

GLOUCESTER RUGBY HERITAGE

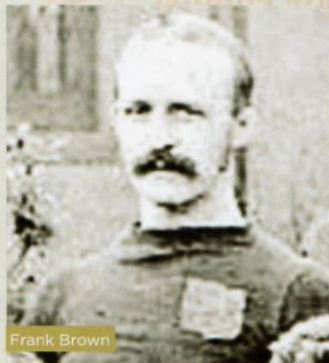
www.gloucester rugby heritage.org.uk

FLY HALVES - PART ONE

FRANK BROWN

In the very early days of rugby there was very little definition of position. There were forwards, half backs, three quarter backs and a back. Sometimes a team would play as many as three half backs, and a fly half (as we would call him) was unknown.

In those far off times the nearest thing to a fly half in the Gloucester team was Frank Brown. He played for the club from 1875 to 1885, and was captain from 1876 to 1883. Under his leadership Gloucester developed what was called a "short passing game". This was quite innovative and proved very successful.



Frank Brown

The team was unbeaten through 1882-83 and they were called "the invincibles". Under Frank's leadership Gloucester emerged as a major force in the land.

TOMMY BAGWELL

The early Gloucester players were mostly middle class professionals, and the first working class player to break



Tommy Bagwell

into the team was George Coates.

He persuaded his friend Tommy Bagwell to try his luck at the club. Tommy had previously been playing for a local club called St. Luke's Red Cross, and made his first appearance for Gloucester against Cardiff in 1883.

In only his fourth game on Boxing Day he scored two outstanding tries against a London Team, which contained A.E. Stoddart who was to play for England. At this time Tommy was playing in the centre, but soon switched to fly half, as the position was now being called.

He was an early advocate of player fitness through thorough training. He captained the club in 1890-91 when Gloucester achieved the double over Cardiff, and again in 1891-92. Tommy made 239 appearances and scored 62 tries. He also played 22 times for the County.

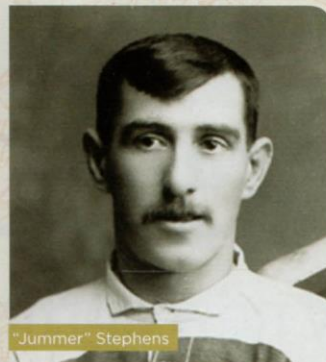
On his retirement Tommy became the club's trainer and continued in that role until the late twenties, and even after that was

baggage and kit man for several years. He died aged 83 in 1943.

"JUMMER" STEPHENS

Jim, nicknamed "Jummer", first played for the local teams Tredworth Stars and Gordon Wanderers as a centre. He made his debut for Gloucester in March 1895 but only played four times in his first two seasons. Then he disappeared from the team only to return in 1899-1900 when he quickly established himself in the first fifteen.

It was not until the 1903-04 season that he moved to fly half. In 1904-05 he built up a special partnership at half back with another iconic Gloucester player, Dai Gent.



"Jummer" Stephens

In October 1905 Gloucester played against the touring All Blacks, and decided to play three half backs, Dai Gent at scrum half and two fly halves, Jummer, and Alfie Wood (who became an outstanding full back). The ploy was not successful as



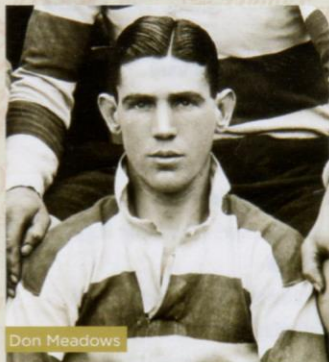
the game was lost 0-44. The pair also played together for Gloucestershire and faced the South Africans in November 1906, but that also ended in defeat 0-23.

Jummer played no fewer than 322 games for Gloucester. He also played 32 times for the county and was a member of the team (again partnering Dai Gent) which beat Yorkshire 27-0 at Kingsholm in April 1910 to win the County Championship.

Jummer came very close to an England cap as a trialist and a reserve but was never selected for the ultimate honour.

DON MEADOWS

Don was a jinking fly half and solid kicker, who between 1927 and 1939 made 305 appearances for the club. He played for England as a schoolboy and had two full England trials, but was never awarded a cap.



Don Meadows

He was a vital member of the very successful Gloucester fifteens of the thirties which produced some memorable wins against Welsh opposition. In the 1932-33 he was in the team which won the first double over Newport for 50 years.

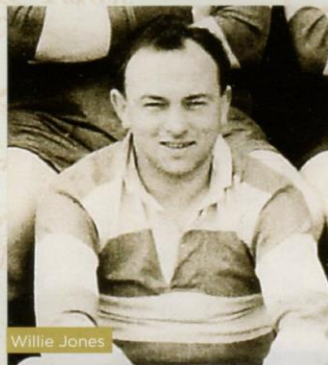
In November 1933 he was present when Gloucester won for the first time ever at Swansea. Not content with that, he was there later in the season when Gloucester completed their first ever double over the Welsh club. In March 1936 he was in the team which won at Llanelly for the first time in 38 years. This was truly a

golden era for Gloucester.

Don was awarded the captaincy in season 1936-37. He also played 16 times for Gloucestershire and was in the team which lost in the final against East Midlands in 1934.

WILLIE JONES

Willie was a diminutive (5'5") but busy fly half who played for Gloucester from 1945 to 1949. He first played for Neath from 1937 to 1940 and appeared in two Welsh trials in the 1938-39 season. He was a war-time Welsh international.



Willie Jones

In his 76 appearances for Gloucester, he kicked no less than 38 drop goals, which at that time counted as four points. It is said that he was instrumental in having the value of the drop goal being reduced to three points in 1948.

His kicking ability did not end with dropping goals; he was an accomplished place kicker. In the 1947-48 season he scored 212 points in 30 games, including 42 conversions, 18 penalties and 17 drop goals.

Willie also had success playing for Gloucestershire. In the semi-final against Middlesex in 1947 he kicked 18 points in the 24-17 victory, and two drop goals in the drawn (8-8) final against Lancashire. Although acknowledged to be a great kicker he was sometimes criticised for lack of ability to see an opening, or pursue constructive play.

He was a very accomplished cricketer and played for

Glamorgan from 1937 to 1958 scoring 12,285 runs. He had a big role in Glamorgan's championship winning team of 1948, topping the batting with 1,425 runs at an average of 41.91.

ALAN HOLDER

Alan was a neat, reliable utility back who played in every position behind the scrum apart from scrum half. A product of the Crypt Grammar School, he played in 31 games in his first season, 1955-56.

In 1956-57 he moved from centre to fly half. In December 1957 Gloucester took on Cardiff at Kingsholm, having lost eight of their ten previous games. Cardiff, however, had lost only one game all season. Gloucester won 3-0 due to a penalty Holder "kicked from a few yards short of half-way"



Alan Holder

as The Times correspondent put it.

In 1959 partnered by Mickey Booth, Alan played in the championship losing county final against Warwickshire. With the arrival of Terry Hopson, he moved to full back for the rest of his career. He captained the club in 1963-64. Alan made 338 appearances between 1955 and 1966, scoring 42 tries, 46 conversions and 34 penalties.