

FOUR SPORTING PERSONALITIES FROM BROUGHTY FERRY

Broughty Ferry Men Play Rugby for Scotland

Introduction

A photograph of the Scottish team that played Wales on 6th February 1909 confirms a remarkable co-incidence: Colin Gilray and George (later Sir George) Cunningham both then playing for London Scottish were in the team. Born within yards of one another in Broughty Ferry and then separated to live in different hemispheres, rugby had brought them together again first at Oxford, then London Scottish, and then the national side.

Colin Gilray had the remarkable honour of playing rugby for both New Zealand and Scotland.

George Cunningham

George Cunningham was the third son of a jute merchant, James Cunningham and Anna Fraser Cunningham Sandeman. His grandfather, James, who lived in Airlie House on Victoria Street was provost of Broughty Ferry from 1870-1873. George was born on 23 March 1888 at 'Fort Rock', Hill Street. In 1891 the family was living in 'Seafield Lodge', Seafield Road; and by 1901 census they had moved to 2 Windmill Park, St Andrews.

George received his preparatory education at Seafield House School, Broughty Ferry, which was also attended by two other men who, like Sir George served with great distinction in India: General Sir Rob Lockhart; and Sir Francis Mudie.

George went on to Fettes College Edinburgh and at Magdalen College he was a triple blue successively captaining the Oxford and Scottish rugby teams and winning eight international caps before going on to play for London Scottish.

Cunningham entered the Indian Civil Service in 1911. Most of his professional career was on the North West frontier. He was acting governor from November 1932 to May 1933, and later served as Governor for the period 1937–46. He retired in the spring of 1946 and the following April he was installed as rector of St Andrews University, from which he had already received an honorary LLD. Within three months, however, he was back in Peshawar as governor of the North West Frontier which had now become part of Pakistan. He became seriously ill in the spring of 1948 and retired home on the advice of his doctor. He died suddenly, on 8 December 1963.

Sir George Cunningham was held in great respect by his colleagues, not just because of his immense knowledge and expertise, but because of his tact, imperturbability, and tolerance. Cunningham's approach avoided the confrontations of the India in the difficult years 1919–20 and 1930–32. He was regarded as the outstanding official of his generation in a region which was of crucial strategic importance to the Indian empire.

Colin Gilray

Colin Macdonald Gilray BA (Hons) (Otago) MA (Oxon) LLD MC OBE was born at 8 Castle Street, Broughty Ferry. In those days that terrace of houses was one of the most fashionable areas of the Burgh. It was equipped with all of the modern conveniences including gas, electricity and the luxury of indoor toilets. In front of the houses, and looking out onto the sands of Broughty Ferry beach, were private garden grounds reserved for the use of the residents.

Colin Gilray was born on 17 March 1885, the fourth of five children of Thomas Gilray (1851-1920) and his wife Annie, née Macdonald. Thomas had been a brilliant graduate of Edinburgh University. After teaching English at the High School of Glasgow and University College, Dundee, in 1889, when Colin was 4 years old) he was appointed Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Otago, New Zealand.

Colin was educated at Otago Boys' High School and at the University of Otago graduating from there in 1906 with first-class honours in English and German and a second in classics. An outstanding athlete, about 5 ft 10 ins tall and weighing 12 stone, he played as a wing/centre for Otago Boys' High School and Otago University and by the age of 19 he was established as a representative of the Otago Provincial rugby team. Because of his forthcoming exams, he refused an invitation to join the "originals" -the All Blacks on their first tour of Britain, France and the United States during 1905–1906. However, on 2 September 1905, at Dunedin, he was in the winning New Zealand team v Australia.

Elected New Zealand's Rhodes Scholar for 1907, Gilray took a second class in 'Greats' at University College, Oxford (M.A. 1910). A double Blue (1908 and 1909), he played for Oxford University v the 1908/1909 touring Australian Wallabies. He was capped 4 times for Scotland at centre: in 1908 he was in the winning team v England, in 1909 there was a win against England (16-10) and a loss to Wales (3-5), and in 1912 a loss to Ireland. In 1910-13, while reading for the Bar at the Middle Temple, Gilray taught at Mill Hill School, London which made a lasting impression on him. He also found time to captain the London Scottish.

Colin Gilray returned to Dunedin in 1913 to practise law. Early in 1916 he enlisted in the British Army; in July he was commissioned in the Rifle Brigade and took part in the Somme offensive; he was wounded on 13 November. Promoted to the rank of Captain, he was awarded the Military Cross. Invalided out to England in September 1917, on 24 November he married Ethel Standish at the parish church, Haslemere, Surrey. In 1919 Gilray resumed law practice at Milton in New Zealand. However, in 1922 he accepted the headmastership of John McGlashan College, Dunedin where he energetically built up the new Presbyterian school to high academic standards, was innovative in developing science and music, and was himself a gifted teacher.

At 49 Gilray moved to Australia to the post of principal of the premier private school in Australia: Scotch College, Melbourne. A devout man, he often preached in chapel. He was a liberal humanist, kind, modest and self-effacing. He stressed to the boys that privilege implied responsibility and public service. From 1939-52 Gilray was a member (chairman, 1949-52) of the standing committee of the Headmasters' Conference of the Independent Schools of Australia. In 1951 he was made an O.B.E. As deputy-chancellor (1954-58, 1959-61) of the University of Melbourne (LL.D., 1956). Gilray remained convinced that the best foundation for 'leaders-to-be' was classics, mathematics, and some science. He died on 15 July 1974 in Melbourne.

A plaque produced by David McGovern commemorating Colin Gilray's residence in Broughty Ferry and subsequent achievements has been pinned in front of his birth place on the south wall of the gardens in front of Castle Terrace in which he would have played as a boy.

Postscript

In the recent past the rugby tradition in Broughty Ferry has continued. Former pupils of Dundee HS and Captains of Scotland, Andy Nicoll and David Leslie, are from Broughty Ferry as is SRU Past President Harvey Wright. Alasdair Dickinson and Richie Vernon are internationals also from the Ferry. However, Colin Gilray remains the only one who has played for both New Zealand and Scotland.

ANITA LIZANA ELLIS:

BROUGHTY FERRY'S AND CHILE'S GREATEST TENNIS PLAYER

Broughty Ferry has been the adopted home of an array of distinguished migrants who have found it a congenial and welcoming place to take up residence. To the Russian Eugenie Fraser, and the Polish Zoe Polanska Palmer must be added the Chilean Anita Ellis.

Anita Mercedes Lizana de Ellis (19 November 1915 – 21 August 1994) was the first Latin American to be ranked World Number 1 tennis player. The only other was the Brazilian, Maria Bueno, in 1959. Anita's prowess is well known, at least in her native Chile. Less well known is the fact that she lived for over 50 years in Broughty Ferry first at 68 Seafield Road and later at 1A Traill Street.

Anita Lizana was born in Santiago, Chile, on 19 November 1915. Her father, Roberto, was caretaker and administrator at the local "Club de Tenis de los alemanes". The Germans who frequented the club set up a small house for the family beside the club grounds. Anita's uncle, Aurelio Lizana, was a talented tennis player who took on the best players who came to Chile and beat them all.

Aurelio and Roberto coached the young Anita with such success that she played in her first senior tournament in 1926. By 1930 Anita was champion of Chile at the age of 14. Bearing in mind her modest circumstances, a public appeal in 1934 raised 120,000 pesos to finance her entrance to her career in what then was still a strictly amateur sport. In 1935 she won several tournaments on her international debut in Great Britain. On unfamiliar grass courts she reached the third round of Wimbledon. In 1936, she established her reputation by winning several tournaments including the he British Covered Courts on the wood courts at Queens Club which were even faster than grass both of which were quite alien to her. She reached the quarter-final at Wimbledon, losing to the eventual champion. These results led her to be classed number eight in the world.

In 1937, Anita again reached the quarter-finals at Wimbledon and on 11 September she won the US title at Forest Hills. Looking back on that 1937 US championship win nearly fifty years later, Anita said: "I can still remember every minute of that tournament. It was my greatest victory. What I felt at that time can't be compared to anything else. I was invited to countless receptions and congratulated by some of the most famous people in the world. It was as if I was living in a wonderful dream." She went on that year to win a number of other singles titles, including the Riviera Championships in Menton on clay, the British Hard Court Championships in Bournemouth, and the Pacific Coast Championships in Berkeley, California. She was ranked number one in the world in 1937, and at the end of the year she returned to Chile where she was received by President Arturo Alessandri Palma.

In May 1937 she had become engaged to Ronald Taylor Ellis, a former winner of the Junior Plate at Wimbledon and then ranked as Scotland's number two tennis player. The couple had met in 1936, at Peebles Hydro during the Scottish tennis championships. On 14 July 1938, they married in a "society wedding", recorded by Pathe News, at the Brompton Oratory in South Kensington.

Ronald was born in Invergowrie on 3 December 1914 and was part of the extended family which owned and ran Taylor Brothers the major coal, fuel and oil company with offices at 68 Yeaman Shore and Gray Street Broughty Ferry and who had yards on East Dock Street and on Clepington Road. Taylor Brothers were an integral part of the commercial history of Dundee and the company's advertisement at Tannadice was immortalised by Michael Marra

recalling a game on 30 September 1981 when United played Monaco in the European Cup winning on aggregate 5-2:

"I remember the time it was an evening game,

A European tie in the pouring rain,

Gus Foy pointed to the side of the goal,

And said: There's Grace Kelly by Taylor Brother's Coal!"

Despite her single minded dedication to her sport in her early years, Anita had a very relaxed approach to tournament tennis and her pleasant disposition won her many fans. At no more than 5 foot tall, she was nicknamed "the little mouse". According to Helen Jacobs, writing in 1951 in "Gallery of Champions", her "timing was so carefully gauged and her body weight so skilfully used in adding momentum to her strokes that she could hit harder than players thirty pounds heavier than her". In addition, she had perfected her drop shot as a means of wrong footing her opponents.

The Second World War intervened and Anita was never able to dedicate herself to the game as she had done before she married. Moreover, she devoted herself to her husband and family of three girls in the happy home they had set up at in the large stone- built late Victorian property at 68 Seafield Road located close to what was then the edge of Broughty Ferry. Her roots were now firmly in Scotland, and Broughty Ferry in particular.

Anita resumed her tennis career in 1946 and again won the Scottish Championships in Edinburgh. The following year she returned to Wimbledon, but lost in the second round to the number four seed. Although this defeat discouraged her from entering the top tournaments again, she won the Scottish Hard Courts in 1947 at Saint Andrews. Ronald partnered her in the mixed doubles at the Scottish Championships and at other tournaments where Anita enjoyed success in the singles. In later life Anita and her husband played both tennis and golf socially. They were involved in the West End Tennis Club as well as the Broughty Ferry Games Club.

Although she never received the attention she deserved in her adopted country of Scotland, Anita Lizana is still recognised as Chile's most famous female tennis player. After her pre-war triumphs she appeared on cigarette cards and post cards; and today part of the Estadio Nacional (National Stadium) in Santiago bears her name. When reminded by a Chilean journalist in 1986 that no Chilean player, male or female, had approached her success, she smiled and said with genuine modesty: "I keep my trophies in the bank".

Ronald Ellis died suddenly of a heart attack on 2 August 1978. By then the couple were recorded as living at St Michaels (1A Traill Street) a substantial property of modern design set in its own considerable garden grounds situated on the corner of Seafield Road, Broughty Ferry. A grandmother and a great-grandmother several times over, Anita died of stomach cancer on 21 August 1994 at the age of 78 following a period of treatment in Fernbrae Hospital. She was cremated and her ashes were deposited beside those of her husband.

GEORGE KIDD:

UNDEFEATED LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE WRESTLING WORLD.

Dundee has produced two heroes of the ring: Olympic gold medallist boxer Dick McTaggart and the world champion professional wrestler George Kidd. Although born in Dundee, the latter qualifies as a Broughty Ferry man.

George Kidd was brought up in the Hilltown, and educated at Clepington Primary and Stobswell Secondary School. Weighing only nine and a half stone and standing just 5' 6", George started wrestling when he was demobbed from the Navy in 1946 and had his first paid contest in 1946 at the Caird Hall; within twelve months he was Scottish Lightweight Champion. In 1948 he took the British title from Jack Dempsey; and the following year he won the European Title in Paris. Two years later he added the World Title by defeating the Frenchman Reny Ben Chemoul.

During the fifties and sixties, when wrestling became one of the nation's favourite spectator sports, George's unique style and skills secured him national and international recognition. His belief in the integrity of his sport meant that he rejected the gimmicks favoured by other higher profile wrestlers. In short, he allowed the quality of his wrestling to speak for itself.

Although he was no lover of tag team matches it is of some current interest that, George, on occasion, partnered the disk jockey and part-time wrestler the now infamous, Jimmy Saville.

In the 1960s George combined a limited programme of wrestling bouts with appearances on Grampian Television. Its viewers voted him Personality of the Year in 1965; and in the same year he was Dundee's "First Citizen".

Where other wrestlers concentrated on developing muscle bulk, George Kidd preferred to augment his training regime of running and weights with yogic muscle-stretching exercises. Using their own weight as a tool against them, Kidd could defeat challengers, some as much as five stone heavier than himself. As well as developing his characteristic suppleness, George claimed that yoga's meditative element focused his mind; and this, along with a competitive spirit, helped him to out-think his opponents.

George retired in 1976 after a career that lasted over 30 years during which he suffered only 7 defeats in over 1,000 bouts.

After his retirement from wrestling, George owned a series of pubs in Dundee including the Ellenbank on Victoria Road. He and his wife, Hester, settled in Seafield Crescent, next to Dawson Park. Following her death George led a quiet life, resident in Lawrence Street in Broughty Ferry until his death, aged 72, in 1998.

George Kidd is widely acknowledged as the finest technical wrestler in the post war era. He held the World Lightweight Championship for 26 years defending the title 49 times. He was the undefeated, and undisputed, Lightweight Champion of the World. In August 2015 he was inducted as the first entrant into the newly created Scottish Wrestling Hall of Fame. A plaque detailing his achievements hangs in the Caird Hall.

Hugh M Begg

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