

CARDIFF RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

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Tour of South Africa -- May 1967

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In making this report of the Club's tour of South Africa in May, 1967, I am aware that it was the first short international tour made by a Rugby Club, and as there could be others in future I have on occasions been purposely critical, not in a mood of complaint but rather with the purpose of giving guidance for future tourists.

A large crowd saw us depart by coach from the Cardiff Rugby Club (at 9 o'clock) on the morning of the 3rd May 1967 and after lunching at the Bacon Arms, Newbury, we boarded our plane at Heath Row Airport, London, and left promptly at 5.15 p.m. It should be mentioned that the South African Airways who were transporting us to South Africa, were surprised that we had not received their small blue travel bags which they had intended to issue to each member of the party. However, this was soon put right and each member of the party was issued with a travel bag. It was later found out when we were in South Africa, that an itinerary had been expertly printed by the South African Railway Travel Bureau, and it was with some surprise that we discovered these and later learned that they should have been issued to the Club before we left Cardiff.

After some hours flying, we put down at Sal Island for refuelling for approximately three quarters of an hour, and we enjoyed some refreshment there. We arrived in Johannesburg at the Jan Smuts Airport at 8.15 p.m. on Thursday, 4th May 1967, to be greeted by a Reception Committee composed of Danie Craven, Mr. Kobus Louw, Dr. Maynard and other officials including Mr. I. Froneman, who was to be the Liaison Officer during the whole of the tour. We were also joined by Mr. Steenkamp who was the representative from the South African Railways, to assist with our luggage, baggage, accommodation and tickets etc. They became known to us during the tour as "Fronie" and "Stoney" respectively.

The flight out had been very tiring, but some of the party had taken the precaution of having handy their pyjamas, or other casual wear, into which they had changed. Some slept and others dosed. Vacant seats were taken up for sleeping purposes, and when we arrived at Johannesburg it was observed that each member of the party had made every effort to look spick and span. White shirts, Club tie, blazer and grey flannels was the order of dress.

We had a very good reception at the Jan Smuts Airport where, in a welcoming speech, Dr. Danie Craven emphasized that we should enjoy ourselves as the tour would soon be over, and that we were to take advantage of the hospitality extended to us. He even suggested that we should not be allowed to sleep, which was an ominous message and little did I know at the time that he was not joking. His speech, whilst emphasizing the reputation which the Cardiff Rugby Club enjoyed in South Africa, seemed to call for a dedication to hospitality and friendship whilst in South Africa, and he recalled that the idea of this tour had first been conceived in 1951. We left Johannesburg in a Viscount plane, and we arrived in Windhoek at approximately 3 p.m. where we were greeted by the local representatives of the South West Africa Rugby Union including their President, Mr. Henry Gous, Mr. Aubrey Rautenbach, Mr. Capri Badenhorst, Liaison Officer, and others, and we were accommodated at the Grand Hotel, Windhoek.

During our stay here it must be mentioned that the service at the hotel was not what we would have liked it to have been, and we could not help but notice the difference in the service enjoyed in England as compared with this hotel. Perhaps it should be mentioned that the boys were a little dismayed when they were asked to pay for orange juice which they had requested with their lunch, as it will be appreciated that at home a drink on the table is always included in the charge for lunch or dinner. This presented a problem which was soon solved in consultation with the Liaison Officer, and here it should be stated that whilst the Liaison Officers and the hotels at which we were to stay had received a copy of instructions from the South African Rugby Board we, as a tour party, had not received a copy. In these instructions were details of what was to be expected and I think to facilitate better relationships and feelings, it would have been advisable to furnish the Manager and/or myself as Assistant Manager, a copy of the instructions. As it was, we felt that things were a little vague to us.

Whilst at Windhoek, we were invited by the Administrator and his wife, Mr. and Mrs du Plessis, to take morning tea with them in their beautiful home and gardens. They were charming hosts and we sang a few songs to them on request. There is no comparable post in our country, but one would assess that the Administrator of South West Africa would be comparable with our Prime Minister in England. We had the usual receptions by the Mayor, and we were introduced to many officials and personalities in the area.

Training was arranged, and at the first training session which lasted approximately two hours the coach, Mr. Roy Bish, put the playing strength through a very exacting programme in intense heat and at a high altitude which quite understandably affected our players, and this had an affect psychologically on the game they played in South West Africa in our first game. One member of the party complained of pains in the chest, and another complained of coughing up blood and quite naturally this had a big effect on the way they approached the game against South West Africa where, in the first half of the game it was noticed that our boys were taking it easy in an attempt to pace themselves. In the second half they played much better, but perhaps a drawn game was a fitting result, as both sides had missed chances. The score was 11 points each. It appeared to me that our reputation in South Africa was perhaps higher than what we were entitled to, and this may have something to do with the fact that over the years the Cardiff Rugby Club had enjoyed a most successful record against touring sides in Wales. It was not easy to convince people in South Africa that we were only a Club side, and that we were not a party selected from a number of Clubs.

The first game had been played and it was obvious to all of us that the tension had now left the players and we prepared to go to Upington by charter plane, and this perhaps was one of the most frightening experiences of our tour. The plane was of the Dakota type which is reputed to be one of the safest planes in use, but we were all aware of the very heavy baggage which we were carrying with all seats taken up in the plane, but the boys kept in high spirits and we safely took off at Windhoek and landed at Upington to be greeted by the usual officials, and the usual receptions were laid on for us. Supporters with the party who were unable to board our plane were taken by private aircraft to Upington. We stayed at the Oranje Hotel where the service was an improvement on that at the Grand Hotel, Windhoek, but due to the programme arranged by the officials at Upington, we did not see much of the hotel.

We arrived at approximately 12.30 p.m. on Sunday, 7th May 1967, and after settling down and having lunch, some of us were whisked off to the Augrabies Falls which were approximately 85 miles away, and those of us who visited these Falls were most impressed. Some of the party, however, had been taken to the Game Reserve by plane with the idea that they would meet the rest of the party in the Game Reserve on the following day. We returned to the hotel after the visit to the Falls and, after a restful evening and night and following training at 9 o'clock the next morning, the party moved off by bus to the Gemsbok/Kalahari Game Reserve. We arrived there in the late afternoon

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after travelling for 200 to 250 miles by bus along the desert road. We were accommodated in bungalows and tents, and we enjoyed a very good supper which, in our country, would be called a barbecue. In South Africa it is called a "Braiface". Before sunset we went out to see certain bush men and their families who had arrived near the Game Reserve in the knowledge that a doctor was handy and they had a patient in their camp. Needless to say the bush men and their families put on a show of dancing for us and sold bows and arrows to the party. After staying in the bungalows and tents during the night, we went into the Game Reserve next morning and saw many of the wild animals like springbok, gemsbok, wildebeest, hyenas, the secretary bird and, to our immense delight, a pride of lions which had just partaken of one of the animals they had killed only recently.

We returned after our visit to the Game Reserve and after travelling for approximately five to six hours we arrived back in Upington a little tired, but nevertheless impressed by our journey into the Reserve and, by this time, many of the boys had made their friendships with various families in the area. To my mind these will be lasting friendships, and I cannot help but envisage that a strong relationship will be set up between Cardiff and Upington following the wonderful hospitality extended to us and the friendships made. Some of the families which come readily to mind are those of Dr. Visser who was the local Liaison Officer, Wilhelm Barnard, a former Springbok who toured this country, and his charming wife; Jack Horn, President of the North West Cape Northern Union; Peter Colliers, Secretary of the North West Cape Northern Union; George Young and his wife; and a host of others.

In the game which we played against the North West Cape, we won by 23 points to 12, but only in the last ten minutes did we get into any position of ascendancy, and I think that the amount of travelling which the boys had done in Upington had affected their stamina. As I have stated previously, lasting friendships were made and during the rest of our tour in South Africa, we were receiving messages and support from the people in Upington. As a matter of fact a couple of them journeyed down to Pretoria to see our last game in Northern Transvaal.

We left for Port Elizabeth on Thursday, 11th May, by charter flight to Kimberley and here again, having regard to the weight we were carrying and the type of plane we were using, we were a little anxious, but we arrived at Kimberley safely and changed aircraft, and from Kimberley to Port Elizabeth we enjoyed the comfort of the boeing 727 and one could not help noticing the change and ease of tension in the party. We arrived at Port Elizabeth at 11.45 a.m. and we were received by the local Entertainments Committee including Jimmy Ward, Lawton Fourie, Chris Hattingh, Felix Walker & Co. The Manager, Captain and Vice Captain, Mr. H. Johnson, and I were taken straight away to a Rotary Dinner. Afterwards we were taken back to the Elizabeth Hotel which was our accommodation whilst in Port Elizabeth.

From the press it appeared that we had now played the two easiest games in South Africa and that from now on we could expect much stiffer competition, and from the conversations with our hosts and having regard to the reports in the press, it seemed that we stood little chance against the Eastern Province side who had beaten the British Lions on many occasions. Training was emphasized and discipline was ensured by letting the playing strength know that on no account should they drink on the day before the game, nor should they stay out late the night before. Besides the normal training the boys did some exercises on the beach which relaxed them a little and by the time we were due to play East Province the boys were in good spirits and one could not help but be impressed by their singing in the bus on the way to the ground. This proved to be a happy omen and in a terrific exhibition of rugby we defeated East Province by 34 points to 9, and the local people were immensely pleased at the outcome because we had played the most appealing rugby and it was found that this was the type of game they wanted to see in South Africa. Here, again, we formed friendships with the many people with whom we came into contact, and one could

not help but be impressed by the hospitality extended to us at all times. Indeed, the hospitality which we had received and enjoyed to date, and particularly at Upington, had been so hectic that one must be forgiven for thinking that the extent of the hospitality was misguided or even politic. Nevertheless, we felt that the hosts had been genuine and generous.

We left Port Elizabeth on Sunday, 14th May, and arrived in Cape Town with the usual reception, but on this occasion we were greeted also by a contingent of Welsh exiles, some of whom were dressed in the Welsh National Costume. Our Liaison Officer was Doctor "Porkie" Wells, and here again we were well looked after. We were put up at the Arthur Seat Hotel which, to date, proved to be the nicest hotel we had stayed at. It should be mentioned that the management at the Elizabeth Hotel and at the Arthur Seat Hotel, were most helpful, and one can say the same for the hotel Oranje at Upington. This was appreciated by the party and it should be stated that the behaviour of the individual members was exemplary and at all times they looked well groomed.

The highlight of the tour to my mind was our visit during our stay at Cape Town to the Rhodes Fruit Farm which is just outside Cape Town, where we were entertained by Mr. Jack Manning and his charming wife. Mr. Manning is the Managing Director of a Fruit Company in this immense orchard stretching for many many acres, and I was impressed by the locality and his beautiful home which is situated in a spot where the high peaks of mountains tower behind you and in front stretch some wonderful orchards for miles and miles, and in the distance beyond stood the Table Mountains. The weather was perfect, and it appeared to me that I was in the most beautiful spot that I had ever visited. Here, again, we enjoyed the usual barbecue, and the boys had plenty to eat and drink before going on to Stellenboch University where a demonstration had been arranged for us by Doctor Danie Craven and his students. We were impressed by the amount of training which was taking place where the playing fields stretched for miles and miles in a most beautiful setting, and we were asked to witness a special demonstration of the new methods of training. The training was hard and reminded me of the battle course or commando type of training during our War Service and by improvisation, various types of apparatus had been set up which were intended to strengthen the limbs and characters of the players taking part.

For instance, one part of the training consisted of a "run off" by four people in four lanes, and in each lane they were confronted by the following "obstacles" :-

two motor car tyres were attached to two posts, with the two tyres touching each other in the middle of the lane, and the idea was for the player to charge between the two tyres, separate them, and then pass through them to run on to a suspended type of kit bag which they dive tackled;

then they negotiated another pair of tyres before finishing the short course of about 25 yards;

also, two players faced each other and supported on alternate shoulders a big log which was suspended from above, and they jumped in the air with a log on their shoulders and then jumped away before the log descended.

This was training intended for good line-out work.

There were improvised scrummage machines, and following demonstrations we were asked to watch some hard tackling by twenty or more players followed by a really intensive short game of rugby where no holds were barred. One could not help but be impressed by all this, but I kept asking myself where, after all this specialised coaching, will the game end as a sport and when will it commence to become a dedication to beating the other side. I am quite sure that the witnessing of this training by our chaps had an effect psychologically on the game they played at Newlands against the Southern Universities where in the first twenty minutes both sides were intent on impressing their strength on each other. Some blatant infringements in the front of the line-out by the South African players went un-noticed by the referee, and this added to the deterioration of the game in the first twenty minutes. As a result we were 11 points down at one time, but we did regain our balance and lost by only 14 points to 11 in a game which we could easily have won. Danie Craven described the last twenty minutes of the game as the best rugby he had ever seen in his life, and this consisted of attack after attack by our team and only some faulty handling or a small mistake by one of our players, prevented us scoring and winning the game. This is a game which we should have won, and we were a little disappointed.

Whilst at Cape Town, Mr. Hubert Johnson, Chairman of the Athletic Club, had permission from the South African Rugby Board and relatives of the late Colonel Frank Mellish to place a wreath of flowers on the chair he formerly occupied at the Newlands ground, and also to spread some of his ashes in a corner of the Newlands ground which from thereon would be called "Frank's Corner". He was assisted in this small ceremony by Mr. Lynn Williams, the Manager.

We left Cape Town on Thursday, 18th May 1967, and it should be mentioned that the time of our departure was certainly unpopular. We were awakened at 5.30 a.m. in order to leave the hotel at 6.30 a.m. to catch the air transport at 7.45 a.m. from the D.F. Malan Airport. To be awakened so early in the morning is never popular, and when one considers that this was in the morning after a night out following a game on the day before, it is easy to understand how the party felt.

We arrived in Johannesburg to be greeted by the usual officials and we were transported to the Union Hotel, Pretoria after taking a look at Ellis Park, Johannesburg, and having a drink there. The programme arranged at Pretoria was a very considerate one and, as at Cape Town, we had no difficulty in fitting in our requirements with those of the local Committees. We were well looked after at the Union Hotel and as usual the same degree of hospitality was extended to us. We carried out our training on the ground where we were to play our match against Northern Transvaal and we arranged for a Club photograph which turned out to be one of the best ever seen in our Club.

In the match against Northern Transvaal we scored a very good try early on, but from thereon we played badly and lost to a very strong side by 25 points to 5. No excuses can be made for this defeat, and whilst the referee made some decisions which were baffling to our team, it must be emphasized that the reason we lost the game was that we played it badly with many mistakes and wrong tactics.

We enjoyed seeing some of the local sights, particularly the Voortrekker Monument, where we were given a very interesting guided tour, and we left Pretoria at 8.30 a.m. on Sunday, 20th May, in order to see some Bantu Tribal dances which, however, were a little disappointing.

We lunched at the famous and fabulous Wanderers Club at Johannesburg, where we were given some speeches, on request, by Charles Fortune the South African Radio Commentator who had been with us throughout the tour, and also by Billy Thomas our hooker, who announced his retirement. We were all impressed by Mr. Fortune who emphasized the fact that we had done a wonderful job in South Africa, but perhaps the most emotional moment was when Billy Thomas in a very moving speech, spoke very highly of the Cardiff Club, and it is no secret that this great character who had always been and will always be a credit to the Club, brought tears to the eyes of some of our hard forwards.

We left the Wanderers Club and journeyed to the Jan Smuts Airport where we were joined by the Scottish Borderers team on completion of their tour, and after farewell speeches from the Managers and Captains of each side and from Danie Craven, we left "reluctantly" but nevertheless pleased, because we were going home, at 6.45 p.m. Sunday, 21st May 1967. We touched down at Nairobi where more souvenirs were purchased, and at Frankfurt, before arriving in London at 8.30 a.m. on Monday, 22nd May 1967.

We caught the 11.0 a.m. Pullman train from Paddington and arrived in Cardiff at 1. 20 p.m. after lunch on the train, and during this last journey I could not help but reflect on many things, such as -

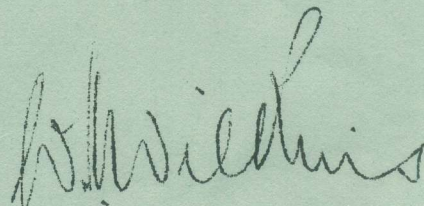
- (a) It was a wonderful experience and a truly memorable and enjoyable tour, but it was nice to be home;
- (b) The Club's decision to make the tour despite opposition was the correct one, and I was enlightened by the manner in which South Africa was trying to solve the colour problem with their "separate development" scheme;
- (c) The Club had made two other correct decisions in arranging to take their Coach, Roy Bish, who had done a grand job in ensuring the fitness of the team and also in taking their own baggage man and masseur, Mr. Tom Holley. He had done a wonderful job in a most conscientious manner, and we can be grateful that we have such a servant who thinks so much of his Club;
- (d) Whereas Danie Craven had emphasized a dedication to hospitality and friendship at the beginning of the tour, a South African selector at Uppington called for a playing dedication from Young South Africans. Somewhere between these courses lies the optimum for the future pleasure of the game. One must always try to win, but not at all costs!
- (e) Itineraries for the small tours should be approved beforehand by both parties. This would avoid the embarrassment of asking for alterations when the party arrives at its separate destinations. As it turned out, because of the excellent feelings on both sides for each other, there were no really awkward moments;
- (f) Each player should have one number allocated to him throughout the tour for playing and other purposes, and,

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- (g) I would advocate for similar tours in future, that two sets of kit carried collectively, should be adequate, but that each playing member should carry his own training kit.
- (h) It was a good idea to print "thank you" cards which had been sent to the individuals who had helped in our enjoyment of the tour, and it was a great pleasure to send these cards to those persons already mentioned and others such as Mr & Mrs Truter, Mayor and Mayoress of Pretoria, Carl Nell, Hennie Nell, Alwyn Bergen, and Dr. Rautenbach of Pretoria, in addition to the Mayor and Mayoress of Windhoek and the friendly officials at the Game Reserve.

The players, of course, had also been supplied, on request, with "Thank-you" cards of a different type from those used by the "management" and they were pleased that they were able to express their gratitude in such a way.

- (i) We refrained from commenting on the referees who officiated in the games that we played, but for the future well being of the game it should be stated that a better degree of uniformity in interpretations should be reached. Unless the laws and rules can be simplified to such an extent as to allow no discretion to referees, a major attempt should be made to achieve uniformity in interpretation throughout the world.
- (j) Our record of Played 5, Won 2, Lost 2, Drawn 1, with 84 points for and 71 points against, was a very good one, having regard to the fact that we were a Club side in opposition to teams which normally play against National and British Lion sides.

It was a pleasure to have with us from time to time a grand bunch of supporters who had journeyed out at their own expense, and at all times our relationships were cordial and agreeable, and may I say finally that the jobs of the Manager and myself were facilitated by the exemplary manners, behaviour, presentation and conduct of each individual member of the party and for this the Manager and I were extremely grateful.



ASSISTANT MANAGER

May 24th, 1967.