

Transcript of lecture given in Wheatsheaf Hall, Brunswick Road, Gloucester on 26 September 1951

## GLOUCESTER RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

by C. Granville Clutterbuck

I have been invited to lecture on my favourite game not because I am an expert but because I have been a member of the Gloucester Rugby Club for nearly 70 years. It is said that some of my reminiscences will be interesting to present day rugby players. When I told my son that I had been asked to speak on rugby he said that he hoped I would because it would probably be entertaining.

From W. Bailey's excellent book "Jubilee Souvenir" published in 1924 by Priestley's Studios I learn that the club was formed on the 15th Sept. 1873 and the first match was played in October against the College School in Dean's Walk on the site of the present playing field at Kingsholm. The playing field then ran parallel to Dean's Walk and this occupied the western half of the present ground. The school was no match for Gloucester who won by 1 goal and 6 tries to nil.

From the history of the "Cardiff Rugby Football Club" 1906 kindly lent me by Mr. Yeates, the Cardiff Football Club was founded on 22nd September 1876 just over 3 years later than the Gloucester Club which is therefore that much older than its famous rival.

The captain in that first match was F. J. Hartley and the team included J. P. Riddiford, W. A. Lucy, W. A. Boughton, and others.

At the first annual meeting we are told that the said F. J. Hartley and J. P. Riddiford were re-elected Captain and Secretary respectively and the Committee were elected as follows: – E. Lynch Blosse, J. Bryan, H. Jewesbury, W. A. Lucy, W. A. Boughton, E. T. Gardom, and A. McKenzie. Mr. John Bryan was afterwards Magistrates' Clerk for Gloucester for many years and Mr. E. T. Gardom was the first clerk appointed by the Gloucestershire County Council.

Mr. Hartley, who was mainly instrumental in starting the club, held the captaincy for the first 3 years of its existence. He came to Gloucester from London where he had had a lot of experience with one of the leading clubs of those days, Flamingoes. His experience was valuable to the club at the start and he was a popular captain.

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In 1876-7 J. F. Brown succeeded to the captaincy and it was during his seven years tenure of the office that the game made such strides in popularity. The team was indeed fortunate in having such a splendid and inspiring leader and it was mainly through his efforts that the club rose to such pre-eminence in the football world.

I will [*sic*] remember being present as a boy when J. F. Brown was presented with a wedding present by his admirers at an open-air meeting held in front of the Spa Pump Room.

The matches were regularly played at the Spa until the season 1890-91 when "notice to quit" was served on the club under circumstances to be hereafter explained.

I remember being present in 1878 when a match was played by electric light against Rockleaze (Bristol). There were four lights – at least there should have been four – but one failed entirely and one of the others was very uncertain. The result was that the crowd of spectators got out of hand and did a good deal of damage to the shrubberies and walks. The Corporation gave the Club notice to leave but a petition was presented to them signed by 3,000 supporters and they eventually relented and allowed the Club to enter into possession. The lights were suspended from trees near Queen Anne's Monument and this is believed to have been the first occasion on which electric light was used in Gloucester.

The first record available is that for the season 1876-7 when out of eleven matches played six were won, three lost, and two drawn.

Up to this time the principal fixtures were with Hereford, Ross, Rockleaze, Swindon, Reading, Cheltenham White Cross, and Clifton. The Clifton Club (started in 1872, a year before Gloucester) used always to beat the city and it was not until the season 1882-3 that they received the first of those reverses which later became as regular as their previous victories and a good deal more severe, especially at Kingsholm, when Gloucester have run up some monumental scores against their old rivals. Newport, the oldest of the Welsh clubs, was first met in 1878.

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The first match at Newport ended in a draw and in the return at the Spa, W. Snushall, one of the Gloucester half-backs, sustained a broken ankle.

It is interesting to note that in the same season 1879-80 Gloucester gained 16 victories, Cheltenham White Cross, Swindon Rangers, Moseley, Cheltenham Training College, Rockleaze, Stroud, Ross, Cheltenham College, and the R.A.C. Cirencester.

In the season 1881-2 T. Bagwell appeared in the opening match for the Colts and scored a try but he had to wait some time before gaining a permanent position in the team.

During this season Newport were beaten twice but Cheltenham College (2), the Irish Rovers, Clifton and Moseley triumphed over the city.

About this time I bought my first member's ticket (junior) for 5/- from A. W. Vears ("Commodore") who then lived in Brunswick Road.

### An invincible team

According to the record published in "W.B."s book Gloucester were undefeated in the season 1882-3 under the Captaincy of J. F. Brown. Stroud, Newport, Worcester and Cheltenham White Cross were amongst the teams defeated. H. E. Taylor and G. Coates figured on the wings during this season and the first will be remembered by the Spa frequenters by his "galloping" runs and his deadly tackling.

In the following season H. J. Boughton took over the captaincy from J. F. Brown. 1883-4 only two reverses were sustained from Cheltenham College and Newport.

### A red-letter day

In 1883 Gloucester received a first visit from R. L. James' London team. This team included A. E. Stoddart, a famous English international, but Gloucester won by a try, scored by T. Bagwell, to nil. The day was made the occasion of a gratifying testimonial to J. F. Brown in the shape of a handsome gold watch and chain. Mr. W. C. Lucy made the presentation in front of the Spa Pump Room and the proceedings were marked by the greatest enthusiasm.

### Memorable struggle with Cardiff

The ever friendly rivalry between Gloucester and Cardiff began on the 21 Oct. 1882 when Gloucester at the Spa beat Cardiff

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Extracted from "The Cardiff Rugby Football Club, History and Statistics, 1876-1906, compiled by C. S. Arthur, Secretary."  
Printed by the Western Mail, Cardiff.

Page 51 1883 - 1884.

This season opened under the captaincy of H. J. Simpson, with a match against Clifton on October 13th at Clifton, which ended in defeat for Cardiff who had there afterward no unbeaten record to preserve. This season was a most important one, if only for the fact that it saw the origin of the four three-quarter game.

Cardiff being short of a three-quarter to go to Cheltenham (a very strong Club at that time) received the services of F. E. Hancock, who had then recently come to Cardiff from Wiveliscombe. Hancock played an excellent game, and obtained the only two tries scored.

When the team came to be selected for the next match the Committee were in a difficulty as to whom to select for the three-quarter line. Not wishing to lose such an excellent player as F. E. Hancock as a fourth three quarter that day, the match being against Gloucester on 23rd Feb. The four three-quarters that day were: – W. B. Norton, Tom Williams, F. E. Hancock and A. J. Stewart. Although there was no score by either side, the combination was considered so successful in this match that the four three-quarters were played in all the succeeding matches during this season.

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by 1 goal and 7 tries to nil.

These matches were played with varying results but the climax was reached in 1888-9. In that season for the first time 4 matches were played by the clubs and the first three having resulted in draws, the fourth match at Cardiff aroused the greatest enthusiasm. It was played on the 16th March 1889 and the G.W.R. ran a special cheap excursion (2/6 return) from Gloucester believed to be the first ever run! I was amongst the crowd of enthusiasts and my father and mother came to see us off! They were immensely amused by the excitement which prevailed. At least 1,000 keen supporters accompanied the team and there were about 10,000 Cardiffians present when the game began on the Cardiff Arms Park. The start was sensational because Ronnie Grist, the Gloucester left wing three quarter, made one of his wonderful "cork-screw" runs through the home team and scored a try in the corner. T. G. Smith failed to convert but shortly after he kicked a splendid penalty goal when a Cardiff forward got off-side and then in less than 20 minutes Gloucester were leading by a goal and a try to nil.

In some sharp exchanges C. S. Arthur secured the ball and ran in for Cardiff but the kick failed and so the teams crossed over at half time with Gloucester leading by 1 goal and a try to a try. In the second half Cardiff played better and soon scored a goal and a try and with about 10 minutes to go it seemed all over.

The Cardiff spectators were very jubilant and started singing "Take them home" "It's another colour now" and the like. But just then a transformation came on the scene. A. F. Hughes (Barley) caught a long ball on the half-way line and dropped for goal. His kick fell a bit short into the hands of H. Hughes ("Sawdust") who dropped it. G. F. Dere (Dicky) playing on the right wing in place of G. Coates (injured) picked it up and scored right behind the goal. T. G. Smith converted and Gloucester had gained a wonderful victory. The jubilation of the Gloucester supporters may be better imagined than described and they gave the team a great ovation at the end. George Holford tells me (1950) that T. G. Smith is still living at Stonehouse near Stroud and still takes the liveliest interest in the doings of his old team.

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## GLOUCESTER V. PENARTH

### W. H. TAYLOR'S DEBUT

The next match which I remember clearly was played on the 1st Nov. 1890 when Gloucester met Penarth on the Spa. This match was remarkable because it was the occasion of the first appearance of Walter Taylor, probably the fastest three-quarter ever included in our team. He had scored 3 tries for the 2nd XV. on the previous Saturday. The start was sensational. The first scrum took place on the 2<sup>d</sup> side about half way. The ball was heeled out nicely to Sammy Ball who passed to Walter George who passed it on to Walter Jackson ("Cocker"). The latter ran a few yards and then passed to W. H. Taylor who took the ball in his stride and showing an astonishing turn of speed ran round the Penarth team from half way with ease. The try was converted and Gloucester were 5 points up before Penarth realised that the game had begun. Penarth were strong in those days and "Dicky" Garrett, one of the centres, was a Welsh International. The game resolved itself into a series of rushes and although Penarth spent quite three parts of it in the Gloucester half they returned defeated by 5 points to nil. So delighted were the spectators that at the finish they carried Taylor shoulder high from the field.

The team under C. E. Brown's leadership (1889-90) was not very successful but in the following year under T. Bagwell a good record was attained. Of 26 matches played 21 were won two lost and three were drawn.

### Gloucester v. Swansea

The next match I remember was the great victory obtained against the undefeated Swansea team at the Spa in March 1891. Several frosts in succession made the ground very hard and it was extremely doubtful that the match could be played although the surface was covered with hay. It was ultimately decided to "salt" the pitch and this was done so successfully that at the last minute it was decided to play. The result was that Gloucester won by 1 goal and 1 try to nil and thus kept up their reputation as record breakers! One of the tries was scored by W. H. Taylor and W. McCutcheon (a Swansea three quarter) was reported

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to have said that it would have required a swallow to catch him!

This application of salt killed the grass and so the Cricket Club gave the Football Club notice to quit and fresh quarters had to be found. A few sportsmen found the money and the Castle Grim Estate was purchased and the matches have been played there ever since. Castle Grim was occupied as a school carried on by W. McPherson when I was a boy at the College School and my school used the ground for football and cricket playing parallel to Dean's Walk.

Before leaving the Spa it may be interesting to note a few of the events which happened there. I note that "W.B." suggests that Gloucester in the early eighties adopted the four three-quarters system and made it so attractive as to be recognised as the pioneers of the passing game in the West.

However I imagine that the same claim could be made by Cardiff who undoubtedly made great headway after they were joined by F. E. Hancock in 1883. His theory was that to play the four three quarters game effectively they must have 2 fast straight-running centres. Each centre should be capable of dodging his vis-avis and drawing off the wing man before giving the ball to his wing, who then only had the back to pass. This movement should be carried out at full speed and the results were electrifying! He further advocated the theory that the best defence was attack! The success of the Cardiff team under his captaincy in 1885-86 was phenomenal. Of 27 matches played 26 were won and only 1 lost! The last match was with Moseley at Cardiff and the victory won by 2 tries to 1. It is said that the home team were so upset that they wept as they left the field. Mr. Aubrey tells me that the Moseley player who scored the wing [*sic*] try ran off his own goal line. He was hotly pursued by a Cardiffian whom he had to shake off by zig-zagging up the field and this succeeded as he crossed the Cardiff line all right! In the Cardiff history a special chapter is devoted to F. E. Hancock.

In 1888 Gloucestershire played the Maoris on the Spa and the latter won by 1 goal and 1 try to 1 try. The try for the home team was scored by Ronnie Grist by one of his favourite "corkscrew" runs! The Maori back was one of the best seen on the ground

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He caught the ball one handed and kicked it into touch with un-erring accuracy gaining about 50 yards for his side every time. The Maoris played three half backs and their centre half, Ihimai'ta was a big man who required 3 of our men to tackle him! He smiled all the time and was called "Smiler" by the crowd, with whom he became firm favourite. Now it is worthy of note that Cardiff played the Maoris on the same tour on the 28 Dec. 1888 and WON by 1 goal and 1 try to 1 try. It is therefore doubly interesting to note that Gloucester played 3 draws with Cardiff that season and won the fourth match as described before.



## Touring Teams

To bring this matter up to date I wish to point out that in the season 1949-50 Gloucester played a sporting game with Cardiff, Newport, Llanelly, and Swansea and are therefore entitled to a fixture with any of the touring sides from the Colonies just as much as their famous Welsh rivals.

### J. W. Bayley

One of my earliest rugby impressions concerning this incident on the Spa when the above earned the soubriquet of "Down 'em Bayley". About 1880 Gloucester were playing Moseley when one of the visitors broke away, ran clear and was about to cross our line when J. W. Bayley, a fast forward, overtook him about 2 yards from the line and pulled him down. "It saved the match" he told me with justifiable pride.

### H. J. Berry

In 1880-81 the above played brilliantly at full back. He was probably the fastest full back we ever had and he told me that he never allowed an opponent to cross our goal line!

### R. C. Jenkins

In 1890-91 Jenkins was a member of a very fine pack. He used to walk in from Newent (9 miles) play a hard game and walk back home – another 9 miles!

### C. A. Hooper

In some of the matches on the Spa Gloucester had the assistance of this brilliant [ ] at left wing three quarter, who played for Cambridge University and England. He was a splendid exponent of

the diagonal run. I have seen him take the ball at mid-field and run hard for the left hand touch line and just as the visitors were running in his direction he swerved and ran in the opposite direction right through them as he caught them on the wrong foot and they could not stop!

### An auspicious opening

After leaving the Spa the first match at Kingsholm in October 1891 was with Burton who were beaten by 2 goals and 4 tries to nil. Mr. Rowland Hill, Hon. Sec. of the Rugby Union, was the Referee and Sir T. Robinson, M.P. kicked off. A. E. Henshaw (a former Newport player) had the distinction of scoring the first try on the new ground; others scored by Bagwell, Walter George, T. B. Powell (2) and J. Williams. The gate receipts were £46. 7. 3.

In 1892 I was living in London and whilst there I was a spectator of Gloucester's victory over Old Merchant Taylors at Stamford Bridge by a goal to nil. The try was scored by W. Collins.

I also saw Oxford play a pointless draw with Cambridge before a crowd of 5,000 in top hats!

I saw Newport and Cardiff beat Blackheath at the Rectory Field, the former by 2 goals and 3 tries to 2 tries and the latter by 10 points to 9 – Norman Biggs kicked a goal from the touch line in the last minute to give Cardiff a one point victory.

I also saw Yorkshire beat Middlesex at Richmond by 2 goals and 3 tries to 1 goal. The Middlesex three quarters were all 4 internationals, A. E. Stoddart, A. J. Gould, J. McGregor, and G. T. Campbell, and they scored one try by passing and re-passing the whole length of the field when ultimately A. E. Stoddart scored the try. R. E. Lockwood, a perfect Hercules from Heckmondwike was the Yorkshire star. Their forwards were too good for Middlesex.

One curious incident happened when I saw two first class matches for 6d in the Old Deer Park at Richmond. One Saturday afternoon I stood on a mound which separated two playing fields and on the one side Cambridge University was playing London Scottish and on the other side Richmond was matched with the Marlborough Nomads!

At Kingsholm since 1891 Gloucester has had many successful

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seasons interspersed with some lean years.

In 1893 Penarth paid us a visit and were defeated. W. Jackson was our star performer. He scored 3 tries and each one was greeted by an admirer with a fanfare on a bugle. Penarth at this time had two fast wings Kirby and Alexander and in one match the latter was badly bitten by a dog and was laid up for a fortnight. I hope our supporters will leave their dogs at home when attending matches at Kingsholm!

According to W.B.'s book in 1920-21 Gloucester for the second time in the history of the club defeated the four principal Welsh Clubs, Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Llanelli, (a feat never before or since equalled by any other English Club) besides winning against the Harlequins, Bristol, Guy's Hospital, United Services and Leicester.

### A. C. Williams

Charlie Williams captained the Gloucester team in 1895-6. He was a sturdy forward and played a very fine game for the city.

### J. Hanman

Jack Hanman was another good forward who captained the side in 1893-94 and 1894-95.

### W. H. Taylor

A brilliant scoring three quarter who captained the team from 1896-1900.

### F. M. Stout and Percy W. Stout

The brothers Stout left the "Soccer" game and joined the Gloucester Rugby Club in 1895 and both eventually played for England. I remember Percy's first appearance for Gloucester against Leicester when he scored 2 tries. In 1898-9 he helped to gain Gloucester's first victory at Llanelly. Our four three quarters in that famous match were Percy Stout, Gilbert Collett, F. M. Luce, and W. H. Taylor – probably the fastest set ever put in the field. Gloucester won by 2 tries to one and on the return of the team to the City they were met at the station by a crowd of over 1,000 supporters and headed by Kilminster's Band, a procession was formed and W. H. Taylor (who scored the wing[sic] try) was carried shoulder high round the City! Collett and Luce were the best

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exponents of the "scissors" movement whom I ever saw.

In the same season Gloucester triumphed over Cardiff, Newport and Swansea and they gained the distinction of being the only English club to defeat the famous Welsh quartette in one season. Newport were beaten at Kingsholm by 11 points to nil. This was Gloucester's first win against Newport for 11 years. Arthur Gould was pressed into service at the last minute by Newport and this weakness contributed to his club's defeat. It was ludicrous to see F. Oswell and H. Manley dribble the ball round the famous International and finish up by kicking it between his legs to pick it up and score behind the goal.

In the previous season I saw Gloucester win at Cardiff by 9 points to 5 – George Clutterbuck dropped a goal from halfway and scored a try which Taylor converted.

### C. Hall

"Nobby" Hall was one of the best forwards we ever had – especially good at dropping on the ball and stopping dangerous rushes. He gained his English cap in 1901.

### C. Smith

"Whacker" Smith was a sturdy left wing three quarter from the West End who gained his cap in 1902.

### George Romans

Captain in 1904-05 rendered good service at full back and was unlucky in missing an International cap as he was a contemporary of H. T. Gamlin who had the preference.

### Gordon Vears

Captain in 1907-8 and was a fine forward who led the pack well.

### Percy F. Bush

The Cardiff captain in 1905-06. On Dec. 26 1905 he played for Cardiff against the New Zealanders who just won by 10 points to 8. Percy Bush played several times for Wales and his career was particularly interesting to me as in July 1893 he was playing cricket for Cardiff when I played for Gloucester.

### H. Berry

A fine forward capped for England in 1910.

### Arthur Hudson

Hudson had a wonderful career. From 1908-9 to 1912-13 the

captaincy devolved on him. During this period the team performed consistently and well and Hudson, Gent, Berry and Johns were all capped for England in 1909-10 – a great honour for a provincial club. It must be a great joy to him to see his son, Gordon, playing so well in the pack with the present team. He is still the club's secretary and long may he reign.

### D. R. Gent

Was a very fine scrum half. In 1903-4 Gent then at Cheltenham Training College joined Gloucester and his subsequent association at half back with J. Stephens extending over several years was brilliantly successful. Gent was honoured with International distinction but Stephens got no further than on the reserve. They were a fine combination with a perfect understanding and worthy successors of another clever pair in G. Hall and R. Goddard.

### W. Johns

A first class forward. He retired in 1912. Altogether in ten seasons the International forward made 238 appearances for Gloucester, 22 for the County and seven for England, a marvellous record.

### S. Smart

A fast forward who played for England in 1920 and captained the team in 1921-22.

### George Holford

Another good forward played for England 1913-15.

A. T. Voyce

Was chosen for captain 1924-25. I believe that he played in 27 International matches for England. I shall never forget a great try he scored at Kingsholm against Newport when he ran in from half way with the whole Newport team in full cry at his heels!

F. Webb

Was a good three-quarter. Elected captain in 1920-21.

F. W. Ayliffe

A useful forward elected captain in 1922-23.

T. Millington

Was a clever fly half. Captain 1923-24. His association with W. Dix at scrum half was a great advantage to the Club for several seasons.

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Don Meadows

Was a tower of strength at fly half for about ten seasons.

L. E. Saxby

Began as a three quarter but eventually joined the forwards and led the pack for years in fine style. I shall not readily forget a try he scored at Kingsholm against Swansea. Saxby came through at half way with the ball at his feet. He steered it through the backs and just before he got to the full back the ball rose waist high. Saxby caught it and swerved past the astonished Swansea back to score behind the posts!

H. Boughton

Harold Boughton played in first class football for 20 years until he retired in 1948. He was one of the best full backs Gloucester ever had and played for England in several matches. He won many matches by his accurate goal kicking and when he won a match for England by a conversion his friends were most amused by the difficulty experienced by the "B.B.C." announcer in pronouncing his name. It eventually sounded like "BAWTON".

His great tackle on J. C. Morley, the Newport player, which enabled Gloucester to win by 2 points will linger long in the memory!

Roy Morris and John A'Bear were a very efficient second row in the scrum for several years.

### B.B.C.

I should like to appeal to the B.B.C. for a little more consideration for Rugby-ites. At present in the sports bulletin at 6.30 on Saturday evenings we in Gloucester have to listen to a long string of Soccer results in the hope that we may be rewarded with a report of a few rugby matches only to be disappointed. It seems to me that on alternative Saturdays we might be favoured with a few rugby results, such as Gloucester, Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, Llanelli, Bristol, Leicester, Coventry, Blackheath and London Scottish.

In conclusion, I should like to express my gratitude to the present Gloucester team for the fine displays put up recently at Kingsholm. I trust that I have been able to interest the followers of this greatest of all games in the history of the Gloucester Rugby Football Club and in the methods of some of the great players of the past.

23 Heathville Road, Gloucester.

31st Oct. 1950