

GLoucester RUGBY HERITAGE

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# THE LION'S DEN

IN THE NORTH-EAST CORNER OF THE GROUND IS THE LION'S DEN, THE OLDEST BUILDING ON THE KINGSHOLM GROUND.

**On match days, the main room acts as a watering hole for spectators, who can enjoy a drink whilst admiring the team photographs and honours boards, which adorn the walls.**

Covering most of the history of the Club, these display the players and the playing record for each season. At other times, this room can be hired by those who want to enjoy a function surrounded by Gloucester Rugby heritage.

The building also houses the Gloucester Boys Bar, home of the Players' Association, where former heroes of the Shed gather to reminisce amidst photos of their exploits. The rest of the building is given over to offices and storerooms and, during the week, the Club's Community and Stadium Management departments operate from here.

## ORIGINS

**The Club suffered a big loss from hosting the England v Wales International in 1900, and it took some years to get the balance sheet back onto an even keel.**

Five years later they were confident enough to contemplate paying more rent, and therefore asked the Gloucester Football and Athletic Ground Company, who owned the ground, to develop the facilities there.

The Company Board decided



A. W. Years

that they should build a gymnasium, training quarters, Club office and committee room, for which the Club agreed that they would pay extra rent of £100 a season.

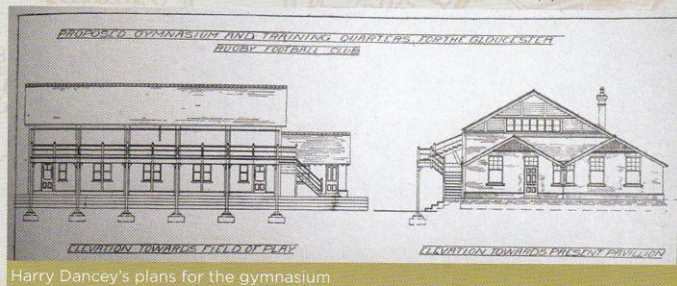
Shareholders in the Company were invited to a meeting at Kingsholm in June 1905 to hear about the plans, which were presented by the Company architect, Harry Dancey.

The Company Chairman, A W Years, said that the cost would be £1,012, and admitted that the

The meeting degenerated into a debate about the relative merits of electric or gas lighting. Messrs Moffatt and Robinson both argued strongly against "the electric light", believing "incandescent gas as an illuminant" to be more economical and efficient – "electric light was a thing of the past" and four times as expensive.

Others were just as vehement in favour of electric lighting. Mr Jennings contended that "the electric light in Gloucester is especially good", and Mr Grant insisted it was cheaper than gas, on the evidence of the two lights (one gas and one electric) in his home.

Eventually the Chairman managed to put the motion to the meeting, erection of the gymnasium was approved

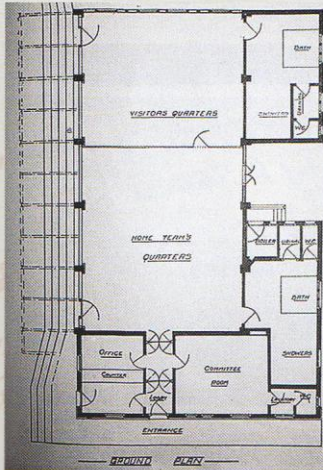


Harry Dancey's plans for the gymnasium

Club rather than the Company and its shareholders would benefit from the new facilities, but nevertheless recommended the scheme as a means of supporting the Club.

unanimously, and the pressure was then on to have it erected for the start of the season.

The building work (including electric lights) was entrusted to Mr A J Dolman, the cold-water



The original layout of the interior of the gymnasium

plumbing to Messrs Turner and Pritchard, and the boiler and hot-water supply to Messrs Woodward and Co.

The gymnasium was opened with some fanfare by the local MP, Russell Rea, before the first match of the season on 23rd September 1905. The presence of the great and the good of Gloucester, who made speeches galore, and Fred Rowland's band, made it quite an occasion.



The builders posing proudly in front of the newly constructed gymnasium

As can be seen on the plans, the original design included a balcony overlooking the pitch, described as an additional grandstand. This was not included in the original construction to reduce costs, the intention being to add it later, but that never happened.

The total cost of the gymnasium turned out to be £1,140. To fund this, the Ground

Company took out an additional mortgage of £1,000 with the Gloucester Conservative Benefit Society, and issued a further 150 shares in the Company, which were all bought by the Club.

### THUMBS UP FROM THE ALL BLACKS

A month after the gymnasium was opened the first All Blacks side to tour in the Northern Hemisphere came to Kingsholm. Gloucester were pulverised 44-0, but at least the gymnasium was admired by the visitors, who reckoned it housed the best facilities they had come across on their tour.

Indeed four of them were so keen on their Kingsholm experience that they came back at the end of their tour to don the Cherry and White in a match against Leicester. They were instrumental in Gloucester winning 20-0 and Leicester were not amused.

### WAR MEMORIAL

At the end of the First World War, the Club erected a

memorial to those players who had lost their lives in the war. It was placed just inside the door of the gymnasium through which the players exited on their way out to the pitch to start a game, and it became a tradition that the players all reached up to touch it as they passed as a mark of respect. The memorial now hangs in the entrance corridor to the Lion's Den.



Original war memorial in Lions' Den, which has now been updated with a new one on the wall outside the Club reception

### ALL A QUESTION OF TIMING

The original clock on the gymnasium also dated back to the years following World War One, when it was presented by the Club President, Sir James Bruton. A man was paid £2 a year to keep it wound up.

By 1946 Mr Brunson had this job and was being paid 2 guineas a year. He demanded an increase in salary to £5 per year, but the Club committee reacted by dispensing with his services altogether, and adding the job to the groundsman's duties.

### MEAT OR NO MEAT

For several decades the two teams were served teas in the gymnasium after a game. These teas became so popular, and the number of gate crashers so great, that the Club had to issue tickets for entry. However, the standard of the teas did vary.

In 1947 the Committee decided that the caterer should provide teas for 55 people in the Lions' Den. Normally this would be plain teas with cakes and sandwiches, at a total cost of £5.

Only on special occasions would they splash out £7.50 on meat teas, an honour first accorded to Cardiff and Leicester.