

PENGUINS (GKT RFC 4TH XV) TOUR TO SOUTH MOLTON, APRIL 19, 2008

The sun usually shines when the Penguins travel to Devon. It was a grey, wet morning as players, partners and children made their way to South Molton on April 19 for this annual match. The team had beaten South Molton at home earlier in the season and it was presumed that the hosts on this occasion would be keen for revenge.

From 11 a.m. until late kick off, the team and fellow passengers assembled in customary fashion at the gracious home of Charlie Popplewell, a Guys first fifteen prop from the 1980's. There was coffee, brandy and food to revitalize the travellers. Thus replenished there was time to walk to the ground and watch the South Molton first fifteen in action. The rain stopped and there was a glimpse of sun on the Georgian buildings lining the High Street of this attractive market town.

The pitches in the West Country tend to be heavy clay and ridged and rutted as though grazed by cattle between games. The South Molton pitch is no exception. The referee was a familiar face and a few years ago had played in the front row of the opposing team. Well that was acceptable but it was a matter of concern when he forgot which side had won the toss and gave the advantage to the host team.

The GKT players kicked off led on this occasion by the playing club president Terry Gibson. The sides were evenly matched but South Molton had two distinct advantages. They were better cheats and the referee had monocular vision. It took about 20 minutes for the Penguins to adapt but soon discovered how to take advantage of the referee and by the end of the game were as good as the opposition at lying over the ball at the rucks and mingling with the opposition in an off side position. In the first half South Molton scored an opportunistic try. Well actually a conventional sort of move which the Penguins failed to anticipate. The referee awarded ten scrums to South Molton in the first half and one to Guys, a fair indication of the game plan. The forwards were equally match and possession evenly shared.

William Popplewell, borrowed for the occasion, burrowed and charged like a terrier. His older brother George had a quieter afternoon on the wing. The Penguins responded with a try by mark Kinirons playing on the wing. There were men aplenty in support and it was then realized that the GKT players could win. A second try by a student representative in the side, Rhys Davies, made the point. Both tries were converted by Shay Reading and the Penguins left the field happily with a 14-7 victory to share along with the cider and port left over from the half time interlude. The small band of loyal supporters freezing on the touchline had managed to sustain themselves in similar manner.

After the clubhouse there was an excellent dinner at The George, then the local disco at the Coach and Horses for those with reserves of stamina.

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