

150 years of Watsonian rugby – celebrations begin

A commemorative plaque has been unveiled at 50 Yeaman Place, Edinburgh, near the site where the Watsonian *Football Club's rich history began with its first game 150 years ago.

On 30 January, 1875, the Watsonian Football Club played its inaugural game of rugby union against St George's at Bainfield, a farm then located at Yeaman Place, Polwarth.

While the game ended in a draw it laid the foundation for a club that has since achieved remarkable success. Over 150 years, Watsonians has consistently competed at the pinnacle of Scottish rugby, producing national team players across all levels.

Those in attendance at the unveiling included 96-year-old Honorary President, Dennis Carmichael, men's 1st XV captain, Neil Irvine-Hess, women's 1st XV co-captain, Freya Walker, Watsonians most capped international player, Scott Hastings, the Scottish and British & Irish Lions legend and two of the youngest members of the Watsonian Warriors and Watsonian Wildcats mini section, Alexander Wright and Amelia Boyle.

Scott Hasting said: "It's incredible to reflect on how far the club has come, from that first match to becoming such a cornerstone of Scottish rugby. Seeing members of all generations come together – young players, lifelong

supporters, and legends of the game was a really great moment. This plaque is a fitting tribute to our history.”

The unveiling of the plaque marks the start of 150th anniversary celebrations, with further events taking place throughout the year including a gala dinner on 21 November at the O2 Academy with Sir Ian McGeechan and Sir Chris Hoy as guests of honour.

The club has also released a maroon and white limited-edition jersey to mark the important milestone which features its unique crest and the words, ‘ex corde caritas’, the Latin motto which means “love from the heart”. Additionally, this year will see the club publishing a 150-year history of Watsonians book in partnership with Peter Burns of Polaris Publishing.

Alistair Hamilton, General Manager at the Myreside based club, said: “The unveiling of the commemorative plaque at Yeaman Place is a proud moment. This milestone is not just about looking back but also about bringing together players, members, and supporters – past and present – throughout the year.

*The Watsonian Football Club is one of only a handful of rugby playing clubs across the world who still call themselves a football club. When the club was formed there was football (as in rugby) and association football (as in soccer).

The club was admitted to the Scottish Football Union in 1877 which became the SRU in 1924. Other clubs that are still referred to as football clubs include Edinburgh Academicals, West of Scotland, Northern (Newcastle), Hong Kong and The Barbarians.

Watsonians’ historic triumphs include their inaugural Scottish Club Championship win in 1891-1892 marking the onset of an illustrious journey in Scottish rugby followed by a remarkable period of dominance between 1908 and 1914. Despite a brief

relegation in 1989, the club rebounded, securing promotion to Division I in 1991.

Watsonians' contributions to Scotland's Grand Slam victories emphasise its integral role in shaping the nation's rugby heritage. The club's celebrated roster boasts over seventy Scottish internationalists.

One of these was Keri Holdsworth, who died in a car accident aged 36 in 2014.

As a mark of respect the club retired the No 8 women's team jersey in her honour – a symbol of the club's inclusive ethos.

To find out more about Watsonian Football Club see : watsoniansrugby.com



Dennis Carmichael holding the Plaque



L-R – Scott Hastings. Neil Irvine-Hess. Alexander Wright. Dennis Carmichael. Freya Walker. Amelia Boyle



Scott Hastings fitting the Plaque



The Watsonians Football Club 150 Year Plaque