

GREAT GAMES

GREAT MOMENTS

After the club's formation in 1937 the following year brought its potential and ideals to early fruition when a Barbarians side met Auckland at the end of the season in a match for the Injured Players' Fund. The club fielded a side containing no less than eleven past All Blacks and one former English international in Marine Charlie Webb. With a magnificent display of running rugby they defeated a weakened Auckland team 43-21. Arthur Bullock-Douglas and George Hart the wings thrilled the crowd with some dazzling running and both the club founders Hugh McLean and Ron Bush were amongst the scorers. Earlier in the season the club had played their first fixture in the now familiar scarlet jerseys with the lamb badge against Matamata on August 6th and in early October returned to Arch Dovell's Junction Hotel in Thames to play the local side.

Another fixture was played against Auckland in 1939 with the club again triumphing 25-3 before war caused a necessary gap in club activities until 1946. Once peace was restored the club was quickly back in action and in 1946 matches were played against Matamata and a combined team at Takapuna. Many of the pre-war players were again seen in action including Ron Bush, Hugh McLean, Merv Corner and Bill Hadley. A trip to Whangarei was a highlight of 1947. This was the last season our founders played for the club and it was interesting to note some of the more famous post war names like Bob Scott and Ron Dobson were also in the side.

Few who saw the magnificent match against Auckland at the Showgrounds in 1948 will never forget it. Despite fielding eight of the All Blacks selected for the 1949 tour to South Africa Auckland overcame a 6-8 deficit at halftime to storm home 27-13. Pre-war All Blacks who played for the club in this match were Tom Morrison and Jack Taylor. For the record it was the first loss sustained by the club in its history.

During the early 1950's the club played Auckland and other sides to assist various fund raising projects in the game. Our kindred club in the Waikato - the Harlequins were met several times and a close bond grew between us.

In 1956 rugby fervour in New Zealand reached a new height with the tour of the Springboks and the 3-1 series win to the home side. At the tour's end a match was arranged between a Coronation Shield Districts side and the club who selected several Springboks in their side including tour captain Basie Viviers. Despite being played midweek the match attracted a crowd of 40,000 to Eden Park. Although the club lost the match 18-25 it was again a great day in the history of the club. Earlier in the season a match was played against a New Zealand Maori XV before an attendance of 35,000. The club won this spectacular encounter 46-27.

Matches against secondary schools developed during the 1950's and these educational games added further scope for the club to advance the ideals of rugby.

In 1958 a match was played at Pukekohe against the Harlequins in the L. V. (Dan) Bryant Memorial match. Both sides fielded members of the touring Wallaby side and the referee was the Wallaby manager Charles Blunt. Dan Bryant, a Barbarian and a driving force in the formation of the Counties Union had died a year earlier in a car accident. The club led by Wallaby skipper 'Chilla' Wilson led the side to victory 48-34 in front of an enthusiastic crowd of 10,000.

A new innovation came in 1960 when a Junior Barbarians team met a Junior Vikings side. The Junior Baabaas, who include the youthful Ron Urlich and Don Montgomery won the match played at Eden Park 29-12.

Throughout the 1960's the club played matches for Injured Players Funds, primary schools' rugby and in jubilee fixtures. During the 1970's the overseas tours commenced with visits to Fiji and Australia. Finally in our Golden Jubilee year a long awaited tour to visit our mother club in Britain was arranged. Perhaps no greater way to culminate 50 years of great rugby by a great club came at Cardiff on April Fools Day 1987 when the club registered an outstanding victory over the British Barbarians 68-16 and running in twelve fine tries.

We sincerely trust that the next 50 years can produce as much fine running rugby and great moments as the first half century has.