Alan Shilleto Bean

Born 10th June 1902, Sunderland.

Died December 18th 1985, Sunderland

Studied at Cambridge University and was an analytical chemist by profession.

Began refereeing in 1926

In the 1930s Alan Bean lived literally a touch kick away from Ashbrook. He was one of the extremely small band of referees who controlled Test matches either side of the Second World War. He also had the very rare distinction of refereeing England versus Wales at Gloucester on 13th April 1940! There was a silent vigil for the death a fortnight earlier of Prince Obolensky and England won 17 - 3 in front of a crowd of 18,000. Bean wore glasses when refereeing which might seem strange now but was the norm until contact lenses were invented.

His first International was in 1939, Wales 11 v Scotland 3 at the National Stadium, Cardiff and he did another seven after the war. Wales XV 0 v France 8 at St Helens, Swansea in 1945**, France 12 v Wales XV 0 at the Stade Colombes, Paris in 1946**, France 0 v Wales 3 at the Stade Colombes, Paris and Wales 6 v Australia 0 at the National Stadium, Cardiff in 1947, Scotland 9 v France 8 at Murrayfield, Edinburgh and Wales 3 v France 11 at Swansea in 1948 and Scotland 3 v Ireland 13 at Murrayfield in 1949. He was invited to referee the Oxford 0 v Cambridge 6 Varsity Match in 1948 and Oxford 14 v Cambridge 8 in 1949. He also refereed the first Barbarians game v Australia in 1949 which represented the first Barbarians game versus an overseas touring side with the Baa-Baas winning 9 -6 at the National Stadium, Cardiff. He was also in charge of the Combined Services v The Wallabies and London Counties versus the Wallabies both held at Twickenham. He retired from the International Panel in 1950.

One of his other greatest gifts to Refereeing was his involvement in authoring 'The art of refereeing: a handbook for rugby referees' edited by H F Ellis and illustrated by Fougasse and published by the RFU in 1956. Generations of referees were significantly influenced by the clear and precise advice offered in the text. (I still have my copy! which was the third revision of 1975.) There is a very telling comment in my edition at the end of the Editors note. 'Readers familiar with the earlier editions will realise as they study this new one, that though the Laws may change, the principles of good refereeing do not.

In all, Alan Bean refereed 9 Internationals however the game recorded in 1940* and the two "Victory International" games in 1945** and 1946** were not recognised as official Tests. This was due to the many players that were missing from the British

Union teams and France. France did not award caps for these games. Wales also did not initially award caps in these internationals. However in 2013 the Welsh Rugby Union finally decided to award caps to otherwise uncapped Welsh players that had been involved in playing in these 'Victory Internationals' games against France in 1945** and 1946**.

Bean is the most capped Durham Society referee. He would have undoubtedly refereed many more International games had the Second World War not intervened.

In the wider context of refereeing, he was the Chairman of the RFU Referees Advisory Panel in 1975 and served on the Mallaby Commission. He was influential in organising successful refereeing courses held at Ashbrook, Bisham Abbey and Hatfield College, Durham.

He served as Secretary and Fixtures Secretary at Sunderland RFC and was the mover and shaker that made many things happen within the Club. He became President of Durham County for the 1964-1965 period.

His endearing and passionate approach to the game is summed up in The Art of Refereeing when he states:-

'Rugby Football is a recreation played for the enjoyment primarily of the players. It follows that the referee's approach to his job must be positive and cooperative,,,,, Rugby players are not criminals out to transgress the Laws. It is not and idle claim that Rugby footballers are in the main 'grand chaps' and grand chaps do not automatically become hardened cheats as soon as they step on a playing field.'