



# Dudley Kingswinford

Rugby Football Club



Accredited Club



DK has a long and interesting history going back to 1920. It is important that we record and publish this story. It is only when we know where we have come from that we can fully appreciate where we are!

We are lucky at DK because we have a keen, accomplished and indeed a published historian (and retired Engineer) in Bob McMaster.

Bob has huge archives of facts and images of DK going all the way back to its inception in 1920. He has produced articles for the Black Country Bugle and has provided a wealth of information for our website.

If you have any information regarding this article that we might be able to include please contact [admin@dk-rfc.co.uk](mailto:admin@dk-rfc.co.uk)

Please take the time to read them and enjoy!

*“People without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture are like a tree without roots.”*

# Fred Fry's Legacy.

DKRFC, established in 1920, was originally known as Dudley Bean albeit the club was also known and referred to locally as Harper Bean by other clubs.

The original founders of the club included **Harold Chambers**, **W J (Bill) Elliot** and **Fred Fry**. Harold and Bill were employed by car manufacturers A Harper, Sons and Bean Ltd (*Est.1907*) who had works at Coseley, Dudley and Tipton. The company was later to be known as Bean Cars Ltd.

Fred was employed as a Pattern-maker by Cannon Iron Foundries Ltd (*Est. 1900*) located at Deepfields, Coseley near Wolverhampton, later to be known as Cannon Holdings Ltd.



*Fig 1: Fred Fry (1885- 1966).*



*Fig 2: Fred and his wife Ethel (nee Belcher) c.1914.*

The following newspaper articles reproduced below with supporting text, provide an insight into Fred's rugby career as a player and life member of the club including other sporting interests and activities.

**Sporting Star Wolverhampton Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April 1955**

**Still running the rugby line - and he's over 70!**

*In South Wales last weekend, I encountered the oldest linesman I have ever met - on tour with Dudley Kingswinford, the club he helped to start in 1920/1. But before mention of all that **Mr Fred Fry**, who is over 70, I was interested (writes **Gwyn Bayliss\***) to hear of his playing days.*

*In 1906/7 he became a member of Exeter RFC and was captain in 1910/11. During this time, he tells me he was privileged to play with England internationals **T S Kelly**, **JRP Sandford** and **G D Roberts**.*



*Fig 3: Fred playing for  
Wolverhampton RFC at Fly-half  
1913/14 season.*

*When he came to the Midlands in season 1911/12, he played for Wolverhampton. After the 1914-18 war he helped to found the Dudley Club, then known as Dudley Bean, and played at the Dudley Cricket ground.*

### *Try - Scoring Record*

*Fred captained the club until 1924/25, and it is a very proud boast that during the 1921/22 season he created a club record which still stands - scoring 22 tries.*

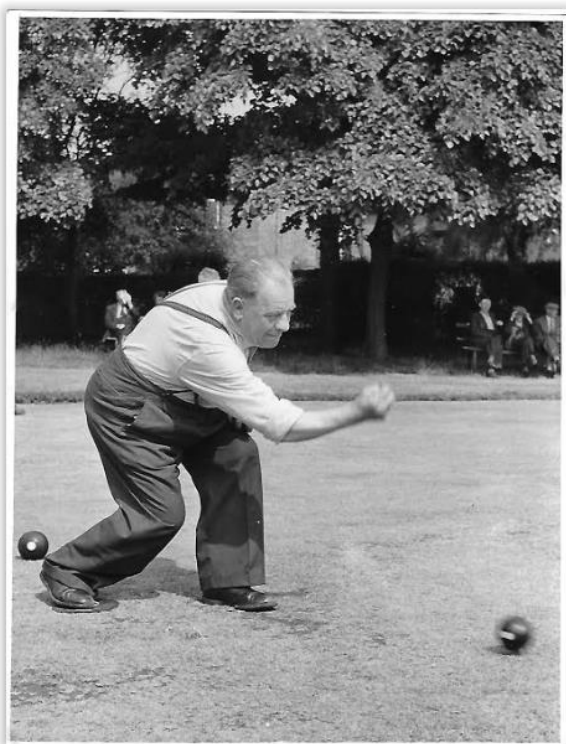
*He took over the captaincy of the second XV in the 1925/6 season and finally hung up his boots in 1932 at the age of 46.*

*He then joined the North Midlands Society of Referees and continued in this capacity until the outbreak of war in 1939.*

*Afterwards, he was soon active again and became a member of both the management and selection committees and finally became a life member. He hopes to give many more years' service to the club.*

### *All - Round Sportsman*

*He never misses a game, and until recently could be seen regularly running the line for one team or the other. He keeps all the club's scorers and all team details.*



*Fig 4: Fred in action on the Bowling Green.*

*Rugby is his life, but he has other sporting interests too. He is Chairman of the Bowls and Snooker sections at Cannon Industries where he is employed, and he is also a member of the Staffordshire Amateur Bowling Association management and selection committees.*

*\* Midlands sports reporter and former Welsh international rugby player.*

**National Union of Stove Grate and General Metal Workers**

**Annual Report for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 1960.**



*Fig 5: Here is Mr Fred Fry taken on the last day he worked at Cannon Holdings Ltd., Coseley, Nr. Wolverhampton. Fred doesn't look his 75 years, nor does he feel it. He served his time at Messrs Willey & Co. of Exeter as a pattern-maker and in 1907 went north to work at Messrs. J. Sykes and Messrs. Hygienic Stove Co., Huddersfield. He then went to Messrs Cannon Iron Foundries Ltd - as it was then called - in July 1911 and worked for them unbrokenly ever since. He retired at the end of last year i.e. 1960. He became foreman in the pattern-making shop and was respected by Management and men. A first-class craftsman and a thoroughly dependable gentleman in every way. Fred is a good trade unionist and joined our Union on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1912. Mr Fry was our first Branch Secretary at Coseley.*

*Express and Star Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September 1963*

*Boldest step yet for Dudley-Kingswinford Rugger. Heathbrook ground a far cry from the twenties.*

*There were gasps of astonishment in circles outside rugby when Dudley-Kingswinford Rugby Club announced they had sold their ground at Penzer Street, Kingswinford, for more than £34,000.*

*There were more gasps, this time of admiration, when the club, with a good slice of the money they received from the sale of the Penzer Street enclosure, yesterday opened their magnificent new headquarters at Swindon Road, Heathbrook, Wall Heath.*

*Swindon Road is a far cry from the first days of the club in 1920/21 when they started at the Dudley Cricket Club; moved from there, for a short time to the Bean ground at Tipton; and from there to Penzer Street in 1927/28.*

*No Comparison*

*By comparison with the facilities at Penzer Street, those at Heathbrook are simply superb. Their magnificence drew many compliments from the Rugby Football Union No.1 personality, **Mr AG Butler**, the President, and these he renewed at the celebration dinner at The Station Hotel, Dudley, in the evening.*



*Fig 6: Fred chatting with RFU President Mr AG Butler and Club President RGH Higgs at the Official Opening of DKRFC, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1963.*



*Fig 7: Fred enjoying a drink with his fellow team-mate and friend Jack Fellows.*

*But the best comments on the new ground were made by the last two original club members, **Fred Fry** and **Jack Fellows**, still to their credit and also that of the club, as keenly interested as ever in Dudley Kingswinford's fortunes.*

*Said Fred, skipper of the first XV in their second match, and now one of the five life members ..'it's a magnificent place.' Jack was equally terse in his tribute..'it's unbelievable.'*

*The visit of Mr Butler was the first time a Union President had visited the club. But there were past occasions when **Dr Cove-Smith\*** and **Ivor Preece\*** attended on other red-letter occasions.*

#### *First-Class Club Need*

*The new ground will bring new responsibilities as the Dudley President, **Mr RGH Higgs** pointed out when replying to the toast of the club, proposed by **Mr PL Richards**, President of the North Midlands Union.*

*Mr Higgs, referring to the new status of Staffordshire, in being elected to the senior ranks, said it was more than ever essential that the West Midlands should have at least one first - class club side. naturally he hoped Dudley could, in time, achieve that distinction. That would be up to the members. But the ground was*

*available for county games and the club, would, as always, continue to give every possible help to further rugby. One pleasing prospect in the provision of young players, was the probability of two senior schools in the district turning to the handling code.*

*Councillor **WGK Griffiths** proposed the toast of the Rugby Union;*

*Mr **MC Mobberley**, the Dudley-K Chairman, proposed the toast of the guests and*

*Mr **Peter Jackson**\* replied.*

*A great day for rugby and not only in Dudley, but the entire West Midlands.*

\* Former English international rugby players.

**Mr Fred Fry (aged 79 years) appointed club President for the season 1964/65.**

**Sporting Star Wolverhampton Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> February 1965**



*Fig 8: Fred and Jack Fellows on the Bank (the Bonk) as they watch the Fred Fry Tribute Match at Heathbrook 7<sup>th</sup> March 1965.*



*Fig 9: Fred Fry Tribute Match in progress at Heathbrook 7<sup>th</sup> March 1965.*

*Reporter **Gwyn Bayliss** comments: On Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> March, I am taking a team to Heathbrook as a tribute to that great rugger character and sportsman **Fred Fry**.*



*He will be 80 soon and rarely misses a game with one team or another. I have asked **Bobby Lloyd-Jones** to lead my side. He is a big favourite in these parts. The side will consist mostly of first-class county players and **Ron Cotterill** (Staffs. Society) will be the referee.*

### **Express and Star Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July 1966**

#### **Rugby Union - 'Death of a Midland Stalwart'**

*Members of Dudley Kingswinford Rugby Club heard with regret at their annual meeting last night of the death, only a few hours earlier, of past President Mr Fred Fry at the age of 81.*

*Mr Fry, of Ebenezer Street, Coseley, an Exeter man, came to The Midlands nearly 55 years ago. He was a founder member of the Dudley Kingswinford Rugby Club and captained the first team at the age of 40 and was linesman at the club's matches until he was well in to his 70s.*

*He was also the club's historian and record keeper. He kept a detailed file on each of the seasons' matches and provided club captains with information for their yearly review.*

*My Fry, who was also a keen bowls player and administrator, was a rugby referee with a North Midlands Union.*

*The Club Chairman, **Mr WM Growcott**, said 'it was impossible to say too much about the vast amount of good work Mr Fry had done for the club.'*

### **Express and Star Thursday 14 September 1967**

#### **'Tribute to Fred Fry - from Dudley Kingswinford'**

*In memory of their great stalwart, Fred Fry, Dudley Kingswinford Rugby Club last night unveiled a photograph of him and received a trophy to be called 'The Fred Fry Memorial Trophy'.*

The Fred Fry Memorial Trophy is presented, at the end of each rugby season, to the most successful club team. The very first team to be presented with the shield at the end of the 1967/68 season was the club's 1st XV, captained by **Peter Lees**.



*Fig 10: Pictured at the unveiling ceremony are (left to right), **Arthur Fry** (Fred's son and Club Member), **NVC Court** (Club Chairman), **J Fellows** (who played alongside Fred) and **WM Growcott** (Club President) who presented the trophy.*



*Fig 11: DK U11's Team, 'Gallis Trophy' semi-finalist, 1982. **Fred Fry's** great grandson, **Jonathan Smith**, standing fifth from left.*

Like his great grandfather Fred Fry and his grandfather Arthur Fry, Jonathan Smith, aged seven, was destined to join (the Youth Section of) DKRFC. Within four years, Jonathan, a confident and talented eleven-year-old rugby player, was selected to play in the club's 1982 in-house 'Gallis Trophy' competition. Clearly, Jonathan's progress and development as a member of the Youth Section was looking positive, however, his playing days at the club were short-lived. The Smiths' family moved from Kingswinford to Old Swinford near Stourbridge and as a consequence Jonathan joined the Youth Section of Stourbridge RFC albeit he was also playing rugby at his new school, Old Swinford Hospital (OSH); a school renowned for its successes in school-boy rugby. After his schooling at OSH, Jonathan attended St. Mary's College, Twickenham where he continued to play rugby and in due course he was selected to play for England & Great Britain Colleges at Stand-off & Fullback in 1991.



*Fig 12: Jonathan Smith representing England & Great Britain Colleges at Stand-off & Fullback, 1991.*

## Acknowledgements:

Sincere thanks to Fred Fry's granddaughter **Pam Smith** (nee Fry) and her husband **Gordon Smith** for their support and assistance in producing the above; various photographs and newspaper articles kindly reproduced from family archives.

Also, many thanks to rugby enthusiast and historian **Roy Hough** whose records provided details of Fred Fry's playing career at Exeter RFC.