

## **The History of the Rhodes Rugby Club**

**Inception to 1987 written by Derek Barter, 1988 onwards by Conan Olivier and Brendan Grant**

The Right Honourable CECIL JOHN RHODES died on 26th March 1902. In terms of his Last Will and Testament, and by enactment of Parliament, an institution for Higher Education was established in 1904 at Grahamstown under title of Rhodes University College and became a constituent college of the University of South Africa. Cecil John Rhodes' Will also laid down that his "Rhodes Scholars" should have a "fondness for, and success in, manly sport". Thus bearing Rhodes' name, the infant Rhodes University College could not but be mindful in 1904 of this recipe for the all-round man. A sporting, and, more particularly, a rugby tradition would have to be forged.

And so with the advent of Rhodes University College, the birth of rugby at Rhodes soon followed in 1905. Games were friendly and few and far between. Often schools in Grahamstown helped to make up the Rhodes complement. In 1907 Rhodes first commenced playing in the Eastern Province Grand Challenge Cup and later that same year went on their first rugby tour, a tour of the Eastern Province (EP) and Border. Rhodes' rugby team first commenced playing in white jerseys, secondly in green, and then in 1909, in green with white and red hoops. In this same year, and sporting this new jersey, Rhodes University College entered two teams for the first time, with great trepidation, for the Grahamstown League and the EP Grand Challenge Cup. Beyond all expectations Rhodes won both leagues. This was achieved after some incredible victories over the likes of Albany, a team with a most distinguished record, and then a 3-0 victory against Olympics at the Crusaders ground in the final of the EP Grand Challenge. It is thought that almost the whole of Rhodes took the train with the rugby team, and the old German street band was at the Crusader ground as usual, which all helped to add dramatic atmosphere to a rousing final. Among the team were the well-known East Cape names of Sampson and Frielinghaus. The team was a mixed one, including players from Kingswood College, Oppidans (some of whom were better at soccer) and laced with reportedly reluctant Andreans. In this golden year Rhodes also travelled to meet the experienced Cradock Rovers for the Michau Country Cup and came away with another trophy for their cabinet.

In 1912 two Rhodians who had registered in 1907, S N Cronje and A S "Saturday" Knight, were chosen as Springboks. Cronje was the first Rhodian to win his Oxford rugby Blue, and Knight was chosen by the great Markotter in his best-ever South African team. During these early years the rugby club, as with other Rhodes sport clubs, did not have their own sports ground in the College precinct. Rhodes practised their rugby at City Lords, the home of Albany Rugby Club, but in 1913 The Great Field was completed and is still today the club's home ground.

The immediate post-war years were the years of the rising star Jack Slater, a superbly built player with a strong handoff, he was also difficult to tackle. He became a Springbok in 1924. In 1925 Rhodes withdrew from the EP Competition following a row over the registration of a player, but the next year could deploy its formidable team throughout the season and bring the Grand Challenge Cup home for the second time. Among well-known E P rugby names in this team were Slater,

Monty Levin, and Itsky Waldman. A remarkable achievement by this great 1926 side was that not only did they remain unbeaten, but not one single try was scored against them throughout the season. In the early '30s Rhodes rugby again began to work up to a climax like that of 1926. Behind the initial impetus was the redoubtable "Jock" MacConnachie (scrumhalf), but players like George Hodgson (loose forward 1933 -1936), Ken Dimbleby (1934 - 1936) and Hubert D "Tribly" Freakes (centre 1933 - 1935) were there to take over the running. Freakes later captained Oxford and played for England. MacConnachie, after leaving Rhodes and having played for Eastern Province (1933 and 1934), played for Natal.

In these early '30s Rhodes played in two competitions - one was a Country league consisting of Rhodes, Albany, Fort Beaufort, Bedford, Somerset-East and Cradock Rovers, and the other was a Town League consisting of Rhodes and Albany of Grahamstown, Swifts and Old Collegians of Uitenhage, Crusaders, Olympics and Parks in Port Elizabeth (PE). The team had to travel to the country districts by car on fairly rough dirt roads in the morning before the match and return again afterwards. However, matches in Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth involved travelling by train leaving Grahamstown at about 9.00 pm on Friday evening, arriving in PE before breakfast on Saturday, then returning to Grahamstown by train after the match on Saturday night. 1933 saw the arrival of the first Australian Union Rugby side to visit South Africa. They were called the "Wallabies" and played in the pale-blue jerseys of New South Wales as only two states in Australia played Union rugby in those days, namely New South Wales and Queensland. Included in the Eastern Province side against the first touring Wallabies were three Rhodians - Hodgson, Freakes and MacConnachie. Rhodes were also represented in the first ever "PUGS" team in 1935.

This team was based on the principles of the Barbarians in England but was confined to players from PE, Uitenhage and Grahamstown under 23 years of age. It was founded by a well-known anaesthetist in P E called "Porn" Dyke and captained by the Rhodes captain, George Hodgson. Other sponsors of the "PUGS" were a PE dentist, John Finmore who was an Old Rhodian, Boet Erasmus and Robert St Leger Searle who later became the president of the EPRFU. The steady improvement in Rhodes University College Rugby resulted in Rhodes' winning three floating trophies in 1935, and in 1936 was crowned again with three trophies including the much prized EP Grand Challenge Cup for only the third time in their history. On a lighter note, George Hodgson, captain of this fine 1936 side, remembers with affection one of the personalities of the early '30s. He recalls: "The one character which immediately comes to mind during my time was a local Cobbler /Shoemaker affectionately known as 'Teddy' who was an ardent Rhodes supporter. So much so that every Friday he would inspect the boots of the first XV to ensure that each member had the proper studs for the weather forecast for the following Saturday. In those days all boots had leather studs and these frequently became worn or insecure. Furthermore, Teddy had his own theories on the different stud formations for forwards and backs. He also insisted on longer studs for wet weather. His enthusiastic support frequently extended to Rhodians in Provincial sides. I was often greeted By Teddy at the entrance to the ground with a request for a ticket. How he got from Grahamstown to PE I never enquired but I always had a complimentary ticket in case I met him at the gate! The culmination of Teddy's career as a supporter came when we won the Grand Challenge Cup. Teddy was the first to greet me as I

emerged from the grandstand after the presentation and begged to be allowed to carry the trophy. On handing him the much-coveted trophy he, to my consternation, rushed off to parade it proudly in front of the popular East Stand. However, my fears that the Rugby Union had lost its famous trophy were eventually proved groundless when the cup was lovingly returned to me after a final polish".

Then came the war years which resulted in various clubs in the Eastern Province disbanding, and little or no rugby at all was played at Rhodes during these years. World War U ex-servicemen The return of the ex-servicemen after the Second World War gave Rhodes a wealth of talent to call on and made Rhodes a formidable side - in fact "sides", for there were two first teams, one in the "town" and one in the "country" circle of the EP Grand Challenge. In this year, 1946, Rhodes were well represented in the EP side and even the mighty Cape Town 'Varsity (winners of the Western Province Grand Challenge) and Stellenbosch were disposed of in intervarsities. The Rhodes and EP sides were well served by talented players like Eric Norton (loose-forward) and Malcolm Gilmer (wing), both of whom played for the Junior Springboks (Norton captaining the side) and whom many believed might well have been Springboks but for the War. Norton, being an excellent all-round sportsman, did gain his Springbok Honours for cricket. Other well-known EP rugby names in the post-war Rhodes University College rugby sides were Neil MacDonald, a final Springbok trialist wing threequarter, Murray Hofmeyr who later gained an Oxford Blue and England Honours as full-back, Keith McMillan, (8th man) who went on to earn a Scottish cap, Harry Birrell (centre) also an Oxford Blue, I "Zas" Zelman (lock), and Noel Estcourt who gained a Cambridge Blue and England cap as fullback.

Despite all this outstanding talent Rhodes University College seldom played to its full potential, particularly in 1946, because of constant changes and lack of clear direction and training methods. Fielding two sides eventually caused problems because some players would only make themselves available for the side playing a home game rather than travel to Port Elizabeth in the rear of one of the transport lorries. It takes little imagination to appreciate that staying to play at Rhodes with a hot shower after the match, plus girlfriends and home-town entertainment was preferable to travelling back from PE on appallingly dusty roads in the back of a lorry, often somewhat stiff and sore, and always extremely cold.

In 1949 Parliament passed a Bill that the Rhodes University College was to be reconstituted and become a University under the name "Rhodes University". However, it was only later, on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1951, that Rhodes University College became a fully-fledged University and the word "College" was no more. The early '50s saw a period of relative slack water. Rhodes held a combined Oxford and Cambridge side to a draw in 1951 and the young Jeremy Nel, who was also to draw green and gold over his head, made an appearance at centre.

During or about the mid '50s Rhodes left the EP Grand Challenge league and concentrated their efforts in the Karoo and Midlands circles. Nonetheless, they still remained affiliated to the EP Rugby Union. However, in 1961 Rhodes returned to the EP League and for several seasons the talents of players like Roley Rodgers (scru-half), Kinton Weakley (centre), Springbok Clive Ulyate (fly-half), Springbok trialist E K Moorcroft (lock), J Jones (centre), Gavin White, A Weatherdon (8th man)

and Neil Jardine (fly-half) sustained the Rhodes XV, but then the attrition of hard travelling and injury began to cripple performance. From the doldrums of the mid-sixties Rhodes rugby was slowly pulled by enthusiasts like D Lewis, Ray Carlson who also gained Springbok colours, but not while at Rhodes, and Rob Pennefather. Nevertheless, the falling away of the old Karoo and Midlands circles and formation of North-East Cape, together with the increase of first league clubs in the PE/Uitenhage area, was giving an increasingly "Town" complexion to Eastern Province rugby. Realising that their interests in distant Grahamstown would be best served by moving into areas where country rugby was still relatively strong, Albany chose to join North-East Cape, and Rhodes opted to join the Border, which they did in 1970. A new era in Rhodes University Rugby therefore opened and although an immediate impact was made on Border rugby, and a high level of performance and competitiveness maintained, it was only ten years later in 1978 that the Border Grand Challenge Cup was won, for the first time.

In 1971 Rhodes played the touring Paris University team, upon whose colours the RURFC club tie of the 1980s and 1990s was based. Playing with a very depleted side, Rhodes just lost to their more experienced opponents. When the side toured again in 1974, a young Rhodes team came up against a vastly experienced Paris University team containing the great Benoit Dauga and Joseph Maso, two French Internationals, and the Argentinian front ranker Arturo Orzabal. To Rhodes' credit they trailed into injury time by only 14-12 until Paris University scored a goal and clinched the game 20-12 in their favour.

After moving into the Border league, Rhodes rugby again began to work up to a climax when, in 1973, they had sight of their first major trophy since winning the E P Grand Challenge Cup in 1936. However, it was not to be, and in a rousing final the trophy went to the strong Hamiltons side. Behind the initial impetus of Rhodes in the Border League were the likes of R Pennefather (centre), A Siopis (wing), D Neale-May (loose forward), P Reed (scrumhalf) and A Weakley (flank) who went on to lead the team for several years. All these players also gained their Border caps. 1973 also saw the first appearance of Derek Barter (lock) who captained Border to victory in the Sport Pienaar Competition in 1975 - Border's first cup victory in 41 years. Also there to sustain Rhodes and Border in the mid '70s were the likes of D Shaw (loose forward), R Kemick (fly-half) and M Kleinenberg (loose forward).

The year 1976 was mixed bag of results for Rhodes but it will certainly be remembered for the historic rugby match involving five of their players. They were Weakley and Barter, G Bell, M Rowles and K Purcell. At the end of the rugby season these players had been invited in their private capacities to play for the black rugby club South-Eastern Districts Rugby Union (SEDRU) of Grahamstown in their friendly encounter with their great rivals Kwazakhele Rugby Union (KWARU) of Port Elizabeth. KWARU's team included three invited white players, "Cheeky" and Valance Watson and Colin Snodgrass (all Eastern Province rugby players). The match was played on 10th October 1976 at the Dan Qeqe Stadium, Veeplaas, in Port Elizabeth before a crowd of more than 10 000 wildly excited black supporters and no more than 20 white spectators. The significance attached to this event is that it was the match commonly regarded as the very first organized multi-racial rugby match played in South Africa, and certainly the match which almost turned the South African rugby world upside-down. The match came at a time when the South African

government was trying to introduce a new mixed sports policy which would permit a black player to play against a white player, but it was against government policy for white and black to play in the same team and to play mixed rugby on a public ground. Had it not been for a flooded field which caused a postponement of one week, the match would probably have taken place without much publicity and much ado. However, with the postponement more publicity was given to the event and pressure was brought to bear from the S A Rugby Board, the then Minister of Sport, Dr P Koornhof, sports administrators and security police for the white players to withdraw from the match. Permits for the white players to enter the black area were refused and the players were threatened with possible criminal prosecution for illegally entering a black area if the match went ahead. Suspension from rugby if the players disregarded the government's sports policy and played in an unauthorized racially mixed match was also a possibility. The match went on and happily rugby was the winner, although, for the record, KWARU won convincingly 30-3. What had started out as a friendly match between two rival black sides with invited white guest players had unexpectedly turned into something of a political boiling pot. Fortunately there was a happy ending to this most memorable and exciting match and no rugby suspensions were imposed or prosecutions instituted against any of the players. This particular match will also be remembered by many as being the forerunner of multi-racial rugby as it is presently played in South Africa. Fortunately for Rhodes their five "rebels" were not suspended by the SA Rugby Board and Rhodes were able to call on their talents and maintain their consistent challenge in the Border League for the next two seasons.

Also of particular note in 1976 was the much-acclaimed Intervarsity win against a star-studded UPE team, with Ally Weakley triumphantly lifting the trophy at the end of the game. Much credit for this win should also go to visionary coach Stan Morgan, revered by many, and destined to return to Rhodes in the 1980s. In 1978 the persistence of the Rhodes players was rewarded when in their second appearance in a Border Cup Final they won the Border Grand Challenge Cup for the first time. Among the well-known Border rugby names in this team were Weakley, Barter and Bell, D Gallow, P Beeby and the young star, Chari Hattingh. In 1980 the consistence of Rhodes was rewarded with a second, and outright win of the Border Grand Challenge Cup.

Between these two cup victories during the 1979 season, Rhodes hosted the Llanelli Rugby Club from Wales in their first match of a six-match tour. It was in fact a Rhodes Invitation XV with six invitees which met this exceptionally strong side and lost 21-7. The tour side included the mercurial Phil Bennett as captain, Derek Quinnell, J J Williams (who scored three tries in the match), Roy Bergiers - all four Welsh and British Lions Internationals. Also included were the four other Welsh Internationals- Paul Ringer, Ray Gravell, Alan Martin and Clive Griffiths (all of whom later gained British Lions honours). After the success of the Border Cup in 1980 Rhodes rugby again saw a period of relative slack water. Eventually, and with no disrespect intended to Border rugby, Rhodes felt that their own interests would be best served by playing in the stronger Eastern Province League. In 1986 they returned once more to the Eastern Province ranks where, they competed at various times for the premier E P Grand Challenge Cup and the Dewar Shield.

The move saw the reappearance of an under 20 team for the first time since about 1975 when under 20s last competed as a side under the auspices of the Border Rugby Union. Having moved back to Eastern Province first division status the seeds were being sown for some significant future success. Not only was the competition much tougher in a Currie Cup A Division province with Rhodes regularly playing against opponents fielding Springboks and a host of senior provincial players, but the associated financial rewards were proving a boon to the Club. In 1987 the club won only a handful of games in the league, but results were encouraging under coaches Steve Olivier and Stan Morgan, with John Mokawem providing able on-field leadership. That year also saw the Under 20 A and B teams defeating UPE and winning their respective leagues.

In 1988 Olivier decided to return to the playing fray as player/coach/captain and this coincided with a golden year for Rhodes. Rhodes finished quite high in the tough EP league with many notable and prized scalps along the way. The 1988 team included several Eastern Province senior representatives in Jason Venn, Ant Baber and Steve Olivier, while Mike Fennell, Seamus Sargent, Nick Longden later played for Border. The earlier seeds were now bearing fruit and in 1989 the Under 20s, coached by the inimitable Sean Coughlan, were unbeaten in the league and at the South African Universities tournament, a terrific achievement. By this time, having returned from playing rugby overseas, Steve Olivier was the Eastern Province Under 23, EP Under 20 and EP Students coach. For several years Rhodes enjoyed real success in producing even more senior and Under 20 provincial players, including Eastern Province senior players such as Hilton Brown, Garth Wakeford, Richard Lurie, and Jeremy Sieberhagen, while Brendan Grant represented the strong Southern Universities team and captaining EP under 23. On the EP Under 20 front, representatives included, among others, Warren Turner, Brett Hodgson, Kevin Hopkins and Greg Quirk. Another notable achievement was that of Rhodes' successful hosting of the annual South African Universities (SAU) tournament for the first time, in 1988.

After a really good year for the club in 1989, 1990 proved tough. A young and inexperienced team battled in the EP Premier League (Grand Challenge). At the same time, the club struggled to recruit talented players and coaches. Several more experienced players had graduated, highlighting the effect of many years of not having the post-graduate resources that other universities had. Many of the young players were gaining invaluable experience though and spirits remained high.

At the end of this season, the club was relegated from the Premier League to the Junior Clubs section. 1991 proved a tough but enjoyable season. Although the overall standard was not as high as the Premier League, the physical nature of the games was no less demanding and the team had some interesting experiences in places like Patensie, Humansdorp and Addo. Rhodes performed well in this league and was promoted back into the Premier League for the 1992 season.

Dr Brian La Trobe, Peter Glover, John Donald and Steve Olivier had persuaded the University Council to invest in sport through various initiatives, including the awarding of sports bursaries. These initiatives eventually started to bear fruit - players were recruited to Rhodes and made an impact through their experience. Local legend Mlungisi "Pepsi" Twaku (later to excel for Border) also joined the club

and graced the Great Field with some of the most beautiful running it has seen. His two tries in a 17-0 victory over a strong and massive Parks team will long be remembered.

Under the auspices of Sports Administration in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Steve Olivier undertook coaching and recruitment sessions in townships across the country and also arranged joint training sessions and matches with local "township" clubs. As far back as the 1977 Annual General meeting, the club took the decision to "become non-racial". This was formalised when Rhodes arguably became the first university rugby club in the country to achieve unity following extensive talks with local so-called "township" clubs in 1991. The benefits of this were immediately evident with many coaching clinics and friendly games being hosted at the Great Field. The following year was also a watershed year in terms of the unification of sport in SA and for the first time in structured leagues, Rhodes turned out against the likes of PE Harlequins, Zwide United and Progress. The Harlequins side played exciting rugby and although not known to us at the time, the first match against them featured the likes of future Springboks Allister Coetzee, Ricardo Loubser and Deon Kayser in their back line. There were some great tussles over the following years between the two teams. Our team, captained by Anton van Noordwyk performed relatively well in the league and this set the scene for an exciting 1993.

On the social side the rugby club committee felt it was important that, regardless of what happened on the field, we should be good hosts to our opposition afterwards. As such, players from both clubs would regularly traipse up to the Old Mutual Sports Union building for the after-match functions. Eventually however, clubhouse space was secured closer to the Great Field, on the bottom level of the Rhodes Union. At last the club had a venue it could call its own, where 1<sup>st</sup> team photos were displayed and opposition teams were entertained with regular singalongs, Man of the Match awards, and stories recounted from previous encounters.

The club also prided itself on being good hosts to touring teams, and in addition to the aforementioned Llanelli and Paris University, Manchester Metropolitan University, Oxbridge (both UK), Irish Universities, Kansas University (USA), and Danmark RFK (Denmark) added to the club's rich history.

1993 was a great year for Rhodes Rugby. A core of now-experienced youngsters were joined by former Transvaal and EP flank Hendrik Weber who was as tough as nails and an inspirational captain. The team continued with Rhodes's exciting brand of rugby but with a forward pack that could hold their own against the traditional heavyweights. The EP Currie Cup team were also excelling under new and former World Cup-winning coach Alex Wylie and in their ranks were Rhodians Hilton Brown at hooker (later to also play for Gloucester) and Richard Lurie at scrumhalf. Brendan Grant captained the EP under 23 side and a host of other Rhodians would go on to play provincially, amongst them Kelly Hilton Green and Graham Carlson who both excelled for Border in later years. Garth Wakeford would go on to represent EP and the Sharks, Chad O'Riordan EP "B" and SA under 20 lock Daniel MacAlister were also exceptional talents. Centre Nick Smith would later play for Bristol. It was an exciting time on the great field as large crowds were back and the atmosphere was electric. Rhodes ended 5<sup>th</sup> in the Premier League narrowly missing out on the semi-finals in a year that EP qualified to play in the Super 10. A highlight of the year

was when, as captain, Brendan Grant hoisted the Intervarsity Trophy last held by Rhodes hands when Ally Weakley lifted it in 1976. In a tense game in front of a massive crowd, Rhodes had triumphed 18-12 when debutant John Isley ran the length of the field to score late in the game. A long 17-year drought had been broken and the celebrations were of monumental proportions, lasting several days. This great result was the culmination of the vision and hard work of great servants of Rhodes Rugby, none less than Steve Olivier who drove a professional renewal of the club, and Professor Ian MacDonald, the club's wise and dedicated patron and President.

Another highlight of the RURFC Development Programme in the early part of the 90s was the introduction of formal Women's Touch Rugby. Who knew that what started as a regular Sunday afternoon game of touch rugby among friends would lead to a transformation of the Rhodes Rugby Club? During those times, life as a student—especially for those involved in sports—was fulfilling in every sense. Beyond the obvious health benefits, the friendships forged on and off the field were long-lasting. The intense rivalry and competition between players and clubs made the Sunday afternoon “trot” for touch rugby extremely popular.

What added to the appeal was that it wasn't just the usual rugby players showing up for a run; rather, it was groups of friends or residents from the same hall who gathered at what was then the Great Field. A novel aspect of this time was the presence of a group of women eager to participate. While the more serious games among the male residences may not have seemed like the ideal setting for the ladies to showcase their skills, this did not deter their spirit or desire to join in. They engaged in a battle of attrition that they won resoundingly, leading to the formation of mixed teams, and with some minor rule adjustments to level the playing field, the mixed games began and quickly gained popularity.

The catalyst for change may be a memory long forgotten, but its significance remains. The women wanted to take the Sunday “trot” and formalise it—thus, ladies' touch rugby was born. This core group of women launched a well-structured recruitment drive to increase their numbers, and gradually, more joined the fun. They consistently fielded 15-20 players, allowing for at least two ladies' teams with rolling substitutions. However, they soon realised they lacked some basic skills and patterns that their male counterparts had honed from an early age. This realisation led to the next evolution in the Rhodes Rugby Club: the introduction of formal coaching and support for the ladies by 1<sup>st</sup> team player Shaun Kirchmann, along with their official recognition within the Rugby Club and a seat on the rugby committee. Official training sessions commenced, equipping the women with the support and assistance needed to become a skilled and cohesive unit.

A bigger challenge still loomed for the ladies: competitive games were hard to find outside of Rhodes, as other clubs in the EP and Border leagues did not have similar women's setups at the time. With some foresight and strategic planning, the inaugural ladies' intervarsity touch rugby game was included in the competition against Fort Hare University in 1996. This match was a huge success, and after a hard-fought battle, the Rhodes ladies emerged victorious. Following this event, additional fixtures were organised whenever possible, leading to an increase in the number of games played. Nonetheless, the intervarsity—and later the Tri-varsity



competition between Rhodes, UPE, and Fort Hare—remained the most anticipated and well-supported event for many years.

The ultimate success of ladies' touch rugby was widely recognised. The drive and determination of these women, combined with progressive and ongoing support from the club and university, played a significant role in transforming rugby from a male-dominated sport into a more inclusive and representative activity within the Rhodes Rugby Club.

1994 was another good year for Rhodes. Lippi Sinnott was the coach: a New Zealander who was well-liked by the players. Hilton Brown played in the Super 10 for EP. This was the year Daniel McAllister, whom many believed was destined for the highest honour in Rugby tragically died in his sleep. He had been Man of the Match in the intervarsity game of 1993.

Former Springbok Frans Erasmus became the Head Coach in 1997, by which time Rhodes was back in the Border League. He was tragically killed in a car accident just outside town after a first-team game.

The club has at various times fielded as many as 5 teams – 1<sup>st</sup> XV, 2<sup>nd</sup> XV (Collegians), 3<sup>rd</sup> XV (Thistles), and Under 21/20 A and B, an impressive feat, given the large number of activities available to students. At intervarsity time, ex-players were often co-opted to form a 4<sup>th</sup> team.

Rhodes has always contributed players to the various provincial teams. Perhaps because our players were predominantly students, the club's style of play was based on skilful, running rugby, which attracted the eyes of the selectors. Of course, Rhodes players were often overlooked at the expense of players from the bigger clubs, but our players knew that if they were selected to represent the province, they deserved to be in the team.

At about the same time the Club decided to return to the Border League and Rhodes rugby, along with that in the Eastern Cape in general, stagnated. Fortunately, at the time of writing (2024) there is a spirit of optimism and purpose going forward, with real ambition on the rugby front at Rhodes.

Below is a list of Rhodes University players who represented their Province, either Eastern Province or Border (or both). This list is fairly accurate from about 1946 onwards.

<b>EASTERN PROVINCE</b>		<b>BORDER</b>
* (SA) S N Cronje (1907)		R Pennefather (1970 - 1972)
* (SA) A S "Saturday" Knight (1907)		A Siopis (1970 - 1971)
* (SA) ) E Slater (1925)		A Laurence (1973 - 1974) (± 6)
J Mckenzie (1925)		D Neale May (1973 - 1974) (± 17)
Y Jameson (1925)		P Reed (1973 - 1974) (± 7)
G Hodgson (1933 - 1936)		A Weakley (1974) (3)
* (E) H D "Trilby" Freakes (1933 - 1935)		D Barter (1974 - 1982) (51)
J MacConnachie (1933 - 1934)		R Kernick (1974) (4)
K Dimpleby (1934 - 1936)		B Jacobson (1974) (1)

EB Norton (1946 - 1948)	D Shaw (1975) (4)
* (E) M B Hofmeyr (1946)	M Kleinenberg (1975 - 1976) (13)
M Sinclair (1946)	R Edkins (1975) (4)
D De Villiers (1946)	D Murray (1975 - 1976) (3)
D Hanson (1946 - 1949)	L Green (1975 - 1977) (2)
M Gillmer (1946 - 1948)	P Beeby (1977 - 1979) (14)
* (SC) K McMillan (1947)	C Hattingh (1978 - 1979) (19)
I Zelman (1947)	T Brukman (1978) (3)
M MacDonald (1947 - 1948)	G Bell (1978) (4)
R Heugh (1947)	D Gallow (1978) (3)
H B Birrell (1948 - 1950)	R Liddell (1978) (1)
* (E) N Estcourt (1949 - 1951)	C Fisher (1981 - 1982) ( $\pm$ 6)
A du Toit (1951)	H Mansell (1981) ( $\pm$ 4)
* (SA) J Nel (1953)	J Whitehead (1982) (9)
T Yiljoen (1953)	P Clarke (1982) (2)
D Bouwer (1954)	T Jaffray (1983 - 1984) (21)
	R Henry
B Meyers (1957)	T Mills (1983) (1)
P St Leger Searle (1957)	K Mullins (1984) (7)
C Stone (1959)	M Whiting (1984) (5)
K Weakley (1961)	Mike Fennell (1988)
E Moorcroft (1961 - 1963)	Seamus Sargent (1988)
) Jones (1963)	Nick Longden (1988)
* (SA) C Ulyate (1963)	Derek Hendry
M Jardine (1964)	Kelly Hilton-Green
D Lewis (1965 - 1967)	Mlungisi "Pepsi" Twaku
P Stead (1967 - 1968)	Graham Carlson
T Muirhead (1967)	
* (SA) R Carlson (1968 - 1969)	
M Cowley (1968)	
Jason Venn (1988) EP "B"	
Steve Olivier (1988) EP "B"	
Ant Baber (1989) EP "B"	
Warren Turner (1989) EP U20	
Delon Preston (1989) EP U20	
Mark Saunders (1989) EP U20	
Brett Hodgson (1989) EP U20	
Kevin Hopkins (1989) EP U20	
Greg Quirk (1989) EP U20	
Jeremy Sieberhagen (1991-1992)	
Delon Preston (1991) EP U23, EPCD	
Brendan Grant (1991) EP U23	
Richard Lurie (1991) EP U23	
Mark Saunders (1991) EP U23	
Kelly Hilton-Green (1991) EP U20	
Garth Wakeford (1991) EP U20	
Craig Wilson (1991) EPCD	
Nick Longden (1991) EPCD	
Iain Longden (1991) EPCD	
Richard Lurie (1992-1993)	
Hilton Brown (1993)	
Mlungisi "Pepsi" Twaku (1993) EP "B"	
Garth Wakeford (1993) EP "B", EP U23	

Chad O'Riordan (1993) EP "B", EP U23		
Brendan Grant (1993) EP U23		
Chris Rey (1993) EP U23		
Kelly Hilton-Green (1993) EP U23		
Graeme Carlson (1993) EP U21		
Daniel McAlister (1993) EP U21		
Colin Alexander (1993) EP U21		
John Hislop (1993) EP U21		
Nick Smith (1993) EP U21		

\* Denotes International.

(SA) South Africa

(E) England

(SC) Scotland

The following players were selected for national representative teams during the 1980s and 1990s:

1987	Adrian Smith	Zimbabwe (captain)
1987	Kevin "Hedgehog" Graham	Zimbabwe (World Cup)
1989	Brendan Grant	Southern Universities
1989	Malcolm Charles	Southern Universities
1993	Garron Forman	South Africa Maccabi
1993	Richard Lurie	South Africa Students
1993	Daniel McAllister	South Africa Under 20

Long-serving contributions and milestones over the years include those of Derek Barter (Captain of Rhodes and Border and by far the record holder of provincial caps by a Rhodes player); Ally Weakley (longest serving Rhodes captain, most 1<sup>st</sup> XV games, and Border player); and Steve Olivier (longest span of first to last 1stXV games – 15 years, and EP B player).

Rugby at Rhodes should not only be remembered for its players and success on the field, or the lack thereof, but also for those unheralded "backroom boys" for their tireless efforts in trying to maintain the smooth running of the Rugby Club. Invariably they are the ones who shoulder the blame for the Club's failures, yet seldom are they given the credit so deserved for the successes. The only real continuity there has been in the Club has come mainly through its administrators, particularly the President and/or Chairman who has usually been a staff member with a longer association with the University than the students and so has been able to give longer service to the Club.

The Club's Constitution provides for a President and a Chairman, but not always have both positions been filled in any one year. Unfortunately, the Club's records are found wanting in recording the names of all those gentlemen who have served in either or both of these capacities, but one person who is remembered by three generations of players, and who must enjoy pride of place, is Professor H W "Bill" Page, the longest serving administrator in the Club's history. Bill Page arrived at

Rhodes in 1968 and the next year was elected Chairman. With Professor John Benyon as President, they served as the chief administrators until 1973. Thereafter Page, later to become Professor of Psychology, continued as Chairman and head of the Club until 1980. In 1981 he was elected President and continued his function as chief administrator of the Club until he retired himself from his uninterrupted service to the Club, and the university, at the end of 1987. In twenty years at Rhodes, Professor Page failed to attend only a handful of first team matches. Those few that he missed were only as the result of the odd bout of ill health or some other particularly pressing and important business, and to Professor Page there were very few matters more important than the Rugby Club! His support extended to almost every tour the first team undertook, and he attended most rugby practices. Even when the first team were not playing at home, Page could always be seen in the tunnel at the Great Field watching the other Rhodes sides. He gave dedicated and unwavering service to the Club which will not easily be equalled or surpassed. The roles of President and Chairman at Rhodes were sometimes seemingly interchangeable and others who served in both roles for notable periods following Bill Page's retirement included Prof Ian Macdonald, Conan Olivier, and Steve Olivier, with the latter probably being the only President of an EP first division club playing in the 1<sup>st</sup> XV as well. Many were the late-night trips from PE to Grahamstown these gentlemen undertook, returning from long-winded EP Rugby Union meetings.

Finally, the writers would like to apologise for all errors and omissions in this article. Unfortunately, the Rhodes Rugby Club written records are not quite what they should be and so this article is based on what few records have been kept by the Club - and the recollections of Old Rhodians.