

LIFE AFTER TANFIELD



John Maughan (in white) playing at Wembley in front of 100,000 spectators.

NAME THE REVEREND JOHN MAUGHAN

PUPIL AT TANFIELD FROM 1939 TO 1946

HIS LIFE BEFORE AND AFTER LEAVING TANFIELD

John Maughan was born on New Year's Day 1928 at Blackhouse, the elder of two children, to a very loving family. John's father was a miner at Craghead colliery and also a keen, and very senior member of St. John's Ambulance Brigade. He had also a keen interest in football and managed to combine both interests by becoming the trainer of Blackhouse Football Team. Young John in turn became the mascot for the team and learned, very early on, the fierce sporting rivalry between villages in North West Durham. The experience also not only gave him an insight into sports psychology but engendered a great determination and a play-to-win mentality. Above all, it started John's great interest in football and indeed in sport in general.

John's first school was Edmondsley Infants, which involved walking from Blackhouse to Edmondsley four times a day. When the family moved to Bloemfontein John became a pupil at Bloemfontein Junior School, where his scholarship teacher Steve Hetherington (another former SGS pupil) gave young John great encouragement. After attaining his scholarship John began attending Stanley Grammar School in September 1939, an occasion somewhat overshadowed by World War 2. His time at Stanley Grammar School was enjoyable and he excelled both academically and sportingly. His academic progress was overseen by dedicated and hard-working teachers, and although he liked and respected all the staff, John was strongly influenced by Miss Allison and Mr (Pop) Foster. His sporting prowess was overseen and encouraged by the PE Master, Mr Bob Chapman. Although in those days Stanley Grammar School football team did not play in a league, the school did play 'friendly' matches against other grammar schools within County Durham. His competitive sporting needs were also met by a lively and competitive House sporting system.

A typical Saturday for John would be to play football for the school in the morning, rush home, change, then go to play football for Quaking Houses Juniors in the afternoon. Quaking Houses Juniors was a side that produced a number of good professional footballers, many of whom played alongside John, who could have played professionally himself, had not other callings got in the way.

The other great love in John's life was the church. He and his parents were all regular churchgoers and also happened to live next door to the vicarage. Consequently, John became great friends with his local vicar, the Rev. PGM Dennis. From the age of twelve, John knew that he wanted to become, and would become, a priest. In his words "no blinding light – no road to Damascus" moment, he just knew that this was his calling; he never questioned it, and knew that he made the correct choice. If Saturdays were busy with two football matches then school days were equally busy. Sometimes John assisted the Rev. Dennis with a full Latin Mass at 7.30 am before going off to attend school. Indeed, not only did his local vicar play a role in his spiritual upbringing, it was he who persuaded John to apply to Oxford. Not the usual university choice for a lad from Craghead, but he applied and was accepted by Keble College, Oxford. John also recognised the work of Miss Arkless, a Latin teacher at SGS who suggested that in order to "keep her hand in at Greek", she would teach him the subject.

After leaving school in 1946 however, instead of strolling the lanes of Oxford or punting on the Isis, John found himself more tropically ensconced on the banks of the Suez Canal serving His Majesty as a national service conscript. Much of his time in Egypt was spent in GHQ and again, because of his sporting ability, representing GHQ at football and athletics. He once famously won the javelin event by out-throwing a Zulu. The only downside to National Service was that he was unable to read serious books – there simply weren't any to read.

When John was eventually demobbed he took up his place at Keble College in September 1948. It was an Oxford of formal dining halls, privilege and, fortunately for John, a high level of sporting achievement, where he was able to pursue his sporting interests. Firstly he played football for Keble College, before being selected to play for Oxford University, not easy when many members came from the soccer-playing public schools and were already known to the selectors. Then came the ultimate accolade, representing Oxford in the varsity match against Cambridge and gaining an Oxford Blue, an honour achieved by few. One of John's opponents in the Cambridge team was the future England Cricket Captain, Peter May. (He soon realised that Peter did not appreciate hard tackles, especially if the cricket season was near). It was during John's time at Oxford that Professor H W Thompson, an eminent nuclear physicist and football supporter, wished to revive soccer at colleges: rugby was definitely the main sport at this time, particularly at Oxford and Cambridge. He then formed a side made up of the best players from both universities to play in the Amateur Cup. The team was Pegasus; they won the FA Amateur Cup, beating Bishop Auckland in front of 100,000 spectators at Wembley in 1951. John was left full-back for Pegasus – the picture shows John (in white) about to share some Craghead leather with his opponent.

An Oxford Blue, an FA Amateurs Cup Winning medal and an MA Honours Degree in Modern History. The young lad from Craghead had three good years at Oxford!

After Oxford, it was on to Theological College at Lincoln. The next two years training to be a priest also put an end to John's sporting career. His tutors, and also his mentor the Rev. Dennis, said that he could either be a priest or a footballer, not both, and although by this time John was strongly tipped to be capped by the England FA Amateur Eleven his choice of vocation made at the age of twelve did not alter. The priesthood was his first choice. Co-incidentally, whilst he was studying at Lincoln, the Lincoln City centre forward was Andy Graver who had been a team mate of John's at Quaking Houses Juniors. When the two met up at Lincoln, Andy was less than impressed by the Spartan conditions at the Theological College. Also, one of John's fellow students at Lincoln, with whom John struck up a lifetime friendship, was David Jenkins who later became Bishop of Durham. In 1952 John was made a Deacon by Bishop Michael Ramsay and was ordained as a priest in 1954. From then until 1993 when he retired John was parish priest in four different parishes within his beloved County Durham: Heworth St Mary's, St Barnabas, Rowlands Gill, All Saints, Penshaw, St Mark's, Cleadon Park. Incidentally, St Mark's church hall was burned down by vandals soon after John was appointed and to his horror, he found that the church was under-insured, so for the next few years he was not only parish priest but also insurance negotiator and building co-ordinator, not to mention dealing with mining subsidence and other such problems. In his own words, John was deliriously happy dealing with the 'nuts and bolts' of parish life. The choice he made at twelve has never been questioned. The closeness and the privilege of being able to share people's joy, and comforting people's sorrows and promoting the Christian life gave John the life he had always hoped for. John's wife, Kathleen, died in the year 2000. They had two children, Michael and Judith, and five grandchildren. One of them, Christopher Alexander, was a pupil at Tanfield. John officially retired in 1993 but soldiered on, helping wherever he could. A priest's work never ends. "Sacerdos es in aeternum". The battle to advance the Christian life and protect the good goes on. A priest is forever.