

Arthur Orr and Bruce Laidlaw– A great ‘Good News’ news story.

As Bruce said recently, “It’s been a Fifty-Four-year wait, but still very welcome and much appreciated”. This followed an announcement by Scottish Rugby, as shown below...

Scottish Rugby is to honour retrospectively more than 50 players who represented their country in matches that, at the time, did not carry Test cap status. The decision, made by the Scottish Rugby Union Custodian Board, was announced today (Tuesday 15 August) by President Colin Rigby.

He said: “Those individuals who wore the thistle with pride and distinction, whether in Services or Victory internationals during and after the Second World War, or who played under the label of a ‘Scotland XV’ against other nations, will now join the fabled ranks of the 1,140 other men to have been capped by Scotland since 1871. Given this year marks the 150th anniversary of the formation of the Union, we wanted to look afresh at our history and recognise the rich and enduring contribution those players have made to our game. Awarding a cap retrospectively may seem purely symbolic or belated by some people, but I know from conversations with some of those players and their families what this decision will mean to them and that granting cap status will be cherished.”



[Link to SRU announcement](#)

Sadly for Arthur and his family, this has come too late, as [he died in June 2019](#), although his son Christian is nominated in the SRU announcement. Bruce and Christian are contributing substantially to this article.

We think that the article should comprise information about both Bruce and Arthur, and be divided into two parts, firstly the 1969 Argentina tour, and secondly their record for RHSFP RFC, Edinburgh and other representative games.

September 1969 Tour to Argentina

The Tour, which started and ended in Edinburgh and Glasgow, was from the 1st to the 29th September. Six matches were played, including two test matches. Five were won by Scotland, with the first test being the only defeat.

Bruce played four of the six matches (including the second test), at a mix of centre and stand-off, while Arthur played three (including the first test). Arthur scored one try in each of the *Seleccionado Interior* and *Rosario RU* matches.

Bruce was asked about his memories of the tour, and aside the complex journey, the hard hot grounds and the threat of overly-physical confrontations, it seems to have gone well. He particularly remembers the following incidents;

- On the bus – Sandy Carmichael announced as Sandy Carmicello.
- On a day trip, he was presented with a plaque – engraved with ‘B LAIDLAN’ (close but no cigar...)
- The group was justifiably concerned about the reputation of the Argentinians, as can be seen in the determined faces in the pre-test match faces on 28th September. Apparently, Jim Telfer instituted an ‘88’ call (similar to the ‘99’ call used on the Lions tour to South Africa in 1974). Bruce described the ‘the injury ravaged team’ which played in the fourth match at Rosario, and included Bruce at stand off and Arthur on the wing.
- In the second and final test match, the Argentinean team was led onto the pitch by their Captain who was accompanied a puma on a leash. The puma was the only Argentinean on the pitch that day who didn’t resort to foul play.
- Bruce alludes to the team ‘rewarding’ their long-suffering and very helpful Argentinean guide/translator by placing his arm into a plaster cast as a farewell parting gift
- A twenty-five-year tour reunion took place in 1994 in the Ellersley House hotel in Edinburgh.



Bruce has provided a number of Argentinian press cuttings, match programmes and schedules, which are shown later in the article. Bruce is third from the left in the back row, and Arthur extreme right of the centre row in the above team photograph.

The outcome

Arthur is now #1170, and Bruce #1171 in Scottish Rugby’s numbered list of recognised internationals. The SRU plan is to have the capping ceremonies on the days of the Six nations games against either France or England in 2024.

Many thanks to Euan Rae and Robin Boog (and of course Bruce Laidlaw) for uncovering this story, and Wikipedia for some input.

Bruce and Arthur's Club representative and Sevens records

RHSFP RFC records.

Bruce (1963-1972) 203 games, 573 points, 36 tries

Arthur (1961-1973) 160 games, points not recorded, 54 tries

International

1969 September versus Argentina, Arthur in the first test, Bruce in the second test

International trials – Arthur in 1965 and 1966, Bruce in 1968

Representative

Representative matches (e.g. inter-City) Arthur 13 times (1965-1968); Bruce 11 times (1967-1970)

Edinburgh Rugby Trial 1969 – Bruce and Arthur (with no doubt other appearances)

Sevens (where Arthur and Bruce both played)

Winning

1969 Murrayfield - B. Laidlaw, A.V. Orr (until Final), C. McLean (Boroughmuir, Final), I.G.M. Cowper, J. Dignall, I.R.D. Davies, A.D. Forgan, J.C. Stewart, J.G. Acaster

Arthur also played in the winning Seven at Hawick in 1972 and Hawkhill in 1970, while Bruce played at Hillhead and Hawkhill in 1969 and 1970.

Finalists

1968 Melrose - A.V. Orr; I.G.M. Cowper; B.Laidlaw; H.H. Penman; A.D. Forgan, D.G.L.Pickering; J. Dignall. (Ian Allen substituted for I.G.M.Cowper after first round). (Loughborough 30 RHSFP 5)

1968 Jedforest - A.V. Orr; I.G.M. Cowper; B.Laidlaw; H.H. Penman; G.R.A. Livingston; J. Dignall (Hawick 22 R.HS FP 16)

The above information comes from sources including Hugh Mackenzie's RHSFP RFC Rugby history of 2009, and the RHS Club's website archive.

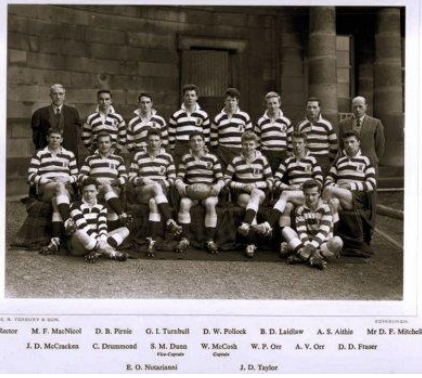
Bruce's favourite RHSFP RFC memories include...

1. While playing against Selkirk, Bruce tackled a Selkirk player into touch, and was 'threatened' by an elderly lady – "leave my grandson alone..."
2. Having captained Edinburgh the previous week, Bruce was dropped to the RHS FP 2nds against Holy Cross. As it happened, three other first team stalwarts also played in that match - John Elvin, Ian Cowper and Arthur Orr

Other information

1. Arthur's son Christian (the SRU nominee to receive his cap) recently said "it's been great to know that my Dad has finally been awarded a cap, as he spent his whole life disappointed that he never received one. He was fiercely proud of his rugby career, and also fiercely proud of his association with RHS, and always spoke very highly of his time at the school-wearing his school tie on many a formal occasion".
2. Bruce's son Douglas already has the 'family' international cap, having played football for Scotland U15's and U17's starting in 1991.
3. Bruce retired from rugby in 1972 after dislocating his shoulder.
4. Arthur went on to play for other clubs including London Scottish.

Photo gallery of images including both Arthur and Bruce



1960-61 PP XV



1963-64 FP XV versus Trinity Academy



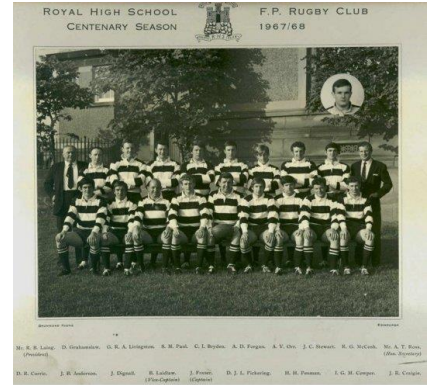
1964-65 1st XV match - unknown opponents



1966-67 FP XV



1967 FP's V Scotland



1967-68 XV - Centenary season



1969 Edinburgh rugby Trial



1969 Murrayfield Sevens



1964 Goldenacre Sevens winners post-match



1969 Scotland tour of Argentina – official photo