



Appledore Archive

Memories and Milestones from Appledore's Past

Goal Running explained and Reg Pellett's memories of the game in Appledore Village



Goal Running was a summer game or sport, peculiar to Kent. It was around in the late 1600's and seems to have died out in the 1950's. The sport was a team game of two equally numbered sides, often around 20 each, normally all men but occasionally there were ladies or 'maids' teams. It was played on any suitable field, and in later years local football pitches proved ideal venues. Always played in bare feet, it was basically a form of team tag, but with many tactics to fool the opposition.

The object was to score a 'stroke' by touching a member of the other side, but this was more difficult than it seems as each team runner had a following covering team member to deter an opposing chaser. Sometimes there were 'point flags' which if rounded by a team member scored points which were added to the score; Games could last from 40 minutes to over two hours, and it was not unknown for disputed strokes to end in a punch-up. No wonder the game needed up to six linesmen, two umpires and a referee.

Reg Explains:

Goal Running brought out the crowds. Held on the Green in the summer on a Saturday afternoon or evening, either with a scratch team or with one from another village. In vests and shorts in team colours, this was a fast-moving game which I'll try to describe.

The area for the game was about 150 yards by 100 but could vary. Two opposing teams of about twenty



runners a side lined up in single file along the long side of the rectangle. Each team had a 'putter out' who sent out his runners alternately, number one from one team then number one from the other, and so on.

The runners from each team started off in the direction of the other, before running away in a loop to line up at the back end of his team again, making two fast moving circles; the object to catch a runner of the other team who left the start before you. If a man reached his boundary or the end of his team without being caught, he was safe. Earned points were called 'strokes' and excitement grew when one or more fast and daring runners 'cut off' any of his opponents, causing men to run in all directions to avoid capture. Sometimes an altercation arose - a task for the umpires to settle.

When one runner caught another, he gave him a slap on the back and shouted 'stroke'. Onlookers joined in by shouting advice, which went unheard and unheeded. The game died a natural death after the first world war after many years and football has taken its place.