



## GLOUCESTER RUGBY HERITAGE

**N**ine years after the formation of the Club, Gloucester went through the 1882/3 season without defeat, and this remains the only unbeaten season in the history of the Club. They were dubbed the Invincibles. Fourteen matches were played, with eleven won and three drawn.

George Coates was the leading try scorer with eleven, and Jimmy Boughton came next with eight. The only caps known to have survived from this era belonged to J W "Down 'Em" Bayley and are on display at Kingsholm.

Gloucester were undoubtedly a strong side, with an inspirational captain in J F Brown, who was leading the team for a seventh season, and who had trained the team in a very successful style of rugby known as the short passing game. They were also helped by the scoring system in use at the time. A try did not count as a score, it merely allowed the chance to "try" to convert it into a goal, which worked in Gloucester's favour in a couple of games when the opposition scored tries, but the match was drawn. The following year the system was changed so that tries did count.

Welsh clubs provided the stiffest opposition. Newport, playing eight current internationals were defeated by a goal (and a try) to nil away, with Newport disputing every score. Because of the bad feeling engendered, Rowland Hill, Secretary of the Rugby Union, refereed the return fixture, which ended in a no score draw (with Newport scoring the only try, and Gloucester claimed the moral high ground by not disputing it).

The first ever fixtures against Cardiff resulted in Gloucester winning at home by a goal (and 5 tries) to nil, and drawing away (a try apiece). For the first match, Gloucester introduced a new formation behind the scrum, playing one back, three three-quarters and three half-backs, and reducing the forwards from nine to eight. Cardiff learned their lesson all too well as results in subsequent seasons demonstrate, copying the short passing game and reducing their pack, but using the extra back as a three-quarter, a formation which was adopted by all four International Unions in 1893-94.

Clifton were beaten for the first time in six attempts by a goal (and four tries) to nil, and the double was completed



(L-R): A.W.Vears, H.J.Boughton, W.A.Boughton, G.Coates, H.J.Berry, J.F.Brown (Capt), H.E.Taylor, H.V.Jones  
B.Sloman, T.G.Smith, P.B.Cooke, J.W.Bayley, A.C.Seymour, W.Brimmell, W.Brown  
H.Fream G.J.Dewey

over Bath by two goals (and four tries) to nil at the Spa and by a goal (and two tries to one try) to nil away.

The team photo shown here is dated 1882, and shows the team in their blue strip with the City Arms badge in front of the pavilion at the Spa.

## In Memoriam Alfred Purton

Alfred Purton was born at Barton St Mary, Gloucestershire, in 1881, but moved to Gloucester as a boy and found employment as a sawyer. He took up rugby and proved to be a very useful back or second row forward, who played



for the Club 1900-08. He made 96 appearances for the Club's First XV, 1901-07, and at least 42 appearances for the Second XV. He was noted for his "splendid work in the open", and appears on several of the Club's honours boards in the Lions Den.

With the outbreak of the Great War, Alfred enlisted as a Private in the 4th Battalion, Grenadier Guards, and landed in France in July 1915. The following year he returned to Gloucester to marry Florence Bick, but returned to the front, where he was wounded in October 1916. He duly recovered and returned to France in April 1917. On 31st July he was wounded at the Battle of Pilckem Ridge and transferred to hospital in Boulogne. He succumbed to his wounds on 27th August 1917 and was buried in Boulogne. He is commemorated on the Gloucester war memorial and on the memorial here at Kingsholm.