

Extract taken from the Programme Notes of the match played at Eugene Cross Park, between Ebbw Vale and Gloucester on Wednesday, 20th September, 1978.

BOMBARDIER BUTLER.

If Gloucester rugby men have been smoking themselves to death lately it's not surprising after winning the John Player Cup last April. Their win over Leicester by 6-3 came a week after we lost at Kingsholm 13-16, a case of the Cherry and Whites playing teams on successive Saturdays wearing Red, Green and White.

Gloucestershire still contains stately homes where old traditions survive with the butler opening the door and maids who offer crumpet [*sic*] and tea. Gloucester Rugby Club have their own butler who has opened the door to many Cup and County triumphs with lethal place kicking.

Peter Butler is a phenomenon of the Western World and a ballistic missile who will be welcomed tonight - particularly if he has misplaced his boots in Nashville, Tennessee - slightly different sort of place to Ebbw or Gloucester - they have a museum dedicated to cowboy singers and movie stars. There you see Roy Roger's stetson hat, Gene Autry's spurs, Tex Ritter's holster and Trigger also left some odds and ends around the place. In Gloucester's museum should surely rest Peter Butler's kicking boots in recognition of points scored and anxiety created for erring opponents.

He follows a long line of excellent Gloucester full-backs like Rutherford and Stephens and we have a connection there also. When in our Centenary we may be asked to select the "best ever" Ebbw Vale side since the War one who will be considered for full back will be Ieuan Sheen who first played for us against Exeter in April 1953. He was years ahead of his time and joined Gloucester midway through the 54-55 season.

In December 1957 he was in the winning Western Counties side that beat the Australians 9-8 at Bristol and we had one last pleasure of his company when he guested against Tredegar on Boxing Day 1959 as an outside half. With him in the side we naturally won and he finished off that season as fullback for Gloucestershire in the County Championship Final.

Our first visit to Kingsholm on December 4th, 1965 started badly when traffic held up the charabanc which only contained fourteen regular players anyway. Wilf Hunt was Secretary at the time and as if he didn't have enough on his mind he had to turn out after a layoff of about two years.

Wilf was a Barbarian and a Welsh reserve and as an outside half was tricky enough to design dodgem' cars but at Gloucester he made his brief comeback as fullback. He couldn't have done badly for we only lost 6-9 and also had another burden to bear - Gareth Howls was No. 8.

Among our favourites who have won the Cherry and White are Mike Nicholls, a marvellous hooker, scrum Mickey Booth, that young veteran flanker Peter Ford who got his first England cap in 1964 aged 30 against Wales, and of course Mike Burton.

Nowadays we see Mike only in advertisements for a travel firm and after his long career he certainly "knows" a few places around the world. Pensioner's Clubs should Book with Burton for conducted tours, it might finish some off but they'll go with a smile. Mike must have said "I told you so" when he heard of the goings-on in Australia lately, for he suffered on that England trip Down Under, a country famous for surfing, cricket, kangaroos and sheep, but not rugby referees.

A Gloucester side without Burton is like the Forest of Dean without trees but the club's continued success in England indicates their strength in depth and genuine love of the game in what is certainly the only true rugby stronghold in that country.

Earlier on we mentioned club colours and there seems to be conflicting explanations why Ebbw Vale changed pre-war from black and amber to red, green and white. Some say it was because several other Gwent Clubs favoured black and amber in the fashion of Newport, in those days the top club in the county. Others recall a great Ebbw Valian, Dai Regan Jones, who was a regular soldier who played for Leicester whose colours he fancied for his home team. The military minded point out that Dai Regan was a South Wales Borderer and the 24th of Foot's colours are those of Wales itself, red white and green.

There the case rests for the moment awaiting more witnesses with more evidence or confirmation of one or other of the views given. Perhaps we wanted to be different from Newport, perhaps Leicester influenced the design or PERHAPS we now wear colours in honour of the defenders of Rorke's Drift. Perhaps someone will have the true story. Thirteen years ago Wilf Hunt must have thought himself at Rorke's Drift when he was the last in line of defence against Gloucester. Tonight we look for more adventure and certainly a better result than 6-9, more like the Charge of the Light Brigade perhaps only with a happier ending. In this month we will have opposed last season's Whitbread Welsh Merit Table winners (Maesteg) and Welsh Champions (Pontypridd) and tonight the 1977-78 John Player Cup holders Gloucester. Whatever happens we won't be short of cigarettes.

R.E.L.

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NB. Gloucester came home the losers by 18 points to 9.

JC