



Reminiscing The Reddings

PLAYFUL PAGES ON A PLAYING AREA OF HISTORY

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By Hugh Gibbons during The Great Yellow Card Summer of 2020

1. Welcome to a Brum play-area stud-marked with history

You might well think this document is well-intentioned but not well-timed. I'm with you. Last year would have been better; but the idea didn't come up till well into lock-down.

It's meant as a likeable sideways and informal look at happenings across a century and a quarter in one of the least socially-distanced of sports. But perhaps the biggest event has been the stoppage time that Covid-19 brought to 2020. With luck, 2023 should see fewer awkward bounces of the ball and be more settled – in time for 150-year celebrations in Moseley circles.

Given that, whether you're way into rugby, a distant onlooker like me, or anyone with an eye for fun with its sleeves rolled up, you should get some smiles in browsing these self-contained topic pages. And surprises. You may find yourself saying: I didn't know that – whether about Birmingham pubs, that Irishman's underpants, a war memorial in a 1963 phone book, or the jinks of The Commissar.

These pages have stories around The Reddings Play Area in Moseley, Birmingham B13 8NU today. Off Reddings Road and Moor Green Lane, the Area's accessible from both Twickenham and Harlequin Drives. The names reference its heritage. Children play and families relax where crowds shouted at players of all sizes and shapes and ages in boots with studs chasing an oval ball. For this is where Moseley Football Club

had their ground – The Reddings. For a century and more, the club welcomed famous sides to this ground and regularly supplied international players. The Reddings was a home to North Midlands in the county championship, and hosted England trials and touring and invitation sides. So this area is studded with ghosts – friendly, of course.

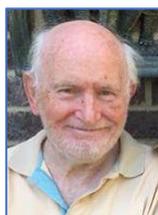


As my family were rugby-linked residents of Moseley 1938-58 – and Birmingham before that – I thought my recollections would give a different perspective its local and social history.

I set to work. Pipe smoke! England triallists on show for only 10 minutes! But I soon hit a problem. I didn't actually have many reminiscences after all. Just glimpses from the touchline of history. So as usual for me, I went researching. Family memorabilia started things off. Then it was googling time, and fun. NB I've tried hard to avoid obvious errors, but at age 80+ to err is hugh...

Great thanks go to Birmingham-Moseley's Historian Ewart Patrick who helped on most pages; and to Peter Veitch for the club's war memorial story. Much appreciated also are Judith Phelps of North Midlands RFA; James Deakin and Abi Rosenberg of Deakin & Francis, and Gary Kinsella of Moseley-Ashfield Cricket Club. Gilbert Rugby kindly allowed me to throw their trademark around!

My overall take? Since My Day, the only things unchanged in rugby seem to be the goalposts, the halfway line, the funny shape of the ball, and the referee's whistle. And the good humour, of course, in players and spectators alike – before, during and after matches. Rugby is perhaps the best team game in the world: for its range of skills, co-operation, ingenuity, sociability, stories – and chance, with the bounce of that funny-shaped ball.



With all best wishes – and enjoy these playful pages!

Hugh Gibbons

In Moseley in the autumn of 1949

In Bracknell during The Great Yellow Card 2020

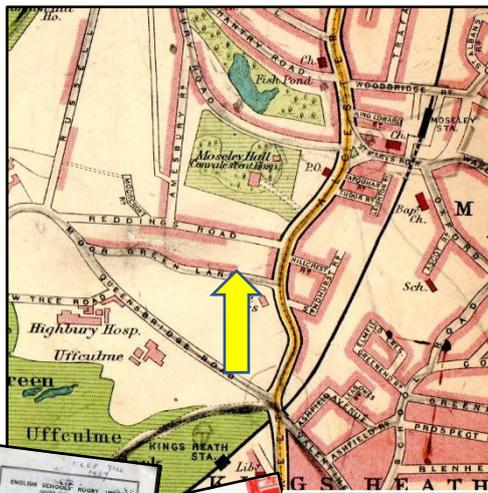
hughgibbons@just1.org.uk

2. How The Reddings helped put Moseley on the map

Cricketers kicking their heels created Moseley as a rugby club. Starting in 1873, over time they: organised themselves as a team; sorted out venues and opponents; chose red and black for their jerseys and whatever colour of socks anyone had on the day; found a friendly publican; called themselves Moseley Football Club; and came to make The Reddings their home for well over a century.



The Club led the way in helping establish Birmingham's sporting heritage. Aston Villa weren't formed until the following year, by members of Villa Cross Wesleyan Chapel. (The first match was against Aston Brook St Mary's Rugby team: one half under Rugby, the second under Association Rules...) Birmingham City followed in 1875; West Brom in 1878; Warwickshire County Cricket Club in 1882; Birchfield Harriers in 1877. By 1883 Moseley were settling into a century at their family home: The Reddings.



Our 1933 family's street guide shows the setting between Reddings Road and Moor Green Lane (the pink shading is houses). It was easily reached by tram and train that ran from the city centre out through Moseley Village. (NB Woodridge Road at the top.) The pitch ran north-to-south after east-west in the early years.

The Reddings saw and made much rugby history. Moseley welcomed many of the top clubs and players. From early days the club supplied and gave a home to international players. The Reddings was also a handy central ground to host all sorts of other matches: North Midlands in the prestigious county championship; England trials; youth internationals; as well as touring and invitation sides such as The Barbarians.



Want more on the heritage of the game? There's a very fine 15-minute video called *Rugby, A Midlands Story* made by Iconic Productions for the 2015 Rugby World Cup – available on YouTube. It features archive material from Rugby School, Moseley Rugby Club, Webb Ellis Rugby Museum – and Aston Villa, an official host venue for the Cup, with only rugby rules for both halves!

The club was paused during both world wars. The second saw the ground handed over to a local War Agriculture Committee – perhaps the goal posts proved ideal for growing runner beans. Residential Moseley (us Gibbons included...) suffered a lot of damage from bombs intended for the factories just to the north as Birmingham endured 65 raids and 2241 people killed (*Brum Undaunted* by Carl Chinn is the go-to book.)

Rugby has always undergone changes, mostly slight increments and adjustments to the rules affecting only the players. Major reorganisations have meant big shifts for everyone on the pitch and in the stands and settings. National leagues in 1987 saw Moseley starting in the top tier. In 1995, the advent of the professional game brought new opportunities - and pressures - on and off the field, and the club went into administration in 1998. The final First XV game was played at The Reddings on 6 May 2000, and the ground became today's Twickenham and Harlequins Drives – and The Reddings Play Area.

For a while the Moseley ball was bouncing awkwardly. One plan would have seen it playing at Oxford – having once been based at Oxford Road! But the solidarity of the membership meant that in 2005



Moseley Rugby was resettled with all-new facilities at today's fine ground at Billesley Common – see <http://www.moseleyrugby.co.uk>. In 2016 the club name was widened to Birmingham-Moseley. In the 2019-20 season the Club played in League 1, the third tier of the national system. The First XV was still in black and red – all wearing the same colour of socks!

And with vastly more player-friendly facilities than in the early days.

3. How the captain came from Oz to kick off in Balsall Heath

In 1873, younger players at Havelock Cricket Club in Trafalgar Road decided they wanted to play a sport during the winter as well. Like many people, they were getting more work-freed time. They could have opted for Football Association Rules like Small Heath Alliance in 1875 – who went on to become today's Birmingham City. But there was only one other club nearby. So rugby it was.

The formation of the Rugby Football Union in 1871 increased the popularity of an increasingly well-organised sport. The first England International was an away defeat on 27 March – to Scotland in front of 4000 people. Scoring? A try just let you try a kick at goal, today's conversion. (The 1874 Varsity match was a draw, though Oxford scored two tries to nil!) There were no penalty goals, as it was accepted that gentlemen would not cheat. If that sounds like a load of old cobblers, the balls were too – in Rugby.



William Gilbert was a local cobbler who developed footballs for Rugby School - plum-shaped in 1823 when Webb-Ellis picked one up and ran into history. This early Gilbert is leather with inner tube and laces. The size and shape weren't in the rules until 1892, when the weight was set at 12-13oz. Today's match ball is slightly larger, but of polyester to be waterproof and hold its shape, with a surface that gives better grip when handled and flight when kicked.

In the first season, Havelock Football Club had two problems. One was that rugby then was a 20-a-side game. But they managed twenty members for starters. By 1881 there were eighty on the books.

The other was finding somewhere to play. The obvious solution would have been to use the cricket club's ground down Trafalgar Road. However, as cricketers they probably didn't fancy having their turf churned up by muddy studs. They found space in St Paul's Road, and later at a nearby ground the press called Balsall Heath - on the corner of Highgate Road and Moseley Road. Forthcoming football fixtures for 1875/6 published in the Birmingham Daily Gazette said the ground was adjoining Camp Hill Station – handy for visiting sides. The first recorded home game with their long-term rivals Coventry was played on this ground on 26th February 1876, a week after an away game.



The club's captain for the first four seasons was Stephen Deakin. Born in Hobart, Tasmania, he was perhaps Australia-qualified before there was such a thing. His father had gone out from Birmingham, married, and came back to Worcestershire. Stephen went to work in the Jewellery Quarter, joining his uncle's firm Deakin & Moore; later Deakin & Nephew; and today's well-known Deakin & Francis. And found time to be in at the founding of Havelock Football Club – as a goal-kicking forward. Perhaps the travel demands of the job caused him to hang up his boots around 1877. But he must have kept his fitness because in 1886 he was able to swim for shore carrying a belt packed with sovereigns when the SS Oregon collided with a schooner and sank off New York. (The wreck remains a popular diving site – though ICYMI the purser did rescue those gems worth millions...)



His son Henry (left) took up the ball and ran with it – as he talked about in an interview with a Birmingham paper just before going to the Moseley centenary dinner in 1973. He recalled that the club started in a field that belonged to his grandfather, and that the changing room was the local pub (of which, more overleaf). *"The members were mostly public-school boys. Sometimes we were as rowdy then as they are now"*. But in those days *"the game was not so fast, not so serious, nor so popular. Gates were small."* The photo shows him with his father's and his own club caps. After gaining honours with Midlands Counties and the Barbarians, Henry's playing days were cut short on the first day of The Somme. But in later years he became President of Moseley, proud of the club his father had been around to found.

He had big boots to fill. First President was timber merchant and philanthropist Amos Roe, whose fine house still stands on Bristol Road. In 1887, School Road Moseley resident Lister Lea succeeded him. His architectural practice was involved in many Birmingham pubs. Try The Bartons Arms in Aston.

By the 1878/79 season, Moseley Football Club finally got round to playing in Moseley! The Birmingham Daily Gazette listed games as taking place at Oxford Road, Moseley. Not quite at Reddings but getting there. And that's the next page in the story.

4. Why Reddings battles began & ended with Trafalgar

For much of the early years, Moseley and visiting teams playing at The Reddings had a really palatial place to change into and out of their kit. Not only were sociable bars built in, but round the back was a bowling green and ice-skating rink.

The downside was that the Trafalgar Hotel (right, now the popular Patrick Kavanagh Bar) was in Woodbridge Road, half a mile away; which meant battling weather and ribaldry to and fro the ground. Such a pub/club win-win arrangement wasn't unusual in those days.



The club's first home ground actually within Moseley was along Oxford Road. But as this was starting to develop residentially, in 1880/1 they moved to a ground by Moseley Hall, long associated with the Taylor family. However, the pitch was uneven and had a severe slope. Luckily, the club was offered an alternative parcel of land, for an annual rent of £25 – about £3000 today. So they moved on, but taking with them the scallops on the Taylor coat of arms for the Moseley badge. The new ground became known as The Reddings, derived from "riddings" meaning cleared for cultivation. A footpath from Alcester Road led along the top of a dry moat, and on this Reddings Road was eventually built, seen below.

The original pitch laid out at The Reddings in 1883 ran parallel to the Road, ie 90° to the one familiar from 1912 onwards seen here. The pitch sloped away near one of the corner flags, but the sandy sub-soil meant that though the surface could get very wet it was quick drying.



For the early spectators, backing on to Moor Green Lane was a 'grand' stand, which held approximately 50 people and which had room for coats underneath – presumably the players', needed as they braved the weather to and fro The Trafalgar. In its match report of the first game, The Leicester Daily Mercury remarked that the ground 'was in capital condition' and that 'a lot of expense' had been incurred in laying it out; and local newspaper said The Reddings was being 'situated in a most picturesque spot.'



Moseley's first game at the new ground took place on 6th October 1883, against Leicester. Cannily, Moseley decided to play up the hill in the first half. Leicester kicked off and almost immediately the ball was returned by the home team for forward Ward to score the first-ever try at The Reddings.

In 1912, the pitch alignment was rotated, with all-round benefits. The picture here shows the West Stand added in 1935. The clubhouse was added in 1947 and the large main stand in 1957. Floodlights in 1965 extended the playing and training times. The original 'grand' stand on the south side had become a standing terrace. But the north end was never developed – letting some residents of Reddings Road enjoy watching front rows go at each other from the comfort of their front rooms.



FYI Today's main pitch at Billesley Common has a nod to the original of 1883 – it slopes gently from the north-east, as you may sense overleaf.

5. How a Moseley cricket club cared for Reddings history



This is today's replacement for The Reddings. On Remembrance Sunday November 2018, the Mini & Junior Sections of Birmingham-Moseley Rugby – with families, club members and friends – gathered on the 100th anniversary of the end of World War1 to add to the history of Moseley and Birmingham

They were there to welcome back the memorial plaque to the 16 Club members who lost their lives in that conflict, first dedicated around 1920.



The memorial had been displayed at the Reddings until the closing of the ground in 2000. For safe keeping, it was then moved to Moseley Ashfield Cricket Club (MACC) along Yardley Wood Road. They themselves have a fine memorial to the 30 players they lost. The cricketers cared for the rugby memorial for the next 18 years. And more. Jointly with MACC, Moseley Players Association (MPA) organised an annual Remembrance Sunday service by the Memorial, with a fine breakfast after in the MACC clubhouse.

In time for that 100th anniversary, the MPA arranged for the memorial to move from cricket back to rugby club. The traditional service was conducted by Rev Debbie Collins, Vicar of nearby Holy Cross church, who rededicated the WW1 Memorial. This now had an extra – a plaque saying simply: "And all those who fell in conflicts since. Requiescant in Pace".

WW1 claimed 12,500 Birmingham dead and 35,000 wounded – and families suffering the aftermath. The simple list of names plaque hides poignant stories. Age 37, Captain Hugh Evers of the Worcester Regiment was killed on 1 November 1918 - just a few days before the Armistice. Walter Mansell and his brother were killed within a few months of each other, leaving his widower father and sister bereft. Two Pearces were lost. PR Vaughton was perhaps a Prisoner of War when he died at Kassel in Germany in September 1916 – one of 78 former pupils of Handsworth Grammar School who did not return. Some names appear elsewhere, as you'll see with RB Gibbins on p16.

There's an excellent and inclusive book called 'Who's for the Game' by Moseley member Doug Smith. This details the Great War dead of the club together with those from Moseley Golf Club, Moseley Ashfield Cricket Club and Moor Green Football Club.

Moseley-Ashfield CC's kindness is not forgotten. An obelisk is to mark the spot where they cared for Moseley history.



6. How rugby at The Reddings came to run in the family

Rugby has always been a sport for families to enjoy. It wasn't a game made with spectators in mind, but the crowds have appreciated its social and civilised ethos (fighting confined to the pitch and the duration of a game). For the first hundred years or so – before TV or live-streamed games, in the bar or on the phone – if you wanted to see a match, you had to go to it in person. Which my bit of the Gibbons family did in Birmingham from 1921 to 1958, with breaks for job postings and in, well now, Rugby, after we were bombed in Moseley's School Road...

My father Alfred Charles (Dick to everyone) learned to play before WW1 at his school, Presentation College in Cork. After the war, he brought his skills as a full back to both Birmingham University (that's his 1922 membership card) and Birmingham rugby clubs.

This photo in the family album suggests he's the player in possession here, sometime around 1921 (maybe on one of the Uni pitches in front of the tower in the picture below?) It's a typical game of any time, watched by a couple of casual onlookers in the top left-hand corner. The kit is long shorts – not necessarily the same colour. The boots, ball and pitch are heavy.

The chaps don't look like undergraduates. The War was still etched in them. The photo on the right shows dad's pals at their digs in Priory Road; student garb his now-scruffy officer's tunic, the white-and-purple ribbon of the Military Cross still in place. Yes, that's a naval jacket left of the suits.

My parents and sister lived in Handsworth and Smethwick before the new ICI job meant Dublin and Bristol. Then with my brother Paul and me, they came back to Birmingham and 71 School Road in Moseley 1938-40 and 68 Greenhill Road 1943-58.

Post-war, the family became Saturday afternoon regulars at the Reddings. If no home game, we'd be able to wander the terrace of University (right) where we might catch several games taking place. Alternatively, the Old Edwardians played – I think – behind the County Cricket Ground.



service of Newcastle Falcons and Percy Park.

And that's us Kodaked by him on a sunny day in 1955 – perhaps before going off to the North Midlands Sevens at the Reddings!



7. When Moseley stayed strong despite the Haka

In 1888, The Reddings helped make social and cultural as well as sporting history. On 13 October Moseley Football Club hosted a visit by the first-ever international tourists to Great Britain and Ireland: the New Zealand Native Football Representatives Team – essentially Maoris. There are fine accounts at <http://therugbyhistorysociety.co.uk/nzmos.html> and the New Zealand government website <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/the-new-zealand-natives-rugby-tour>.

The crowd was 4-5000, the biggest yet seen in the Midlands. And Moseley won by 6pts to 4. The visitors chose to play with the wind but against the “rather steep slope”. However, after 20 minutes “Smiler” Ihimaira – playing in bare feet - released Ellison to score a try converted by McCausland, “to prolonged cheering from the crowd”. Later the visitors lost two players to injury - in those days no replacements were allowed. They returned to The Reddings on 4 February 1889, and beat a Midland Counties side 6-1.

The tour was privately arranged and funded. Of the 26 players in the squad, at least five were full-blooded Māori, while fourteen had a Māori mother and a Pākehā father. But Paddy Keogh had been born in Birmingham! The average age of the tourists was about 22. Nearly all were single and had poor job prospects. An expenses-paid trip to Britain must have appealed to them.

The team photo on the right includes the famous words Ake Ake Kia Kaha - be strong: my thoughts are with you - a term of comfort or solace, used far beyond the rugby field today.



The tour lasted for 15 months and took in New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom. The Natives played 107 rugby matches – winning 78 – and another 8 under Australian rules. In the UK, they won 49 of their 74 matches. Between their first and last matches in Britain, the Natives played on average every 2.3 days. They played four times on consecutive days, and once three days in a row. Not surprisingly, injuries were frequent, and their effect was compounded by the fact that several of the party turned out to have little ability... Competent players who were no worse than slightly injured were forced to turn out in match after match; at one point only 11 men were fully fit. That they won two-thirds of their matches in these circumstances seems remarkable.

Several innovations may have helped. Their kit was an imposing all-black. They used disruptive wing forwards, and more structured back play. And they preceded each game with their crowd-pleasing “picturesque native rugs” and haka ritual (right) which looks like Morris dancing but with less flowery hats and no menacing sticks.



They played hard. Accusations of poor sportsmanship in the press reached a crescendo after the England test on 16 February. Late in a closely contested first half, England were awarded two tries despite the protests of Native players who claimed to have touched the ball down first. Soon after half-time, things got much worse. When an England player lost his knickerbockers in a tackle, he threw the ball down and Native players encircled him to preserve his modesty as he left the field. However, another Englishman picked the ball up and touched down between the posts. When referee Rowland Hill (who happened to double as the Secretary of the English Rugby Union...) awarded the try, three of the Natives walked off in protest and could not be persuaded to return for several minutes. The game eventually continued. England won 7-nil.

But perhaps that circle of players preserving modesty stayed strong as an idea – as you’ll see overleaf.

8. How not to short-change a Reddings crowd!

Residents near the Reddings knew how Moseley or North Midlands were doing from the distant roars and groans of us supporters. Brief silence? A penalty kick. Five minutes' murmur? Half-time, when the players got lemon slices brought out to them on the pitch.

But sometimes they'd hear a big laugh, a couple of minutes' chuckling, then a great cheer. It was for one of the highlights of a game – sometimes the only one. It meant a player needed to change his torn shorts, triggering a happy ritual on the pitch that the crowd sitting or standing could join in. Remember how the Native players encircled the English player who lost his knickerbockers to preserve his modesty as he left the field? Well, no matter whether it was North Midlands at the Reddings or the All Blacks at Auckland, In My Day the player stayed on for the fun, with modesty thrown in. It was part of the code – not written in the Rules, not needing a whiteboard covered in coach's moves.



So Donnacha O'Callaghan would have raised a tut-tut rather than the crowd and TV audience laughter in 2006. He had 94 Ireland caps, four Lions test appearances on two separate tours, two Heineken Cups and one Grand Slam. Yet he's often remembered as the player who Lost His Shorts But Carried On. The big surprise wasn't the, well, snug fit of his budgie smugglers but that they matched the Munster strip. Trying not to waste time and miss the next phase of play, O'Callaghan prepared for the lineout. French referee Christophe Berdos wasn't having any of it. "Move away please. You can't play like this". Donnacha got the replacement shorts on quickly and returned in time of the lineout. God was with the Ref. At the lineout, O'Callaghan knocked on from Frankie Sheahan's throw before landing awkwardly on the ground.



And at least his replacement shorts were white instead of the

Munster red. My Reddings crowds would have approved of that anomaly. But they'd have wanted more. There was still a sense of decorum and public decency. Like the teams, the crowd contained many of a sensitive and sheltered nature - some of them women or children. Play would stop. The shorts-torn one was surrounded by his team-mates in a tight circle with arms around shoulders. Not for team bonding and pep talk like these Swansea University Women Students today (right), but to shield everything inappropriate. Mind you, it didn't stop all bawdiness, honed by all our in-it-together years of war.



A replacement pair of shorts arrived from the dressing room – as with Donnacha's, not necessarily anything like the same size or colour as the original. When the torn shorts were flung out, a great cheer went up. The circle dissolved, the player was allowed to show that he was now proper again. If a slow-on-the-uptake lady shouted Get Em Off, the unwritten rule was for the player to reply: Listen, if I did you'd pay me to put 'em back on again.

And the game restarted; the residents of Reddings Road and Moor Green Lane relaxed; the distant roars and groans resumed around The Reddings. With luck, perhaps something like that still happens in lower leagues. But they don't seem to make highlights like that anymore.

Of course, other happenings on the pitch can be glued in the memory, as you'll see overleaf.

9. How I got on running the @!!**#%** Reddings touch

Around 1956 I was, ahem, a match official at a wintry Moseley game at The Reddings. Well, that's to say I was the sole spectator for, what, United or Nomads; as a schoolboy, there only to support my brother Paul at full back and see if he could give me a laugh by getting hurt.

It felt churlish not to accept the invite to play the game, young man, by running the flag along one touchline. I had the kit on – a coat. (On the right is touch judge RV Jeffares in Irish blazer, club tie, and boots at Twickers ready for England v Ireland in 1948). By flag, I mean holding up my arm and wagging my hand when the ball went out; and judging where, and who had been the last to touch it. In those days, the referee's assistants had an undemanding role in the Rules.



If I was a bit reluctant, it was because like most players I knew something of the Rules, but only as they applied to my usual position. Utility back, not particularly proficient in any role, but willing to tackle anyone. It took two days to get my HIA – an X-ray at the Accident Hospital, which showed no sign of injury, or brain.

At the then Moseley CofE Primary School in School Road, footie was the winter game, of course. Every week we were taken by big bus to Uffculme Park's playing fields. So it was luxury to go to Moseley Grammar School in autumn 1949, with proper changing rooms and rugby pitches. In my new kit (left) you may sense some differences between Then & Now. The shirt had a collar and loose fit. The shorts were long, with a button-up waist. The boots were shiny new leather, with bright white laces – the only colour available. And the ball was leather, heavy, barely flingable. In 1951, King Edwards School at Edgbaston

limited me to House rugger level (Goodie Bill Oddie was school scrum half, FYI.)

Back at The Reddings, all went well until after a tussle near the half-way line. I judged the ball had skidded into touch off a visiting prop. He was a man of few words, apparently, but he used both of them quite a lot as he questioned my decision – citing my knowledge of the laws, eyesight, and my parents' marital status. He squared up: I scared up. But the visiting captain came over from the far wing and explained things to the prop by giving him a heavy-duty smack on the ear. The Ref approved. After all, rugby is one game in which you don't argue with the match officials – at least not until you're in the bar. Mind you, both the prop and I had a laugh when Paul's nose got broken (as you can sense on the right).



Dublin, Somerset, London, Leicestershire and Berkshire took me out of touch with Birmingham – though often spectating their own brands of rugby. The last in-person encounter with Moseley was on 21 April 1979. My son Matt and I were at Twickenham to see them play Leicester (in their alphabetical jerseys) in one of their finals of the John Player Cup. We took along a visiting work colleague from Germany. Heinz said afterwards that he hadn't understood anything, but he'd really enjoyed all the game, the crowd's enthusiasm and good humour, the players' respect for the referee, "And the little flags of the judges."



From KES, I went to Trinity College Dublin. TCD was also steeped in rugby. With its main pitch tucked inside the college grounds right in the centre of the city, you could get to see the best sides in Ireland – for free. Internationals were at Lansdowne Road (on the left) now the Aviva Stadium. That's James Daniel Clinch with the boot, btw. Jamie was from a family with medicine and rugger in their blood. In the 1920's he was a classically fearsome 30-caps flanker. TCD were in no hurry to lose such a valuable player, and ignored any academic inertia. But after a decade on the books, it was felt that awarding Jamie a medical degree would be a token of appreciation and shove towards a career (in which he became a much-loved GP).



A special exam board assembled. In Jury's bar. There were two questions. "What's your name?" "Jamie Clinch." "Correct." Then the medical clincher. "Is this bone a tibia or a fibula?"

"What the hell," says your man. "D'ya think I'm going for first class honours?"

10. When Moseley beat Moseley at Twickenham

There's quite a bit of rugby history in this photo taken at Twickenham on 14 February 1948. It includes a couple of Moseley touches.

Face obscured by the ball but shiny head standing out as usual, Hugh de Lacy then of the Harlequins was at one time scrum half for Moseley. But here he is for Ireland

winning 11-10, on their way to their first ever Grand Slam in what was then a championship of five nations. The next year, they won the Triple Crown again, calling on only 19 players for their four matches.

And there's another one-time Moseley player in the picture. Edinburgh University wing forward Mickey Steele-Bodger became a renowned name in rugby – eventually Chairman of the International Rugby Board.

The intensity of the players is no different from today. But note the diversity of Irish socks with club colours; the long shorts with buttons up the front; the loose jerseys with collars; the scrum cap; the leather boots with their long laces and nailed-in studs. And the leather ball. Referee T Jones and touch-judge RV Jeffares wore appropriate kit – T in plain shirt and RV in blazer, jacket, tie, smart trousers with turnups tucked into boots. There were dress code standards, you know.

Note also the size and physique of the players; some almost scrawny, you might say – from the years of wartime experiences and diet. In that clump of players, English Lock Humphrey Luya had spent four years as a Prisoner of War – all 6ft 2in of him.

Incidentally, gaining possession in the set scrums was not the predictable affair it is today. Karl Mullen of Ireland was a master at this, and it was said that his boots often invaded the opposition scrum as far as the number eight. As now, slow the ball down and you lessen the options for attack.

Like his father and brother, Mickey Steele-Bodger became a veterinary surgeon. Like most people in the crowd, everyone on the pitch had something non-rugby to go back to on the Monday morning. Some might have jobs as teachers, farmers, doctors, soldiers, miners, council officials. Others were university students – most international sides seemed to have at least one, often mature from wartime or national service experience. It was the same with all sides, whether international or club – a level playing field, you might say. Amateur rugby meant play without pay – though being a player with a name might open doors with understanding employers. But essentially, we knew that even the best players were – albeit a bit bigger, fitter, faster and focussed – really just one of us.

Some found time to be good in other sports too. Moseley fly half Peter Cranmer was capped for England and was there for the famous Obolensky try against the All-Blacks in 1936, before giving up rugby to concentrate on captaining Warwickshire at cricket.

Rugby's always had down-to-earth characters. Ray Prosser drove a bulldozer as well as the pack of Welsh and Pontypool forwards. On the Lions Australasian 1958 tour, he was one of only three manual workers in the party. Apocryphally he is supposed to have remarked to the upper-class lock David Marques that *"You English public-school types are all alike, always using long words like 'corrugated', and 'marmalade'"*. Fellow prop Graham Price remembered Ray's warm-hearted advice in training. *"Do these sit-ups properly and you'll have muscles on your guts like knots on a navy's bootlace."*

But some players shimmied their way into the affection of crowds and players – as the next page shows.



11. Why "The Commissar" was a crowd-pleasing visitor

At The Reddings we got to see elusive runners (hey, Arthur Edge!) in our own and visiting sides. If Coventry or Warwickshire were coming, we knew we were in for a hard forwards afternoon - but at least with a chance of seeing the legendary winger Peter Jackson do his stuff. The crowd loved it.

Like me – the only thing in common, I must add - Jackson was educated at King Edward VI School, and before national service played for Old Edwardians. In 1953, he joined Coventry and won 20 England caps.

Seeing him in action in 1948, the Birmingham Post rugby correspondent John Solan observed: *"There is always something electric in the autumn air when Jackson is in possession."* After his retirement, Solan mourned the loss of those *"mesmeric crossfield runs"* and *"excited conjecture"*.



On the Lions' 1959 Australasian tour, Jackson scored 19 tries, including two in Tests against New Zealand. It was said his ghostlike pallor and impassive features got him nicknamed "The Commissar", but they masked a deceptively strong if slight frame. The great All Blacks coach Fred Allen remembered Jackson against Hawkes Bay, scoring after wandering infield, beating man after man, and then, *"seemingly on a private whim, turn about again, beating man after man, possibly even the same men he had already beaten once to complete an uproarious, picturesque figure of eight"*. He said of Jackson's genius in evasion and feinting that *"by the standards of the fliers he was almost a slow coach, but nonetheless scored scads of tries by the trickery and deceptiveness of his running."*

He impressed his Lions team-mates, too. The equally characterful wing Tony O'Reilly (who scored a record 20 tries) observed: *"Jackson, the inimitable, was such a crowd-pleaser that it was suggested to the Lions that he should be equipped with a one-wheeled bicycle and three juggling balls so he could keep the crowd entertained when play was not on his side of the field."*

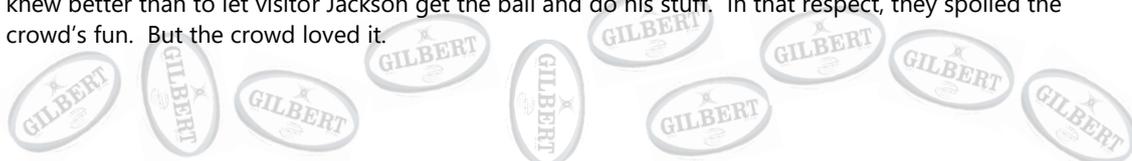


But Jackson's great day was Saturday 1st February 1958, on the right wing against The Australians at Twickenham. He scored a dramatic, match-winning try fit to rank with Prince Obolensky's legendary crossfield run in 1936. You can see it on YouTube. The picture shows him heading for the corner but being cut off by three Wallaby players faster than him. Here's the key bit of his obituary in the Daily Telegraph on 24 March 2004.

"The setting was heroic. With one man carried off the field and another stumbling around with concussion (no replacements were allowed in those days), England had fought back to six-all with a minute to go. Receiving the ball about 40 yards out, Jackson weaved inside and out, leaving the defenders scrabbling in the mud, until he wrong-footed the full-back and dived into the corner as the Twickenham crowd exploded with joy."

The past really is a different country. By chance, Peter Jackson also provided me with an example of the difference between players and preparations for international matches then and now. On a Friday morning before Ireland played England at Lansdowne Road, I popped out of Trinity College to buy my North Stand match ticket from the tobacconist opposite Front Gate. (Yes, you could in those days.) And bumped into Jackson and No8 Alan Ashcroft – a fellow Lion, from Waterloo - out on a stroll to fill in time before the team's one get-together and training session in the afternoon. We had a warm and unhurried chat. And when I said that I'd been to King Edward's and had seen him play in Birmingham, he said he hoped we'd enjoyed it. Oh yes, and how. And on they both wandered, unremarked, relaxing for their later work-out...

Next afternoon I joined the crowd ambling to Lansdowne Road. England lost. The fiery Irish forwards knew better than to let visitor Jackson get the ball and do his stuff. In that respect, they spoiled the crowd's fun. But the crowd loved it.



12. How everyone got bigger – not just at The Reddings

When North Midlands played Warwickshire in 1964 (right) most club players were similar in physique to the general male population. The game then – and still – could accommodate all shapes and sizes.

In recent years, the nature of the top-level game has become far more physical, demanding big, strong, physical players. Women as well as men these days. That's North Midlands recently against Lancashire in the picture.

But physiques have changed anyway. Online menswear brand The Idle Man researched data on changing body shapes using government statistics.

- In 1954, the typical male in Britain was just over 5ft 7in tall, weighed 11st 6lb, had a chest of 37 inches and a waist of 34 inches. He wore size seven shoes, had a collar size of 14 and had a life expectancy of just 68.
- Sixty years on, the average man was 2 inches taller, 14lb heavier, with a chest 5 inches and a waist 3 inches bigger. His shoes and collar had gone up two sizes. Life expectancy was now up to 79.
- The Man noted: *"Suits are being cut in a completely different way to reflect this changing body shape, with much bigger sizes in the upper body. Collar sizes have gone up markedly to reflect modern man's much more muscular neck."*
- *"He is likely to exercise at least twice a week and eat and drink about a quarter more than he did in the Fifties - consuming 2,500 calories a day compared to 2,000 calories back then."*

Rugby has more than reflected these changes as gym-time and serious training have come into play. For 15s and 7s rugby, in all positions players are patently stronger, fitter, more agile and reactive. And bigger.

In 2014, Professor Peter Milburn, Professor of the School of Allied Health Sciences at Griffith University in Australia, examined when rugby players got so big. He analysed height and weight from 700 All Blacks profiles from the New Zealand Rugby Museum website dating back to 1884. He found:

- The height and weight of the players increased by 2.35cm and 4.9kg per generation of 25 years. That's consistent with the change expected of healthy males in developed countries.
- He predicted that if these trends in player size were to continue, the average height and weight of all players would increase over the next generation from the present 185.4cm and 96.5kg to 188.4cm and 101.4kg by the year 2039. That's only marginally greater than expected from the general population.
- However, the change in height and weight showed a marked increase in rate of change from about 1980 onwards, which coincided with increased professionalism in rugby.
- Based on these trends, players' height and weight could be expected to increase by more than double the trend of height and more than three times the trend in weight for other men.
- His bad news for the rest of the world? If these trends were to continue over the next generation, the average height and weight of All Blacks would be 195.4cm and 119.3kg, or more than 10% taller and heavier than they are today.

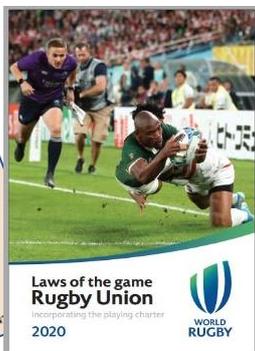
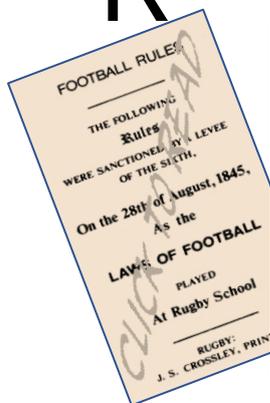
There's a downside that applies to all countries. Former All Black coach J.J. Stewart lamented that rugby was becoming a game for big men only; and at lower grades and schoolboy grades, of becoming a game for big, strong, early maturing boys only. He felt this would rob the game of its traditions and ethos of being a game that caters for all physical types. He also feared rugby would ultimately follow other football codes of becoming a game of relatively few highly paid athletes performing for large crowds. What say?

Of course, the biggest growth of all? The number of professors and PhD students – let alone coaches – researching all aspects of rugby. Including, presumably, the mathematics of that wicked bounce of the ball away from a defender and – surprisingly often – smack into oncoming hands for a runaway try.



13 Why it's "What was that for, Ref?" in 100+ languages?

Rugby for players and spectators alike has always been a sort of inverse pub quiz. The referee blowing the whistle gives the answer and you have to think up the question. So it's a bit like the orchestra where the player said I don't know what he conducted but we played Beethoven's Fifth.



The first rules were drawn up in August 1845 by three senior pupils at Rugby School. Even then, the game was not simple. Their Football Rules Book had 37. More were to come, as you can see at <http://www.rugbyfootballhistory.com/laws.htm>. The History of the Laws of Rugby Football published in 1949 contained 241 pages of changes to the laws that had occurred over the years. The History of the Laws of Rugby Football 1949–1972 had a further 83 pages. The 1991 Lawbook ran to 261 pages, though the actual Laws took up only 105. There's an amusing tale of writing the Laws in Plain English – in the USA – at www.rugbyfootballhistory.com/laws_in_plain_english.html

Today the definitive guide is provided by World Rugby. They cater for rugby in over 120 countries, with 8 million players in registered competitions. And not just 15- and 7- but 10- and 12-a side; with Tag, Touch, Wheelchair, and Beach forms. For woman and men, and most ages. You can find their fine handbook at <https://laws.worldrugby.org/index.php?&language=EN>. It runs to 140 pages – though this includes lots of diagrams, and reminders of the ethos of the game in its many settings.

Some differences for spectators since Back In My Day?



The actual game itself doesn't seem to have changed that much – and the changes have been gradual. It's faster, with the ball in play much longer than 70 years ago. The players still wear shorts, whatever the weather. They mostly move the ball up the field by running while the opposition tries to stop you by tackling. The ball has to be passed backwards. Lineouts and scrums usually involve eight forwards.

You still score points by tries – currently worth 5 points - by conversion, penalty or drop kick.

The penalty try is an innovation – worth 7 points, as the conversion is assumed. Oh, a kicker doesn't have to dig in a heel and make a little mound but uses a tee. Restarting after a score is by drop-out. Outside the 25-yard – oops – 22 metre line, kicks directly into touch cost you.

Until 1958, what slowed things down was the requirement for someone to "play the ball" with a foot when it was released after a tackle. That, and knocking-on the heavy, slippery, water-logged leather ball... Playing advantage has let the game flow more naturally – though "play to the ref's whistle" remains vital. Line outs seem a bit different. Time was when the ball was usually thrown in by the wing, not the hooker as today. Lifting was out - and pulling down. Of course, scrums, mauls and rucks still have their own arcane rules and on-the-spot interpretations – exhaustively worked over on social media...

What impresses is the handling skills, especially at speed and under pressure – from the opposition or weather, or tight space. Of course, the ball is easier to see, catch and pass. So long passages of continuous phases of play are common, and the ball is in play a lot more across the 80 minutes than it was half a century ago. Dynamic visual acuity and visual alignment are new skills trained in!

Some surprises? That players can be sent off for 10 minutes or the rest of the game. Tactical as well and injury substitutes are allowed. And all injuries are taken seriously.



And referees? They now have a whole lexicon of visual signals to communicate the reason for their decisions to spectators and players. My father would have approved. On 15 January 1938 he noted in his diary that he'd been to Cardiff and seen Wales beat England 14-8. "Wales were the better team, but their first try should not have been allowed as the ball was grounded in play, and England really scored a try in last few minutes which was disallowed for some extraordinary reason or other".

And "what was that for, ref?" still gets an airing in every game – in 100+ languages.



14. How the faces of rugby have changed

These pictures are of two matches at Twickenham at which I was present. Both were historic, but in different ways, offering an indication of some changes in the rugby scene over half a century. On the left, in March 1965 England winger Andy Hancock of Northampton is about to



touch down in front of the then North Stand after a 79th minute match-saving 80-yard run against Scotland (YouTube clip!) On the right, my view from that North area in September 2015 when England lost to Wales 28-25 in the World Cup. In the 79th minute, England had a 5-metre touch in that left-hand corner, ideal to secure the win. They made history, all right - but it was more upcock than Hancock.

It's good to compare and contrast these matches. Some points of difference?

1965 The match is in daylight – play just about visible. The north stand has spectators standing at the bottom tier, with the crowd right up to the pitch. The players have loose kit. The pitch and the ball are muddy. Drinks beyond the bars not allowed – but smoke away to your heart's content. Big loo queues.

2015 The match is at night, under floodlights. Everyone has a seat. Advertising and sponsorship abound. Big TV screens show you what they're seeing around the world – with frequent replays of all action. No Smoking anywhere - but beer everywhere (NB not in glasses). The crowd carry phones, and use 'em.

But you can literally see one very big change in the match programmes today – even before the players run out, women and men. The range of names suggests a worldwide game. But the player portraits show a welcome advance in cultural diversity. You see, in 1965 all the England and Scottish players were white. It was 57 years since the first black player Jimmy Peters had got an England cap – and 23 before the next.



Jimmy Peters' story is quite something. Born in Salford, his father was from Jamaica and mother from Shropshire. As a homeless child, Jimmy even had to work as a bare-back rider in a circus, before being settled into James Fegan's orphanage The Little Wanderers Home in Greenwich, where he showed great aptitude for sports.

Trained in printing and carpentry, Jimmy took his skills westward - and became fly-half for Bristol and Somerset. His presence was opposed by some on racist grounds: a committee member resigned in protest at his selection for the team, while a local newspaper described him as a "pallid blackamoor", and complained that he was "keeping a white man out of the side." Moving to Plymouth, Jimmy was star of the Devon side which won the county championship.

On 17 March 1906 he won his debut cap against Scotland – alongside CH Shaw of Moseley! The Yorkshire Post pointed out, "his selection is by no means popular on racial grounds". The Sportsman commented that the "dusky Plymouth man did many good things, especially in passing." In that autumn Jimmy became embroiled in controversy about the touring South African Springboks, as some objected to him playing against them for Devon. He was not picked for the International, with a number of newspapers citing racial grounds. But he got six caps in all. Settled in Plymouth, he was described as a "gentleman" teetotal publican who would often quote Bible passages. Many a rugby player would be happy with that.

Jimmy died in 1954 - 34 years before the next black player was capped for England, winger Chris Oti in 1988. (When South Africa still had the policy of apartheid, in 1981-4 Errol Tobias gained six caps...) But in the 2019 World Cup, 10 of the 31 England squad were BAME.

So rugby has travelled a long way in my time – in right directions. That's Kyle Sinckler of Harlequins, btw, as England got revenge on Wales in 2020. Note that collar size. A play area in itself!

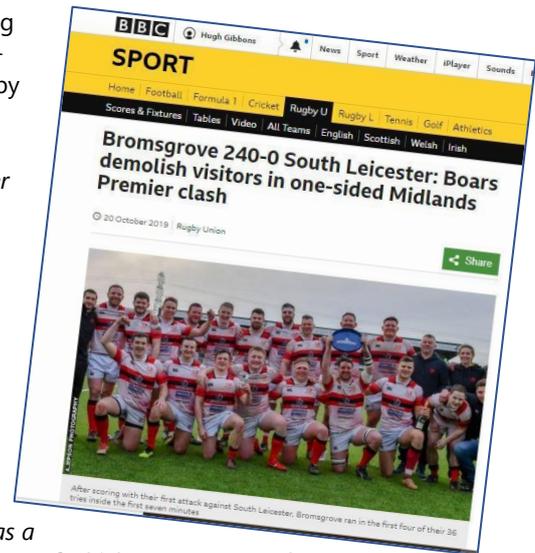


15. How Boars and Belgians made their points

Since rugby started, probably every pitch – including The Reddings – has seen a bizarre one-sided high-scoring game. Here are two recently reported as by BBC Sport – one from a North Midlands side.

Bromsgrove – “The Boars” - secured a try bonus point after only seven minutes on their way to an astonishing 240-0 win over South Leicester.

The Midlands Premier side registered an average of three points a minute in the rout of the visitors at Finstall Park. South Leicester have now conceded over 100 points in all but one of their seven games this season. The club revealed that every first-team player left during the summer after relegation from National League Two.



Bromsgrove coach Dan Protherough described the game as a "surreal experience" as he watched his side run in 36 tries, 30 of which were converted. "I'm happy with the lads," he told BBC Hereford & Worcester. "They didn't take their foot off the gas and it's testament to what we are trying to achieve. We had to be professional and kept going."

After starting the season with a 119-0 loss to Bournville, South Leicester's results this season have also included 127-7, 124-11 and 120-0 defeats. And their cause was not helped against Bromsgrove when they lost two players to injury and had to continue with only 13. "South Leicester kept going be fair to them," Protherough added. "You can only beat what's in front of you. It was a tricky scenario as you feel for the opposition but you have to get the victory. They came down from National League Two and of the other two (relegated clubs) Birmingham & Solihull dropped out and Peterborough are also struggling."

A world record by the Boars, you reckon? Hold my Stella.



FEUILLE DE MATCH			
Date (JJ/MM/AAAA): 08/02/2015		F.B.R.B.	
Heure de la rencontre: 14h00		Lieu: KITURO	
Terrain: DIVECOURT		Score final: 356 - 3	
	Visité	Points	Visiteur
Essai (x 5)	56	280	
Transf. (x 2)	38	76	
Pénalité (x 3)			3
Drop (x 3)			
Handicap			

On 8 February 2015, the Belgian top division club Royal Kituro beat Soignies 356-3. They ran in 56 tries and 38 conversions to Soignies' lone drop-goal - more than four points a minute on average – as the Ref's card shows.

The problems apparently began for Soignies in the run-up to the game when the referee failed to turn up on time. Their coach and most of the players then left, assuming the game was off. However, the referee did eventually appear, more than an hour after the scheduled kick-off, and the game went ahead. The away team were effectively forced to play and gain the 'loser's point', rather than forfeit the match and earn no points at all. The 16 Soignies players still available seemingly did not compete in protest. Soignies president Guy Calomme described the result as "catastrophic", while a Kituro spokeswoman said Soignies "didn't really play".

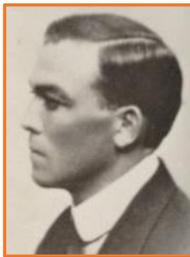
And despite the hammering, Soignies still sat at third place in their league, above the Kituro - albeit with a points difference of minus 264 – just that one crucial losers' point ahead.



16. How one friendly life played out beyond The Reddings

Alan Bennett was spot on in defining History: women following behind, with a bucket. Captain AC Gibbons MC survived The Trenches. My mum Ilma had to see him through the later nightmares. The sociability of club rugby in '20s Birmingham may have helped – as with others who survived to Blighty.

On Remembrance Sunday 1955, I played The Last Post on my cadet bugle at the nearest church to The Reddings, St Mary's in Moseley, with 99 names on its WW1 memorial. And in 1956, as drum major I led the annual cadet parade from King Edwards School to Edgbaston Old Church, St Bartholomew's. The WW1 memorial there also has 99 names. They include a Moseley Football Club player. Friendship was a key part of his life – in and beyond rugby.



Roland Bevington Gibbins was born in 1886 in Wellington Road in Birmingham. He was educated at Sedburgh School and King's College, Cambridge. He got rugger Blues 1905/6, played for Moseley and Midland Counties, and had England Trials. As a manufacturing chemist he was a director of John & E Sturge Ltd at 18 Wheleys Lane. (Sturge was a famous name among the Quaker families of the city such as Cadbury, Southall, Albright, Galton, Pumphrey - and Gibbins. You can see the statue to the great humanitarian Joseph Sturge at Five Ways, or on this plaque in Wheleys Road.) Roland was also secretary of the Friends Library in Bull Street – home of their fine Priory Conference Centre today.



Roland travelled. March 1915 found him on the RMS Lusitania from New York on one of its last voyages before it was – historically – torpedoed that May. In October 1915, he joined the Artists Rifles Cadet Training Corps. And in May 1916 he had a big life event: he married Edith Grace Ritchie, from a family in Brechin. By July 1916 Roland was 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. In August, he went to the 2/8 Battalion in France and within a week was in the trenches. He sent some accounts to Friends.

During the First World War, Bull Street Quaker Meeting's Social Union asked absent members to provide accounts of their war-time experiences. These were read out as a way of sharing the experience with those who remained in Birmingham – especially the mothers, sisters, daughters who were to follow behind, picking up the pieces and patching up the men's lives. Some Friends served in the armed forces; some, as conscientious objectors, were members of the Friends Ambulance Unit (an alternative to military service while still contributing to the war effort); others worked in hospitals, and some were imprisoned for their pacifist beliefs. Their letters from wives about their husbands, some from mothers about their sons. The letters provide us with a valuable insight into the varied experiences of those living during this period.

Roland was one of the Friends who responded. You can read extracts at <https://theironroom.wordpress.com/2019/11/11/roland-bevington-gibbins>, an on-line collection of the Library of Birmingham. Here's one giving strong glimpses of Roland's personality, humanity, and friendliness.



"In the front line the rats are the very dickens. They go everywhere and eat everything. They trip you up at night and walk over you while you sleep. The men have an awful job with food, especially extra food, for if they put it up on a shelf the rats eat it and if they hang it up, ditto, and if they put it in their haversack or kit-bag as well, – which reminds me that in one of the letters I was censoring this afternoon the man said he'd pack up all his trouble in his old kit bag (as per song you know) but that the rats had eaten a hole in it, so that by the time he had got home to Blighty he wouldn't have any [sic] trouble's left. Not bad was it."

Roland didn't make it home. During the battle with the first major use of tanks, Captain RB Gibbins was killed at Cambrai on 3rd December 1917. He was 32. Like over 7000 other servicemen there, he has no known grave. But his name appears on the great memorial – and also among the 256 lost from Sedburgh School and 55 Rugby Blues commemorated in the 2014 Varsity Match. And Edgbaston, and Moseley.

Roland's mother died two years later, his father, ten; sisters survived to 1981. And there's another memorial. On Edgbaston 1930s electoral rolls, an Army record, and probate note, his widow Edith appears as you'd expect: Edith Grace Gibbins. But for the 1963 phone book she wanted a 48-year old reminiscence:

Gibbins Mrs. Roland B, 29 Moorland ct, 16...EDGbaston 2535



17. Where to find further information



Birmingham Moseley Rugby

are at <https://moseleyrugby.co.uk>

The impressive and comprehensive website includes key dates in the Club history



North Midlands Rugby Football Association

are at <https://www.northmidsrfu.co.uk>

The website includes links to all their clubs



Rugby, A Midlands Story

was made by Iconic Productions for the 2015 Rugby World Cup

You can view it on YouTube



World Rugby

is at www.worldrugby.org

The Laws are at <https://laws.worldrugby.org/index.php?&language=EN>



The Rugby History Society

is at <http://therugbyhistorysociety.co.uk>

and is packed with detail on all sorts of topics. For the history of the laws, go

to www.rugbyfootballhistory.com/laws.htm and

www.rugbyfootballhistory.com/laws_in_plain_english.html



The Natives Rugby Tour

is in the definitive article by Moseley Rugby Historian Ewart Patrick at

<http://therugbyhistorysociety.co.uk/nzmos.html>

and the New Zealand government website

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/the-new-zealand-natives-rugby-tour/nz-natives-rugby-tour>



Jimmy Peter's story

is at www.bbc.co.uk/sport/rugby-union/49755681 and

www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/dec/26/jimmy-peters-race-pioneer-english-rugby-circus-big-top



The Moseley Society

is at <http://moseley-society.org.uk> and includes a very good review of its

sporting heritage in the document <http://moseley-society.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Sports-in-Moseley.pdf>



Moseley-Ashfield Cricket Club

is at <https://moseleyashfield.play-cricket.com>

NB/BTW/FYI

- Searching on Google for "Havelock Cricket Club" produced a response – an article on Moseley Rugby in the April 2014 issue of The Gazette, by the Balsall Health Local History Society – available as a PDF.
- YouTube has clips of the Peter Jackson and Andy Hancock tries (one of them bundled with Richard Sharp dummying the Scots defence three times...) as well as Birmingham-Moseley and international matches.
- Ancestry UK was the starting point for exploring names on the Moseley WW1 memorial – and you may find it fascinating on your own family.
- If you have personal experience of The Reddings or around that you'd like me to consider for airing and sharing, I'll be happy to do so at hughgibbons@just1.org.uk
- And Gilbert history is at www.gilbertrugby.com/blogs/gilbert-rugby-history/the-gilbert-rugby-story