded me to transfer to Dock. In November, 1957, I moved from Pwll RFC, to replace Peter Lew (Lewis), the long-serving outside half, who had retired.

Gren Rees, at scrum half, was a tough, nuggety, player in the Rex Willis mould, who never shipped on any bad ball to me. He saved me, on many occasions, from marauding back-row forwards. After his playing days, he took up bowls and became a regular county player. As a County Councillor, he worked tirelessly for his New Dock community and others as well.

The pack was a formidable unit:

Cliff Sykes, one prop was a lightweight but speedy player who made up for his lack of bulk with his pace and handling skills about the park. He was never short of a word on the field. He was probably the best looking prop in West Wales rugby and was always good for a laugh. He lived in Nevill Street.

Colwyn Owen, was the hooker, whose father Jimmy, had a butcher's shop in Marsh Street. He was educated at Christ College Brecon as a boarder and there weren't many of that ilk in the Dock team at that time. Colwyn, was a fine hooker in the days when they really had to strike for the ball and we were always in with a chance of winning the ball on the opposition's put in.

Vic Hands, the other prop, who joined from Burry Port RFC and returned to them later on. He was a powerful scrummager with a great work-rate.

Glan Morgan, who was a legend down the Dock, was in the engine room. In those days, it was considered, that playing against one of the Southern Hemisphere countries was the next best thing to getting capped for Wales. Glan achieved this on two occasions firstly, for Swansea, in their defeat to the 1963 *All Blacks* and secondly, in a formidable Llanelli front row, with Byron and Norman Gale, beating the 1967 Australians. He was some player. His partner in the second row was:

Len Ellery, from Heol Tregoning, a tough as teak, uncompromising player on the field but, off the field, he was an amiable, good-natured man, with a wicked sense of humour. He was the prankster of the team.

The back row was a combination of pace and physicality.

Ray Bourne, at blind side, was a Llanerch man who had just finished National Service. He came into the side as an automatic choice; he was big and robust and, on the field, few took liberties with him.

Les Mansel, at No 8, or lock (as the position was known as then), was a quiet unassuming gentleman who brought the strength of his job, in the blacksmith's shop at the "Klondike", to his game. He was a tower of strength at the back of the lineout and protected his scrum-half at all times. Les was extremely unlucky in 1953 when, after playing most of Llanelli's games up to the fixture with the "All Blacks", he was inexplicably left out of the side for that game. This must have been a great disappointment to him but he accepted it with the dignity of a true gentleman.

Mel Rees, the open side wing-forward and former Marine was an extremely fit player who would fly off the side of the scrum and cause mayhem amongst the opposition backs. Mel was a hooker by choice but it suited the balance of the side for him to be at wing forward. Although, in later seasons he played many times for the Scarlets in his favourite position of hooker. He played against the South African tourists of 1961 at Stradey. Mel lived in Ropewalk Road.

Gordon Evans, the vice captain, that season, was a former Welch Guardsman and Wales schoolboy international. He was a tall, rangy, forward who could play in the second or back rows and gave 100% every time he played. Unfortunately, injury prevented Gordon from being selected that day.

The match itself was a disappointment and though we won by 14 points, to nil, we didn't play to our full potential. This was partly due to the unorthodox and unstructured play of the Canadians and partly because we didn't click on the day. After the game, Gren Rees and I, were invited by the Canadians to join them on the next leg of their tour but we both declined the offer. Who knows, if we had accepted, I might be writing this article from Toronto. I think not. The connection between the clubs was forged by Vernon "Bola" Roberts, brought up in Tyisha, who emigrated to Toronto in the early 1950s. He joined the Balmy Beach Club having previously played prop for the Dock.

The post-match function was held at the RTB works staff restaurant which had been suitably transformed for the dinner by the company and we were treated to a wonderful meal befitting the occasion. The toast to "Balmy Beach RFC" was

proposed by Captain D H Thomas, of the WRU, (known locally as Dai Hop) a member of the Welsh selectors, or the "Big Five", as they were known. He was also a former Headmaster of Copperworks Boys School, a school I attended, for a few years, during World War 2. The response was by the Ontario Director of Rugby, Mr Mathers, who thanked the club for their invitation and for the wonderful welcome they had received. He praised the committee for their organising skills and hard work in arranging what was then, a ground-breaking rugby adventure as the first-ever Canadian Rugby Team to play in Wales.

The tribute to "New Dock Stars RFC" was proposed by the Vice President, of the WRU, Mr F S Phillips, the response was by Dock Chairman, Mr Howard Davies and "the Guests" was proposed by the Secretary, Mr Cyril Rees, who represented the club as player, Secretary, Chairman and President, in a lifetime of dedicated service. The response was by the Mayor of Llanelli, Alderman G W Every, JP. Sadly, many of the players and officials mentioned are no longer with us.

After the dinner and speeches were concluded, we spent time socialising with the Canadians. We eventually took them "up town", first calling at the Rolling Mill pub, in Station Road. At the time, this was the unofficial headquarters of the Dock where the AGMs were held in a large upstairs room. The Landlord was Dock supporter Mr Ivor Ellis. This was long before the development of the first clubhouse in the New Inn, in New Dock Road.

And so, after "stop tap", it was on to the Ritz Ballroom where the Denza Dance Band was in full swing, playing to a packed dance floor. Cliff Sykes, was a brilliant dancer and his forte was the Valeta, which until then, I thought was a car-cleaning service! The day ended after the Ritz because there were no Indian or Chinese restaurants, to go to, only chip shops that were closed at that time of night anyway.

The day had been long but very enjoyable. I am privileged to have played for the Dock and proud to say I played against the "First Canadian Rugby Team" ever to tour Wales. This was some consolation for the disappointment of the season, after losing by 3 points to nil in the semi final of the West Wales Cup to Ammanford, the eventual winners and just missing out of the "top four" play-offs in the league. Nevertheless, the team and committee could look back on the season with great pleasure and satisfaction.

OFFICIALS OF THE NEW DOCK STARS R.F.C.

President	Capt. D. H. THOMAS, W.R.U.
Chairman	H. DAVIES, Esq.
Vice-Chairman	J. MANSEL, Esq.
Secretary	C. R. REES, Esq.
Treasurer	G. MONGER, Esq.

THE TEAMS

Balmy Beach R.F.C.

D. McMurray, D. Johnston, W. Logie, J. Reeve,
B. Cowan, E. Robinson, J. Krauss, G. Wilson,
T. Redwood, D. Johnston, V. Roberts, P. Byrne,
F. O'Rourke, G. Walsh, J. Hoskins, R. Dunn,
D. Curtis, W. Hume, B. Baldwin, G. White,
N. Hill, F. O'Brien, B. Mathers, K. Bryant,
R. Oliver, W. Russell.

New Dock Stars R.F.C.

B. Ruddall, W. Evans, Henry Cross, Ray Rees,
R. Davies, John Lloyd, Gren Rees, C. Sykes,
C. Owens, V. Hands, G. V. Morgan, Len Ellery,
Mel Rees, Les Mansel, R. Bourne.

New Dock Stars Rugby Football Club



DINNER

in honour of the

Balmy Beach Rugby Football Club

First Canadian Team to tour South Wales

President :

Capt. D. H. THOMAS,
Welsh Rugby Union

R.T. & B. Restaurant,
Machynis.
Llanelly.

Saturday,
April 12th 1958

New Dock Stars RFC v Balmy Beach RFC Team Sheet.

M E N U

Melon

—o—

Soup

—o—

Fillet of Sole

—o—

Turkey

Mushroom

Roast and Cream Potatoes

Peas

Cauliflower

—o—

Fruit Salad and Cream

—o—

Tea or Coffee

—o—

Cheese and Biscuits

TOAST LIST

" The Queen "

—o—

" The Balmy Beach Rugby Football Club

Proposed by—Capt. D. H. THOMAS, W.R.U.

Response by—Mr. MATHERS.

(Director of Rugby Union, Ontario).

—o—

" The New Dock Stars R.F.C. "

Proposed by—F. S. PHILLIPS, Esq.,

(Vice-President, Welsh Rugby Union)

Response by—H. DAVIES, Esq.,

(Chairman, New Dock Stars R.F.C.)

—o—

" The Guests "

Proposed by—C. R. REES, Esq.

(Secretary, New Dock Stars R.F.C.)

Response by—Alderman G. W. EVERY, J.P.

(Mayor of Llanelly).

Menu and Toast List.

New Dock Stars Rugby Football Club

(Affiliated to the Welsh Rugby Union, West
Wales Rugby Union and Carmarthenshire
County Rugby Union).

SEASON 1957-58.

Member's Ticket

NOT TRANSFERABLE.

JOHN LLOYD

25 DENHAM AVE

Seat No.

"Mercury" Offices, Llanelly.

OFFICIALS.

Chairman : Howard Davies, Esq.
Vice-Chairman : Jack Mansel, Esq.

Committee :

Mr. A. C. Rees.	Mr. Edgar Davies.
Mr. Myrddin Davies.	Mr. B. Jones.
Mr. C. Washer.	Mr. George Rees.
Mr. P. Kavanagh.	Mr. John Williams.
Mr. J. Skinner.	Mr. Ivor Griffiths.
Mr. Roy Brown.	Mr. Hugh Richards.
Mr. C. Wilkins.	Mr. Cliff Davey.
Mr. D. O. Rees.	Mr. David Lloyd.

Life-Members :

Mr. Geo. Rees.	Mr. Cliff Wilkins.
Mr. Hubert Thomas.	Mr. A. C. Rees.

Hon. Secretary : Mr. Cyril R. Rees, 68, Trinity
Road, Llanelly.

Hon. Treasurer : Mr. Gwyn Monger, 22,
Pemberton Street, Llanelly.

Hon. Assistant Secretary : Mr. Howard John,
28, William Street, Llanelly.

Press Secretary : Mr. Howard Morris, 36,
Marine Street, Llanelly.

First Fifteen.

Capt. : Mr. Henry Cross.
Vice-Capt. : Mr. G. Evans.

Second Fifteen.

Mr. John Evans.
Mr. John Owens.

Headquarters and Dressing Rooms:

NEW DOCK STARS RECREATION CLUB,
Biddulph Street, Llanelly.

Colours :

Royal Blue with White Star.

Member's Ticket New Dock Stars Rugby Football Club 1957-58 Season.

Patrons :

Col. C. W. NEVILL, O.B.E., T.D.
EDGAR G. REES, Esq.
RHYS HARRY, Esq.

President :

Capt. D. H. THOMAS, W.R.U.

Vice-Presidents :

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Cyril Davies, Esq.	Haddon Evans, Esq.
Handel Rogers, Esq.	Chas. Stallard, Esq.
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R. I. Richards, Esq.	(Station Hotel).
A. H. Phillips, Esq.	Robert Richards, Esq.
Jack Peregó, Esq.	W. Petheram, Esq.
D. J. Longhurst, Esq.	Jack Hughes, Esq.
Buckleys Brewery Ltd.	Joe Peregó, Esq.
Felinfoel Brewery Ltd.	H. P. Rees, Esq.
Dr. D. E. Thomas	C. Pascoe Williams, Esq.
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W. J. Williams, Esq.	Harold Thomas, M.P.S.
D. Williams, Esq.	Gordon Owens, Esq.
Ivor Ellis, Esq.	Johnnie Jones, Esq.
(Rolling Mill)	John Beachi, Esq.
Gwynne Jones	(Halfway Hotel)

NEW DOCK
STARS

RUGBY
FOOTBALL CLUB

SEASON 1957-58

