

THANK YOU TO OUR

KEEPER OF THE RECORDS

by Marie Davies



PHIL BEARD

After nearly twenty years Phil Beard our devoted, diligent Keeper of the Records has decided to 'hang up his boots'!

What would we have done without his accurate statistics, attention to detail and excellent communication over the years? Phil was always there to answer questions about Bedford's games, players, dates, scores, opponents and, in fact, any other data that was needed. I, personally, am very grateful to Phil for providing me with any details I needed for my programme articles. Nothing was too much trouble.

A rugby club's records are invaluable. For example, without them how would we have known when to celebrate our Director of Rugby's 500th game in charge or Deano's 100th try for the Blues last season? Phil's contribution to the publication in 2011 of '125 years of the Blues' was immeasurable and is evidence of how important it is to keep a detailed and accurate account of a club's stats.

Phil was born in Rye Close Nursing Home, Bedford Hospital. The family home was in St. John's Street, Kempston and Phil was the eldest son. He had two sisters and a brother and his nickname was 'Walt'. He attended Up End Primary School in Kempston where he was captain of the football team, before he took what was then known as the Scholarship (11+) examination and gained a place at Bedford Modern School. However, because his 11th birthday was at the very end of August he had to wait a year before taking up his place. Phil felt it was a completely wasted year as he spent most of the time tidying up around the school.

At B.M.S. his main sport was rowing, which always happened during the Easter and Summer Terms and because of his size he became a cox. He recalls being in West House at school which was the same House as Roger 'Tod' Slaughter - they both lived west of the school! He remembers Tod excelling

at the Triple Jump! Phil caught the bus to school outside the King William Pub, Kempston where the Rogers family lived, and recalls sitting in the bus waiting while Budge and his brother Chris, who were watching from an upstairs window for the bus' arrival, rushed downstairs and jumped on for their journey to Bedford School.

When he left school Phil went to work for Zurich Insurance and ended up spending all his working life with them. He started at the Goldington Road office which allowed him to play rugby for Bedford Athletic who, in those days, played at Newnham Avenue. His younger brother Trevor was captain of Colworth House and later became, mainly for Bedford, what was then known as a Touch Judge.

The first game he watched at Goldington Road was Bedford v the London Hospital in 1960 (Bedford won 20-5). He was hooked! These are Phil's words, 'This is when I decided I'd rather watch than play!'

Phil's wife Ginni is also from Bedford where she attended St. Andrew's School. Phil confessed that two days after they got married he managed to get to Goldington Road to watch a game.

He joined the B.M.S. Rowing Club and became Tournament Secretary of the Bedford and District Table Tennis League. He also enjoyed completing the Bedford Bridges Swim - the open water river swim from the Town Bridge to the Suspension Bridge.

Phil's work with Zurich eventually meant he worked all over the country.

1958-69 Bedford

1969-72 Manchester

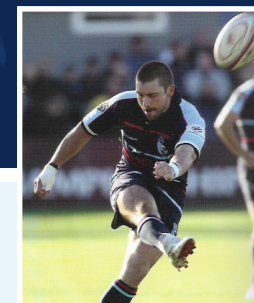
1972-74 Hereford

1974-81 Birmingham

1981-84 London



PHIL (2ND ON LEFT) PICTURED WITH 'THE BLUES BOOK CLUB' ON COMPLETION OF THE '125 YEARS OF THE BLUES'.



JAMES PRITCHARD 2010-11 MOST POINTS IN A SEASON - 403

Whenever possible, he supported Bedford and even travelled to Amsterdam in 1973 to support the Bedford team who competed in the Amsterdam 7s.

When he worked in London the family settled in West Sussex, where they have been for 41 years. This allowed him to commute to Bedford's matches and his dedication resulted in him becoming the first Followers Supporter of the Year in 1995.

In 1948, Don Riddy was appointed the club's first official Keeper of the Records, a role he held for over thirty years. Neil Roy, the sports editor of the Bedfordshire Times continued after Don, until the project to write the 'Centenary History of the Blues' 1886-1986 got underway and Jack Pope took over from Neil.

Phil recalls that in 2003, shortly after Jack Pope passed away Tony Mills, the first secretary of the Former Players Association and later the club's Rugby Administrator phoned Phil to suggest that he might like to be the new Keeper of the Records. Phil greatly admired Tony's dedicated work in so many aspects of Bedford Rugby Club's life. He remembered that he himself had once said to Jack Pope, 'Jack, your job as Keeper of the Records is the only job I could possibly do for the club'. Obviously, it was the only role that was viable from a distance! The discussion with Tony was quite brief and soon a mountain of paperwork, newspaper cuttings, letters and photographs arrived and so began nearly twenty years of what must have been a very demanding and time-consuming role.

Phil had the idea in 2006, to update the original 'History of the Blues' - an idea taken on board by Tony Mills. It took two years to find an editor but Neil Roy, who had edited the Centenary Book eventually agreed and the book was published in 2011 - '125 Years of the Blues'.

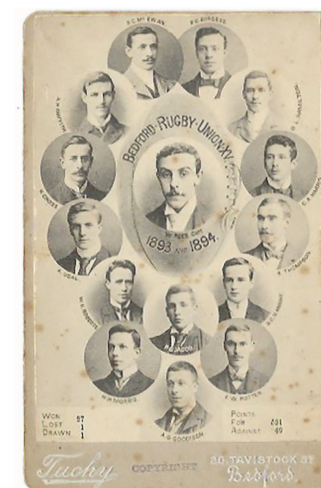
It was a wonderful achievement! Phil's wish is that the publication of Bedford Blues' history will continue. Maybe in 2036 - '150 years of the Blues'!

I asked Phil for any 'standout' highlights from his 62 years as a Bedford Blues supporter. Of course, he mentioned the two Twickenham Cup Final wins of 1975 and 2005 and, how any game v local rivals Northampton was eagerly anticipated.

We wish Phil a well-deserved retirement and happy days ahead with Ginni, son Bruce and family and friends.

The Club has recognised Phil's sixty-two years loyal support and his almost twenty years dedicated service as Keeper of the Records by making him an Honorary Life Member! Congratulations Phil!

1893-1894 BEDFORD'S MOST SUCCESSFUL SEASON
PLAYED 29, WON 27, LOST 1, DRAWN 1



H.H. MORRIS (BOTTOM LEFT) STILL HOLDS RECORD FOR MOST TRIES IN A SEASON WITH 38.