

HISTORY OF DOLTON RANGERS A.F.C.

(written by Jack Mardon and published in the 1987 / 88 season programme - Edited)

The Club was founded following the return of many of the young men from WWI to provide the means of athletic enjoyment, entertainment and pleasure for the youth of Dolton and District. It was formed under the Presidency of Squire Luxmoore of Stafford Barton, with Len Martin and Jack Heale as joint secretaries and Reuben Clements, the local blacksmith as treasurer, in time to commence the 1919/20 season, in what had been a hot bed area of the rugby code. At the commencement, a fixture list of friendly games was played till 1923/24 when with other neighbouring parishes they formed the North West Devon League and participated in various cup competitions. Among the players at this period were Jim Friend, Bob Lugg, Carlton Luxmoore, Harry Piper, Wilfred Squire, Tom Heale, Taylor, W. Luxton, Archie Parkhouse, Herbert Martin, Dudley Maynard, Bill Farley, Len Martin, Northley Farley, Fred Wonnacott, Harold Martin, Reuben Nott, Charlie Baker, Bill Branch and "Gentleman" John Friend. In 1922 a Cup was donated for competition among the surrounding villages by Mrs Fanny Maude Woollacott, of Aller Farm, Dolton, but Dolton were eliminated, and the winners were Petrockstowe, who beat Roborough in the final 1-0.

Prior to the commencement of their first season in competitive football, the club gained their first success by winning the Beaford Sports five-a-side competition and it was in this competition that an outsider was picked up and persuaded to make up the side, by name, Alban Mardon, of Ashreigney and was such a success, apart from having won the 100yd and 400yds earlier in the afternoon, that he was signed for the Club and became a prolific scoring centre forward for many years. After about three seasons, the club left to join the Kingsley League and in 1927 reached their first final when they played Appledore in the Reed Cup at Northam losing 1-0. The team was J. Maitland, J. Dickens, Tom Heale, Harold Martin, H. Selley, Jack Mardon, Philip Heard, Dudley Maynard, Northley Farley, Charlie Fishleigh, and Alban Mardon. In 1929 the Bridgerule Cup was won in which several Cornish clubs participated and the team was J. Meade, W. Tucker, B. Davy, Bill Meade, Charlie Fishleigh, Bill Clements, C. Petheridge, Philip Heard, Alban Mardon, H. Davy, T. Wonnacott and John Heale and Jack Mardon as reserves.



In the early 1930's the Club were runners up in the Kingsley League by default of Bideford A.A.C. who failed to put in an appearance at Dolton, presuming that the ground would be unfit as there had been heavy falls of snow, but Dolton were awarded the points.

The Club continued in the Kingsley League until 1935, when owing to the inability of finding officers to administrate, they suspended operations and several of the teenagers gained experience with other Clubs. Cowley Baker joined a number of youngsters and older

players in the parish and played for Winkleigh in the North Devon League including Jack Mardon, Argo Pickard, Harold Nott, Fred Pickard, Reg Baker, Fred Folland, Percy Folland, etc. and were responsible for Winkleigh winning the Junior Division and finalists in the Braunton Cup losing to High Bickington. The Club did not restart again before the outbreak of war and was reformed in 1945. There have been many highlights following the 2nd World War, eg. when Walt Paddon had his jaw fractured after 24 minutes play when opening the scoring in the County Cup semi-final, and after seven minutes off the field, returned on the right wing and completed a hat trick! The time when play was held up by a severe rainstorm in the game against Weare Gifford in the successful season 1953/54, the year the North Devon League celebrated their Golden Jubilee. In this year Dolton reached the final of the Torridge Cup and were beaten by a goal 30 seconds from time to lose 1 - 2. The most successful season was that of 1965/66 surpassing that triumphant 1953/54 season, as we won the North Devon League Division 1, area Devon Junior Cup, losing the County final to Kingsbridge United 0 - 1, winning the Pickard Cup and losing to Woollacombe 1 - 3 in the final of the Braunton Cup. All this was accomplished by a team that were joint winners of the Devon Minor Cup the previous season, having drawn 3 - 3 with Prince Rock, under the guidance of Cowley Baker. Season 1966/67 the Club accepted the invitation of the League, reluctantly, to play in the Senior Division and caused a few eyebrows to be raised, winning their first game by beating R.A.F. Chivenor 7 - 4 and going on to finish joint winners, losing the title to Ilfracombe Town with R.A.F. Chivenor runners-up with Dolton 3rd all on goal average and decimal difference only. In 1967/68 the Club returned to Junior Division 1 as the composition of the team was broken up through several players seeking their football elsewhere. However, while not gaining any honours, the club had a successful season, finishing in the middle of the League. To some extent this was helped by the institution of a Minor side, with the object of developing talent to eventually have more local boys in the senior team. In season 1968/69 with the reconstitution by the League Council, Dolton were placed in Division II and their first game ended in a home defeat in a high scoring game by 5 - 6 to Bratton Fleming, who won the return game and being the only team to inflict defeat on Dolton throughout the season in the league. Losing two games in the first four, prospects seemed rather uncertain but then came the silver lining, as with potential in the team with D. May, E. Dayman, T. Pickard, Malcolm Peach, etc. John Baker returned to Devon to work and to play also the return of W. Stapleton, K. Braund and the signing of goalie T. Evans, confidence developed by the extent that the team won their last 18 games to emerge worthy champions by three points.