

(1948-1953)

Just how does one follow the achievements of a silverware-laden campaign? I suppose they try for a repeat prescription! Mearns Amateurs started off the 1948/49 season by holding a successful trial match at the Public Park. They unearthed a promising young striker by the name of Ian Clason.

By August, the Amateurs were ready to play challenge matches to help prepare them for the rigours of defending each of their titles. As Scottish Cup holders they were much in demand and decided upon games against Gourock Juniors and Girvan Amateurs.

Gourock proved no match on their own pitch and the Amateurs ran out 8-0 winners. Clason and McFie grabbed trebles while Hodge and Lambie also countered. The team for the opening match was: T. Gallacher, J. Stevely, J. Pollock, D. Hamilton, J. McFetridge, J. McIntyre, L. Hodge, J. Walker, J. Clason, I. Lambie, R. McFeeters.

The following Saturday, a packed supporters bus left Mearns Cross at 1pm - destination Girvan. They saw Clason bag four with Hodge and Lambie also scoring as Mearns romped to a 6-1 win.

With the league season just days away, Mearns played a Barrhead Churches Select at Neilston's Brig O'Lea Park. It was arranged by the Neilston British Legion, in aid of St Dunstan's Church.

The Amateurs opened their league campaign with a 4-0 win over India of Inchinnan, while the Strollers won 3-1 at Killermont.

Next up was a belated Mactaggart Trophy semi-final match against Moorpark Amateurs at Arthurlie's Dunterlie Park, which resulted in an easy 6-1 win for Mearns.

Meanwhile, the SMT league season was brought to a close with Mearns Depot drawing 0-0 at home to Gourock.

Back in the West of Scotland league and Mearns romped to four successive victories, with Clason on target in each game, including a 3-0 win over the previously unbeaten Mossvale.

The last Saturday in September saw Mearns unveil their new look Crookfur Park. The surface had undergone extensive refurbishment, with the committee erecting a wire fence round the pitch in a bid to keep spectators off the field. This was the first time such a fence had been installed. Mearns supporters, while extremely loyal, had a tendency to become a little over excited during matches. Unfortunately, this normally incurred the wrath of the football authorities, who were viewing pitch 'break-ins' with increasing disdain.

A Lindsay Hodge double inspired Mearns to a 4-1 win at Greenock Rob Roy in the first round of the Scottish Cup, while the Strollers took advantage of 'plush' Crookfur Park to register a 7-1 win over Bearsden Amateurs.

Star man, Clason, missed out on the Scottish Cup win but was back in the side for the 7-4 league success at Inchinnan and scooped a double. And the same player scored again as Mearns marched into round three, courtesy of a 5-0 win at Cathcart Rosevale.

Mearns then swept away Kilbarchan British Legion 7-2 in the final of the 1947/48 Mactaggart Cup at the Anniesland home of Barclay Curle Juniors to complete a deferred haul of all four trophies!

Ironically, Mearns were drawn at home to Babcock & Wilcox in the third round of the national competition – a repeat of the 1947/48 final. It took a Blair penalty to help Mearns salvage a 1-1 draw against a fired-up Renfrew side. Significantly, goal machine Ian Clason was badly injured in this match and, strangely, never again played for Mearns.

Meanwhile, the Strollers were marching from strength to strength and racked up an 11-2 home success over Beattie's Amateurs.

The following Saturday, a controversial Scottish Cup replay took place between Babcock and Mearns – just days after Mearns players Hodge, McIntyre and Mulholland were chosen to represent the league – as the match was abandoned due to darkness just minutes after Babcock had edged 3-2 in front.

The following Saturday, Mearns had yet another cup-tie abandoned, a West Cup first round match against Queens Park XI, with Queens leading 2-1. On the same afternoon, the Strollers suffered their first defeat in over a year, losing 3-2 at Bearsden.

In the Scottish Cup third round, second replay, Mearns lost 3-0 to Babcock. An inglorious exit no doubt celebrated wildly in Renfrew!

Elsewhere, John Traynor of Moorhill Crescent, who had been “freed” by Pollok, joined Hurlford Utd. He had been on loan the previous season to Darvel from Pollok.

Despite their Scottish Cup defeat, Mearns marched on in the West Cup, defeating Thornliebank Amateurs by the odd goal in seven, before back-to-back seven goal victories over Thornliebank Methodist and Mossvale, in which local lad Andy Goldie bagged half the goals.

Meanwhile, Mearns Pollok’s old Pollok Park was back in the news, although there wasn’t a football in sight. A motor van was descending the “Pock Hat Brae” in Barrhead Road when it burst a front tyre and crashed through the hedge into the football ground. The van was damaged but no one was hurt. Thankfully football had long since ceased at the park or legendary Pollok goalkeeper McLaren may have been faced with a runaway van, with the goals just yards from the main road!

And so the campaign ended with Mearns beating Babcock 3-1 at Renfrew Juniors’ Western Park to win the League Cup. It was a cup which was to be annexed a further five times in the next ten years.

The winning League Cup team was: W. Stevely, J. Stevely, McVicar, Pollock, McFetridge, Goldie, Hutton, Begg, Kirkwood, Clark and Scott, with goals by Clark, Scott and Hutton.

The summer months again signalled the start of the Young Farmers football league and East Renfrewshire had mixed fortunes, losing their opening match 2-1 against Cross Roads at Hurlford, before beating Dunlop 2-0 at Mearns. A challenge game with Mearns British Legion was also won by the East Ren side, the score being 4-0 in their favour.

And so to Mearns Utd, the club formed the previous year by local lads. Unfortunately they had lost several players to the Army, but resumed in the summer of 1948 and started with a game against McCorqudale's Printers. Mearns led 5-1 at half-time and ultimately were winners by 6-2. Outstanding was Bruce, Doughty, Scott & Ferguson. Team: McLellan, Doughty, Stewart, Bruce, Kirkwood, McGee, Ferguson, Traynor, Carvel, Byrne, Scott.

Mearns Utd continued unabated with a Monday night match against Thornliebank at Mearns and won 6-3. Traynor opened the scoring for Mearns and at half-time they had a five-goal lead. The second-half belonged to Thornliebank. Traynor, Kirkwood, Doughty, Bruce and Carvel impressed.

The 1949/50 season started off with some individual success for a village footballer. Chas Adam (17), of 2a Main Street, was a goalkeeper with Corsehill FC. His team won five cups and at a social meeting in the Miners Institute, medals were presented by Mr Hastings, manager of Kilmarnock FC. Charlie's proud parents and grandparents were present at the function.

For Mearns Amateurs, the season started off in somewhat bizarre fashion. With no league game on the first Saturday in October, they took up the offer of a game behind bars! They were invited to spend an afternoon in Glasgow's tough Barlinnie Prison to play against the local cons. Mearns 'enjoyed' a comfortable 5-1 victory, with Kay, Allan and Hutton amongst the scorers. One can only imagine the extent of the post-match hospitality.

Legend has it that a wild clearance scaled the perimeter wall. A member of the 'home' team – a notorious cat burglar - was up and over in seconds. To everyone's surprise, he returned moments later with the ball, boasting that he had never missed a game for his adopted side!

More individual success arrived when young Gordon Bruce, of 19 Hill Avenue, a player with Giffnock North FC, was selected to play in the Glasgow V West of Scotland Youth International trial match.

However, that particular week was tinged with sadness as Joseph McDonald, a legendary Mearns Pollok player, sadly passed away. Arguably the greatest player the club had known, Joseph was born in 1871 and had lived all his life in the village, starting work as a boy in Greenfield Works before entering the employment of the Netherplace Bleachworks, where he remained, with the exception of a short period at Giffnock Quarries, for almost fifty years.

He was active in various sports and in his younger days had played for the Mearns Pollok; he was a good quoiter, a member of the Mearns Quoiting Club, and was also a member of Mearns Bowling Club. Mr McDonald, who was in his 78th year, was survived by his wife and two sons.

And yet another piece of Mearns footballing life was forever changed when a road was opened for traffic within the new housing scheme. Cutting off a bad turn of Netherplace Road, it ran from Hill Avenue through the centre of a field which was once the football pitch of the Lorne club and joined up with Netherplace Road further along. It was hailed as a great success.

Elsewhere, the first ever match between Mearns Strollers and the East Renfrewshire Young Farmers Club took place at Crookfur Park on Hogmanay of 1949 with the Strollers emerging victorious by 2-1.

At the end of April, Mearns Amateurs were forced to play a league match against India of Inchinnan on the Friday night, due to the prestigious Cattle Show being held on Crookfur Park the following afternoon. The match was played on the Public Park.

In April of 1949, another well-known local personality William Jamieson passed away. Mr Jamieson, who resided at Moorhill Road, was 73 years of age. Coming to Mearns from Eaglesham as a boy, he was, for a time, a guard on the buses which ran between Mearns and Giffnock station and remained there until motor vehicles supplanted horse-drawn buses. He then worked for the First District Council and later with Wallace & Co, Netherplace, as a watchman. He was a keen supporter of the local football club until overtaken by illness.

Mearns Amateurs brought down the curtain on their season by hosting the Wright Anderson's Athletic Club from Gateshead, winners of the North-East England Amateur League and the Durham County Cup.

On the Saturday morning, the visitors were shown around a Glasgow Newspaper office, and later taken to Hampden Park, where they undertook a tour of the stadium. In the afternoon they attended the Scottish Amateur Cup Final and in the evening a match between the respective clubs took place, which Mearns won 3-0 thanks to goals from Goldie (2) and McNaughton. Mearns team: Gallacher, McVicar, Brown, Martin, Elder, Crawford, Stevely, Hutton, McNaughton, Goldie, McIver.

With the Amateurs trophy cabinet bare, it was left to the Strollers to defeat Moorpark Amateurs to tie up the Reserve League Championship. In the home and away play-off matches, the Strollers lost the first-leg at Renfrew by 2-1, but triumphed by 7-0 at Mearns. It was a third title in four years for the Mearns side.

There was further excitement for villagers when, on Saturday 3rd June, glamour film actress Dorothy Lamour opened the Mearnskirk Hospital garden fete. Meanwhile, in July of 1950, Pollok Castle was inherited by a Canadian timber worker. The sawmill worker from British Columbia claimed the old Mearns landmark, a 30-roomed country house at Girvan, and a fortune, estimated at between fifty and a hundred thousand pounds.

He was 40-year-old Robert Fergusson-Pollock, and the estate and money were left to him by his aunt, Miss Jane Dunlop Fergusson-Pollock, who had died just months beforehand. The estate had granted a piece of land for Mearns Pollok to play their matches on some fifty-five years previous.