

A TRIBUTE TO CUDRRS

by Michael Dimambro (Honorary Member)

1. INTRODUCTION

Cambridge University and District Rugby Referees Society will celebrate its seventy - fifth birthday in season 2020 - 21.

CUDRRS was formed to enable rugby to be played by the clubs within two Constituent Bodies of the Rugby Football Union, namely Cambridge University Rugby Football Union and Eastern Counties Rugby Union, and schools within the Cambridgeshire Schools Rugby Union. Without referees, there are no games.

The Society's history includes a period when its influence extended beyond the county of Cambridgeshire to Rugby around the world. Between 1996 and 2008, it provided the refereeing input to the RFU Cambridge University Laws Laboratory. This was set up to carry out research into the effects of specific variations to the Laws of the Game. It operated with the approval and involvement of World Rugby and the RFU which also provided some financial support

There is no written record that documents how and why CUDRRS began or what contribution it has made since then to Rugby both near and far.

This tribute has been written to mark the Diamond Jubilee of the Society. It identifies key events in its life and members who played a significant part in its development and some members who featured prominently in life beyond Rugby.

My knowledge of the Society dates back to 1964 when I played for Cambridge RUFC and coached Cambridgeshire and the Eastern Counties Colts teams between 1969 - 1975.

I then joined the Society with the intention of refereeing for five years. Most people volunteer to referee because they want to put something back into the Game. That was my reason. But now, 40 years later, I am the Society's longest continuous serving member.

I have been its President, Chairman, Honorary Secretary, Appointments Secretary, Training Officer as well as an assessor and magazine editor and society representative to Cambridgeshire RFU, Cambridge University RFU and the Central Federation of Rugby Referees.

In compiling this tribute, I have relied upon my memory, a bit shaky these days, of what I have gathered from others about CUDRRS' past and what I have experienced personally as a member. That covers about three quarters of CUDRRS' existence.

I hope this history, based upon my memories, will prove of interest to past, present and future members and lovers of Rugby and referees.

Should anyone wish to correct, expand on or add to any of information I have given, please contact me by e-mail to michael.dimambro@ntlworld.com

2. DATE OF BIRTH

To most people, their date of birth is of great importance. It determines when they can legally drive a car, buy and drink alcohol, vote or qualify for a senior citizen bus pass. It is also important as it certifies the correct dates for anniversaries to be celebrated.

How old is CUDRRS, the Cambridge University and District Rugby Referees Society? This was not a question members often asked themselves over the years. However, it was asked in 1998 when the federalisation of referee societies in England was under consideration. That's when research began.

Jimmy Crowe, an Essex man and an acknowledged authority on the history of Eastern Counties Rugby and the Laws of the Game, was consulted. He found evidence in his collection of handbooks that CUDRRS was operative in 1950 but he could find no earlier record.

The Society decided to regard 1950 as the year it was formed. It celebrated its Golden Anniversary in 2000 with a dinner at the University Athletics Ground. Ed Morrison, the 1995 World Rugby Cup Final referee, was the guest speaker. The 60th anniversary dinner was held in St John's College in 2010.

In 2014, doubt was thrown on the accuracy of the 1950 date when the London Referees Society was making preparations to celebrate its 125th anniversary.

Jack Lewars, a member of both CUDRRS and the London Society, was compiling and editing a commemorative brochure for the event. Jack joined CUDRRS in 2011 when he became a referee whilst studying at Trinity College.

He contacted the Society to say he had recently interviewed a former referee named Ian Mackintosh who told him that he had formed CUDRRS in the 1940s.

At that time, Ian was studying at St. John's and refereeing college matches. He became University Honorary Secretary and in 1944 began to organise referees to replace those they previously had who were abroad fighting in the Second World War.

According to Ian, the secretary's job was a labour of love, involving the hand delivery of printed fixture cards around the colleges. It soon became a service that was very much relied upon.

In 1946, Ian joined forces with Len Elliott, Honorary Secretary of the Cambridge (Town) Society, to create the Cambridge University & District Referees Society. The two elements of the Society had been operating separately and referees for both of them were in short supply.

Until then, the colleges had to provide their own referees. They were often people who were members of rugby clubs. As individuals, they tended to referee the Laws in accordance with their own levels of awareness about them.

Presumably, the Town referees society appointed to Cambridge RUFC which was founded in 1923 and Shelford RUFC in 1933 but they may have got their referees for their 1st XV games from the London Society as the University did.

Dr Tony Craigen, a GP in a Trumpington Street surgery, was fixture secretary for both Town and Gown in the 1960's.

Jack's information was investigated. Unfortunately, there was nothing in the Cambridge University RFU archives about the birth of CUDRRS.

Honorary member of CUDRRS, David Ford, was refereeing at the University as a student in the late 1950's. He was also a member of the London Society and knew Ian.

David had refereed in London before returning as an assessor to CUDDRS and ECRURS and later becoming an RFU Advisor Development Officer. He could not recall the exact date of the merger but remarked that back then the Society had more University referees in it than district referees.

According to him, in 1961 CUDRRS numbered some 100 members of which 80 were undergraduates. Two student members from those early days of CUDRRS went on to have notable careers as referees.

The first was Peter Brook who was involved in the game for most of his life. He was an international referee between 1963 - 66, taking charge of seven matches. Peter was also a member of the International Board and Five Nations committee from 1993 - 9 and President of the RFU from 1997- 98. He died in 2001, aged 69.

The other was Chris Tyler who during his first year at Trinity College in 1955 volunteered to referee because there was a shortage of officials for the inter-college rugby matches. He soon found that he was being appointed to referee games of a higher standard than those in which he had been playing. In 1957, he was appointed to the RFU County panel at the age of 22, a record that has never been broken.

In the autumn of 1971, the RFU organised a short tour to the Far East which included two international matches against Japan, where rugby union was still a fledgling sport. Chris was invited to accompany the England team as referee.

The Sony Corporation had recently developed technology for referees to commentate live during a match. He became the first referee to commentate and explain his decisions live on television when Japan played England. He became a Major General in the Army, was onetime Chairman of the Army and Combined Services Referees Society and Governor of the Tower of London. He died in 2017, aged 82.

Further evidence to support Ian's information came out of the blue from a Peter Ogden. He had been a member of CUDRRS in 1964 when he was at Pembroke College.

Peter matriculated that year and started refereeing in Cambridge before joining North Midlands. He sent a copy of the menu of the Society's annual dinner he had attended at the University Arms Hotel in 1966. The Hon Sec that season was Alan Walker (Wolfson), a vet student.

The menu clearly stated that "The Society was formed in 1946 for the purpose of providing referees to Colleges within the University of Cambridge and to Clubs and Schools in Cambridgeshire". It also identified that Ian had been the Honorary Secretary of the University Society in 1946 and David Ford was Secretary in 1960.

The additional evidence was considered by the CUDRRS Management Group in 2018. It accepted that the University and District referees had come together four years earlier than was previously thought. The constitution was accordingly amended.

1946 was in fact a significant year for Cambridgeshire rugby as it saw the formation of the Ely and Old Cantabrigian clubs. Many of their ex-players have become CUDRRS referees.

It was a significant year for me too as that's when I started to play rugby at my grammar school in Bristol and began my lifetime's involvement with the game.

Wisbech RFC was formed in 1947 and the need for more referees was increasing.

3. THE EARLY YEARS

The newly formed CUDRRS became part of the Eastern Counties Rugby Union Referees Society comprised of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire officials in 1952.

ECRURS took on responsibility for making appointments to the higher levels of matches in the four counties, grading and exchanges. Mike Stott, chairman of appointments and grading for many years at ECRURS, organised exchanges with societies all over the country.

The opportunity of refereeing the University at Grange Road before or after the Varsity Match served as a useful bargaining chip for ECRURS to get good quality exchanges.

The grading system for referees ranged from C3 for beginners rising through C2 and C1 to B Grades 3, 2 and 1 and then to A Grade. Those B Grades are now today's Levels 7 to 5. Referees at A grade were appointed to first class and county championship matches. The average grade achieved by referees was C1/B3.

In the 1960's, several referees came from Old Cantabrigians including Derek Ashman, Tom Seaber, John Tuck, John Churcher, Peter Redhead and Bob Roe. Jim Laurie came from the Cambridge club and Jim Townsend from Newmarket.

Referees had to provide their own kit and have two or three different coloured shirts to avoid clashing with the teams. CUDRRS constitutionally preferred colour was green.

The monthly meetings of the Society served as the main forum for improving refereeing skills. For many years, these were held at the Baron of Beef pub in Bridge Street.

Referees would turn up to meetings there to receive their appointments. Notice of appointments also came via post or telephone.

At one such gathering in 1971, I gave a talk to the Society about the purpose of the coaching scheme initiated by the RFU and explained the Cambridgeshire RU plan for introducing it to affiliated clubs.

Len Elliott remained a leading member of the Society into the 1960's. Colin Unwin, of Unwin Seeds of Histon, became President in the 1970's. He was followed by Viv Allen, headmaster at Neil Wade School in March and Mike Runswick who joined CUDRRS in 1982.

More clubs were formed and affiliated to CUDRRS - Newmarket (1956), Saffron Walden (1962), March (1968) and in 1977 Queens Head (Newton) which later became Sawston.

This growth was offset later when Old Perseans folded as did Burwell, a club that had a short life.

Refereeing was less complicated in the 1970's. Coaching at grassroots level was in its infancy. Few clubs had coaches so confrontation with them was not an issue for referees.

Matches were arranged as friendlies. Players did not arrive early to warm up for an hour before games. Many often turned up close to kick off time. There were no pre-match briefings. There were no league regulations to be concerned about or forms to sign.

The introduction of Mini Rugby at Cambridge RUFC in 1975, and later at other affiliated clubs, was supported by CUDRRS which provided trained referees for festival tournaments.

Mini-rugby coaches were given crash courses on refereeing and some became CUDRRS referees. One was Lord Archer of Weston Super Mare, Jeffrey the novelist, who officiated in a distinctive Corinthian style, often dressed in a cricket sweater.

In 1977, Trevor Littlechild, CUDRRS Honorary Secretary, suggested that I start up training sessions for new referees as I had run training courses for club coaches as County Coaching Organiser. Trevor went on to be the rugby reporter for Radio Cambridgeshire and late night DJ for its older listeners.

The Constitution of the Society was revised in 1977 by a group led by the Rev David Stacey who was a theologian and tutor at the Wesley College in Jesus Lane. David moved to Bristol in 1978, to take up the post of Principal at the Methodist training centre there.

The Windsor Room at Grange Road became the regular venue for meetings and courses

It was customary for the Society to make the captain of the University team an Honorary Member for the year. The close relationship between the Society and the University was mutually beneficial.

In 1986, Gavin Hastings spoke at a society meeting about his international debut and a video of Scotland's victory over England was shown. He revealed some of the skullduggery indulged in by international players who were encouraged to do so.

Monthly meetings were sometimes held on the eve of the annual Steele - Bodger's match. The referee, usually a top level official, was invited to these meetings.

One of these was Chris White who prior to starting his fifty plus test match career, spoke about his practice of putting Olbas Oil on his shirt cuff to sniff during games to keep a clear head. He referred to the increasing influence of commercialisation in the professional game with coaches communicating with players during matches via physios and radio.

Appointments for University college matches and local clubs were made by separate secretaries elected at AGMs. Between 1981-84, Richard Snowden was studying Law at Downing and organised appointments to college matches.

Richard was knighted in 2015 and is a High Court Judge. No wonder he was a very good referee who knew the laws of the game inside out.

When no more student volunteers came forward to administer college appointments, Nick Pett took over the role.

Several Ely and Old Cantabrigians players joined CUDRRS to referee in the 1980s. From Ely there were Tony Brear, David "Taff" Evans, Mark Randall and from OCs Ray Olds, Barry Wakefield, Steve Cardy and Charles Osbourn.

4. A DECADE OF CHANGE

There was change of leadership in 1991 when I took over as chairman from Ken Hart. The need to modernise the organisation and administration of the Society was recognised and over the next decade lots of changes were made.

Following a special consultation meeting with members, a Management Group was formed consisting of elected managers for Appointments, Training and Development, Assessment and Grading, Finance and Communications. Job descriptions for each post were agreed.

The Group was chaired by me with John Hooper (Hon Sec / Appointments), Nick Pett (Recruitment and Publicity), Frank Whaley (Training), Bryan Wynne (Grading) and Charles Osbourn (Finance).

In 1994, CUDRRS produced a five year strategic plan and adopted the mission statement "Better Refereeing for Better Rugby". A programme of action to implement the development plan was then drawn up each season.

Policies covering appointments, grading and the transition of referees from training course to match competence were introduced. Guidance notes to referees on matters like spectator intrusion, dealing with injuries and use of yellow cards were issued.

Successive management groups led by Ray Olds, David Norman, Charles Osbourn and Jon Evans pursued the strategic plan and policies and for the most part retained the same organisational structure.

It is not always easy to get members to volunteer to take on administrative roles and some tweaking of job descriptions proved necessary.

A new logo was designed in open competition which was won by John Hooper. It consisted of the University's red lion passant above a golden open crown symbol from the old County of Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely coat of arms. It replaced the former logo of the scales of justice that was featured in white on the green tie the Society had adopted.

The rules and constitution of the Society, last revised in 1977, were revised again in 1997.

A Membership Charter was adopted which set out the obligations of membership for achieving the aims and objectives of the Society. CUDRRS was well prepared to cope with the challenges that were to come.

A newsletter with the title of "In Touch" was introduced to ensure good communication between CUDRRS management and members and the affiliated clubs. The newsletter developed into a monthly magazine that was distributed under the title "Contact" until 2017.

There was no national format for training referees until the 1990's. Societies did their own thing. Some new referees joining CUDRRS were just given a law book and an appointment and expected to get on with it. Being thrown into the deep end was not the best induction.

The RFU invited society training officers to draw up a national syllabus and CUDRRS was involved in the construction of the first national training scheme, the Pilkington Award. The Rugby World Cup was staged in Britain and Ireland in 1991. The RFU recruit campaign to attract more referees was run with the mascot image of Willy Whistle.

A county wide recruitment campaign proved successful. it was sustained and boosted the number of match officials available. Continuous efforts to recruit enabled the Society to provide a refereeing service to the University and District on five days a week.

In 1993, the RFU appointed a National Referee Development Office, Steve Griffiths, and the training and development of referees was given a higher priority. Train the Trainers courses were run by the RFU.

Mike Daniel, Frank Whaley, Tony Kennedy and Jon Evans attended. They arranged the topics for monthly meetings and staffed the training courses. Tim O'Connell also served as Training and Development Manager.

He arrived at Girton College as a trained referee from London. He joined CUDRRS, stayed on to complete his PHD and then departed to work in China. He returned after five years to resume the refereeing he had started twenty years earlier. CUDRRS is addictive.

The basic entry syllabus was converted to the National Foundation Course. Many referees from both the local clubs and colleges were recruited and trained this way. Membership of the Society grew.

The Society made good use of the NFC award scheme. Courses were run for teachers on PCGE training at Homerton College, sports masters at The Leys School, youth coaches at Ely and for new members of the society.

Successful candidates on these courses included three members of the local constabulary, Mike Dean, David Howell and Tony Kennedy.

With John Hanlon, Jim Kennaway, Noel Woodgate, Derek Manning, John Tidswell, Jeff Miles and Jon Evans (whose father, Dai, was also CUDRRS trained) from the clubs and David Norman, Martin Dixon, Ian Steed, from the University, collectively they went on to give over two hundred years service to CUDRRS,

The Society attended the annual Fresher's Fair for three consecutive years with the University club's representatives to raise students' awareness about refereeing and the training on offer. This was unsuccessful and the number of University students in the Society dwindled further.

In 1999, the Society produced its first handbook as an independent body. Sponsorship for printing this and purchasing kit was obtained from Price Bailey, Chartered Accountants, and later ETL Cambridge. Further sponsorship was secured from Marshall Engineering and Toshiba. Ian Steed (ex Jesus) helped with its compilation and printing.

A number of changes have influenced the development of the Society not least the decision in 1995 to allow Rugby Union to become professional.

This led to an increased need to professionalize activities at all levels of the game, refereeing included. CUDRRS had already started the process and was ahead of the game.

Rugby at all levels had become more competitive with the introduction of leagues in 1988. Players and coaches demanded better performances from officials. Referees had to study more closely how the game was played both technically and tactically. They had to place more emphasis on game management, preventive refereeing and consistency.

To do so effectively, they needed to be fit. Fitness testing was introduced, first the Bleep and then the Jam. CUDRRS held these annually at The Leys School under the guidance of Mike Runswick. They were voluntary for grassroots officials but compulsory and essential for the development of those wanting to progress in the professional era.

Different management styles have to be applied in matches played by young children, youth and adult men and women. It seems acceptable for referees to call players by their first names. Players still use "Sir" when speaking to referees.

The recruitment and retention of referees depends on them being treated with respect, on and off the field, and given hospitality by the teams they serve and the clubs they visit.

In 1994, "The Whistlers' Trophy" competition was introduced and provided a process whereby referees rated club's performance in these respects. The trophy is awarded annually. There is a points system by which referees to rate how well clubs do, Their returns have been chased up and collated by Steve Cardy for many years.

The Whistlers' Trophy stimulated clubs to improve the changing facilities they provided for referees. Before clubs built new or modernised their club houses and dressing rooms, it was not unusual for referees to change in the same room as one of the teams.

However, player hostility to them was restrained before and after games even in the communal baths that some clubs had. After all, rugby then was a game played by gentlemen.

A similar competition was inaugurated for University Colleges Rugby in season 2003 - 4. The Fair Play Trophy aims to promote a sporting attitude within student rugby as well as securing respect, support and appreciation for referees and the Laws of the Game.

Referees are urged to always report how they are treated by the clubs.

In the old days referees were simply tolerated rather than treated as welcome guests as they should be and now are. Very often they were not offered their travelling expenses nor a free drink.

In 2000, CUDRRS took the decision to change how clubs paid for the refereeing services they received. A standard fee for the appointment of a match official was set.

Clubs and schools were asked to pay these in lump sums at the beginning and halfway through each season. The customers agreed and remain content with this arrangement. The partner societies in the Central Federation adopted similar arrangements.

Referees now claim their travelling expenses direct from the Society's financial manager instead of waiting for someone from the home club to offer them.

Allied to the introduction of the Trophy, CUDRRS sought to promote refereeing at its affiliated clubs local clubs by assigning ambassadors to them.

Under the acronym SMAC, Society Member Attached to Club, an ambassador was appointed to each club to offer them support with knowledge of the laws and to deal with any issues about refereeing standards or their treatment by players, coaches or spectators.

A further attempt was made to bring the Society and clubs closer together. CUDRRS monthly meetings were held in turn at club venues on their training night. The response of players was not enthusiastic and the attempt was abandoned. Subsequently, meetings were held at the excellent facilities of the Shelford and Cambridge clubs.

5. TESTING TIMES

University college games are played on perfect pitches in free flowing style without the cynicism or player dissent found in the professional game. For years they have attracted referees from neighbouring societies to help CUDDRS appoint quality officials to them. They provide excellent opportunities for referees to gain experience and hone their skills.

The availability of competent referees was a decisive factor in the RFU establishing a Laws Laboratory in Cambridge in 1996. It ran for twelve years under the leadership of Dick Tilley, the University's Director of Rugby.

The colleges played in a closed competition of three divisions which made them an ideal "experimental test bed" to trial variations to the Laws. Problems in the game needing attention were identified by the International Rugby Board and the RFU.

Intensive coaching had created a game that, at the top, was becoming less attractive to paying spectators.

Teams concentrated on tight defences. Scrums were collapsed cynically and resulted in the ball being in play for less time. Pick up and dive produced successive breakdowns. Kick and chase tactics were boring when both sides employed them. Driving mauls with the ball carrier shielded behind team mates seemed to flout the offside laws.

Solutions were suggested by the RFU and the University constituent body with input from CUDRRS. Over sixty experimental variations were trialled. The variations were assessed by whether they were safe, made playing more enjoyable and were easy to understand and referee.

The student players, being bright and intelligent, and referees gave their feedbacks at the end of the Michaelmas and Lent rugby terms. These were reported to and discussed with the RFU Laws Sub-Committee which met regularly at Grange Road.

The variations included outlawing tackling above the waist to counter the "big hit" mindset that professional rugby favoured.

The points scoring was varied including eight points for a penalty goal to punish cynical penalty offences when committed to prevent conceding tries.

The 22 metres line was moved to 15 metres to reduce the ground loss by attacking teams when the ball is made dead in goal .

Allowing the ball carrier in the maul to be taken to ground safely went on to be trialled in the Under 21 county championship but was not pursued as it was thought too dangerous for the professional game.

It had already been trialled in 1999 in a match organised between London Irish and Wasps at Sunbury. Dick Best was coach to Irish and Nigel Melville to Wasps.

It was refereed by international official Steve Lander who came on to the field looking like a Samurai warrior. He was wearing a camera strapped across his chest and a head camera on a beanie hat. His face was only just visible as he was also wired up to hear and speak to his assistants, Tony Spreadbury and Chris White.

CUDRRS now had an international profile similar to Stellenbosch University in South Africa, another laws laboratory setting.

However, the task it faced needed practical help from neighbouring referee societies. It was given in particular by experienced referees from the East Midlands, Notts. Lincs and Derby, Hertfordshire and Eastern Counties societies.

Student rugby enjoyed a high standard of refereeing as more top referees came to participate in the research.

They included Chris Harrison, Darren Gamage and David Grashof from EM, Richard Massey and Glyn James from NLD, Mark Abbas, Paul Freestone and Phil Davies from Herts and Daryll Chapman from EC.

The concept attracted widespread interest and matches were officiated by international referees from England, New Zealand, Argentina and the USA. The international flavour was further added to by referees from Canada, United States, Namibia and South Africa on exchange with East Midlands and NLD being involved.

Sky TV tested out a prototype of a "ref cam" in a laws laboratory match at Jesus College. A chest camera was fitted to Glyn James, now a CUDRRS referee, with the lens poking out through from a hole cut in his jersey (fortunately a borrowed one).

History was thus being repeated as in 1971 another CUDRRS referee, Chris Tyler, had been involved in pioneering the use of radio technology in Japan.

A teenage Wayne Barnes travelled from Norwich where he was studying at the University of East Anglia to participate in the experiments. He had a detailed understanding of the game even then, long before his elevation to international referee.

He had refereed Shelford's 1st XV at the Davey Field on exchange from Gloucester and District when he was only 16. Wayne was coached, mentored and "chauffeured" by Mike Runswick when he was with ECRURS.

In recognition of its valued contribution to University Rugby, in 1990 an invitation was extended to CUDRRS for six members to attend the Varsity Match with attendant hospitality.

It came from the President of the University club, Professor John Dingle of Corpus Christi College. The trip to Twickenham has become an annual "perk" shared between those members who serve college rugby and the Society.

Soon after the start of the Laws Laboratory, Peter Eveleigh joined CUDRRS. He was a London Society member who had refereed at first class level. He was an RFU adviser in the London and South East Division and worked for the RFU in the World Rugby Museum at Twickenham.

Peter and his wife Betty moved home to Yelling, 12 miles from Cambridge. Peter volunteered to take on the management of Advising and Grading and improved the Society's approach to this function.

He made a big impression in the short time he was a member which ended in his death from leukaemia. In his memory, the Peter Eveleigh Award was instituted in 2003. It is presented to the member who has, in the opinion of the whole membership, made the most outstanding contribution to the Society that season.

Invariably, the award is won by members who serve CUDRRS as officers.

John Hanlon, Sunday Appointments Officer, has been a regular recipient of the trophy.

He is committed to ensuring that all matches played on Sundays by 13 year olds and over are refereed by trained and competent officials. In addition these officials needed to have been CRB checked. They often refereed twice at weekends, Saturdays and Sundays to give the youngsters a disciplined introduction to rugby.

The dedication he shows in this task which he has undertaken for more than ten years, has been recognised with awards not just from his colleagues but by Cambridgeshire RU as well. Without him, the latter's Youth Rugby could have ground to a halt.

6. COMING OF AGE

In 1998, the RFU proposed the merger of 46 individual referee societies into 13 federated groups.

It claimed that this would make it easier for their support of refereeing to be given, no mention of the real desire being to gain control. It also promised improved status for refereeing within the RFU by giving refereeing constituent body status.

Societies went along with the proposal having been told that this would not interfere with their independence. The Rugby Football Referees Union was formed in 2001 and accepted into constituent body membership of the RFU in 2002.

The RFU then introduced joint development of the playing, coaching and refereeing aspects which was organised on a regional basis.

Federalisation was an opportunity for CUDRRS to show it had become of age and was well able to manage its own affairs. The opportunity was taken. CUDDRS had grown up.

In 1999, CUDRRS decided to opt out of the Eastern Counties collective and plan the formation of a Central Federation of Rugby Union Referees in partnership with the East Midlands, Hertfordshire and Warwickshire societies as equals.

There was a long and close relationship with East Midlands referees who had for years provided officials for the University colleges matches midweek. This was an influential factor in the decision in 2000 to confirm the formation of the Central Federation and leave Eastern Counties but retaining close ties with former colleagues.

Hertfordshire left the Central Federation in 2014 and joined forces with Eastern Counties.

Rugby in the Federation is played in a wider range of styles than in East Anglia and provides a pathway to the very top of the refereeing ladder for those with the potential to make it.

Shortly after the set up of Federations, the RFU took over the appointment of officials to matches at Level 5 and above and set up a development process for referees with potential to become Group and National Panel officials.

CUDRRS serves Rugby at the grassroots, the Community Game, and is a welcoming home for those referees trained elsewhere who come to work or study in the Cambridge area.

Current members include Rowan Kitt (London) - a Christ's College alumni who is now a RFU and World Rugby Television Match Official, Craig Maxell - Keys (Staffordshire) who is a RFU professional referee and Jonathan Cook (Durham), a former student at Jesus College and a National Panel Referee.

Sadly, the RFU also decided to take over the initial training of referees and charge participants on the courses. The Entry Level Referee Award course was introduced.

Only RFU approved trained trainers were allowed to present them and a minimum number of candidates were required. Previously, CUDRRS provided the courses free of charge and ran them irrespective of the number of candidates.

This change made the establishment of early contact between the Society and trainees more difficult and added to the society's administrative workload.

However, a CUDRRS representative attends these courses to explain the benefits of society membership to the candidates post training and offer probationary membership.

The RFU continues to expand the nature and range of the training and development it offers through its Match Official Development Officers.

CUDRRS provides appropriate and ongoing training for all its referees, touch judges and advisers. It also provides this for non-members who wish to referee only in their own club or school. It is willing to support any referee. One such beneficiary was Glen Jackson when he decided to switch from playing for Saracens to refereeing,

Glen joined CUDRRS to take advantage of refereeing midweek college matches which fitted in with his playing commitments. He did so in 2010 before returning to New Zealand where he soon progressed to international status.

CUDRRS officials are encouraged to prepare a plan for their personal development. Support is provided for them by senior referees who act as mentors and by advisers who assess their on-the-field performances and fitness levels.

Monthly meetings are held to discuss all aspects of Rugby not just refereeing. Top referees and coaches are frequent guest speakers at them.

CUDRRS has grown up over its 75 years. It has built up a reputation for quality officiating and delivers a service to the game that all members can be rightly proud of. It has retained its independence and flourishes numerically and financially.

Sound financial management has resulted in strong balances being built up. Much has been down to members being reluctant to claim back the full expenses due to them.

This has enabled CUDRRS to supply match officials with sets of kit every other season free of charge. Mike Daniel and Paul Wilson took on responsibility for ordering and issuing stock as Kit Managers.

In 1994, CUDRRS chose "Better Refereeing for Better Rugby" to be its mission. It is committed to making that a reality not just a paper aspiration. It is succeeding.

This reputation and commitment has helped recruitment. CUDRRS is able to achieve consistently close to 100% success in meeting every request it receives for a referee to appointed to a game within its area of coverage.

These include club, University college, school games and youth games from U13 to Colts at weekends and college and schools in midweek.

This is a level of service enjoyed by CUDRRS affiliates, envied by many and which few other societies in England deliver.

Correspondingly, the financial stability of the Society has strengthened with the introduction of up-front payment for referee appointments requested, sometimes for teams of three.

The appointment of teams of three has meant additional training for match officials and the purchase of sets of radio communication. Touch judges were renamed Assistant Referees. CUDRRS referees get useful experience in this role when they are appointed to assist RFU referees at Blues matches at Grange Road.

New clubs have been formed in the 21st century at Cottenham Renegades (2003), Cambourne (2005), Mildenhall and Red Lodge and Wendens Ambo. They have affiliated to CUDRRS to join the ten others.

Women's Rugby provided another challenge for CUDRRS. Referees needed to develop additional skills as more ladies learnt to play. On occasions, a little coaching has to be part of officiating in order for games to flow and be enjoyed. The standard of play in Women's Rugby continues to improve and the amount of coaching has lessened.

In 1988, the University Women's Rugby Club was formed and Shelford Ladies a year later. Women students at University colleges played in a Seven a Side league.

Talks on the laws were given annually to the captains of college teams. In order to improve the refereeing of these games, CUDRRS held courses attended by several ladies.

Eventually, a few women referees joined CUDRRS and proved their ability to manage matches equally as well as men.

Information technology has been embraced by CUDRRS in the past decade. A website has been established and communication is now done by e-mail.

CUDRRS is a relatively small society in size but this helps to foster a close friendly, family atmosphere within it.

The traditional end of rugby season dinners were halted after some unruly behaviour in the 1970s at those held at Robinson and Christ's Colleges when they were male only events.

They were restored in the form of a Ladies Night dinner when Honorary Secretary John Hooper and his wife Norma cooked for 30 members and guests at Grange Road.

This inspired the society to return to formal annual dinners with a Ladies Night theme. It was an opportunity for the male members of CUDRRS to say thank you to their ladies who supported their sporting activities.

Thank you is accompanied by the presentation of orchids to the ladies by their male companions at the conclusion of formalities. It has become a tradition.

Christ's College has been the venue for the annual dinner since 2005 which has developed into an awards night. The behaviour of those attending has been exemplary. Times have changed for the better. David Norman, a fellow of the college, has been the organiser.

7. THE FUTURE

There is a concern around the world that the number of adult men players is declining whilst the women's game is growing. Over the past five years there has been a steady decline in the number of teams put out by clubs.

In the University, colleges have had to combine forces to field a side. There are now eighteen teams formed from 25 colleges.

Inter - college matches used to be played on Tuesdays and Thursday afternoons. The demands of studying have taken precedence over playing sport and fixtures have been switched to Saturdays.

Rugby has become a more demanding sport since the introduction of leagues and the loss of friendly fixtures.

The decline in the number of sides local clubs field each week has enabled the Society to cope with this change. There is talk about more clubs combining to ensure full teams can be fielded every week.

The RFU has hinted that the Community game may have to be reorganised on smaller regional lines to reduce the amount of travelling that the league system generates.

Players that have come through the mini rugby process have better basic skills The trend is towards a more physical style of play as participants are now fitter, bigger and quicker.

Law changes that will lessen the risk of injury and permanent damage are contemplated with particular emphasis on reducing the incidence of concussion.

Youngsters in droves still want to learn to play the game, despite the reservations of some parents about how physically tough it has become.

Many of them choose to enjoy rugby through refereeing instead of playing and CUDRRS is blessed with several teenagers who show great promise.

The proportion of referees in the Society coming from the University is growing as the Constituent Body sponsors training courses for students annually. More students are arriving at the University as trained referees.

CUDRRS helps them to develop and they are proving a useful resource for college rugby. Maybe some will emulate these past students.

Peter Coulthard (St. John's etc 2004 - 11) came from Hampshire as a Level 11 and rose to Midlands Group Level 5 in five years,

David Allen (Emmanuel 2008-10) came newly qualified with the Leicestershire Society. He got to Level 7 but then left to study further at Harvard. Both took on appointments roles whilst with CUDRRS to show their gratitude for the help they were given.

As CUDRRS progresses towards its centenary season, its role to provide Better Refereeing for Better Rugby will continue, no matter who or how many play it.

This will be achieved if the close relationship between the Society, its affiliates and Constituent Bodies is maintained. Over the years, many members of CUDRRS have served as officers at their clubs and county.

Clubs are the most likely source of new recruits for local rugby and are urged to encourage some of their members to become referees.

Judging by its past history, the Society can feel reasonably assured that this source will continue to flow and the Society to thrive.

During its life, CUDRRS has coped with the many changes that have occurred in rugby whether initiated from within or without its ranks.

Professionalism, federalisation, Mini Rugby, O2 Touch, women's rugby, law changes, floodlit pitches, G4 playing surfaces, radio links, videoed performance and more. It can face the future with confidence.

Membership of CUDRRS provides fun and friendship and a sense of pride in belonging to a organisation that is valued and respected for the service it gives. This has been my experience over 40 years and given me many memories. I am very grateful for it.

The history of the Society should encourage more people to join it and share the true spirit of Community Rugby.

Happy 75th Birthday, CUDRRS.

8. FOOTNOTE

It would be unforgiveable not to record the names of those who, to my knowledge, have contributed significantly to the establishment and development of the Society. Several of those named* were elected to more than one office in CUDRRS.

Presidents: Colin Unwin, Viv Allen, Mike Runswick, Mike Dimambro*, Mike Daniel*, Charles Osbourn*, Jon Evans*

Chairmen: Derek Ashman, Ken Hart, Ray Olds, David Norman

Hon. Secs Len Elliott, David Ford, Derek Cramp, Clive Hallett, Trevor Littlechild, John Hooper, David Tyrrell

Treasurers: Malcolm Watson, Paul Wilson

Long service: Nick Pett*, John Hanlon, Steve Cardy, Ian Reid, Tony Kennedy, Tim O'Connell, Gordon Wallace, John Taylor, Frank Whaley and Bryan Wynne and all the Honorary Members of CUDRRS.

Thanks everyone!

MJD / May 2019