

GLOUCESTER RUGBY  
HERITAGE

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## THE FRENCH CONNECTION PRE-WW1...

### RACING CLUB DE FRANCE 1908

The first French side to visit Kingsholm was Racing Club de France, the forerunner of the present day Racing Metro and one of the leading French clubs of that era.

On Christmas Eve 1908 they played their first match of a tour of England and Wales against a Gloucestershire XV captained by Gordon Vears, which included ten other Gloucester players alongside two each from Cheltenham and Cinderford.

The Gloucestershire XV overwhelmed their French opponents by 39 (6 goals, 3 tries) to nil. Frank Smith helped himself to three tries, "Father" Dix scored two, and there were one each for Lindsay Vears, Jim Stephens and Dave Holland; Welshman kicked the six conversions.

### TOULOUSE 1911

Two years later, in February 1911, the Gloucester Club paid the first of two visits to France, undertaking the long journey to Toulouse to play the Stade Toulousain team.

This trip took six days, with departure from Gloucester at 2:25pm on Saturday (seriously



Arthur Hudson captain in France 1911-1912

weakening the team for the match at Abertillery that afternoon, a fixture which was lost 3-14, by a makeshift side who were probably sorry that they weren't going to France!)

There were overnight stops in London and Paris on the way out and a night in Toulouse before the game.

Gloucester beat Toulouse by

18 points to 13 on 28th February 1911, scoring 3 goals, 1 penalty against 2 goals, 1 try. Holford, Pegler and Hall scored Gloucester's tries, Cook converting one and kicking a penalty.

The result was somewhat controversial, and the match finished with a hostile demonstration against the referee, who was none other than the Rev O E Hayden, a Gloucester Committee man, who had accepted the invitation to take charge of the game.

Fortunately nothing serious happened and, under an escort of players and gendarmes, Rev Hayden was able to exit the field of play unmolested.

There was a further night in Toulouse, and another in Paris on the way back, before arriving back in Gloucester at 8:40pm on Thursday evening.

However, the players still had enough energy left to defeat Swansea 13-6 on Saturday. The trip was judged a great success, and was never forgotten by the players, who regarded themselves as fortunate to be selected in the party.

The match had been filmed and within two weeks the film was

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 AT THE  
**PALACE THEATRE**  
 (IN THE GOLDEN FRAME)  
**TO-NIGHT! TO-NIGHT! TO-NIGHT!**  
 And at every Performance until further Notice.

**GLOUCESTER**  
 V.  
**TOULOUSE.**

THE GREAT MATCH AS PLAYED IN FRANCE JUST RECENTLY.

Certainly the finest Football Picture ever seen in Gloucester, showing first and second half of the Game; also excellent Photos of the Teams and of Local Gentlemen.

**TERRIFIC RECEPTION NIGHTLY.**  
 Highly praised and applauded at the Second House on Wednesday night by THE GLOUCESTER TEAM, who were interested Patrons. TO SEE OURSELVES AS OTHERS SEE US. Here are a few of the Players' Opinions—

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 "An excellent film, true to life."  
**A. HUDSON (Capt.)—**  
 "A splendid Picture! And what a length."  
**H. BERRY—**  
 "Certainly worth a Golden Frame."  
**F. YATES—**  
 "A Picture we must all see again."  
**J. HAMBLIN—**  
 "A remarkable Film. Highly interesting."  
**W. HALL—**  
 "A jolly good Picture, recalling a very pleasant Trip."  
**W. DIX—**  
 "Instructive—Entertaining—Amusing."  
**W. JOHNS—**  
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Gloucester at the pictures — Citizen 18 March 1911

being shown twice nightly at the Palace Theatre in Gloucester. It proved a major attraction, but sadly no copy is believed to exist today.

### STADE FRANCAIS 1912

During the following season, 1911-12, Gloucester took the somewhat shorter journey to Paris to play Stade Francais, and were away for only three days.

It proved just as enjoyable, and resulted in another victory, 13-3, Gloucester scoring 2 goals, 1 penalty against 1 try. "Father" Dix and Arthur Hudson scored the tries for Gloucester, Lionel Hamblin converting both and kicking a penalty.

The match was played on Thursday 14th March 1912, and afterwards the Stade Francais club entertained their visitors to a memorable banquet.

Gloucester travelled home the next day, not arriving until the early hours of Saturday morning, which may have contributed to their rather dismal 0-3 loss to Cinderford later that day.

## ... AND AFTER

### FRENCH UNIVERSITIES 1966

It was to be another 54 years before the Gloucester club played a French side at Kingsholm for the first time. On 29 March 1966 the French Universities, who were in Britain to play their annual match against British Universities, played Gloucester in an all-pay game.

The French side, which contained the great Pierre Villepreux at full back and a couple of other future internationals, won 17-0 and went on to beat British Universities 9-0 two days later.

### BEGLES 1975

At long last, the first match to be held at Kingsholm between Gloucester and a French club took place under floodlights on 18 February 1975 when Begles visited during a West Country tour.

It was a fitting first match in which both sides played sparkling open rugby. Alan Brinn, John Bayliss and Eddie Pinkney scored tries for Gloucester, but Begles won a thriller 21-20.

### PERPIGNAN 2002

With the onset of professional rugby and European competition everything changed and visits to Kingsholm by French clubs became an annual event.

On 8 December 2002, a bitterly cold day at Kingsholm, Gloucester took on Perpignan for the first time in the Heineken Cup. Gloucester won 33-16 but the forward battle was fiercely contested and only Gloucester's superior finishing won the game.

Marcel Garvey scored two tries, the second an outstanding effort in which he took the ball in midfield and hammered through the cover defence. Ludovic Mercier kicked 7 goals and scored a try for a personal tally of 23 points. The pack did well to hold the opposing eight



Ludovic Mercier 41 points in two games against Perpignan

with an outstanding performance from Peter Buxton.

Six days later in Perpignan, it was a different story. The Perpignan pack driving forward dominated the Gloucester eight in the first half and by half time they were 23-6 up.

Despite a third Mercier penalty, the lead was increased to 31-9 midway through the second half. Gloucester clawed back a try when Boer emerged from the bottom of a forward drive to score.

James Forrester came on late to add some pace and invention and chipped through to win back possession for Tom Beim who put in Mercier for a try which he converted. Final score 31-23.