

GREAT PLAYERS FROM THE GLOUCESTER BACK ROW

PART TWO

The Thirties and Forties



JACK HEMMING

Jack played his local rugby for a team called Gordon Wanderers, and made his debut for Gloucester on 8 December 1923 against Clifton. He only appeared in two more games for the firsts that season, but played 23 games for the 'A' team. However, from the start of the following season he was a regular in the back row appearing 34 times and scoring eight tries.

In October 1925, Jack had an outstanding game against Bristol, which seemed to impress the county selectors, and he made his first Gloucestershire appearance against Cornwall in December. He held his place and the county had a good run through to the semi-final but lost to Hampshire at Southampton.

On 19 October 1929 Jack was a member of the Gloucester team which won at Cardiff for the first time since 1898. By this time he had lost his place in the county team but was recalled during the

1931-32 campaign, and played in the Championship final against Durham played in poor conditions on a windy day. Gloucestershire won 9-3.

The following season saw Jack lose some form, and by the end of it he was playing several games for Cinderford. He had played 267 times for Gloucester.

PETER HORDERN

Peter, although a flanker or number 8, was very versatile and could also play at prop, and on a couple of occasions in an emergency turned out at full-back for the Barbarians. He gained four England caps, and played his county rugby for Devon, North Midlands and Hampshire. For Gloucester he made 91 appearances and scored 20 tries. He played a remarkable 19 times for the Barbarians.



Peter Hordern was born on 13 May 1907, and was the brother of the actor Michael Hordern. In 1928 he won an Oxford blue in his final year. A teacher, he obtained a post at

Monmouth High School, and played for Newport from 1929 to 1932. In the 1931-32 season he appeared for the club against the South African tourists and for the Barbarians against Leicester.

He won the first three of his England caps in 1931, and did not join Gloucester until the start of the 1932-33 season, after moving to teach at Bromsgrove School, although he had appeared as a guest player twice in the 1929-30 season.

His final cap was gained against Wales in 1934. From 1935 to 1937 he was the Gloucester pack leader. By now he was playing county rugby for Hampshire and was a member of the team which won the Championship in 1936.

At the end of the 1936-37 season Peter retired and was for some years a referee. In WW2 he was squadron leader and in 1954 was promoted to Wing Commander. He died on 22 June 1988.

LES SAXBY

Les Saxby was born on 19 May 1900, and from 1921 to 1926 played for and captained Hereford. Whilst there he played county rugby for North Midlands in the centre. Although still a Hereford player, he guested for Gloucester against Cheltenham in April 1924, and then played three games on the annual tour.

He appeared in a few more games the following two seasons before fully committing to Gloucester in 1926. By now he was playing in the back row. He was so impressive in those early games that he was soon selected for the county against Somerset in November.

Les was a born leader. He captained Gloucester from 1927 to 1930 and again in 1931-32. In addition, he captained Gloucestershire in 1931-1932. The county won the championship three seasons running from 1930 to 1932, and Les appeared in all three finals, scoring a try against Warwickshire in the final of 1931.



Indeed, the 1931-32 season was a season of triumph for Les. Not only did he lead the county to success, he also captained Gloucestershire and Somerset against the Springboks. His performance in this game was such that he was selected to play, and captain, the Rest against England in the final trial game. The Rest won 16-6, and Les won his first cap as the England pack leader against South Africa. He also played against Wales, and went on the Easter tour of Wales with the Barbarians.

He retired at the end of the season, having played 169 times for the club and scored 30 tries.

When war broke out in 1939 Les joined the RAF and was attached to the South African Air Force. He decided to stay on after the war and died there at the age of 58.

JOHN THORNTON

If ever there was a player whose career was ruined by the war, John Thornton was that man. He was an

aggressive, fast and mobile flanker who broke into the Gloucester team in the second half of the 1938-39 season. He was recognised as a great prospect for the future, but the war cruelly ended the dream.



However, he did play in war-time internationals against Scotland, Wales, New Zealand and Australia, and three "Victory" internationals in 1946, against Scotland twice and Wales. In addition, he played for the RAF & Combined Services team against New Zealand.

He appeared in all Gloucestershire's games in 1946-47, where they reached the final against Lancashire which proved to be a draw, but perhaps surprisingly in the replay at Kingsholm, Lancashire triumphed 13-3.

In 1947 he stopped playing for Gloucester due to business commitments, but did re-appear for just one game against Moseley in November 1949.

He later became the landlord of the "Marquis of Granby" pub in Eastgate Street. John died aged 75 in September 1992.

CHARLIE DUNN

Charlie made his debut for Gloucester on 29 September 1945, in the first game played after the war, against old rivals Bristol. He

had pace and his first try was not long coming against Stroud on 27 October, and followed that up with a brace against Moseley in December.



He was a versatile player who could play at fly-half, on the wing or even at prop, but he was first and foremost a flanker. He was a character and known as "Jigger" Dunn.

Charlie played five full seasons for the club and in all made 157 appearances and scored 31 tries. It is perhaps surprising that he only played four times for the county. In his first game against Somerset in December 1948 he scored a try showing great pace, and then was in the team which beat Middlesex in the semi-final, only to be dropped for the final!

On leaving Gloucester in 1951, Charlie went on to play for Coney Hill.

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