

## 11<sup>th</sup> Season 1882-3

Once more few match reports can be found from a list of sixteen fixtures. However the outcome of half of these games is known, Exeter winning three and drawing one game and losing the other four. In addition the opening game in mid-October of the season took the form of a practice match between teams chosen by the Captain and the Secretary. One Saturday was given up to a Devon trial and four others to county matches. How many might have been lost to the weather or because a team could not be raised cannot yet be established.

Following the opening intra-club game a press report suggested that there were enough good players on view and “the captain should have little difficulty in picking a strong team for the coming season”. The problems of the previous season had been addressed at a September meeting when it was unanimously agreed to increase the number of playing members. Potential recruits were invited to send their names to the secretary. There is no indication of other more positive action being taken.

At the same meeting at the Bude Hotel members elected W.T.G. Hooper as captain. Hooper, a former pupil of Allhallows School at Honiton, was one of the many Exeter members engaged in the legal profession. This season also saw a change in the club’s home ground. A move from the field behind the Topsham Road Barracks was made when the Cricket-field at St. Thomas was “taken for the season.”

At the practice match, won by the team chosen by the Secretary, several new members were to be seen, suggesting that the invitation to new players had drawn a good response. This match at the new ground was also well attended by spectators.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> November the first competitive game was played against old rivals Wellington and was witnessed by a large number of spectators despite a steady drizzle. Comment was made that the Exeter team wore black and white jerseys whilst their opponents played in “miscellaneous uniforms.” Comment was also made that equal halves of forty minutes were played. Wellington won by a goal and a try to nil. The Wellington umpire was judged to be acting more like a coach on the sideline and spectators shouted at him to stop directing the visiting players. The Wellington side contained R.A. Glass of Wiveliscombe was to captain Exeter five years later.

A defeat at Barnstaple followed a week later when Exeter failed to reply to a try and three disputed tries. The Exeter team was compelled to touch down in defence as many as thirteen times. Travelling to Westward Ho! to play against the United Services College, Exeter came away with a victory by a goal and two tries to a try. Defeats by Tiverton and Wellington in December were followed by a narrow home victory over Barnstaple on the last Saturday of the year.

The next match, for which details are known, did not come until early March. A draw was the result with each side obtaining a try but the Bridgwater Dreadnoughts score was obtained by a “questionable” piece of play. Two Exeter players were criticised in the press for late arrival at St. Thomas causing the kick-off to be delayed by half an hour. The final game against Blundell’s, played at St. Thomas, was won by two tries to one. The home team’s first try was obtained by Albert Ellis, probably the outstanding player of the season.

Among the officers elected for the season was R.S. (Dick) Kindersley who had been educated at Clifton College and then went on to Exeter College at Oxford University where he became a Double Blue appearing in two varsity rugby matches and three boat races. Oxford won all three of these races. Whilst at Oxford he was first capped at rugby by England, against Wales in December 1882. He was capped twice more (in 1884 and 1885) whilst representing the Exeter club. His weight of 14 stones (nearly 89 kg) was considered remarkable at this time for a rugby player and in the 1881 boat race he was the heaviest man in either boat. Kindersley became a respected House Master at Eton College. He died in 1932.

In March 1884 Kindersley became the unwitting central character in a dispute that eventually led to a significant development in the Rugby Union game. When playing for England against Scotland at Blackheath Kindersley came into possession of the ball near the posts where he scored a try. Scotland disputed the try on the grounds that a Scotland player had “knocked back” the ball during the England passing movement. The score was allowed to stand thus affording England a win by a goal to a try. Relations between the two countries became strained and only two representative games between the two sides were played up to 1890 the year that saw the formation of the International Rugby Board.