

ARTHUR HUDSON — A LIFETIME OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO GLOUCESTER RUGBY

ARTHUR WAS BORN IN GLOUCESTER IN 1882, THE SON OF AN INNKEEPER. HE BECAME A CLERK ON THE MIDLAND RAILWAY, AND PLAYED SOCCER FOR THE CITY ALBION CLUB ON WHAT IS NOW THE KINGSHOLM CAR PARK. HE SWITCHED TO RUGBY AND SCORED TWO TRIES ON HIS DEBUT FOR THE GLOUCESTER 1ST XV IN A 14-11 WIN OVER CHELTENHAM AT KINGSHOLM ON 27TH DECEMBER 1902.



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Arthur's rugby career took off in the 1904-05 season, when he scored 35 tries in 31 matches, a Club record. The following season he beat his own record with 41 tries from 26 appearances, which enabled the team to set a new point scoring record of 661.

He played for Gloucester against the All Blacks at Kingsholm in 1905,

when he was knocked out in the first half, but returned for the second. He became friends with one of the All Blacks, Duncan McGregor, who returned to Gloucester to go into partnership with Arthur in setting up a sports outfitter shop which remains in the family, now run by Arthur's grandson, John.

Arthur played in all four of

Gloucestershire's matches in 1905-06, and won his first cap for England against Wales at Richmond on 13th January 1906, when it was noted that:

"Hudson is only 22 years of age. His weight is 12st 7lbs, and he is an inch short of 6ft. When on the run – and the Gloucesterian goes for the line in no half-hearted fashion – he is a most awkward man to tackle, as many a full-back has had cause to remember."



Despite losing, Arthur was judged the best of the England backs, and was retained for the following match against Ireland. But the highlight of his international career came on 22nd March 1906, when he travelled to Paris for the first representative match between England and France. He was playing against a French wing, Emile Lesieur, who two months later equalled the world 100m record. But it was Arthur who scorched across the Parc de Princes turf, scoring four tries, as England won 35-6.

He missed out on England selection in 1907, but played in all four internationals in 1908, scoring two

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CONTEMPORARY REPORTS PICTURE ARTHUR TEARING DOWN THE WING WITH HIS KNEES COMING UP SO HIGH THAT ANYONE NOT CATCHING HIM JUST RIGHT WAS KNOCKED FLYING

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tries against Ireland. After another gap, he returned against France in Paris in 1910 and scored two tries as England went on to win the International Championship for the first time for 18 years.

Contemporary reports picture Arthur tearing down the wing with his knees coming up so high that anyone not catching him just right was knocked flying, and Dai Gent, who played with him, wrote, "...a splendid example of a man using his excellent physique to the best advantage, without too much finesse".

Arthur played for the County against the South Africans when they visited Kingsholm in 1906, and against Australia in 1908, by which time he had become Club captain, but injury and illness reduced his appearances, although he did contribute two tries in winning the final of the County Cup against Lydney in 1910. He also enjoyed success with Gloucestershire, when they won their first County Championship title against Yorkshire at Kingsholm, Arthur contributing two tries in the resounding 23-0 victory.

Arthur was fit again and Club captain for the 1910-11 season, scoring 32 tries in 32 games, but the highlight

of the season was a trip to Toulouse, which took six days to complete but resulted in Stade Toulousain 13 Gloucester 18.

Arthur was again captain and leading try scorer with 23 in 1911-12, and enjoyed another victory in France as Stade Français were defeated 13-3. Injury then caused him to retire from the game in 1913, and he was promptly elected to the Club committee, but he was talked out of retirement to play five games in 1913-14, during which he managed to score two hat-tricks.

During the Great War, he served on submarines, but organised a rugby team when ashore in Devonport, and brought them to play at Kingsholm.

In 1915, Arthur married Ellen Phillips. Their son, Gordon, had a distinguished playing career with Gloucester, and followed his father as captain and secretary of the Club, before becoming chairman. Arthur was keen on tennis, and his daughter, Gwendoline, qualified for Wimbledon on numerous occasions.

In 1919, Arthur resumed his playing career with Gloucester, aged 36, was again top try scorer, including four against Bath, and a hat trick against Cheltenham in his last game to make it 235 tries in 260 appearances.

A week later, Arthur played his final game of rugby, when he captained Gloucestershire in the County Championship Final against Yorkshire at Bradford. Gloucestershire triumphed 27-3, but Arthur suffered a dislocated shoulder, which ended his playing career.

In 1920, the Club appointed Arthur as General Secretary on a salary of £120 pa, and made him a life member. He also became a Director of the Ground Company, which owned Kingsholm. Arthur combined the role of Secretary with Treasurer and Fixture Secretary for many years, taking close control of club affairs and finances, and saying that he ran the Club "like a business". It prospered as a result, the President commenting on "...the genius displayed by Mr Hudson in

the management of the affairs of the club".

He kept a close eye on Kingsholm during the Second World War, when it was requisitioned, and after the war the Club proposed to pay him an honorarium of £500 for this service, but Arthur insisted the money be put into a Memorial Fund to purchase rugby pitches for local clubs, and this resulted in the Memorial Ground on Tuffley Avenue, used by the Old Cryptians and Widden Old Boys clubs to this day.

In 1951, Arthur reminisced on the 60th Jubilee of the Club playing at Kingsholm - "I do not begrudge one minute of the time I have devoted to Rugby. To me it has been a labour of love; it has given me some of my richest memories."

He was described by the Club's President, Dr Arnold Alcock, as "...the heart and soul of Rugby in Gloucester." Arthur remained as secretary of the Club for 42 years, finally relinquishing the post in 1962, aged 80.

When the All Backs came to Gloucester in 1972, they went out of their way to see Arthur, then aged 90, a tribute to his standing in the game. He died the following year, just before the centenary of the Club - 100 years during most of which Arthur had contributed enormously to the wellbeing of the Club.

