

Lifelong fan of Pirates looks back on last 60 years

THE longest-serving Pirates supporter of them all, Mary Hoare, has enjoyed 60 years of association with the club and can even recall those days when she watched her brothers play for Newlyn on the old St Goulder pitch up the Coombe towards 'Dava'.

Mary, who was 87 in October, remembers with humour the earliest times of the new club in a room at the Union Hotel when *Goodnight Ladies* was sung when the boys wanted to celebrate on their own. The ladies would wait patiently in the lounge.

She became president of the Supporters Club for a three-year term and has carried out a thousand and one duties, from helping with the popular summer fete on the Mennaye pitch, under Emily Porritt and Mavis Lawrey, to currently running coffee mornings with Margaret Ashcroft.

Mary has enjoyed all her years for Penzance-Newlyn, from amateur to professional era and delights in recapturing the dozens of personalities down the years, from Rex Carr, Ben Batten, Joe Barron, Ceddie Barnes, Jack Jenkin, Geoff Mabbott, Cyril Mann, Raymond Evans, Harvey Richards, Rodda and Ken Williams, Cyril Ladner, Bill Monckton, Desmond James, and Johnny Thomas, and so many more, to those of today led by Raymond's son, Richard Evans.

"I never missed a match at the Mennaye," she said, although most of them were spent selling cups of tea from the supporters hut or caravan. "I enjoyed it all, there was such a lovely atmosphere. On those days of top matches against Cardiff and Swansea we stood in such large crowds so close we didn't get wet in the rain."

A life-member of the supporters and parent club, Mary, who still lives at Newlyn, added: "This will be the last season for me."

It is difficult these days for her to get about so easily and she has a taxi whenever she travels to and fro from the club at Westholme. But her heart and memories are there.

Her Pirates story goes back to those earliest seasons, with the visit of the Australian Rugby touring squad and the 'Wallaby', and before that to the pre-1939 to 1945 war seasons at Newlyn.

"I had eight brothers and one sister. All my brothers played for Newlyn. "When I was 12 or 13 with sixpence pocket money, I would go up to St Goulder. It cost threepence to go in. "My eldest brother was Dickie and when Ben and Jim went to the

Is Mary Hoare Cornwall's most dedicated sports supporter?
DOUGLAS WILLIAMS met her

United States they started a rugby team in Detroit. Jack and Doug played for the pirates with Jack a team captain."

She was fund-raising before Westholme was bought and then joined with many other friends and fans helping to clean it ready for opening.

Born in 1920, she first worked at the Western National bus office at Wherrytown for 10 years and at the Penzance laundry office for a short time before joining the DHSS at the HQ in Princess Street before the Penlowarth multi-storey was built. She led the girls out on strike at the laundry office when they had to work in a small room full of steam and water! Still a spirited cheerful personality, with her own mind on events and people, she can enjoy a laugh about that incident today. She recalls laughs from the past, such as when she - known to all in the Pirates club - forgot to take her membership card with her to Westholme one night. "Are you a member?" asked Emily Porritt. She wouldn't let Mary in until Peter Michell came to the rescue.

"I was there with all those great characters. We had choirs to help fund-raise in the days when Jethro was playing for the Pirates at prop with 'Stack' Stevens. I heard him in the bar and asked if he would sing solo - so I started him off before he became famous!"

"I served on the committee and we would try anything to make money - we just didn't have any. At the barbecues we worked from 3.30pm to 11pm at night, preparing and serving the food and ran a food stall at the fete with players and farmers like Henry Care bringing us bags of potatoes to sell.

"We loved every minute of it - they were such a nice crowd. My first job with the Pirates Supporters was making teas and coffees under the grandstand and selling chocolate from Woolworth's with Eve James and Mrs Ashcroft.

"We made enough to pay for the new shop. When the Colts were invited on a tour but didn't have the money, I had coffee evenings at home to pay



■ A group of Pirates supporters in front of the Mennaye Grandstand several years ago, when Mary Hoare was its president (front row centre).



■ Miss Mary Hoare of Newlyn.

for the bus for them to travel. "We raised money for jerseys and rugby balls, we had raffles on match days and Sunday lunchtimes - with a special Christmas raffle board, and could make several hundred pounds from the events. Penzance businesses would help generously with prizes in the Christmas raffle with 40 to 50 on show."

Mary, who would build up a hamper as a main prize for her contribution, still has her old notebook to mark the financial progress made. This, typically, shows £78 from a raffle, £18 from a coffee morning with over £27

from a contest for a teddy bear. A match against Redruth brought £31 from programmes and £85 from refreshments from the caravan inside the ground.

But it wasn't all work. "Each year I booked a coach for a trip to a Twickenham international, leaving Penzance on Thursday at 4.30am, with breakfast at Bodmin, lunch at Salisbury and returning on the Sunday. We had great times. "And we held a ladies' night, harvest festival, club birthday night and annual dinner and dance. And I was on the Pirates executive,

representing the Supporters' Club for a time."

Mary first worked behind the bar when there was a spot of bother at the club and learned to pull a pint but she was happier clearing and washing the glasses and did this voluntarily for four seasons to help build up the club funds. One of her staunch friends was supporters' treasurer Betty Parkerwood.

At one time Mary went around the town to all the business people collecting money for their season advertisements in the match programme - £10 for the season - from friends such as Trezise, Direct Textiles and Jelberts.

The Colts and then the Mini-Juniors were backed by the supporters and she treasures a letter from Desmond James, the Colts' treasurer, thanking her for the "wonderful support you have given us all this past season". She would find an empty shop in the town, ask the owner if she could have its use for a week for the Pirates Supporters as a sale shop and also make a donation to a charity. "We made £700 in one week and £300 on the last."

Mary retired from the DHSS when she was 60 and today only brother Doug Hoare and herself remain of those 10 children. Looking back on her efforts for the pirates she added: "There was a lovely atmosphere but we all had to work hard if we wanted to keep the club going. And I never missed a match at the Mennaye."

"We had wonderful times at Westholme, especially at Christmas when we would go carol singing to the West Cornwall Hospital, Cheshire Home and Goldsithney, and then have refreshments back at the clubhouse."

Mary delighted in the nostalgia and memories of the heydays at the Mennaye. Her interest in the fortunes of the Pirates remains but the future will give her more time to enjoy the company of her 17 great nieces and nephews whom she has often visited in this country, South Africa and the United States.