

GLOUCESTER RUGBY
HERITAGE

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ON CENTRE
STAGE
— PART ONE

IN THE EARLY DAYS OF GLOUCESTER RUGBY THERE WAS NO SUCH POSITION AS CENTRE THREE-QUARTER. THE BACKS CONSISTED OF THREE "THREE-QUARTERS" AND A "BACK" OR FULL BACK AS WE WOULD NOW CALL HIM.

BY THE TIME THAT GLOUCESTER MOVED TO KINGSHOLM IN 1891, IT HAD BECOME COMMON FOR A FIFTH BACK TO PLAY BEHIND THE SCRUM, AND SO FOR THE FIRST TIME TWO PLAYERS WERE CALLED "CENTRES".

PERCY STOUT

The first star centre for Gloucester was Percy Stout who played for the Club between 1895 and 1900. He was an Old Cryptian and scored a try on his debut against Leicester.

He played four times for the Barbarians and was capped five times for England between 1898 and 1899. His brother, Frank, was a forward and often played in the same team for Gloucester and England.



Percy Stout in his England garb

These days it is usual for players to specialise in one position (with James Forrester's appearance at centre being a notable exception), but in the past it was common to play in several positions amongst the backs, and

even sometimes to take a turn in the forwards!

ROY JAMES

Roy James who made 298 appearances between 1924 and 1937, predominantly at centre, played in every position behind the scrum. He played his first game in 1924 against Guy's Hospital, but did not become a regular until the 1926-27 season. He captained the club in 1930-31, when a moderate season was lifted by the first double over Cardiff for 40 years.

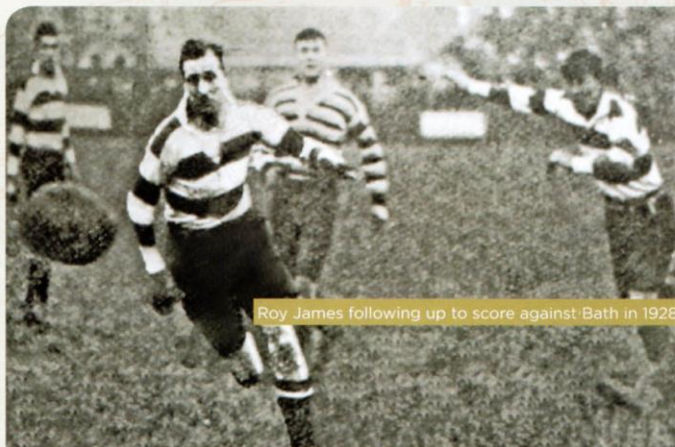
Roy also played 31 times for Gloucestershire, and was a member of the County Championship winning teams of 1930 and 1932. After his playing days were over, he coached Gloucester Old Boys and was their club president from 1945-51.

The 1930's was a very successful decade for the Club, and their record against Welsh teams (which was always the measure of a Gloucester season) was second to none. A significant contribution to this success was made by two outstanding centre three-quarters, Maurice McCanlis and Francis Edwards.

MAURICE MCCANLIS

Maurice McCanlis won Blues for Oxford University in 1926 and 1927. He was also a good cricketer, which won him Blues from 1926-28. He had played a few times for Blackheath before arriving at Kingsholm for the 1928-29 season. In 1929, he scored two tries in a famous Gloucester win, the first away at Cardiff since 1898.

Maurice was also a regular



Roy James following up to score against Bath in 1928



choice for the County, appearing alongside Roy James in the team that won the Championship in 1930. The County won the title again in 1931, McCanlis scoring a try in the final, when Warwickshire were defeated 10-9.

Maurice was now on the radar of the England selectors, winning two caps in 1931, and the following season helped the County to a hat trick of Championships when they beat Durham in the final.



Maurice McCanlis

FRANCIS EDWARDS

Francis Edwards, a product of Wycliffe College, first played for Gloucester in the 1932-33 season, starting in just eight games, but he became a regular in the following season. In 1934-35, in 31 appearances he scored no less than 21 tries. He also played 23 times for Gloucestershire.

By 1937-38 he had moved to the north of England where he played for Birkenhead Park, and the following season made it into the final England trial for the Rest which beat the senior team, but no cap was forthcoming.

The War then intervened, and Francis played in several of the wartime internationals, for which



Francis Edwards

caps were not awarded. After the war in 1945-46, he played one season for Leicester and just one game for Gloucester, before retiring.

KEN DANIELL

Ken Daniell, who went to the Central School, was the son of Norman, who enjoyed a distinguished playing career with Gloucester in the 1920's. Ken was very fleet of foot and initially played on the wing, before moving to centre to "see more of the ball".

Ken's first season was 1945-46, but he really came to the fore the following season, which included a stunning try at Cardiff, who then boasted the entire Welsh international back division. Ken left them in tatters, intercepting and running in from 60 yards.



Ken Daniell

In 89 appearances for Gloucester he scored 42 tries, and in one period in the 1947-48 season, he scored at least one try in 10 successive games. Unfortunately

he picked up a knee injury during the 1948-49 season, and by January 1950 this had caused his retirement at the age of 24.

JOHN BAYLISS

John Bayliss was a Gloucester legend, a bustling centre who tackled with ferocity. A favourite ploy of his, on receiving the ball, was to head for the nearest group of opposing forwards and drive straight into them, often emerging with ball still in hand on the other side. He was even more devastating against opposing backs, who knew they were in for a flattening whether they had the ball, John had the ball, or the ball was just somewhere in the vicinity.



John Bayliss

He first appeared for Gloucester in 1960, and by the 1961-62 season he was established as a first choice selection. He was in the cup winning team of 1972 and captained the club in the following season. In all John made 402 appearances, scoring 92 tries and kicking a single penalty against Birkenhead Park in 1968.

John was a stalwart of the County team with 57 appearances, and was captain from 1974-76, when they won successive County Championships. Although appearing in several England trial games, he was never capped. He was offered professional terms by Warrington, but decided not to "go north".

Of course, because of John's fearless approach he was bound to pick up injuries, and in 1973 he broke his neck, but he bounced back and played on until 1976.