



Ronald Ernest Bracewell was born on the 25th June 1927 in Southport, Lancashire. Ron was the son of Ernest Hogarth Bracewell (1897 -1974) and Ethel Bracewell, nee Wood (1898 – 2002). Ernest and Ethel were married in June 1920 in Ormskirk, Lancashire; they went on to have four children Doreen, Ronald, Brian and Mike.

Ron met his future wife Yvonne (nee Kane) in Southport when they were teenagers, some 5 years later they married on 11th November 1950; they went on to have three children Jane, Mark and Sarah. His wife Yvonne who also played a pivotal role during those early days was only ever affectionately referred to by her nickname Tim.

He studied dentistry at Liverpool University, before embarking on a career that began in the Army. He completed his National Service in 1952 – 53 in Germany in the region of the Black Forest. Following his National Service discharge, he practised as a locum in Esher, Surrey, before moving to Harlow, Essex in 1953.

In 1953, Ron along with Doctor John Huntley set up what is thought to be the first neighbourhood health centre at Haygarth House in Harlow. The team then moved to the newly built health centre at Nuffield House in The Stow, Harlow in 1956. He continued to practice dental surgery for “NHS patients only” for 37 years before retiring in 1990’s. The former health centre Haygarth House (120 and 121 The Chantry) was reinstated back to housing stock.

As a young man, Ron was a very keen rugby player and travelled every Saturday to play in Bishop’s Stortford. After travelling for a couple years to Stortford to play, his wife Tim (Yvonne) suggested to Ron that it would be a good idea to establish a rugby team in the new town. Ron having duly considered his options, then placed an advert in the Harlow Citizen seeking like-minded people to start a team and form a new rugby club.

The club came into existence on December 8th, 1955 after a meeting in the Essex Skipper pub in Harlow. Founder members included; Alexander J McCowan, Dr John Huntley, Ron Bracewell, Ron Strudwick, Ron Parkin, Derek Jennings and Eric Jones.

In those early days before Rams Gorse was purchased from the Development Corporation, the team would play in the farmer’s fields off Parndon Mill Lane to the north of Rams Gorse.

He suffered from a slipped disc at the age of 32 and as a result retired from playing. He then went on to take up refereeing the game and became an accomplished and respected official. For many years, he would arrange the appointments of referees for home games hosted by the club.

Ron was the Club Secretary for over 15 years and went on to take up the role as Chairman from 1977 – 1979, then the club President from 1984 – 2003.

At the age of 75 plus, he was still committed to working in the community ferrying old age pensioners to and from the hospital for their appointments and not charging a penny.

His other hobbies included hill walking, gardening and cooking, rugby was his first love and passion after his wife Tim and children. At the age of 78 whilst holidaying Corfu (August 2005) the family recall he swam ashore from the boat moored some 700 metres from shore. He died peacefully in his sleep on the 11th September 2005.

Ron Bracewell's career was dedicated to the well-being and health of the community he served but, there are generations of people past, present and future who have and will continue to enjoy the legacy of the Trustees of Harlow Rugby Club.

