



History of Mumbles Rangers 1950 - 2018

Billy Johns B.E.M. Founder of Mumbles Rangers. (1929 - 1962)

The story of Billy Johns is one of great courage, of strength and of passion. Although Billy died in 1962 at the age of 33 his inspiration lives on.

Billy John's health in the early years of his life deteriorated rapidly. The physical struggles diminished his energies to such an extent that by a very early age he was losing his mobility, and soon afterwards he found himself permanently confined to a wheelchair. For the remainder of his life he was to be virtually totally paralysed. Despite his disability he was an inspiration to others

Billy had many friends, and Billy had a dream, he decided that rather than be led he would make, for him, the monumental effort to lead. His aims were clear - enjoyment for his friends, "his boys" through sporting and other activities and develop a friendship that knew no barriers. Billy's dream was of a club where he could gather around him hard working and committed officials who could nurture and foster its members, and together they could create something that was very "special."

Sixty-six years on there can be little doubt that Billy Johns' dream is very much alive. Billy's hopes and aspirations for the members of his club live on in the current players and officials and friends of the Mumbles Rangers of today. In spite of the fact that the majority of the club's present members never had the privilege of knowing Billy Johns, all recognize the privilege of belonging to his club. The massive influence that he had upon all who came in contact with him all those years ago exists still to this day. It is an influence that all that has ever been associated with Mumbles Rangers will have experienced. If he had lived to witness the strength of the club today, his pride would have known no bounds.

In the 1961 New Years Honours list Billy Johns was awarded the British Empire Medal

A History of Mumbles Rangers

Founded 1950 by Billy Johns B.E.M.

Mumbles Rangers Boys' Club has a proud part to play in the history of our local community.

It is sixty-eight years since a young man named Billy Johns decided to found his own club. The late Billy Johns, B.E.M. lived with his devoted parents, George and Lillian Johns, in what was then 65 Higher West Cross Lane (now West Cross Avenue).

From an early age Billy was confined to a wheelchair but that did not affect his enthusiasm for life and in particular his commitment to the boys of West Cross and Mumbles. It was the tenacity and resolution of a quite remarkable young man backed by a devoted mother's love and support which led to him first becoming treasurer, then secretary, then manager of "his" team. He wanted "his boys" to enjoy the sports which crippling handicaps made so cruelly impossible for him. Such was his remarkable talent for leadership, that when he decided to leave Oystermouth Youth Club in order to form his own team, almost all the boys left with him. In the first difficult years, Billy Johns not only held "his boys" together, but without resources of any kind, without premises of their own, he laid down the ground rules for all to obey. The response was a total commitment from as loyal a group of youngsters and as assorted a cross-section of young people as you could wish to find anywhere.

In those early post-war years Billy Johns became a familiar figure throughout Mumbles as "his boys" pushed his wheelchair to and from Underhill Park no matter how extreme the weather. His early wheelchair pushers were local boys Derek James, Keith Davies, David Palmer, Alan and Keith Ockwell, Doug Peachey and later Andy Cuthbert, Malcolm Jones, Bob Smith, Kevin McCoskey, Alan Dawtry, Peter Aspel and countless others. If Mrs. Johns



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allowed you to push Bill for his haircut over at Silas Macey's you'd arrived. Former Spurs and Wales footballer Terry Medwin married Silas's daughter Joyce envied by all the local youngsters!

The present-day club now boasts a vibrant membership of over 450 players, with over 400 boys and girls aged between 6 years and 16 years within the 33 teams registered in season 2017/18. But the club would probably not have survived its first year had it not been for the inspirational leadership of a truly remarkable young man. The year before the club's formation Billy Johns was involved with Mumbles Youth team based at Oystermouth School, and boasting powerful local players like Jim Pressdee (later of Swansea A.F.C. and Glamorgan C.C.C. fame), Ray and John Hammacott, George Davies (son of local Auntie Minnie) and Shaun Bowen From Newton.

Although Billy Johns admired the highly successful Mumbles Albion team and shared others' pleasure occasionally watching their players beat the best in Swansea – locals like John Budge, Ben Hoppe, the Nash brothers, Peter Elias, Ray "Stormy" Fairweather, etc. he was determined that his boys would be different. They would be special. Ask any member of Mumbles Rangers today about their club - 68 years later - and they will answer as one.

"It's a bit special"!

Early members like Terry O'Brien recall how they paid 8/6d each towards the cost of their jerseys, which were heavy and "seemed to be made from sail cloth". In addition they paid 2/6d a week. Expensive? "No, it was our club. We were privileged, (best seats in the Tivoli Cinema were then 1/6d and a pint of Worthington beer cost 1/3d).

Their first season was a struggle but Billy Johns was a very determined man, and as his small band of youngsters increased, they learnt to admire, respect and finally revere their leader – and friend.

An early member recalls how in 1952 at a club meeting in Oystermouth Square at the British Legion Snooker Buildings and Dance Hall where Boots and C.J.'s are now, the club celebrated that season's success by approving Billy's proposal to make 13 players life-members. Terry (Texas) Llewellyn (now Dr. R.T. Llewellyn, Cambridge Don), Alan Okwell, Clive Gammon, Terry O'Brien, Hylton Jolliffe, Roy Lloyd, Danny Sheehan, Bob Aspell, Johnny Davies, Vic Collier (later to become Squadron Leader), and the only 3 non-local Mumbles players – John (Nubs) Norman, Dai ("Mr. Rangers") Davies and Brian Owen from Brynmill.

Over the club's long history many have resided outside Mumbles, but almost all who have joined have found the club impossible to leave.

Those early years brought undreamed of success on the football field. But real success for Billy Johns was never to be confined to the football field. His dream was to build a clubhouse for his boys. Looking back at those early days it seems incredible now that the very early club meetings had to be held in the open air on the side of a football pitch in Underhill Park, often on dark, damp windswept evenings. Soaked through, Bill would often be pushed home by his faithful band of youngsters promising them that "something will turn up". He told them once – "If we have to we'll build our own clubhouse". In 1954 (until 1956) they did just that – on the site of a disused air-raid shelter in "the horses' field" where Castleacre now stands. After 2 years the club was forced to look elsewhere and relocated to the old Badminton Hall at the top of Norton Road just below the Beaufort Inn.

The search for a clubhouse location has continued unabated for over half a century – including stays in premises in William Street, Oystermouth Square, Oddfellows Hall in the Dunns and currently in a hut built by club members in Underhill Park. Mumbles Rangers has earned the right to be allowed a Clubhouse commemorate with its contribution to the



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community of Mumbles. Possibly one day Billy Johns' dream will firstly be fulfilled and the club's great service to the community fully recognised.

Over the years, Billy John's club has attracted a loyalty unrivalled by similar organisations. Ex-Cardiff and Wales footballer Steve Gammon was recommended by Billy to the then Cardiff Manager Bill Jones and Steve even now returns for the club's Annual Dinner every year. The club has produced some outstanding footballers, unlucky not to do well at the highest level – Murray Crook, Phil Davies, Alan Lloyd, Geoff Riley, Derek Rees, Gary Hockley, John Lodge, Phil Vaughan, Russell Thomas and many more.

But it is the special camaraderie that will always be the hallmark of Mumbles Rangers, Fred Clement, Eric Nicholas, Jeff Fackrell, Keith Billington, Clive Henson, Des Criddle, Mike Podbielski, Chris Parkin, Martin Duffy, Mike Isaac, George Kyrillou, Mark Wade, Eddie Wade, Fraser Gardiner, Jack Thorne, Mike Harvey, Dave Harris, Clive Aston, Les Hockley, Neil Gray, and Haydn Lewis can combine a total of over 500 years in service to Mumbles Rangers.

There must be a very special reason for that.

In 1959 the Daily Mirror proclaimed their nausea with the Queens's New Years Honours list and invited their readers to vote for what they described as "exceptional people" in the community. In January 1959 a panel comprising Lady Joan Braithwaite, Beryl Grey, the Duke of Bedford, Alec S. Dick and Mr. (later Sir) Matt Busby, decided that Billy Johns was their 'Daily Mirror Man of the Year'. For the people of Mumbles Billy Johns has been their man of the 'Century' and some form of posthumous recognition for this outstanding incredibly brave local man is felt by many to be long overdue. Perhaps a purpose-built clubhouse to add to the sculpture sitting in the woodlands in the park would be a fitting tribute and memorial to Billy Johns. The club is actively pursuing Billy's dream and has joined forces with Mumbles Rugby Club and the local community to form a Limited and Charitable Company to improve the clubhouse and to safeguard the futures of the community to enjoy the Park as THE recreational centre for the Mumbles.

To continue the story of Mumbles Rangers, Billy John's overriding ambitions were always for his young members, and throughout his short life he strove to build a clubhouse for his boys. Sadly, on Valentine's day, February 14th 1962 Billy lost his fight for life at the age of 33 years, but he left behind wonderful memories and a legacy that is still carried on to this very day. Billy's dream of a clubhouse of our own will one day be realised.

In the meantime, Mumbles Rangers carries on in the true traditions of Billy, almost as if he were still at the helm.

In the mid fifties Billy was introduced by Murray Crook to a young Italian, Carlo Prete, who had been sent to Wales by his father to learn English. Carlo idolised Billy and the Italian Connection began. After Carlo's return to his homeland a visit to Italy was organised, Carlo and his family were to play hosts to Billy and his youngsters. For Billy it was a journey made against all the odds. 36 boys led by Billy travelled from Swansea to Paddington, and to cut costs, stayed overnight in a Salvation Army Hostel, before continuing next day to Dover where they crossed to Calais. They travelled by train through France and Switzerland to Genoa, Italy, a massive journey for Billy. "His boys" watched over his every moment and youngsters, Eddie Wade in particular, and others still in their teens, demonstrated astonishing care and concern for Billy throughout that fortnights stay. That did not prevent 'the boys' losing Billy's wheelchair on the journey??? Such was the impression they made that in 1975, some 13 years after Billy's death, Carlo Prete brought over an Italian team to Mumbles as a tribute to "the most incredible man I've ever met".

Carlo had sent Billy a colossal bronzed statuette on a marble base and, after Billy's death another breathtakingly beautiful trophy similar in stature. These trophies are today



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presented to the First and Second Team Players of the Year, and held with pride within the club.

The late 50's was a bleak time for funds and new kit was badly needed. But Spurs and Wales's footballer, Terry Medwin came to the rescue with eleven Welsh International jerseys. They were only numbered 7 and 9, Terry's positions for Wales. So we fielded a side with six wearing number 7's and four wearing number 9 on their shirts!

Through the 60's there was plenty of success on the football field, Hylton Jolliffe's 'B' side having enormous success, and many more achievements by the other sides. Billy's quest for a clubhouse continued, with many failed applications, but his determination remained as strong as ever.

Billy John's death in 1962 left the club shell-shocked, but still in good hands of club stalwarts like Mende Morgan, John Budge, Club Leader Bob Smith, Secretary Kevin McCloskey and Fred Clement, our home then being The Old Catholic Hall in William Street. But Bob Smith left for South Africa and then came the move to premises in the basement of Oddfellows Hall in the Dunns. The rooms often flooded with the incoming tide and it was an unhealthy existence and this move signaled an era of decline for the club.

But a new era was emerging, Jeff Fackrell (later to be club leader), Clive Henson (Chairman, Secretary and Fixture secretary), Mike Harvey, Keith Billington, Ian Williamson (later to become Secretary), and Clive Hemp (the new treasurer), were determined to keep the club going. These were difficult times and it was hand to mouth existence. With the further loss of the premises at Oddfellows Hall, the club sank to its lowest ebb. Meetings were now held at No.11 Glen Road, the home of Fred and Helen Clement and thanks to their hospitality the club was able to survive. Fred Clement played a huge part in our club's history became 'Man of Mumbles', earned the Welsh FA long service award and served the Club for over 50 years becoming the Club President before his death in. His wife Helen must also be mentioned for without the patience, understanding and support of Helen and many other such wives the Rangers officials would find it nigh impossible to devote their time and commitment to building the Club.

It was at this time that the club was offered a strip of concrete in Underhill Park, which had housed the American Nissan Huts during the war and was adjacent to the Rugby Club changing rooms. This was to be the Rangers' new home and work began immediately. Ken Jones played a major part, ably assisted by Eddie Wade and other club stalwarts, Fred Clement, Jeff Fackrell, Ian Williamson, John Budge, Alan Martin, John Lodge, Clive Henson and Keith Billington to name a few. The main structure was supplied by Marley, the internal walls fittings and fixtures being built by club members. It was not a palace but it was our club and a home.

The arrival of Frankie Vaughan to open our own 'Billy Johns Clubhouse' was as nice a gesture to the memory of Billy, as one could get. Frankie first met Billy in November 1958 when he opened our then clubhouse at Norton. Mrs. Johns was present and also Clive Thomas, World Cup referee and Chairman of the Welsh Boys Clubs.

The late 60's saw the arrival of Reg Nix, an ex-referee, to assist with first team coaching, and Danny Sheehan and Dai Davies who had both seen the first team play in badly faded shirts and despaired at the state of the club. Fortunes blossomed with the purchase of a new set of kit in the old club colours of Yellow, Red and Black and the installation of Danny as club leader. With the arrival of Gerry Griffiths, the club took on a new dimension, and on the playing field the phoenix was about to rise from the ashes.



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Although our football ambitions in returning to the first division were achieved, the search for a clubhouse went on. Our application to build in Oystermouth Quarry, now a car park was quashed; our plans to build behind the car park at Underhill Park were unsuccessful. Our recent joint venture with the Rugby Club initially fell again on stony ground. But the work carried out by Eric Nicholas, Des Criddle, Mike Podbielski and Chris Parkin in pursuit of Billy's dream which continues with success on the horizon. Under the mantle of 'Go Underhill', in conjunction with Mumbles Rugby Club and a strong contingent of Mumbles Community Council, local Community organisations, the Club achieved Charity Status in 2016. Outline Planning permission was approved and a contract with City and County of Swansea for an Agreement to Lease Underhill Park and all its facilities for a period of 125 years lay 'on the desk' for signature. Included in the ambitious plans were the demolition of Billy's Clubhouse and the Rugby changing rooms, the building of new changing rooms alongside the Red Pavilion in the centre of the Park, a Full Size All Weather pitch with lights and fencing contained in Phase 1.

Other members who have served the club well, must not be forgotten, Malcolm Miller, Ray Thompson, Russell Davies, Kim Thomas, Kevin Whittington, Ala'a Shouhaib and Richard Potheary have acted as Treasurers, Chris Jones as Secretary, Colin Henson and Keith Billington as Fixture Secretaries, Malcolm Maggs and Jeff Fackrell as club Leaders. Just as in the early years people like Alan Price, Roy Browning and Haydn Griffiths contributed so much.

In 1973 the club began a junior section with the arrival of Alec Sorley, the late Eric Nicholas, (later Club President), Malcolm Maggs, (later Club Leader), Des Criddle, (later Chairman and President), Eddie Wade, Mike Harvey, Len Rowden, Bernard Evans, Ivor Owen, and Lawrie Buckland.

Some of the more recent junior managers are Chris Parkin (ex-Junior and Senior Manager X 4, Junior coordinator and Club Secretary, fixture secretary, now Chairman). Mike Isaac, Haydn Lewis (Junior Manager x3 Junior coordinator for last 25 years), Mike Podbielski (Junior Manager Club Secretary) George Kyrillou (Junior Manager, Alan Martin Coordinator) Leroy Anderson, Neil Grey (ex V.P. Club Administrator), Chris Gudgeon (Junior manager and Assistant Secretary), Franco Simeone (Junior manager, Club Kit Coordinator and Assistant Secretary), Fraser Gardiner (Player, Captain, Club Committee, VP Assistant Secretary), Ian Jones, Clive Henson (Treasurer Chairman and VP Secretary), Neil Rees (Junior Manager and Alan Martin tournament), Gwyn Lloyd-Jones, Simon Howells, Lawrence Jones, Paul Thomas (Junior manager and Club annual dinner), Renato Restighini, Paul Skinner, John Cox, Keith Norris, Martin Duffy (Junior Manager x 2 Club Treasurer) and Tom Cox, have been with the club for many years. Our junior section now boasts sides from under 6 through to under 16, and Mumbles Rangers is now one of the largest Clubs in Wales thanks to all our past and present managers, members and officials.

In 1976 the club celebrated its 25th Anniversary at the Top Rank Suite, Swansea and the main guest was Max Boyce. Eric Nicholas, Rangers' lifetime friend Grafton Maggs, and the Rangers' committee masterminded this anniversary dinner.

In 1982 Mike Harvey suggested that the Club holds an Annual Dinner and invite all of the old boys, those original Rangers, to gain their support and reintroduce them to their club. The first one with 60 members was held at the Langland Court, but soon outgrew this venue to go onto the Caswell Bay. Now 43 years' later this event is still being held every year with over 200 members attending and with tickets at a premium. The Vice Presidents are now the main source of income along with our loyal and important list of sponsors. Initially set up by Eric Nicholas, the Vice Presidents Club was taken over by Neil Grey and currently is currently managed by the evergreens Clive Henson and Fraser Gardiner. The cost of membership as a VP is £20 per annum and the contributions give the club



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invaluable funds to safeguard the future of the Club and carry on its important work within the community of Mumbles and Swansea. For VP application details contact any of the committee or Clive Henson/Fraser Gardiner.

In 1989 the idea of setting down the history of the club, before the records became lost or forgotten was instigated by David Harris and Mike Harvey and the book 'One Man's Dream' was written, the history of the club between 1950 and 1990 being saved forever in pictures and print. The book became a best seller and there are but 15 prized copies remaining unsold to this day. David and Mike spent hours, days, weeks and months interviewing members, recalling memories, collecting photographs to chronicle the wads of information. An EPIC exercise with a huge debt owed by the Club members for David and Mike.

In November 2000 the club held its 50th Anniversary celebrations at the Swansea University and present were nine of Billy's 'original' Rangers, Clive Gammon, Terry O'Brien, Hylton Jolliffe, Danny Sheehan, Johnny Davies, Vic Collier, John Norman, Brian Owen and Bob Aspell (son of Wally the club's legendary first trainer). We were also fortunate that day to have overseas visitors in Dimitris (Jimmy the Greek) Zaraphonitis with friends from Greece, and Bob Smith travelling from South Africa to meet up with over 350 past / present players and wives and friends attending.

Since 1997 the Rangers Junior section holds a junior invitation tournament, dedicated to Alan Martin with over 24 teams entering each year from across South and West Wales. Between 1997 and 2006 the tournament covered all age groups from under 8 to under 12 years of age then from 2007 to date it has concentrated on the under 8 and under 9s. Twelve teams in each age group play in round robin groups with winners and runners up progressing into semi-finals and finals. George Kyrillou has been the catalyst and organizer for every competition, all dedicated to the memory of Alan who always enjoyed coaching the younger kids in the Club. In 2016 Neil Rees and Chris Gudgeon took responsibility for organization of the Alan Martin tournament and decided to reintroduce competition for under 8, 9, 10 and 11, increasing the tournament up to a 2 day event. The under 10 and 11 playing on the Saturday and the under 8 and 9 on the Sunday. This proved very successful and was repeated in 2017 with 48 teams competing over the two days. Neil and Chris agreed to extend the tournament to include an under 10 and under 12 sections for Girls from 2018.

In 2000 Mumbles Rangers, Mumbles Rugby Club and other local sports clubs came together with Mumbles Development Trust formed 'Underhill 200' with the aim of improving facilities within the Park. A step in the right direction of realizing Billy Johns' dream of a new Clubhouse for all. Despite early enthusiasm that lasted the best part of 8 years there was eventually little funding available to ensure any realistic success for the organization and it eventually ran out of steam. However, a lasting legacy of the early optimism can be found in the woodland adjacent to the Underhill Car Park where a memorial statue 'Spirit of Billy Johns' can be seen as you walk along the woodland paths.

In 2005 Mike Podbielski realised the need for Mumbles Rangers to encompass Girl's football within the Club and he embarked on an advertising drive for players and coaches. An open day sponsored by McDonalds (current Club partner) provided numerous large inflatable training/fun facilities at the Park attracting over 1000 people which resulted in a successful recruitment of girls of all ages along with a number of potential girl's coaches. With the enthusiasm of Jeremy Holland, Jessica Blanck, Mark Robinson, Linda Warwick, Rachel Doxsey and a host of dedicated coaches the Girls Section have grown to include teams playing regularly at under 10, under 12, under 14 and under 16.



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In 2006 the club was renamed Mumbles Rangers Boys and Girls Club in recognition of the fact that the girls were now an integral and important part of the Club. In 2008 the decision was made to drop 'Boys and Girls' from the Club name and become MUMBLES RANGERS FOOTBALL CLUB.

2007 saw the Club receiving an invitation from Genoa Football Club, yes that's correct the same Club in the Italian Series A league, no less, to enter a team into their prestigious James Spensley Invitation International Tournament. Our own Carlo Prete, one of Billy's Boys who played for the Club in the early 1950s whilst studying at Swansea University never lost contact with his many friends and secured us that first invitation. Since 2007 we have received an annual invitation and each year we have sent our under 14 team(s) to the Tournament every September. Many of Europe's TOP Clubs send teams to compete, including Barcelona, Real Madrid, Turin, many top Eastern Block teams..... What an honour for Mumbles Rangers, what an honour it would have been for Billy Johns.

In 2009 the Club received a £23,000 grant from Mumbles Community Council to improve facilities within the Clubhouse and provide female changing. These were completed in August 2009 and Ian Rush MBE officially reopened the Clubhouse. Without the valued support of the Mumbles Community Council and its officers the Club may not have survived through the difficult times. We entered into a 4-year partnership with Bergoni who continue to provide the Club kit. A new style kit was designed and it was decided that every player. Junior or senior, boy or girl, would turn out and play in the same style kit of jersey, shorts and socks. Our identity on the Parks was reestablished.

In 2010 our partnership with McDonalds the English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh Football Associations Official Team Sponsors started to take off. Mumbles Rangers under 16 were selected to be flag bearers and ball boys at a full Welsh International. We had grown to 350 players, 72 coaches and the inaugural Jumpers for Goalposts fun day for the Dads and older members of the Club was organized by Dom Capel. Dom created such a successful formula for each day that it has steadily grown every subsequent year and is firmly fixed into the Club Diary. Funds and profits from each competition are donated, by Dom and Lara, to those years Genoa Tor Fund. Up to 2014 Dom has raised over £6000 for these teams. Mumbles Rangers were mentioned in the House of Commons when Martin Caton, MP for Swansea, congratulated the Club on our 60th Anniversary and records are documented for posterity in an Early Day Motion 1018.

The end of the 2010/11 season saw the final season completed by that years under 16 run by Mark Dezulian, Dean Allen and Gaffa Vaughan. Their last game was the Swansea League Cup Final against West End which they duly won 3-2 to complete another successful season. In fact, by the end of the last season the team had established themselves as the most successful team ever, in the 48-year history of the Swansea Junior League. In their five seasons together, the boys set records tumbling by winning ten of the thirteen trophies competed for. They created history at under 13 by becoming the first team ever to do the TREBLE in a season they remained unbeaten. That year they were awarded The City and County of Swansea Junior Team of the year at the Swansea Active Awards ceremony held at the Swansea Brangwyn Hall. They had an unbeaten run that saw them undefeated for over one and a half years from under 13 to under 14. In four consecutive years they won the Swansea Cup and only lost one game at home in five years and five games in total during five seasons. They also became the first team in West Wales FA history to win the West Wales Cup three out of three attempts.

The Team will forever live within the archives and memories of Mumbles Rangers.

30 teams were registered and played every week in the 2011/12 season and Mike Podbielski and his patient wife June along with Dave Harris organized 2 separate and very successful Old Boys Reunions at Mumbles Cricket Club. The under 8 and under 9 boys and



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girls were selected as the Game Mascots at the Full Welsh International between Wales and Luxemburg played at Parc Y Scarlets. The game was televised and players thoroughly enjoyed the experiences being presented with full Welsh new style kits.

Welsh Football Trust Lifetime Achievement Award

Many of you are aware of the 33 years of work that Haydn Lewis has carried out for the Club. Anyone walking through the park on a Sunday morning from 715am through to 1230pm will have seen Haydn setting up his training area for his under 6 and under 7, marshalling all the mums and dads and enthusing the boys and girls as he puts them through practice routines. For 33 years Haydn has been the Foundation of this Club, well over 1600 players have gone through his care, the great majority onto Mumbles Rangers teams through the under 16 to Seniors. Many of these players are now back at the Park on a Sunday morning again with their own children and Haydn is still there with the same vigour and commitment that would have made Billy a proud man yet again. It was no surprise that the Welsh FA/McDonalds nominated Haydn as a candidate for the 'Welsh Community Football Awards 2011' held in Cardiff Castle in July 2011. Haydn had previously won the South Wales equivalent of this award earlier in the year. With the support of our President Des Criddle and his wife Barbara, Haydn and his ever so patient wife Linda attended the posh dinner-suited event and Haydn was really surprised when he was presented with this prestigious honour by Ian Rush MBE. He recovered his composure sufficiently when the television cameras captured him and he was not lost for words offering a very well received acceptance speech.

Another example of what Billy has started and created in Mumbles. Well done Haydn.

2011 also saw the Club applying for Welsh FA accreditation. The levels of the award start with the Basic level, onto the Bronze level, then the Silver level and finally the ultimate Gold level. The officers worked tirelessly, Mike and Haydn spending hours over the Welsh FA Portal computer records recording every single coaching qualification of our (close on) 100 coaches in the Club. What did we do?? We by-passed the Basic and Bronze levels and entered straight into the Silver level. The continued growth and success within the Club created problems when it came to our Annual Presentation Day. The committee commissioned Haydn Lewis and a few wise Club members to review the event and come up with a format and venue more suited to our size. They came up with an ALL-DAY event to be held at Mumbles Cricket Club. Each team was allocated a 30-minute slot in the Marquee with the event starting at 10am and often extending past 730pm. It was a master stroke and such a huge success with players, parents, families, coaches and supporters making the day a social event. An all-day BBQ, along with an open cricket outfield to run around, offers both players and parents the chance to make the day an enjoyable social gathering.

In 2012 we increased to 31 teams and Billy's dream of a new clubhouse at the Park was starting to become more of a reality. The Club officials had struggled with a number of previous attempts to provide and improve facilities at the Park over the past 30 years. Simon Tse, who was responsible for successfully leading the multi-million-pound development of the Phoenix Centre at Paradise Park, Townhill, was persuaded to lead a Joint Venture between Mumbles Rangers and Mumbles Rugby Club to improve facilities at the Park. A Memorandum of Understanding signed by both Clubs formed the basis for the formation of a Limited Company with aims to improve the appalling drainage in the Park, provide an all-weather surface and a new Clubhouse/Changing Rooms with community facilities. Whilst these were early days Simon and his fellow directors gained the support of Swansea and Mumbles councilors. The City and County of Swansea have officially



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granted our Joint Venture now named Go Underhill a 125-year lease on Underhill Park. The current Limited Company was wound up and a new Charitable Incorporated Organization formed to push forward the venture and seek the necessary funding.

Mike Isaac, a long-standing Club member, Junior Manager and patron, designed and produced a quality memorial slate plaque dedicated to Billy and his life in Mumbles Rangers. The plaque takes pride of place in the Clubhouse. Fred Clement's dedication and long service was recognized alongside Billy's and Mike produced a similar quality slate plaque in memory of Fred.

2013 again saw an increase of players and up to 33 teams were registered to play every week. Martin Duffy joined the officers as the new Treasurer taking over from Ala'a Shouaib. Mike Podbielski was nominated for an award in the South Wales Evening Post Swansea Pride Awards held at the Brangwyn Hall ceremony. June again added the glamour with Haydn Lewis, Des Criddle, Eddie Wade, Doug Peachey and Chris Parkin supporting. How does the Club continue to produce so many of these dedicated and proud volunteers?

Loughborough University approached the Club to participate in a National Football Grassroots report for the four Home Countries Football Associations on Developing Grassroots Football. Officers spent hours answering questions, offering facts and opinions, explaining how success and growth had been achieved, the final report was published and first launched in the House of Commons and days later in the Senedd Welsh National Assembly in a high-profile ceremony. Sir Geoff Hurst and Ian Rush MBE fronted the launch and Mike Podbielski and Chris Parkin were invited to attend from the Club. Sir Geoff and Ian Rush answered questions on Mumbles Ranger's development. The honours and recognition for Mumbles Rangers keep stacking up.

This season 2014/15 the Club has 37 teams registered to play weekly at ages from under 6 through to under 18, with many of the age groups having two, three or four teams, together with four girls' teams, 3 senior teams and a veteran's team. Over 40 boys and girls gained representative honours for West Glamorgan, Welsh FA trials, Welsh Boys and Girls Club caps, Swansea, Cardiff, Pontardawe, LLanelli and Pt Talbot development squads.

The current Officers of Des Criddle (President), Chris Parkin (Chairman), Mike Podbielski (Secretary), Chris Gudgeon (Assis Secretary), Franco Simeone (Assis Secretary) and Martin Duffy (Treasurer) ensure that the ideals and dreams of Billy Johns continue to be behind the progress and pathway of the Clubs future.

In 2015 the Club was awarded the Welsh FA GOLD accreditation and was proudly presented with the Award by the Welsh Football Trusts Development Officer Colin Staples who has been instrumental in creating the environment and skills necessary for the Club to be successful. The aim is to maintain and sustain these new standards that were so hard to attain. Mumbles Rangers were awarded and presented with the Swansea and West Wales Club of the Year 2014/15. Chris Coleman, Welsh Team Manager, came to Underhill Park with his entourage on a wet Saturday morning on 10th May 2014 and spent hours with over 200 of our players, coaches and families. Cameras clicked all day and we were so proud to have been selected to host the visit. Colin Staples represented the Welsh Football Trust and Ron Mounsey, our partner from McDonald's added status to the event.

Ryan Giggs came to Underhill Park on Saturday 27th June 2015 together with the McDonald roadshow and Ryan spent all day in the Park with the children, firstly leading training, signing thousands of autographs and finally playing in a match against one of the boys teams.

The Club provided ball boys and flag bearers at the Wales v England under 21 international at the Liberty Stadium in front of the Sky television cameras. Our Girls had a similar very



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enjoyable experience when they were selected as ball girls and flag bearers at the Premier League match between Swansea and old rivals Cardiff. The First team won the Gower Summer Cup in August 2015. Mike Podbielski upgraded the Club showers with a £1150 Club investment.

2016 saw the Club register 33 teams playing regularly each week. The Club sought to provide a Defibrillator for cover for the Park. After many months of difficulties in gaining permission from authorities, Claire Parkin (NSPCC) successfully took responsibility for the project and not only gained the required authority but also a generous £1150 grant aid from Julie Thomas of the Jonathan Thomas Memorial Fund. Local Electrician Dave Roberts generously gave hours of his time at installing the first Defib, adapting the casing and again installing the second Defib all at no cost, Cllr Tony Colburn arranged for grant aid to undertake extensive training, Mumbles Community Council were very supportive and Phil Hardman of CCTV Wales generously donated and installed a CCTV camera system at the Clubhouse. Paul Williams (Willo, ex Club player) of Langland Lifeguards undertook all training for the project. Franco Simeone remodeled the official Club Badge. Mike Podbielski again excelled by producing the 2016 Club Newsletter containing 80 pages within a glossy booklet. Jake Simeone won a BGCW Welsh Cap. Under the guidance of Mike Parkin and Andy Vye the under 14 team entered the annual Genoa International Tournament and a 33-group including 16 players travelled for a 6-day tour in September 2016. After being picked up at midnight the party excitedly travelled on their way to Gatwick Airport. Within 20 minutes in pitch darkness the bus 'Died' in the back roads of Briton Ferry. Many anxious moments passed before a new bus arrived and the tour went to become a huge success for all. The team reached the quarter finals playing in the high 70 and 80-degree heat levels. Carlo Prete our benefactor and huge Club friend arranged our entry into the competition and came to watch every game we played and taking members of the party on a tour of Genoa to the 'White Rose' of Genoa for drinks. Many friends were made on the tour especially the team from Orlando USA who bonded brilliantly with us and them cheering each other on in games. The first team again won the Gower Summer Cup in August 2016.

2017 saw the Club entering into an exercise to increase numbers playing regularly in Girls football. Along with Colin Staples from the Welsh Football Trust, Swansea City Development Officers, Swansea University support, we teamed up to organize 4 summer festivals for the girls. Russell Martin (FAW B coach) organized ALL coaching sessions along with a number of the Clubs Girls coaches. Such was the success the Club signed up a further 55 new girl players in the age groups 8-12. These were all registered with the West Wales Girls Football league to play regularly for the Club. For the fourth year running the Club gained the FAW Gold Accreditation with Chris Gudgeon leading our successful application along with Haydn Lewis and Mike Podbielski. Dave Harris not only organized his annual Old Boys reunion at the Mumbles Cricket Club but initiated regular monthly meetings at the Linden Tree where the Old Boys reminisced and enjoyed the occasional quiz with Bunny Evans excelling. Four new Life Members were deservedly appointed at the Dinner. Andy Jones, Martin Duffy, Mervin Jones and the stalwart Paul Thomas. Four very well received and respected new life members. The First team continued their progress by winning promotion to the Swansea Senior League First Division and for the third year in a row won the Gower Summer Cup in August 2017. Clive Henson and Fraser Gardiner managing the Vice Presidents Club increased the membership to over 200 members. Four boys, namely Callum Andrews, Jake Simeone, Harry Booth and Joseph Lloyd and one girl namely Bethan McGowen proudly for themselves and the Club, earned Welsh caps and representative honours within the year.

With over 500 playing members and nearly 110 volunteer coaches the Club must be one of the largest in Wales and the UK. All coaches have been DBS (Child Registered) checked



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and have or are working towards the FAW Football Leaders Award and First Aid Certification, which are all a mandatory requirement, we encourage coaches to promote their skills and now have 20 coaches with Welsh FA class C and B coaching qualifications with a further 4 having expressed interest in taking the C badge. Our partner, Ron Mounsey from McDonalds, enabled the Club to receive a £4000 grant to increase the level of coaching standards provided by the Club and we have an aim to increase our B/C coaches up to 20+ by 2018. Swansea City Trust also awarded the Club a grant of £2,000 to help achieve our coaching objectives.

Today, past members are joined by current members, in their 68-year search for a permanent and purpose-built Clubhouse. Such is the hold that Billy Johns still has on his club, that Doug Peachey, one of the 'originals' is still writing a multitude of fund-raising letters on behalf of the club. Pursuit of a permanent home for a Mumbles Rangers Clubhouse still goes on, some 56 years after Billy John's death. The club feels it has a very strong case and could at last be within sight of Billy's dream. Those familiar with this club's inspiring history, would not disagree.

If you would like to make a donation to the New Clubhouse Fund or support the club in any other way then further details of how to do so are available on our website.

For information and to find out more about Mumbles Rangers please visit the club website at www.mumblesrangers.co.uk Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/mumblesrangersfc> and Twitter <https://twitter.com/mumblesrangers>

Mumbles Rangers achieved Platinum Accreditation commencing 2019-20 season.