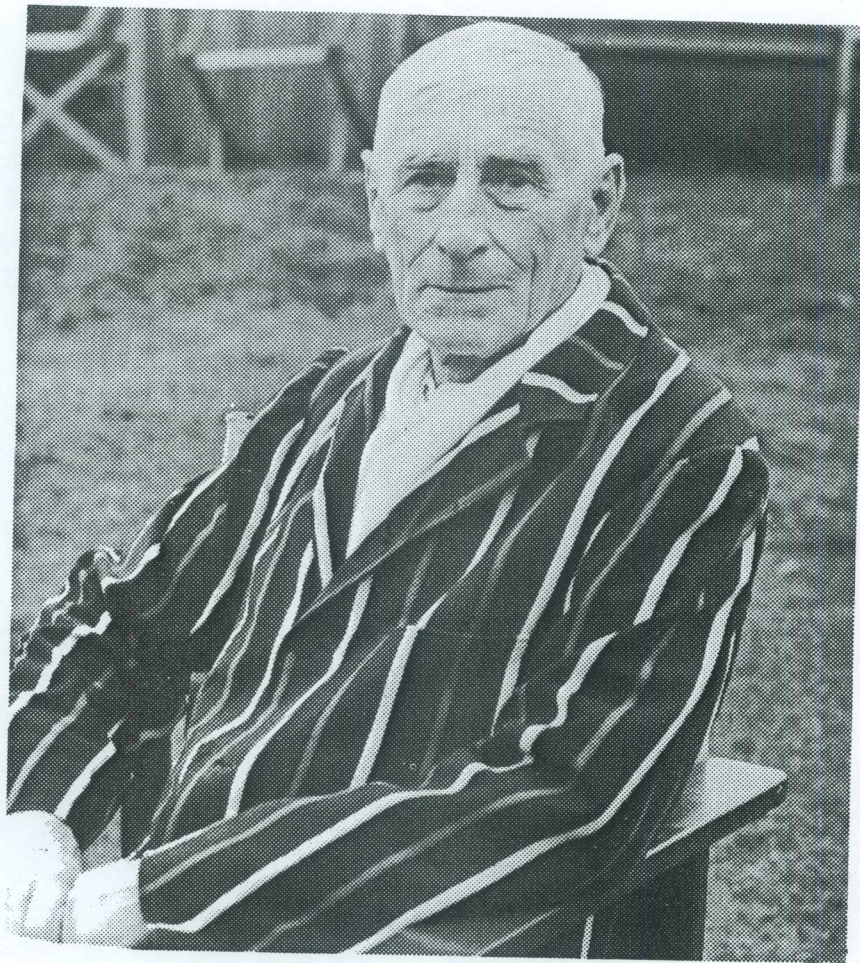


**SIR R.W.M. DUNDAS
CENTENARY
1981**

C.C.C.



SIR ROBERT W. M. DUNDAS, BART.

Cricketer, Schoolmaster, Colonial Servant 100 years

The Dundas family are generally believed to have sprung from the Dunbars, Earls of March, who derived descent from the Saxon Princes of England. Among the first Dundases we read of is Searle of Dundas at the time of William the Lion. Both the Beechwood and Melville septs are derived from the Dundases of Arniston, which Barony was granted in 1609.

The family came to the Comrie area during the 1780's when Henry Dundas, who was created Viscount Melville in 1802, acquired Dunira Estate from the Drummond Castle lands. The Melville monument which stands above Comrie is in his memory.

Sir George Dundas inherited Dunira in 1908 but sadly the family has to sell in 1919. However, they retained part of the estate and moved to Comrie House where Sir Robert now lives. He owes his interest in sport to his father, his uncles and a keen family interest in cricket, rugby football, etc. There were many occasions when Sir Robert, his father and brothers, along with their Melville cousins were almost able to make up a full side. Sir George Dundas was captain of Comrie Cricket Club from its foundation in 1908 until his death in 1934.

The first recordings of Sir Robert's cricketing career appear in the Dalvreck (now Ardvreck) School Magazine. On 16th July, 1892, aged 11, he played No. 9 in the school team in a match against Glenalmond. The score book shows that he was bowled for 0 in the first innings, and was not out 0 in the second. The end of term review of the characters of the cricket XI says:

Dundas (ii) should develop into a good bat; he has some very nice strokes on the offside, but at present lacks power, good defence, fair field and catch."

He never looked back, remaining in the Dalvreck team until he went to Glenalmond in 1896 where his cricketing career was to develop. He was in the 1st XI in 1897, 1898 and 1899, became one of the mainstays of the team and earned the distinction of being a member of their unbeaten XI in 1899.

On leaving school in the summer of 1899 he took up a career in banking but quickly felt that the life didn't really suit him — apart from anything else he couldn't get in very much sport! He moved to teaching which gave him what he felt was a more interesting job and much better opportunities to play cricket and rugby football. He taught first at Harris Hill near Oxford, then at Harleigh School at Bodmin in Cornwall, where he was described by the headmaster as —

“being of a kind manner, popular with the boys and exceedingly good at all games, especially cricket.”

The Headmaster of Harris Hill also praised him for both his teaching and cricketing ability. In 1902 he went up to Keeble College, Oxford, for 3 years, taking a general degree, captaining the cricket eleven in 1905 and also playing in the rugby football and hockey teams.

Sir Robert left Oxford in 1905 with a Bachelor of Arts degree to go to Monmouth School where he was to have five very happy years as Housemaster of School House, Commander of the School Cadet Corps and school games master. It was here that he first met Thea Wiseman, daughter of one of the masters, and whom he was to marry in 1926. In 1910 he considered moving schools to a more senior position, but the idea of joining the West African Colonial Service was suggested to him. He applied and in 1911 went out to be an Assistant District Officer in Southern Nigeria. He was to remain in West Africa for 19 years. His cricketing exploits had to take a back seat, and were largely restricted to organising his home leaves to coincide with Comrie cricket season, which he did most successfully, and to the occasional scratch game with fellow colonial servants and Nigerian court officials. These games were full of surprises as many of his extras had never held a cricket bat in their lives.

Sir Robert finally retired to live in Comrie and succeeded his father as captain in 1935. This was to mark the start of his fourth career, and he remained captain of the Comrie Club until 1965. He continued however to carry his bat at No. 11 until he finally retired from “active service in the field” at the age of 90 with full television coverage and champagne on the pitch. He remains keenly interested in the team.

The Cricket Club has been a constant and great joy to Sir Robert. He has always striven to encourage “the youngsters” and his cricket practices every Tuesday and Thursday became quite a feature of the village. His games with the Club conjure up great memories for him such as scoring 132 against Mr Dewhursts XI in 1910 in a 200 stand with his brother Freddie, his 113 in 1930 against Dunira, the crucial 5 runs he scored in 1959 against Pitlochry at the age of 79, the telegram from the M.C.C. on the Club's Golden Jubilee, the excitement whether the village would be able to raise the money to buy the Laggan Park field in time, and each year's game against his old school Glenalmond. He was a very fine bat and during his later years on the field he realised he would be in difficulty if he had to take more than 1 run, so his great dictum was to try to hit a boundary. He put his technique to good effect during one of his last games against Glenalmond when batting at No. 11 he found the field rather too close for comfort. He is quoted as saying “so I am afraid all I could do was knock the ball over their heads and fortunately the good turf was rather kind to me.”

An incredible 79 years spans his first game against Glenalmond as a school boy at Dalvreck and his last there with Comrie Cricket Club.

PETER J. BICKMORE

SOME "EXTRAS"

The year 1930 has been described as the Club's "ANNUS MIRABILIS". During that summer Sir Robert Dundas hit 113 not out against the local rivals, Dunira, in an innings punctuated by fine cover drives and his favourite late cut through slips. What has not been recorded was the consistent wicket-keeping of Alister Mackay who at the end of each over during the match picked up an array of feathers and transferred them to the opposite end to form a type of "magical" semi-circle. That this "ploy" had an adverse effect on some of the Dunira batsmen is an understatement especially when Joe Smith, Perthshire County and Dunira wicket-keeper was aware of Alister, with his nose over the stumps and the feathers in close attendance.

Alec (Dreamy) McArthur belied his nick-name when against R. H. Burdon-Cooper's XI he captured 6 wickets with 6 consecutive balls — clean bowled 4 batsmen and had another 2 lbw in the one tremendous over.

Cricket statistics fascinate many followers of the game but probably no location other than the Laggan Park, Comrie has produced the fact that visitors from Oban in 1955 scored at a rate of .2 runs per mile. On the same occasion the opening ball disposed of the first Oban batsman after his journey of some 100 miles by coach!

Many cricket grounds in Scotland have to withstand the early evening onslaught of the "midgy". The Laggan Park is no exception but has on occasion had a rival invasion — of bees! To the spectators on the fences was presented the sight of fieldsmen and batsmen suddenly falling prostrate until the Tomperran sightscreen was no longer white. There was another occasion — away from home, at Pitlochry — when such insect intrusion had an even more dramatic outcome. "Father" Johnston was bowling and was hit mid-wicket where his son, "Bo" Johnston was fielding. The latter with his usual safe hands was about to take the soaring catch, when the hands clasped, not the ball but the back of the neck and an anguished noise was uttered. The fact that a wasp had entered the fray on the side of Pitlochry did little to placate the anger of Johnston Snr., as the ball fell to the ground.

In 1939 the Rover Moot was held at Monzie Castle and on one of the Saturdays the Comrie Club entertained a "Rest of the World XII". When looking at a photograph taken on that day the happiness on the faces hardly reflect the unhappiness shortly to follow — the outbreak of the Second World War and the participation in that struggle by many of the players present, perhaps even on opposite sides.

Many well known Cricketers have graced the Laggan turf with Wilfred Rhodes perhaps the most distinguished visitor. He came — late in life — as professional to Perthshire Cricket Club and a glorious record of Test and County bowling and batting behind him. However, reputation on that occasion meant little to the then youthful Harper from Cupar who proceeded to spray shots off Rhodes all over the ground. With all the guile at his disposal, Rhodes resorted to the old-fashioned "donkey drop" and the belligerent batsman was on his way to the pavillion!

To this day, the "Chinese cut" is acclaimed by commentators and reporters alike but Comrie had a real exponent of what is usually reported still with some suspicion — possibly even as a fluke. "Johnny" Robertson — no mean bowler — so often played the ball between his feet to the safety of the fine-leg boundary that to Comrie spectators it became the "Johnny" Robertson shot.

It is hoped these few "Extras" will have added to the total enjoyment of the many who already have applauded the long innings of the Dundas partnership within the Comrie Cricket Club.

JACK ELLIOT, M.B.E.

CARRYING HIS BAT FOR COMRIE

FROM THE GLASGOW HERALD, OF 10th MAY, 1968.

Comrie's greatest cricket match was when they scored 34 runs against Auchterarder in 1910. Auchterarder replied with 32. They still had five fresh men to bat. Victor Hope, Comrie's fast bowler, took the ball. He cast aside his cap. He braced every sinew for a supreme effort. And he skittled out Auchterarder with five consecutive balls.

Sir Robert Dundas remembers it well.

He played for Comrie in that match. He still plays for Comrie. He's 86.

To-morrow, for the start of the new season on the local Laggan Field, he'll be batting for them against Doune. "I go in last now and I don't make many runs," he apologises. "Last year my average was . . . about one, I'd say."

Sir Robert also fields, "Well, I stand at point. I don't run very fast. If it gets past me somebody else usually runs for it."

Comrie played 16 matches last season and won two of them but they *played*.

Most other village teams roundabout have handed in their bats. Auchterarder among them. So have Dunira, a nearby estate team and Comrie's greatest foe. Dunira even had a professional.

But Sir Robert scored a herculean 113 not out against *them* in 1930.

"My highest score? Oh, dear . . . That would be a 130 before the war", he thinks. He means before the First World War.

Now Comrie is happy with any bat who averages 7.83 runs and more. Last season there were five of them.

But the Club's annual report says sternly:—

THE fielding generally was poor, but in the match against Harris F.P's at Comrie really good catching helped George Philips to record nine for 65.

During the season after the Auchterarder match Sir Robert went for 19 years as an administrative officer to Nigeria where there was not much cricket.

"Only occasionally would there be half a dozen enthusiasts in a bush station and we turned out the natives," he says.

Back home he later succeeded his father as captain of Comrie and skippered them until only two years ago.

But the season which matters most to him is this next one. There is a good chance that Comrie (pop: 1800) could do well against their nearest rivals, Crieff (pop: 5600) and might even beat them.

"We have a new player coming," says Sir Robert Dundas, giving warning.

SAMUEL HUNTER

Comrie Cricket Club

MEMORIES OF AN OLD MEMBER, 1911 TO PRESENT DAY

As a schoolboy I used to visit Comrie almost each year from 1910 onwards in the summer holidays. I think that it was in 1911 that I was first roped in to play for Comrie in replacement of someone who had dropped out at the last minute. In those days my uncle, Sir George Dundas, was Captain of the side and invariably batted last man in. On the odd occasions when I was called upon to play I always batted last but one, consequently we had several last wicket stands together but as he was no runner I was in a position to be up and down the pitch three times to his once, thereby causing considerable confusion.

The ground in those days was much as it is now in the lovely setting of Laggan Park. I have played on many cricket grounds, both home and abroad, but for sheer charm and setting I have met few which can compete with the Comrie ground. Perhaps if I had to mention one it would be the Duke of Norfolk's private ground at Arundel Castle. The only slight snag in those days was the primitive nature of the pavillion which has now been much improved.

Sir George Dundas was a great personality. He was very popular in the village, for which he and Lady Dundas had done a great deal, and he was also a keen sportsman. Cricket was his main interest but he was also an active golfer. Even after he stopped playing cricket he was always a keen spectator and as often as possible would accompany the team to "away" matches. It was traditional that when the side travelled by coach Sir George had to stop for "a box of matches" at most of the locals which the coach passed. This used to infuriate the teetotal members of the team who knew that the so-called "box of matches" meant a dram of whisky. Away matches included Crieff, Perth, Dundee, Auchterarder, Amulree, etc., so there was considerable scope for the purchase of "a box of matches" on the way home!

Looking back to the old days several special matches come to mind. One in particular stands out - in 1913 I think it was, against Crieff. Sir George had included his brother-in-law Harry Wilson (my uncle) in this Comrie side and I also had the privilege of playing. Crieff batted first under the captaincy of Graham Mickel and put up a goodish total. Comrie were soon in trouble and about six wickets were down with about fifty runs still needed. My Uncle Harry was next man in; he was not exactly a cricketer but in his younger days had been well known for his prowess in throwing the hammer in inter-hospital athletics (he was then a medical student at Guys Hospital). He came in to bat with a bat which he alleged had belonged to W. G. Grace! It certainly looked it for it appeared to be mainly held together with string and pieces of tape. By adopting hammer-throwing tactics Uncle Harry succeeded in connecting with the ball quite successfully but unfortunately on each stroke a piece of the bat flew off and landed in the out field, and after making some 30-odd runs he was run out, mainly because he had only the handle of the bat with which to reach the crease and safety! That meant a last wicket stand between Sir George and myself. The score crept up and eventually we needed two to win and one to equal. I was facing the bowling and the Crieff bowler bowled me the most flagrant short pitched long-hop. I stepped across, meaning to pull it for four certain runs but alas I hit right under it and there was the Crieff wicket keeper ready to receive a sitting vertical catch. We had lost by one run!

Another match I well remember which must have been in the same year (1913) was that in which I saw Freddie Dundas hit the most prodigious six I have ever seen. He was batting at the Crieff end of the Comrie ground and his hit cleared the road alongside the ground, the railway which existed in those days, and landed full toss in the grounds of the English Church. Freddie was very powerfully built and that year was on leave from the Bombay Burma Trading Company where doubtless his muscles had been further developed by heaving teak about! In his schoolboy days he and his brother Robert (now Sir Robert) used to open the batting for the Glenalmond First XI.

I think that the year I enjoyed most in Comrie Cricket was 1923 when I was on leave from India. I had the privilege of opening the bowling with John Robertson (fast right arm). My bowling was medium left arm and we had a lot of fun! Sir George Dundas used to tick off John Robertson for his bowling action which he said was too complicated. I can recollect them having several heated but friendly arguments about it in the middle of a match!

It was about this time in the 1920's I think, that the main cricket opponent of Comrie became no longer Crieff but instead Gillie Macbeth's Dunira Estate side. He was alleged to have provided each member of his team with a set of white flannels and hired two well known cricket professionals to bolster up his team. I remember bowling against the better of the two and had him dropped at square leg before he had scored - a sitting catch too!

It was in 1923 also I think that Wilfred Rhodes (Yorkshire and England) who was then living in Perth, attended the Comrie Cricket Club "Benefit" Match.

I was lucky enough to play for Comrie both before and after the Second World War, now under the Captaincy of Sir Robert Dundas although I do not think that I achieved very much - except perhaps for one match in 1939 when I made (for me) the terrific score of 58 not out against Auchterarder and incidentally made the winning hit.

It is still the greatest joy to visit Comrie during the Cricket season and see matches played and enjoyed just as they were 70 years ago.

So, on that note, I think that I had better echo the Umpire and call "over".

M. W. M. MacLEOD.

COMRIE CRICKET CLUB
SIR R. W. M. DUNDAS CENTENARY YEAR
SPECIAL MATCHES FOR 1981

GREENOCK C.C. — SUNDAY, MAY 17th

Kindly sponsored by — BLACKIE & SONS LTD., Bishopbriggs.

BAMBURGH CASTLE C.C. — SATURDAY, JUNE 20th

Kindly sponsored by — MR. & MRS. GEO. FINDLAY, Atlanta, Georgia.

WEST OF SCOTLAND C.C. — SUNDAY, AUGUST 16th

Kindly sponsored by — WHYTE & MACKAY DISTILLERS LTD., Glasgow.

JAMES THOMSON'S XI — SUNDAY, AUGUST 23rd

Kindly sponsored by — BELL INGRAM, Perth.

STEWARTS MELVILLE C.C. — SATURDAY, AUGUST 29th

Kindly sponsored by — CLYDESDALE BANK LTD., Comrie.

THE GRANGE C.C. — SUNDAY, AUGUST 30th

Kindly sponsored by — JOHN DEWAR & SONS LTD., Perth.

PRESIDENT'S XI — WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2nd

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Kindly sponsored by — GENERAL ACCIDENT FIRE & LIFE ASSURANCE CORP., Perth.

ALL MATCHES PLAYED AT LAGGAN PARK, COMRIE.