



**THE STORY OF THE HAMPSHIRE SENIOR CUP - SEASON 1888-89**

**Changes to Entries:**

There were twelve entries for the second season of the Hampshire Senior Cup. Three of the first season's entries decided not to compete as follows: Ringwood Hornets played only club (or friendly) games in the season. Hilsea Ramblers who were a service team but did enter the Portsmouth & District Challenge Cup. Royal Irish Rifles (Gosport) a service team who had probably left the district.

The four new entries were as follows:

**Alton** - an entry likely to be inspired by R.A. Crowley who had been vice-captain of the Bournemouth Dean Park club and was now playing for them as well as some of the previous season's Winchester F.C. players.

**Geneva Cross** - a medical team based at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley who had also played the rugby code.

**King's Royal Rifles (Aldershot)** formed their association team in October 1888 and became the second service team based in the town to enter the competition.

**Portsmouth Grammar School** who were the previous season's Portsmouth & District Challenge Cup finalists.

**First Round Summary**

Newcomers Alton exited at the first hurdle although a protest was lodged against Andover but no outcome has been traced. It is therefore assumed that the result stood. The previous season's finalists Winchester were defeated by the Royal Engineers in a very tight game, whilst the Sunflowers were forced to scratch their match. In an all education establishment tie, the Portsmouth Grammar School got the better of Banister Court. Two very popular teams in the county met at the Antelope and holders Woolston Works edged out the Bournemouth Dean Park team.

**Second Round Summary**

There was an emphatic win by the Royal Engineers over Andover, with the published scores mainly showing 16-0. However, this may be a goal too heavy (either way, it was a thrashing and meant Andover decided to enter the Junior Cup for a spell hereafter). The Engineers were the only service team to remain following Portsmouth's result over the King's. The Portsmouth Grammar School gained a bye into the semi-final.

The fourth game didn't take place as it soon became apparent that the Woolston Works and Geneva Cross teams were practically interchangeable. The teams were conveniently drawn together in two cup competitions and the Netley side scratched in this cup and the Works did similar in the Portsmouth competition. One local paper the *Bournemouth Guardian* mockingly called the teams 'old uncle two heads'! This 'walk over' meant that the holders reached the semi-final without breaking sweat. Geneva Cross went on to take the Portsmouth & District Challenge trophy but would the other of the 'two heads' reach the county final?

**Semi-Final Summary**

Portsmouth was going to have a representative in the final and it was the Football Association team who defeated the Grammar School by 2-0 due to second half goals. The Engineers and the Works locked horns in the other semi-final and it needed two matches to separate them. The first game didn't have any goals although the Woolston men defended very well. Extra time was not agreed and the teams returned to the same Winchester venue a week later. Woolston took an early lead in the replay but the sappers turned the score around by half-time and led by 2-1. The Engineers added to their advantage and inflict the very first county cup tie reverse on the Woolston Works.

**Additional Feature**

**The End for Woolston Works F.C.:**

The Works played a club match at Bournemouth Dean Park a week after their semi-final defeat but they may not have taken the field thereafter. The was not helped by stagnation in the shipbuilding profession as many of their star men had returned to the north of the border. Those that remained saw the season out with the 'second head' and contributed to the Geneva Cross F.C. success in the Portsmouth competition.

There was no doubt that Woolston Works F.C. made a massive contribution to football interest in the Southampton area and the likes of St. Mary's and Freemantle were clubs who were already in the background and were going to move the game on further. Someone had to start the football revolution in the area and it was Woolston Works who should take immense credit for igniting it during a very successful three-year period.

**Final Summary**

**Royal Engineers (Aldershot) v Portsmouth F.A.**

They came to the County Ground, Southampton from Aldershot and Portsmouth to witness the final game of the second holding of the Hampshire Senior Cup.

The Portsmouth F.A. side included 'A Conan Doyle' (later Sir) in their team and yes, he was the writer who invented Sherlock Holmes (and had often appeared under the pseudonym A.C. Smith). Some publications show he'd played as goalkeeper but he was clearly a 'back' in this match. Their team only had ten players as a man, perhaps fittingly known as 'Short', didn't appear.

Gray put the sappers into the lead with a disputed goal. Unfortunately umpire Oswald received a kick at that point and had to retire, both teams agreeing to Mr. Tebbutt taking his place. This was added to through two goals by Mellis, one misjudged by the Portsmouth goalkeeper and the other a header. The Engineers led 3-0 at half-time.

Portsmouth were up to eleven players for the second half. F. Smith and Gray added further goals for the service team. Portsmouth obtained a goal of their own on the call of time by G.L. Pares.

Dr. Russell Bencraft gave the cup to Royal Engineers captain R.S. Smith and medals to the winning team.

**Junior Cup Competition**

The Junior Cup final was played on Saturday 6th April 1889 at Bar End, Winchester between St. Mary's (Southampton) and Christchurch, the latter having gone into this final unbeaten during the season. The Saints were victorious by 3-0 and won the trophy for the second successive season.

**Finally, the small print ...**

Extracts from the Bournemouth Guardian and The Evening News, Portsmouth. Please acknowledge www.hantsoccerarchive.co.uk. Compiled in October 2023,. E.&O.E.

