

NORTHERN COUNTIES CRICKET CLUB

Centenary Cricket Week

Monday, 14th to Saturday, 19th June 1965

45¹



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Foreword

by

PROVOST W. J. MACKAY

PROVOST OF THE ROYAL BURGH OF INVERNESS

On the occasion of the Centenary of Northern Counties Cricket Club, I have pleasure in congratulating "Counties" — a name very familiar to sport-lovers in Inverness over the years — on attaining this notable landmark in their history. During the last 100 years the Club has held an honoured place among the leading cricket teams in the North of Scotland, and has done much to foster the game and to provide enjoyment and entertainment to players and spectators alike, in the best traditions of amateur sport. I wish the Club well as it goes on to its double century.

W. J. MACKAY,

Provost of the Royal Burgh of Inverness.

One Hundred Years Not Out

Centuries are common in cricket but centenaries are not, especially in an area as remote from the traditional centres of cricket as the North of Scotland is. So, it is with pride that the Northern Counties Cricket Club, in 1965, celebrates its centenary season. It is a further cause of pride that the name and the home ground of the Club have remained unchanged since the Club's first match was played in 1865.

The Club was formed at what the *Inverness Courier* of 1st September, 1864, described as "A numerously attended meeting held in the Town Hall here on August 26, 1864, for the purpose of taking the necessary steps for the formation of a cricket club which should embrace the whole of the Northern Counties." The Right Rev. Bishop Eden (a name associated with the Club, in one way or another, ever since) presided at the meeting, which was also attended by a distinguished company including the Master of Lovat, Sir Kenneth S. Mackenzie of Gairloch, Captain D. Baillie, Househill, and Mr J. B. Baillie of Leys. The admirable sentiments expressed about the game of cricket and the aims of the Club could, with little or no modification, be applied to the game and the Club a hundred years later, however great have been the changes in the world in that time. The first match played by Northern Counties C.C. was a two-innings match against Nairn Union C.C. at the Northern Meeting Park, Inverness, on Saturday, 16th June, 1865, when Counties won by 13 runs, "extras" being one of the leading scorers — a situation far from unusual in 1965! The culminating event of the Club's Centenary Week, this year, is another two-innings match at the Northern Meeting Park, Inverness, against the successors of Nairn Union, namely Nairn County C.C., good friends and keen rivals of Counties throughout the years.

In its first 25 years or so the Club played many friendly games against service and civilian sides, with considerable success. In 1893 the Club became a founder member of the North of Scotland Cricket Association and won the league title in the first three seasons of the competition's history, as it has done often since. Counties have won the league title outright on 13 occasions and have been joint champions on two other occasions. They have pre-eminently the best record of all north clubs in the Knock-Out Cup Competition which began in 1933, having won it eleven times and having been runners-up on numerous occasions. They had a great run of cup success in the years 1947 to 1951 inclusive, and again had successive wins in 1960/62.

In addition to the staple fare of league and cup cricket and local friendlies, Counties have brought many famous teams to play at the Northern Meeting Park, including an Australian Imperial Forces XI, Dr W. G. Grace's XI, Leicestershire, Kent, Learie Constantine's XI, Oxford Authentics (in two-day matches between the wars), and many others. Many all-day games were played in the inter-war years, when many more students and schoolboys seemed to be on vacation, and not working, than is the case nowadays. It is no doubt advancing years that give the writer the illusion that days then seemed longer and sunnier, with fewer games, in memory at least, being rained-off than we now experience.

Generations of Invernessians — by birth or by adoption — have enjoyed playing for Counties and have contributed to the renown of the Club and to the enjoyment of those who have spectated. Many great names can be recalled but space permits of only a few being mentioned; no disrespect is intended to the many admirable

players whose names are not here given — their prowess and their services to the Club are not forgotten. Before the Great War there were such famous names as W. Ross, A. Sinclair, H. F. Munro, Duncan Duffy, H. Mirtle, G. T. Cornet, and Archie MacGillivray (who continued to play for Counties for many years after the Great War). Between the wars, the Club was splendidly served by such notable players as K. I. G. Matheson, W. G. D. MacLennan, F. A. Bowden, Captain William Mackay, Oliver Davidson, J. L. Rhind, J. R. Braid, D. Dallas, I. P. G. Strachan, I. D. Mackintosh, T. A. Macardle, L. A. Dixon, P. C. Coutts, A. F. Lauder, A. T. Mackendrick, A. G. Hamilton, A. G. Stuart, N. S. MacLennan, D. Bennett, K. J. Whitton, P. D. C. R. Clark, and L. T. Watson (who is the present President of the Club, his immediate predecessor being Kenny Whitton who, like Mr Watson, has given long and splendid service to the Club). Ian Peebles (later to become an England Test player, and now a famous cricket writer) also turned out for the Club as a very young man. The post-Second World War era, in which Counties have scored some of their greatest successes in competitive cricket, has produced many excellent players — J. A. Innes, M. A. Murchison, Hamish Macdonald, W. M. Hutton, Hamish Gray, Stanley Macdonald, Gordon Stewart, Jack Connell, Ian Munro and others. In the first eight or nine of the post-war seasons the big hitting of Jim Innes was a constant source of entertainment to Counties' spectators, and the news that he was batting was almost guaranteed to cause an influx of additional spectators, just as in pre-war years such players as Duncan Dallas and John Braid were famed for their big, but skilful, hitting.

Over the years Counties have been well served by their officials; since 1946 their Presidents have included such notable cricketing names as the late J. R. Braid, the late J. B. Bauchop, and Messrs W. G. Stewart, K. J. Whitton and L. T. Watson. The present Honorary President and Honorary Vice-Presidents of the Club — Captain Willie Mackay and Messrs K. J. Whitton, W. G. Stewart and A. D. Merchant — are all former players of the Club, as are B. S. Menzies and P. D. C. R. Clark, two of the Vice-Presidents. The other Vice-President, D. C. R. Wilson, has been Secretary of the Club for a considerable number of years and is still a playing member. Looking back to the inter-war years, one recalls such devoted officials and friends of the Club as Steve Aitken (whose profound knowledge of, and interest in, cricket and the Club produced very detailed and highly knowledgeable accounts of its matches in the *Inverness Courier*, with which he was a senior reporter), and Andrew (Drew) Watson, scorer for many years, always impeccably attired in whites for (and well before) the matches, and remembered with great affection by those who knew him; also Mr "Jock" MacNiven, who umpired for many years; another kenspeckle figure in pre-war years, as umpire and scorer, was Ted Keenan. Another devoted friend was the late Mr Alexander Fraser (House Furnisher), who was most generous to the Club in his lifetime and by his Will.

The Club has always been associated with and has played its home matches at the Northern Meeting Park, until 1939 the Park was used, with very rare exceptions, only for the two days of the Northern Meeting, in September, and for cricket in the summer; in these days the present stand was shuttered for most of the year and the old stand at the County Buildings end of the ground (which is now incorporated in the "Thistle F.C. stand") was the only stand available for spectators. Since 1945 the Club has been a seasonal tenant of Inverness Town Council, and the ground is also used for rugby in the winter season.

Among the achievements by individual players are the winning of the league batting cup by W. Ross (twice), F. A. Bowden (three times), W. G. D. MacLennan, D. Dallas, A. Bennett, L. A. Dixon, J. A. Innes, D. Beattie and G. A. Stewart; and of the bowling cup by H. Mirtle, F. A. Bowden (three times), J. R. Braid, J. A. Innes, M. A. Murchison, J. Connell and I. A. Munro. Many centuries have been scored for the Club over the years and the teams have always had a reputation for quick scoring, particularly in Knock-Out Cup games. In one match in 1947, Counties scored over 300 runs in less than two hours against a service team, J. A. Innes and M. C. MacDougall both making centuries. Among present players who have scored centuries for the Club are Stan Macdonald and Ian Munro, who is also one of the leading bowlers in the North of Scotland.

The Club has been strong in family associations over its long career; for example, the present 1st XI Captain, Ian Braid, is the son of a former Captain and President of the Club, J. R. Braid, who was one of the best all-rounders the Club has ever had. Present membership includes many fathers and sons; in the 1st XI are an uncle and nephew, and it is thought that the Club would have little difficulty in fielding an XI composed entirely of fathers and sons.

"Counties" occupy a special place in the affections of the Town and County of Inverness, even among those who are not themselves followers of the game. Times have changed, however, and it would be foolish to pretend, in the vastly changed social climate of the sixties, that cricket occupies the pre-eminent place which it once had in the summer sporting scene of the North of Scotland. Yet, to many it is the game, unequalled for charm of setting, artistry, character, humour, good fellowship and sportsmanship. Long may it continue to be so regarded and long may "Counties" continue to flourish in the lovely surroundings of the Northern Meeting Park, with the Cathedral, as ever, backcloth and guardian to the summer pageant of green and white, "as the run-stealers flicker to and fro."

Until 1939 it was used

During the war years of 1939-45 the Home Guard had their rifle range at the County Buildings end of the ground and at one time of the sheep were grazed in the park.

an athletic meeting and fitting competitors and several other functions

CRICKET WEEK MATCHES

(All at Northern Meeting Park, Inverness)

Monday, 14th June 1965

Northern Counties v Service Select

Commences at 6 p.m. (R.A.F. & R.N.A.S.)

Tuesday, 15th June

Northern Counties 2nd XI v Provost W. J. Mackay's XI

Commences at 6.30 p.m.

Wednesday, 16th June

Knock-Out Cup

Commences at 6 p.m.

Thursday, 17th June

Seven-a-side Tournament

(Counties 2 sevens, Highland, Nairn County, Forres, R.A.F., R.N.A.S.)

Commences at 4.30 p.m.

Friday, 18th June

Football XI v Rugby XI

Commences at 6.30 p.m.

Saturday, 19th June

Northern Counties v Nairn County

Commences at 11.15 a.m. - 1.15; 2.15 - 4.15; 4.45 - 6.30 p.m.

The thanks of Northern Counties Cricket Club are cordially expressed to Provost W. J. Mackay for contributing to the Foreword to this Programme, to Inverness Town Council and its Parks Department for their valuable assistance during the Cricket Week and at other times, to all the advertisers, teams playing during the week, and to all others who, in any way, have helped towards the organisation of the event; the Club is also most grateful to Miss E. Barron, M.A. (Editor) and Mr M. Beevers (Printing Manager) of the *Inverness Courier*, for their kind advice and co-operation in the production of this Programme, and to Mr J. I. Ross Martin, C.A., President of the Inverness Camera Club, who kindly provided the photograph on the front page.

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