**NOMINATION FOR POSTHUMOUS LIFE-MEMBERSHIP: ARTHUR JAMES AITKEN**

Arthur James AITKEN
 b. 17 May, 1912, Morrinsville
 d. 15 September, 2002, Mt Maunganui

Jimmy Aitken was an immense presence in Hamilton Old Boys and Waikato cricket for, quite literally, decades. He was an absolute club-man, dedicated to the Old Boys cause, and remains one of our most successful representative players.

His father, William James Aitken, had been particularly active in cricket in the Morrinsville region; ending up as patron of the Piako sub-association. The Morrinsville region was where Jimmy started his cricket too (as well as at Christ's College, Christchurch, which he attended from 1927-30) and the place where he got his break in the South Auckland side, making his Hawke Cup debut in 1931 against South Canterbury.

It took another few years before Aitken, by then in his early 20s, made the trip across to Hamilton to represent our club. His father was acknowledged, too, becoming a vice-president for a number of years.

Once at Old Boys, Aitken set about making runs like a man possessed. We’ll never know just how many he made for the club, with records being as sketchy as they are in that era, but perhaps the most significant individual score was in January 1941.

In a match where he captained the side, Aitken scored 241 out of 364 against Claudelands – the next highest score was 37 – and managed to set a new record for the highest score in Hamilton club cricket. He then took 6-26 in Claudelands’ second innings, leading his team to an innings and 150-run victory.

He took only an hour to go from 100 to 200, and managed at least five sixes; no mean feat for the era.

His leadership skills are worth nothing: as well as captaining the Old Boys side for at least a decade (though, again, records make this difficult to verify with certainty), he captained the Waikato side whenever Jim Everest wasn’t present – including in a Hawke Cup challenge against Hutt Valley – and the Waikato rugby side. It started young too, captaining Christ's College's 1st XI and 1st XV in his school years.

His rugby, though not significant to his Old Boys career, was noteworthy in itself: 38 games in a career ended by the outbreak of World War Two, scoring 138 points (including 18 tries) and scoring four tries in a match against Thames Valley in 1935. In an era where tries were worth three, and Waikato played around five games a year, Aitken’s numbers are impressive.

His representative cricket career, too, saw him stand-out among his peers. Although he appears on the Hamilton honours boards only twice – a century against Bay of Plenty, and a five-for (plus 82) against the same opponents – he was one of the more consistent members of the side, contributing with scores and wickets virtually every game. His only failures, sadly, tended to be against the touring sides.

But what was truly significant for Old Boys were Howden Cup titles in 1941-42 and 1942-43 – the club’s first since the 1920s, and last until the 1970s – and the sheer weight of runs Aitken provided; especially when Jackie Mills arrived in the region, and Old Boys boasted a top order of Aitken, Mills and Wynn Higginson.

Aitken played representative and club cricket until the 1950s, and walked away one of the legends of cricket in the Waikato region; let alone of our club.

Although his administrative contributions don’t match others amongst our Life Members, Aitken’s services to our club as a captain for so long, as a batsman, and as a bowler make him one of the most valuable members our club has had.

Aitken was overlooked for a Life Membership in his living years, a question yet to be answered. Thankfully we have an opportunity as a club to rectify this mistake and finally give Jim Aitken the recognition he deserves for his services to Hamilton Old Boys.