

GLOUCESTER RUGBY  
HERITAGE

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**"DAI" GENT**

Born in Llandovery in 1883, David Robert "Dai" Gent, came to Gloucestershire to train as a teacher at St Paul's College, Cheltenham, where he captained the 1st XV. Joining Gloucester, he made 146 appearances for the club between 1903 and 1911, quickly striking up an outstanding half back partnership with Jimmy Stephens.

Described as "the smallest player in first class rugby" but "as big in heart and gifted in skill as he is small in stature", Dai was scrum half reserve for Wales in all three home internationals in 1904-05.

However, after playing well for Gloucestershire in the 1905-06 championship, he caught the eye of the England selectors and in January 1906 made his England debut against the All Blacks at Crystal Palace. He went on to play against Ireland and Wales that season.

Dai was elected club captain for the 1906-07 season, but

# BOSSING THE SCRUM

## GREAT SCRUM HALVES

### PART ONE

injury restricted his appearances. He came back for perhaps his most notable season in 1909-10, culminating in Gloucestershire's first County Championship title. He returned to England colours to play against Wales in the first international played at Twickenham and also against Ireland in England's Championship winning side.

Dai Gent became headmaster of Saltash School and rugby correspondent of the Sunday Times.

**"FATHER" DIX**

John William Dix, universally known by the nickname "Father" (but nobody could remember why), was born in Gloucester in 1884 and came to the club from St Marks RFC. He made his debut in 1907, and became first choice in his position with the departure of Dai Gent in 1910. He went on to play 235 games for the club.



Renowned for his cleverness and individuality behind the scrum

and his noisy encouragement of the pack, he became the driving force in the Gloucester side. But it was after the 1914-18 war that wider recognition came his way.

After service with the 8th Gloucesters, "Father" Dix returned to partner outside half Tom Millington for club and county. The brilliant pairing was a major part in Gloucestershire winning successive County Championships in 1920-21-22.

In his last county game before retirement Dix scored a try in Gloucestershire's 19-0 victory over North Midlands at Villa Park which brought them their third successive title. He was reserve for all four internationals in 1919-20, and again in 1921-22.

**DICK MILLINER**

A miner at Ruspidge Colliery, the veteran Dick Milliner was 35 and captain of Cinderford RFC when he joined Gloucester in November 1924 in response to an emergency call. For the next five seasons and 122 games, he was first choice at scrum half. His tireless defence and work rate behind the scrum brought him a county cap the next month and he went on to play in the County Championship Final against Leicestershire.

After Gloucestershire unexpectedly lost to Hampshire in the semi final the following season, The Times bemoaned the fact that "so much hard and clever work by Milliner had been thrown away." In 1926-27, he played for the county in a 3-0 victory over the touring New Zealand Maoris



Dick Milliner, Cinderford Captain

and a 14-4 victory over the county champions Yorkshire.

### DANNY EVANS

Another veteran scrum half who joined Gloucester late in his career was David Dan Evans from Barry, Glamorgan. Capped once by Wales in 1934, the diminutive Evans played 80 games for Gloucester from 1945-1949.



Danny Evans's 1934 trial & international caps

Danny Evans took up a teaching post at Sir Thomas Rich's school and joined Gloucester RFC early in 1945. The following year, outside half Willie Jones joined the club and for the next three seasons the partnership between the two Welshmen was at the heart of everything the Gloucester team achieved. Together they were fondly known as the "little Welsh wizards".

Evans's ability to create an opening and his surprisingly long pass for so small a man gave Jones the time that he needed to work his magic. Despite his size, it was Danny's proud boast that no scrum half had ever scored a try against him.

Aged 38, Danny Evans was

outstanding for club and county in 1947-48, when Gloucester equalled their record number of wins and Gloucestershire reached the semi-final of the County Championship. He continued to shine for Gloucestershire the following season and played his last game for the club one month short of his fortieth birthday.

### MICKEY BOOTH

Nicknamed "the General", because of his surname, Mickey Booth lived up to that name on the pitch. A local Gloucester hero, born within a stone's throw of the Kingsholm ground, he played 473 games for his home club in a career spanning the sixteen seasons 1956-72.

Add to this 42 appearances for Gloucestershire and a number of England trials and it will be well understood why his failure to win an England cap is a talking point among older Gloucester fans to this day.

A product of Sir Thomas Rich's School and the Spartans and Longlevens clubs, Mickey Booth made his first XV debut while still seventeen. He quickly made his mark and became a county first choice player with an England trial to his name before the age of 20. In 1959 he was joined by outside half Terry Hopson to form a partnership that would last for eleven seasons and 206 games.

His accurate passing, immaculate kicking and little sniping runs kept his side going forward and his dummy runs from the base of the scrum caught many



Booth gets the ball away

an opposition player offside.

National Service with the RAF prevented Mickey from reaching the magic 500 appearances for Gloucester, but he played in the RAF XV which won the Services Tournament at Twickenham in 1962. His career ended on a high with the 17-6 victory over Moseley in Gloucester's first cup final.

### JOHN SPALDING

Born in Gloucester in 1944, John Spalding played 235 games for his club. Called up from Spartans to make his 1st XV debut against Plymouth Albion at the age of 16, the Citizen commented that "he took up the scrum half position like an old pro" but, after a season in the United ranks, he moved to join Stroud.

Returning to Gloucester, John played regularly as Mickey Booth's



deputy for three seasons before appearing in no less than 49 games in 1969-70. He was playing well and The Times commented that he had enough ideas to hold his own even against Laidlaw, the great All Blacks scrum half.

The next season, although again playing second fiddle at Gloucester to Mickey Booth, he was chosen to play for Gloucestershire in the semi-final and final of the County Championship and for Western Counties. First choice for two seasons after Mickey's retirement, John played in Gloucester's centenary game victory at Kingsholm in October 1973, when a star-studded international XV were beaten 24-14.