



## GLOUCESTER RUGBY HERITAGE

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# GLOUCESTER PROPS PART 2

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CLUB, GLOUCESTER BUILT AND MAINTAINED A FINE AND DESERVED REPUTATION FOR HARD UNCOMPROMISING PROP FORWARDS - OTHER CLUBS, INCLUDING THE WELSH, ALWAYS KNEW THAT THEY WERE IN FOR A TOUGH ENCOUNTER UP FRONT WHEN THEY FACED THE CHERRY AND WHITES.

This second article on great Gloucester props takes us from the fifties to the seventies.

### ROY PARRY

FOR much of his career, which spanned the years 1949 to 1956 and a total of 270 games, Roy Parry formed part of a formidable Gloucester front row alongside hooker Cyril Thomas and England prop George Hastings. Despite being an automatic choice for Gloucester for much of his career, he played only twice for Gloucestershire, making his County Championship debut against Cornwall at Redruth in his last season.



Roy Parry was born in Gloucester in May 1923 and was educated at Linden Secondary School. He played rugby while in the Army in Palestine and then, on demobilisation, for Fielding & Platt's Atlas Works team, before making his debut for Gloucester at the age of 25 in December 1948.

He quickly established his place in the side, playing 69 consecutive games between December 1948 and September 1950 at the start of his career, and 37 games in Gloucester's record-breaking 1953-54 season under John Taylor.

After retirement in 1956 he was immediately elected to the Gloucester committee and served as a selector for a number of years.

### ALLAN TOWNSEND

THE durable tight-head prop Allan Townsend had a remarkable rugby career. He not only made 190 appearances for Gloucester between 1959 and 1964 (captaining the club in 1961-62), but also played for Cheltenham from 1951-59 (captain 1957-59), Aldershot Services, Bournemouth (captain 1967-68), Bath United (captain 1969-70) and Frome. His 18 county caps included a semi-final against Lancashire in 1964.

Allan Townsend was born in Cheltenham in 1933 and was educated at Cheltenham Grammar School. On call up for National Service, he joined the RASC and was stationed at Aldershot where he played for Aldershot Services alongside England internationals M J K Smith and John Currie.

He returned to Cheltenham after National Service and in April 1954 played at Kingsholm

in Cheltenham's first win on the ground for 24 years. The following year he made his Gloucestershire debut and played throughout the Championship season. Then, after two seasons as Cheltenham captain, he joined Gloucester in 1959 and was a first choice at Kingsholm for the next five years.

He played throughout Gloucester's record-breaking sequence of 13 wins between October 1959 and January 1960 and became club captain in 1961-62 when he again played for Gloucestershire throughout the season.

The Times, commenting on the performance of the Gloucestershire pack which played against Cornwall at Camborne, said, "The Gloucestershire front row of Townsend, Thorne and New formed about as hard and robust a combination as anyone could want."

Career moves took Allan to Bournemouth where he captained the club in 1967-68, Bath where he captained Bath United in 1969-70 and finally to Frome where he was both player and administrator.

On his return to the area, he joined the Gloucester committee, where he served from 1983-96, was a member of the Gloucestershire Committee for 18 years and a member of the RFU Committee from 1991-97.

Allan Townsend was President of Gloucester RFC from 2008 to 2013.



GLOUCESTER RUGBY & LUX

**JACK FOWKE**

**LOOSE-HEAD** prop Jack Fowke was renowned as a difficult opponent. Hard working and fearless, he was not outstanding with ball in hand but a good technical prop, both as an exceptional scrummager and as a guardian of the lineout.



He played 267 games for Gloucester and was perhaps unlucky not to be capped more than ten times by Gloucestershire. Keith Richardson quotes John O'Shea, the Cardiff, Wales and British Lions prop, as rating Fowke the best prop he ever played against.

Jack Fowke was born in Gloucester in 1936. His brother Roy, who was five years older, also played for Gloucester, Stroud and Gloucestershire. The two brothers had played alongside each other at Kingsholm in the Stroud front row in April 1959 before joining Gloucester at the start of the following season.

Roy stayed for two seasons but Jack played on to become the cornerstone of Gloucester's scrum for the next ten years. His best years were 1965-66 and 1966-67 when he was an ever-present in Gloucestershire's County Championship side.

**TUG WILSON**

**"TUG" Wilson played for Gloucester in the 1961-62 and 1962-63 seasons, when**

**servng as a corporal at RAF Innsworth. While a Gloucester player, he was capped by England against France at Twickenham in February 1963 and won five Gloucestershire caps, including a semi-final appearance against Warwickshire at Kingsholm that March. His last match at Kingsholm was for a County President's XV against Gloucester on 2nd May 1963.**

Kenneth "Tug" Wilson was born in Newark in 1938 and learnt his rugby at King's School, Grantham. He was an outstanding amateur boxer who won the RAF heavyweight title and gained a points decision over Billy "Golden Boy" Walker during his boxing career.

He played rugby for the RAF and Combined Services alongside Mickey Booth, touring Rhodesia and Kenya in 1962. On leaving the RAF in 1963, he signed as a professional with Rugby League side Oldham for whom he played 321 games over the next twelve years. Tug's final game for Oldham was his testimonial match against the full England side in 1974.

**MIKE BURTON**

**THE uncompromising Mike Burton is a true Gloucester legend, one of the dominant personalities of English rugby in the seventies. A mobile tight-head prop, both tigerish in the loose and a strong scrummager, his determination and will to win served his beloved Gloucester well, but, on his own admission, his abrasive style of play and his challenging of authority probably cost him England caps and a second Lions tour.**

In the second test of the 1975 series in Australia (the infamous "Battle of Brisbane") he became

the first Englishman to be sent off at international level. Nonetheless, his record is an impressive one for that era of 17 England caps, including test wins in both South Africa and New Zealand, and a 1974 Lions tour of South Africa.

Michael Alan "Mike" Burton, was born in 1945 in Maidenhead but, moving to Gloucester, played his early rugby



with the Longlevens club. In his autobiography, 'Never Stay Down', he tells of his single minded determination to succeed and of the profound influence of another uncompromising Gloucester character "Digger" Morris on his early career.

He made his Gloucester debut at the age of 18 and went on to play 365 games between 1964 and 1978, captaining the club in 1975-76, and playing in Gloucester's cup final victories at Twickenham in 1972 and 1978.

He played 49 times for Gloucestershire and was on the winning side in four of his five County Championship finals (1972-74-75-76). His eight Barbarians caps included Easter tours of South Wales in 1972 and 1973.

After retiring from rugby Mike Burton became a successful businessman. He has kept a close relationship with the club and is a Barbarians committee member.

