

GLOUCESTER RUGBY HERITAGE

www.gloucester rugbyheritage.org.uk

1879

Newport were the first Welsh club to play against Gloucester and a tradition of feisty affairs in which victory meant everything was soon established, perhaps partly because *"On the slippery ground several men fell. Ponsford, a Newport forward, crying out so lustily he was hurt that the Gloucester men all stopped playing and stood on one side. Ponsford, however, getting up, rushed quickly out with the ball, and took it well down the ground... a very shady piece of play which all good footballers will without doubt strongly condemn."*

1884

Small wonder that the Newport team were regarded as *"practically invincible, having won 90 successive matches"*. Maybe it was no surprise when Newport won at the Spa in 1884 that *"during the course of the game some of the spectators hooted and hissed the winners, and behaved even worse on their departure. If this is repeated, no club will come here to play."*

Christmas Day 1875

Gloucester played Ross - it was the usual 15-a-side, but ten on each side were forwards.

1892

"During the game the crowd showed considerable dissatisfaction at the decisions of the referee (the Rev F W Loy, curate of St. Mary de Lode) and loudly hooted him. After the match, the much-sought-after

gentleman was secretly let out at a side entrance, where a hansom was waiting, and he was quickly driven away without drawing much attention."

1895

When Gloucester played at Stroud *"Some of the leading lights in the town of Gotham exerted their utmost to get the match put off because of the outbreak of smallpox in Gloucester, but in this they failed. Not content with this, they had the town placarded with large posters urging the inhabitants not to mix with Gloucesterians, and no doubt they were surprised when nearly a thousand persons put in an appearance from Gloucester on Saturday."*

In 1900 a telephone was installed at Kingsholm and the Citizen was charged one guinea per annum to use it.

The good old days of the early 1900s

"The Gloucester players changed in the White Hart and the visitors in the Ram in Southgate Street, from where they travelled to Kingsholm by wagonette - Harry Dyke (the first groundsman at Kingsholm) immaculately dressed and complete with a cheese-cutter hat tolled a bell to signalise the start of play - and Fred Rowlands and his band of instrumentalists played in the streets and on the ground before games and fiddled with greater glee to celebrate a triumph". In 1906, "Harry Dyke's "All Black" horse careered over the

ground, but he was safely brought to hand, and the game proceeded".

1906

Keep a close eye on those players behind the posts *"The Bream full-back left the field. He was walking round behind the goal-line with his coat on, but when the ball came up with a rush and Gloucester looked to have a chance of scoring, he threw down his coat, and dashing in dropped on the ball and touched down, much to the amusement of the spectators."*

1910

During the Bristol v Gloucester match, all was revealed *"Stoppages occurred through Lismore losing his jersey...and then his knickers"*.

1910

When Gloucester A played Cinderford District *"Minahan had the distinction of scoring three tries, but playing in odd boots he was unable to do himself justice, being handicapped when running."*

1913

Woollen jerseys had their own particular problems *"This match should have been played at Kingsholm on Monday morning, but the Seconds' jerseys were unfit to wear owing to the drenching received at Bristol on Saturday"*.

1911

"The referee's whistle would only blow faintly, and so a policeman's was pressed into service amidst cheers."

1912

"Owing to the curtailment of the railway service the Gloucester team had to make the journey to Cinderford today by road, a four horse char-a-banc being chartered to convey the party to the Forest. The City players only arrived back from Paris at midnight last night after travelling some sixteen hours."

These railway problems caused the Club to hire five cars to take the team to Abertillery, but one got lost and did not arrive until 6:40.

Gloucester played with four substitutes provided by the home team and lost. *"The whole party arrived safely back, although one of them did get into a pond up to his waist in trying to read a signpost."*

During the Great War

"The Secretary enquired if the Board wished to insure the buildings against aircraft; the Board unanimously decided not to insure"

1919

A number of soldiers were billeted on the ground during the railway strike.

1920

"Shea, the Newport player, who overnight had been engaged in a boxing contest at Hull, which it was understood he had won on points after going the full distance, was able to make the journey to Gloucester and take his place in the team - a fact which put confidence in the Newport team and their supporters"

1920

Down at Swansea "Jack Bancroft, the Swansea touch-judge, gave a line-out in favour of Gloucester, but which decision the referee overruled. Bancroft declined to move, and the referee took the flag off him, but after a brief delay Bancroft again took up his duties"

1931

The Club agreed to provide jock straps for players.

1947

When Gloucestershire played Lancashire at Kingsholm "Jack Heaton, the Lancashire skipper, decided he would like a bet on the result of the game, but there was only half an hour to kick-off so he was unable to leave the dressing-room to find a bookmaker. Then he remembered that the Gloucester captain "Digger" Morris was a bookmaker. So, as the teams walked down the tunnel Jack asked Digger if he would take a £1 bet on Lancashire winning, and Digger immediately agreed, giving him odds of 6-4 on. And it was a happy Lancashire skipper who collected his winnings later as the Red Rose county won the game 14-3."

1947

A quiz in the match programme for Blackheath v Gloucester included Q: A spectator at a Rugby Match disagrees with the Referee's decision. What should he do? A: Smoke a pipe of soothing Royal Seal tobacco until he feels better.

1947-48

The Club committee agreed expenditure on teas for visiting teams, but only those they wished to impress were allowed to have meat.

Ladies undervalued?

1948

Violet Pegler asked the Club for assistance with forming a ladies team, but the President thought it "inadvisable from all points of view", which ended the discussion.

1952

The Club Committee decided to economise on costs by doing away with the ladies' lavatory from their building plans.

1968

The Club committee voted to buy

a box of chocolates for the ladies committee who provided the teas, but this was rejected by the ladies who negotiated to be given an outing and dinner instead.

1950

The Club committee decided to pay for a "super-coach" - neither Australian nor South African, but a better-than-average bus for away games.

1950-51 Season

Of the 17 players who played most games, 14 were Gloucester men, born and bred; two had professional and business appointments in the city and were expected to stay for some years; and only one lived outside the city.

1961

Gloucester visited Wasps and lost 10-6, the referee explaining that "the match was played 35 minutes each way at the request of the Gloucester skipper who stated on arrival that they wished to catch an early train home".

1966

The Club installed floodlighting at Kingsholm at a cost of £4,700, half of which was paid by the Department of Education & Science.

1967

Late withdrawals from the United team against Newport resulted in both the committee man, C Lynch, and the baggage man, T Law, playing.

1969

The Club was in dire straits financially and gave their players the choice of starting to pay match fees or giving up free beer after each match - match fees of 2/6 were introduced.

1971

Gloucester reversed their shirt numbers so that the full-back became number 15 rather than number 1, a practice adopted by most clubs some seasons previously.