

## GLOUCESTER RUGBY HERITAGE



**GLOUCESTER  
RUGBY**

## CENTENARY SEASON OF MEMORABLE VICTORIES

### 1973-74

Captain Mike Nicholls

**Played** 54  
**Won** 39  
**Lost** 11  
**Drawn** 4  
**For** 1906  
**Against** 570



**F**or Gloucester's Centenary season it seemed quite appropriate that Mike Nicholls should be club captain. He had after all inspired the team to cup success in 1972, and was arguably the best captain the Cherry and Whites ever had.

He made an incredible 52 appearances, missing only two games. He was closely followed by Bob Clewes and John Spalding on 46, Peter Butler 45, Alan Brinn 43 and John Haines 42. Top scorer was full-back Peter Butler who achieved an amazing 488 points (which was a club record at the time) including 114 penalties which is still the club record. In all games Peter scored 574 points, only seven short of the world record set by Moseley's Sam Doble.

Bob Clewes led the try scoring department with 24, followed by Ron Etheridge with 17, then Bob White and Richard Jardine on 10.

As usual the forwards had plenty of

Gloucester "Dog". In the front row Robin Cowling, Mike Nicholls, Mike Burton and Keith Richardson (later to be reinforced by Phil Blakeway) never took a backward step, and were supported by an outstanding second row of Alan Brinn and John Fidler, whilst there was a dynamic back row including Dave Owen, Jim Jarrett, John Watkins and John Haines.

In the backs Bob Clewes and Ron Etheridge ran in the tries, given openings created by centres John Bayliss, Richard Jardine and chunky no-nonsense Bob White, a recruit from Cheltenham.

At fly-half, Bob Redwood, another ex-Cheltenham player, was partnered by John Spalding, a very talented scrum-half. Redwood, together with Ron Etheridge, scored tries in the first game of the season away to Broughton Park. The game was surprisingly lost despite four penalties and two conversions from Butler. However, the team got back on track with five wins on the trot.



Don Rutherford, the England full-back who captained Gloucester in the sixties, gathered a formidable International XV to play at Kingsholm to celebrate the centenary. The team included French stars Pierre Villepreux and Jo Maso, together with John Dawes, David Duckham, Tony Neary and many more. The game was played on 3 October, in front of a crowd of 9,000. Gloucester played sparkling rugby, and won 24-14, scoring tries through Keith Richardson, John Haines, Richard Jardine, Bob Redwood and Peter Butler, who also kicked two conversions.

In November Leicester were beaten 29-6 at Welford Road, with Butler kicking seven penalties, whilst Etheridge and Haines scored tries.

In the National Knock-Out Competition, there was an easy 49-6 win over Devizes, before Gloucester were drawn to play London Scottish at Kingsholm in the next round. Gloucester had beaten Scottish 21-0 away, in January, so the team was confident of victory. By half-time the Cherry and

Whites were 12-0 down, and despite three penalties from Butler in the second half, the Scottish pulled off a shock win, taking Gloucester's ground record in the process.

That season Gloucestershire won the County Championship, and relied heavily on Gloucester players. Consequently, there were several occasions when Gloucester had to field weakened teams against top-class opposition. It is a compliment to the team's depth in strength that not one of those games were lost.

In October Gloucester had to travel to Newport, shorn of nine players on county duty. They returned having fought out a 6-6 draw, Dennis Hargreaves kicking two penalties. In November, eight short, Moseley were beaten 15-13, Eric Stephens, now nearing the end of his career, scored a penalty and two conversions, whilst Jim Jarrett and John Haines scored tries.

Later in November an even more impressive win whilst nine short, was achieved over

London Irish. Stephens pitched in with 15 points, and tries were scored by John Dix and veterans Gary White and Dick Smith.

But perhaps the most remarkable win was over Leicester 27-10, with six county players missing, to complete a double over the Tigers. Stephens was again present to kick two penalties and a conversion. Bob Redwood scored a drop goal, whilst tries were scored by Bob White (2), Bob Clewes and the other by the emerging meteoric talent that was Stewart Dix.

Finally, in February Gloucester had eleven players on county duty when Aberavon were the opponents at Kingsholm. Gloucester won 18-10. Stephens, playing in his penultimate game for the club he had served so faithfully kicked five penalties. Dennis Hargreaves scored a drop goal.

Despite the disappointing exit from the cup competition this was still a season to savour, and demonstrated the talent the club had in depth.