

Memorable tour of Caribbean

HENDON RFC's 15-day visit to the Caribbean proved memorable for contrasting reasons. There was triumph and tragedy; hot sun and heavy rainstorms; and exotic beauty and grim poverty.

Winning all six matches, despite the problems of heat, humidity, travel fatigue and the after effects of generous hospitality at welcoming parties, was a tremendous achievement.

It was all the more commendable, after Hendon had to combat their grief, following the shock death of 42-year-old lock forward Peter Jerrum, with two games remaining.

Well planned

Club captain Mike Brandler, his fiancée, Jill Warrilow, and former Hendon treasurer, John Fone, spared no effort to ensure the success of the tour.

Fone, an accountant in Kingston, capital of Jamaica, planned the itinerary with detailed accuracy — and was at each destination to see that all was well.

He was presented with a polished hardwood carving in appreciation of his efforts.

Brandler and his fiancée received a mammoth polished turtle shell from club president John Froomberg, on behalf of his fellow tourists, when the party returned to Heathrow Airport.

"It was a great experience," said Froomberg: "I am delighted with our success, and feel we owe much to our hosts and the organisers, who contributed so much to our enjoyment."

Mementoes

Brandler also collected a turtle shell as a souvenir of Hendon's three-day stay at their first stopping-off point, the Cayman Islands. Presented by Cayman captain Sidney Coleman, it will hang in their Copthall Playing Fields clubhouse — one of the many mementoes received in their Caribbean travels.

When we arrived at the Cayman Islands, after a 4,800-mile flight via Kingston, I was greeted by former Finchley RFC scrum-half Andy Jackson,

fly-half Geoff Riordan got Hendon off to a winning start. He contributed 17 points in their 21-8 victory over Cayman, with three dropped goals, two penalties and a conversion of their only try, scored by David Bowman.

After relaxing on the seven-mile golden beach strip, Hendon took on Cayman "A," and won 19-12.

Riordan was again in great form with a dropped goal, two penalties and a conversion of Brandler's try. Scrum-half "Gabby" Harris scored Hendon's other try.

By John Pollard

Following a farewell barbecue at the home, overlooking the beach, of my hosts John and Christine Benbow, we flew off to Kingston the next day.

Having encountered torrential rain on our first night in the Cayman, we were again greeted by a storm on arrival.

Among the first expatriots to greet us at the Surrey Tavern were Gerry Finch and his wife Patricia. Gerry, who officiated in Hendon's final tour match, against the Jaa-Baa's, is the only overseas member of the Hendon Businessmen's Club. His father-in-law, Tom Smith, is a member.

I also met Roger Arnold, captain of Kingston RFC, a civil engineer, who designed the footbridge at Endersleigh Gardens, Hendon, near the M1 motorway.

During the stay in Kingston, Hendon were guests at a party hosted by the British Deputy High Commissioner, Charles Godden.

We also visited the Police Training College. Many of the instructors were trained at the Metropolitan Police School, Hendon.

Sparkled

Facing the Jamaica RFU Chairman's XV at Caymanas Park, headquarters of the Union, Hendon sparkled in a 42-22 victory, scoring six tries. These came from Richard Best (two), Bowman, Brandler, Trevor Burkin and Alan Rae.

Riordan again excelled, with two dropped goals, two conversions and two

was a key figure in a pack that performed well in all six successes.

Other guests in the squad, included Graham Hawkie and John Thomson, from Cornish club, Wadebridge Camels; Stuart Dowsett (Saracens) and Bruce Hopkinson (Banbury).

A deluge before the match with Arawak, left Caymanas Park covered with heavy pools of water, and made handling difficult.

Determined

Arawak, who included John Fone in the pack, were the most determined opposition Hendon faced.

Fully extended, Hendon won 19-13 in injury time, when Hawkie scored a try, which Riordan converted.

Riordan also kicked three penalties, and Barry Parker went over for a try.

Hendon president John Froomberg, a London Society referee, was in charge.

'Duppy' night

Monday was "Duppy Night" at the famous restaurant, Devon House. The Hendon party enjoyed a few "Duppies," the house speciality, comprising rum, gin and grapefruit juice — and some suffered hangovers!

We also sampled the delicious national dish of "Ackee and Saltfish."

While staying with my hosts, Pat and Madeline Francis, I met their neighbour, Mary Rose, a genial Canadian, who assured me: "Jamaica is the most beautiful island in the Caribbean. I have visited them all."

Her point was proved during the fascinating long journey along the mountain roads towards the north coasts.

The island has over 1,000 varieties of tree, including 73 exclusive to Jamaica. Most of them flower in colourful profusion, and though this was not the blooming season, the scenery was breathtaking.

Poverty

But there was also ample evidence of the grim poverty that we had first witnessed in a drive from Kingston Airport. In some areas, the hills were covered by tumbling shacks — the dilapidated homes of the local population.

hands, put your foot on the brakes."

During our stay at the Club Caribbean, Runaway Bay, we enjoyed the music of a Calypso Band, playing such well-known Caribbean hits as *Island in the Sun*, *Jamaica Farewell* and *A Child is Born*.

The Hendon party, led by Wall, Best, and John Reed, provided their own special style of entertainment, with the "Harry Flutters" memory teaser game, and traditional rugby songs. The Canadian and American guests at the hotel joined in the fun.

But the hilarity was replaced by stunned silence when Brandler called a special meeting to announce that Jerrum, a popular club figure for 20 years, had died of a heart attack.

After a quiet day, some of our party visited the Runaway Caves, incorporating the Green Grotto.

Situated 120 feet below ground level, the caves stretch for seven miles, and are among the greatest in the world. Abounding with natural art forms, of glistening stalactites and jewelled stalagmites, they provide an unforgettable scene.

Our next stop was at Montego Bay, the island's tourism "capital."

"We will do our best for 'Jerry'" was the mood of the Hendon side that faced West Jamaica in the fifth match. As a tribute they produced their best rugby in the highest win of the tour — 43 points to four.

Bowman (two), Best (two), Dowsett, Brandler, Hemming, Davidson and Hawkie scored tries. Riordan converted two and kicked a penalty.

Country tour

The highspot of the tour was a journey into the heart of a wonderland Jamaica on the "Governor's Coach," a comfortable diesel railcar, with a calypso band and bar.

During stops at many villages, we were greeted by the local inhabitants, selling their produce, including delicately carved wooden birds, and necklaces made from coffee beans. Some youngsters clung on to the speeding train for several miles, in a desperate attempt to clinch a sale!

In the markets traders

Cayman Islands, after a 1,800-mile flight via Kingston, I was greeted by former Finchley RFC crum-half Andy Jackson, who became Cayman's first captain six years ago.

"Please give my regards to Finchley president Pat Conolly. We played in the same side," said Jackson.

Excellent placekicking by

man, Brandler, Trevor Burkin and Alan Rae.

Riordan again excelled, with two dropped goals, two conversions and two penalties.

Former Hendon Players' Best, who foresook the chance to represent Harlequins in the Middlesex Sevens' finals at Twickenham, in favour of the tour,

that we had first witnessed in a drive from Kingston Airport. In some areas, the hills were covered by tumbling shacks — the dilapidated homes of the local population.

The coach ride, along the narrow, twisting, undulating roads, was hair-raising, and prompted a quip from club coach Don Wall to the driver: "When I clap my

eyes and see these hills from coffee beans. Some youngsters clung on to the speeding train for several miles, in a desperate attempt to clinch a sale!

In the markets, traders sold colourful draperies, including kaftans, shirts and dresses, and skilfully woven, attractive straw baskets.

We also had a close-up view of banana and coconut plantations, coffee groves and all kinds of tropical fruits and vegetation.

Then there was a tour of the rum distillery at the Appleton Sugar Factory before the return to Montego Bay.

During a stop-off on the return to Kingston, we climbed the 600 feet Dunn's River Falls, the most celebrated beauty spot in the Ocho Rios area. The waterfall cascades over tiers of smooth rock directly on to the beach.

The last respects to Peter Jerrum were paid during a cremation service at the Sunset Hills Burial Ground, Kingston, on the eve of our departure.

The chief mourner was his fiancée Miss Pat Graham. There was a full complement of the Hendon tour party, and many of their hosts.

Anxious to return home with a 100 per cent record, Hendon faced their stiffest

test against the Jaa-Baa's, a select side, representing the Island.

The dominance of the pack, and accurate tactical kicking by the backs, helped Hendon win 16-10.

Dowsett and Brandler scored tries, with Brandler converting his after Riordan was injured.

Riordan also kicked two penalties, including a superb first-minute effort.

His points tally for the tour was 70, out of Hendon's total of 144, including 12 penalties, six dropped goals and eight conversions.

Brandler and Jaa-Baas' captain Pat Francis exchanged plaques during a farewell party.

Then it was "Jamaica Farewell" as the tourists flew from Kingston to Heathrow, recalling highlights of their unforgettable experiences.

Hendon players in action were Brandler, Jerrum, Riordan, David Bowman, Neil Broady, Trevor Burkin, Steve Burkin, John Cahill, Les Davidson, David Faulkner, Keith Gent, John Hanna, "Gabby" Harris, David Hemming, Ian Lyall, Barry Parker, Alan Rae, John Reed, Tony Ulph, Roland Wallace, and David Williams.

Brandler, Harris and Riordan, an outstanding trio, played in all six games, as did forwards Hemming and Ulph.

