

## **Goff Miles – Memories of our Friend by John Moore**

I have been asked by Eve to talk about Goff, my friend's, extra-curricular activities as Sportsman and believe it or not, Thespian. Having done his bit for Queen and Country, Goff rejoined the Westminster Bank, Penge Branch in 1955 and full of the vim and vigour of a 20 year old became heavily embroiled with that Bank's Rugby Club based at Norbury. At that time Bank Rugby was very strong, playing at junior county level and with five teams, but Goff soon found himself in the Westminster Bank's first XV.

His love of rugby was to continue for many years and when Westminster Bank amalgamated with the National Provincial to form the National Westminster or "NatWest" as it soon was called, he moved his allegiance to Lower Sydenham, the old National Provincial Sports Ground where rugby was now based. A strong and uncompromising player as anyone tackled by him would vouch. He was gifted with a turn of speed and very safe hands and was an asset to any side. In his later playing years he became an invaluable member of the Veterans XV known as the Bishops where his kicking skills both out of hand and at the posts were especially valued. I was reminded by two past first fifteen Captains that in emergency they had turned to Goff to step up rather than select players from the junior sides. He was to continue playing rugby in his fifties, an outstanding record...and talking of records...The Rugby Club will always be grateful for the incredible work he undertook as a researcher of the Club's history. Although he had some assistance, he was undoubtedly the main contributor to the Club's Centenary booklet "100 Years of Rugby". It chronicled the years 1886 – 1986 and is a fitting tribute to the many hours of work spent on the Project and Goff's own literary skills.

However, before leaving his rugby endeavours, not everything was hard work on the rugby scene. Perhaps aided by the fact that the Rugby Club's President was a General Manager of the Bank, Goff won a Chief Executive's award to tour Canada for 2 weeks to research and pursue the spread of the sport in that country. Nice one Goff!

Having dallied with Bowls in the inter-section competitions. Goff decided, in his own words, "to go professional" and in 1985 or thereabouts joined the NatWest Bowls Club at Lower Sydenham, more or less the same time as myself. One of the wonders of Goff's game was how on earth he held a bowl. An old Rugby injury had given him a broken finger which had never been properly set and left him with a very crooked digit. Nevertheless, he soon demonstrated that he was a very skilful player but, unsurprisingly, with a hint of aggression. He soon put his name to a number of the Club's trophies and accompanied by Eve, was a big supporter of the Club's social events. Both of them starred in the fancy dress parades that used to be so much a part of Bowls Tours in those days and most evenings they would escape the hotels and be found with a small circle of friends in a local hostelry which had been carefully chosen by the beer drinkers in that select group!

History, (literally), then repeated itself. Goff revisited old skills and became the Chief Author and Researcher of the Bowls Clubs' histories covering the years 1899 – 1999. As with the Rugby Club, this entailed researching both the Westminster and the National Provincial Banks Clubs' histories but once again a wonderful booklet emerged full of photos, facts and figures coupled with Goff's uniquely light editorials. Another triumph!