

I read with interest your blog about the history of Trinity Rugby Club, bringing back many memories. You asked for the views of an outsider, but you will see that I qualify as both an insider and an outsider, so I'm sharing my recollections of my time at Trinity and later when I became a Casual!

I was at school with quite a number of the people mentioned, including Ray Pope, (his brother Dave was a couple of years ahead) and John Raphael. Seeing the contribution from ON Pete (Jack) Doughty, reminded me that he too was in the same school year, as was Sooty from the BBOB! Our introduction to the game was on our first sports lesson in September 1963 where one of the sports masters was Frank Sykes, England, British Lions and Northampton! It is unthinkable now that a player could be representing his country on a Saturday but then turn up for work on Monday!

On leaving school, many local teams inevitably comprised old boys of the local schools but there were also many people who were roped in to play by work colleagues. In those days the Paget Cup was played for by different trades and occupations. There were interesting mid-week matches featuring the Solicitors versus the Bricklayers and the Reporters versus the Engineers and so on!

After leaving school my first employment was with what was then known as Post Office Telecommunications. The Recreation Association of the Post Office arranged Rugby matches between the principal towns and cities within the Midland Region. In trying to field 15 players, work colleagues were always on the lookout for anybody who had played the game and having the afternoon off to play Rugby and get paid for it proved to be quite popular - we might have been the first paid amateurs! Our teams, by their very nature were clearly of mixed ability; while some players were normally to be seen playing football on a Saturday afternoon, others represented local junior sides, it was not uncommon to find yourself playing against a couple of Saints or Leicester Tigers players!

I worked in the same office as Trinity players Glyn Dawkins and Pete Quennell, our team also included Spider Vass (father of Saints Defence coach Ian) and Phil Maloney from the Mens Own, and Gerry Page (I think was a Heathen), who went on to prop twice for the Saints. We also had Glenn Ward in the team who used to play guitar in the local band Accrington Stanley, Glenn drove a huge battered American Car which proved very useful transporting all the kit and half the team to away games. I have fond memories of those days as it marked the only rugby trophy that I ever won, beating Birmingham to win the Midland Region Post Office Recreation Association 7 a side competition!

My involvement in this works team took me to Trinity in the early 70's and I recall many of the names mentioned in your blog. Geoff Keates was one of the leading lights of the Club and I recall selection meetings taking place at his house. Glyn Dawkins (who became a good friend of mine), was the Club Captain in 1974/75 and so I can only imagine that it must have been he who persuaded me to join the Club and captain the B XV during the same year. Pete Quennell was also a long-standing committee member as were Ian Billson, and Dave Hart among others. Glyn eventually left, buying a Bed and Breakfast in Lynton, North Devon, and he was succeeded as Club Captain by Hywell "Jock" Williams.

I then took a break from Rugby as I had a young family and I did not play again until I bought a new house in 1981 finding myself living next door to the then Captain of the Casuals! A shared interest in Rugby resulted in me going there "just to train and to keep fit", and I have been there ever since. I was once again roped in to the Captaincy of lower teams and any number of committee roles!

In my lifetime, Northampton has always had a thriving local Rugby scene and despite rivalries on the field there has always been a real camaraderie among the local players, whichever Club they represent. I believe that remains true today and certainly Trinity as a Club was no exception. The spirit of the game was always important and at Trinity it was taken seriously both on and off the field. (Off the field I remember famous sherry drinking competitions usually instigated by Ratso!)

The standard of Rugby at the Club was generally high and this was helped by good coaching. The Club maintained its position as one of the pre-eminent sides in the Alliance throughout the 1980's and although when the Club folded a number of players moved on to other local Clubs the loss of Trinity was indeed felt by all other Clubs in the town.

Peter Franklin, Trustee at Northampton Casuals RFC and past Trinity Old Boys player.