

NORMAN HOWARD PORTER (K50-57)

My thanks to Norman for providing the following biography.

He was born in Ipswich in 1938. His father was in the East Suffolk Police Force. This meant moving around the County, so after Norman had spent one year at Colchester Royal Grammar School, he applied for a boarding place under the Direct Grant Scheme at Framlingham. He loved football, was left-footed, so played on the left wing. When the hockey term came along, that same left wing position was vacant so he was put there. Luckily his left-handedness was balanced by a right-handed stance at hockey and (subsequently) golf, so it was not a handicap. What was a handicap in this most demanding of positions was a hefty long-pronged hockey stick, picked up in a sales room, which weighed a ton. So, for most of his school career he just about made the school teams, paying in a difficult position, and never, to his recollection, scoring a goal. Probably because left-wingers wandered in from the outer 5 yard tramlines at their peril. They were simply required to cross the ball for others to enjoy the glory.

Norman made the 1st XI in his final year, to be coached by Norman Borrett. Much of the season was spent indoors, because of the snow outside. Much emphasis was put on pushing and dribbling during indoor coaching sessions. Matches were, of course played – against top class opposition. But still no goals were scored. Being of a somewhat timid disposition, he was even more nervous about venturing infield to join in the mid-field and goalmouth fun. Far more important to concentrate on stopping the ball – left wingers on grass were mightily exposed, not only to the perils of having the ball trip over the stick, but also to the admonishments of demanding coaches. At the end of the final season, having not made much impact, he does remember going to the Oxford Hockey Festival, and enjoying (if that is the right word to describe the, to the-then-youthful palate, horribly bitter taste of beer) a first serious alcoholic drink. Times change.

After leaving school in December 1957 there were a few games with Ipswich Hockey Club and a Wednesday afternoon Nomads team – but primarily because the hockey club was just 200 yards away from Norman's home in Dales Road, Ipswich. Having spent two years in the 1st XV and represented Suffolk Schoolboys at Rugby, he would probably have joined the Ipswich Rugby Club but that was much less easily accessible.

And so to St Andrews University in 1958. It was a revelation. In different company, amidst players who had not enjoyed the benefits of Framlingham hockey coaching, things blossomed. Moving in from the left wing he began to score goals from centre forward or inside forward. In the next two years he was Secretary of the University Hockey Club, and in the final year Captain and selected to play for Scottish Universities. Goals kept coming. St Andrews won the Scottish Universities Championship.

In that final year, feeling very much part of the Scottish hockey scene, he saw an advertisement for a languages teaching job at Loretto School, Musselburgh – but the emphasis seemed to be primarily on sporting abilities. He applied, was appointed, became Master in charge of hockey, but luckily the school season only lasted for six weeks, so it was possible to play League Hockey for the rest of the year. Inverleith HC was one of the top Scottish Hockey Clubs at the time.

1962 was a terrible winter. Snow lay on the ground for weeks on end. But Norman kept training every day – in the snow, round Musselburgh race course - even when hockey was quite impossible. Suddenly winter ended, coinciding with Scottish hockey trials, and most other players were relatively unfit. During the Trials weekend which set the Home Scots against the Anglo Scots, Norman was able to keep running and score enough goals to impress the selectors. At the Sunday evening Chapel service he felt ten feet high as he had just been picked to represent Scotland. The Monday papers were full of sporting Scottish angst "Two new Scottish Caps and they're both English!"

And that was the start of a series of representative games over a period of 4/5 years. The first was against Holland in Amsterdam, with other games against England, Ireland, Wales, France and West Germany, plus a trial match against the embryonic Great Britain Olympic side which resulted in a 0-0 draw. Most matches were then played against the Home Countries and there was very little long-range travel. Players gathered on the Friday night, trained on the Saturday morning, played, had a post-match dinner, and went home. The Amsterdam match meant flying for the first time. Players were expected to contribute to expenses.

Norman won a dozen caps in all – probably to the amazement of those who had witnessed his moderate efforts at Framlingham. The rather timorous left winger had moved infield, scored goals and enjoyed passing the ball – as well as maintaining a good level of fitness. In his final year in Scotland he was Captain of Inverleith who won the Scottish Cup (see picture below) and went on to be runners-up in an inaugural British Cup played in the Isle of Man.



The onset of children meant moving South to be closer to family. Five years were spent teaching at Dulwich, playing hockey for Beckenham alongside some great names, such as Basil Christensen, Alan Page, Barry Mills and Paul Svehlik. He was Master in charge of Hockey at Dulwich College, and in his final year the College won the Schools 6-a-sides against Wellington College. Ironic, because the next move was to Wellington College, an academic move, to be Head of the Languages Department. The Hockey was not neglected. He spent the whole of his 24 Wellington Years coaching the U14s, including a spell of almost 7 years undefeated. He also coached an U16 side who were runners-up in the National Championships. He coached at County Level up to U18, and also at Divisional level with the South West. For most of this period he played for Reading Hockey Club, gradually subsiding to the Veterans. There were still good moments, such as winning the Over 50s London League Cup.

Retirement came, or so he thought in 1997, and he moved back to Suffolk, close to Woodbridge. The end of hockey? Not likely. A previous pupil, Stephen Cole, was now Head of Woodbridge School, and he invited Norman to go back and help with the hockey coaching – at U13 level. The job was extended into cricket coaching and language teaching. A great professional Indian Summer – but one which did involve some conflict of interest! In 2005 the Woodbridge 1st XI and U13 XI went on a Dutch Tour –demanding at the easiest of times –and won all four matches. The final match of the final season was Woodbridge School U13s v Guess Who? - Brandeston Hall 1st XI. It was very moving when the Brandeston Coach, Robin Sampson (who turned out to be a distant relative), presented Norman with a shield to commemorate some 55 years of playing and coaching hockey. And the result? A very fitting 3-3 draw.

So Framlingham introduced Norman both to hockey and to languages. Martin Irving was the French catalyst and Rev Stephen Russell arrived just in time to start up German in the School – from scratch to S level in 3 years. Hockey with languages was the basis for a successful teaching career, and one which culminated in a

return to Framlingham as a Governor, and as President and General Secretary of the SOF. The rounding of the circle – a circle of which Norman’s policeman father would have been immensely proud.

The Dulwich College website <http://sport.dulwich.org.uk/sport/individualsports/hockey/history.htm> quotes the following in respect of Norman “.... in 1971, **Norman Porter**, the Scottish International, took over hockey at the College and instigated the laying of the Redgra pitch. This, along with the decision to make hockey the third major sport, confirmed hockey’s improved status in the College. The sports hall was then put to use encouraging the indoor version of the game on its wooden floor.”

The Inverleith Hockey Club website <http://www.inverleith-hc.co.uk/history.asp> also makes mention of Norman’s Scottish caps “.... our international players were: Tommy Allan (8 caps); John MacMinn (3); Stuart MacMinn (6 John’s son); Ken Dick (68 & Scotland Captain); **Norman Porter (11)**; Denis Hay (62); Ken Hay (31) - brother of Denis; Francis Barnes (16); Tom Hay (72 - most with Edin CS); Andy Hay (35) (Tom’s brother); Dougie Hay (2); Neil Buxton; and Derek Batchelor. In the 90’s, Kerr Thomson (9) and Martin Pearson (2).”