

FAREWELL TO HUDSON'S

FOR MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED YEARS THERE HAS BEEN A CLOSE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE HUDSON FAMILY AND GLOUCESTER RUGBY. BUT, AT THE END OF MARCH, HUDSON'S SPORTS SHOP WILL BE FINALLY CLOSING ITS DOORS AFTER 111 YEARS IN BUSINESS. WE COULD NOT LET THIS CHANGE TO THE GLOUCESTER LANDSCAPE PASS WITHOUT RECORDING THE IMPACT OF THE HUDSONS ON RUGBY IN THE CITY.

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Arthur Hudson (known to his family as Archie) was born in Gloucester in 1882. He became a clerk on the Midland Railway, and played soccer for the City Albion club on what is now the Kingsholm car park. His speed was noted by the Rugby Club and he was persuaded to switch to the oval ball in 1902. He soon made his name as a very quick winger with a high knee action, which made him difficult to tackle. He broke the Club try-scoring record with 35 tries in 31 matches in 1904-05, and the following season bettered this with 41 tries from 26 appearances.

Arthur played twice against the All Blacks on their first tour of the UK in 1905, for Gloucester and Eastern Counties, and became friends with Duncan McGregor, a New Zealand winger, who distinguished himself on that tour by scoring four tries in the 15-0 defeat of England at Crystal Palace. In January 1906, McGregor and two other All Blacks (Simon Mynott and Charlie Seeling) returned to Gloucester and made guest appearances for Gloucester in a match against Leicester – McGregor had a wonderful game, Gloucester scored six tries, and won 20-0.



ARTHUR HUDSON

Arthur's career continued to blossom, winning his first England cap against Wales in 1906, before he matched McGregor's feat by scoring four tries in Paris during the first international match between England and France. Meanwhile McGregor went home to New Zealand and switched codes to become a professional

Rugby League player, returning to the UK with the New Zealand All Golds during the 1907-08 season. At the end of his tour, McGregor decided to stay in the UK and returned to Gloucester, where he opened a shop – "Hudson and McGregor's Sports" - with Arthur as a silent partner, but lending to the business his famous name, which was so revered locally. Arthur's sister, Beatrice (Bessie), helped to run the shop.

In 1913, McGregor, who had been playing rugby league for Merthyr Tydfil, was injured, gave up his interest in the shop, and returned to New Zealand. However, he left in Gloucester his All Blacks cap, jersey and a ball signed by the team, where many decades later they came into the possession of Allan Townsend,



DUNCAN MCGREGOR & ARTHUR HUDSON IN 1906

former captain and president of Gloucester. They are now on display in the New Zealand Rugby Museum at Wellington.

Arthur's rugby career came to an end when he was injured in the County Championship final victory over Yorkshire in 1920, having scored 242 tries in 268 appearances for Gloucester. He was immediately appointed secretary of the Club and director of the Ground Company, and he gave up his railway job to concentrate on the sports shop. He remained as Club secretary for 42 years, and combined it with treasurer and fixture secretary for many years. He kept a close eye on Kingsholm during the Second World War, for which the Club proposed to pay him an honorarium, but Arthur insisted the money be used 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 1915, Arthur had married Ellen Phillips. Their son, Gordon Hudson, followed in his father's footsteps in both playing for and administering the Gloucester Club. He first played for Old

Cryptians, before making his debut for Gloucester in 1935, and securing a regular place in the team when he switched from the backs to wing forward. He served in the RAF during World War Two, which were his best rugby years. He represented the West of England, the RAF and the Barbarians. He also played for England in nine wartime Services Internationals, including three at Kingsholm, and one Victory International, but caps were not awarded. After the war, he captained the Club, and when he hung up his boots in 1954, he had notched up 320 appearances and 75 tries. He also captained and won 34 caps for Gloucestershire.

Gordon also followed his father into the family sports outfitter business, and as secretary of the Club, before serving as chairman for ten years, 1972-82, one of the most successful periods in Gloucester's history. Whilst chairman he continued to stand on the terraces near the exit from the changing rooms for every home game, initially near the clock on the Shed side and latterly in front of the main stand when the changing rooms were



switched to that side of the ground.

Gordon's son, John Hudson, inevitably spent much of his childhood at Kingsholm while his father and grandfather were still heavily involved there. In the 1960s he was a ball boy, operating under the strict regime set by Tom Oakes as groundsman, and frustrated at missing spells of every game retrieving balls from the back gardens of St Marks Street. He played for Old Cryptians at full-back, but his chances of making the step up to play for Gloucester were inhibited by the firm grip which Peter Butler had on that position at Kingsholm. However, he duly went into the family business, taking it over in 1983. For many years he held the franchise for the Club shop, but retirement now beckons. He proclaims "Gloucester Rugby means everything to me", as it did for his ancestors – it could be taken as the family motto.

We wish him well in retirement, and salute the Hudson family for their enduring service to Gloucester Rugby.

