

# GLOUCESTER V LONDON IRISH

THE EXILES HAVE PROVIDED MANY PLAYERS FOR THE IRELAND TEAM OVER THE DECADES, AND ALWAYS PROVIDE GLOUCESTER WITH THE STOUTEST OF CHALLENGES. SEVERAL EXCITING GAMES HAVING RESULTED FROM THIS FIXTURE.

The London Irish rugby club was founded in 1898, as it was felt: "There is a need for a sporting club in London for Irishmen." The newly formed club's first game was played on 1 October 1898 against Hammersmith, and Irish won 8-3. London Irish soon found their feet and fixtures against Blackheath, Rosslyn Park, Saracens and Wasps were soon established. The First World War and the subsequent troubles, impacted negatively on London Irish, and it was not until the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, that an influx of Irish players began to turn the fortunes of the club around. In the late 20's the commencement of fixtures against Leicester and Cardiff, reflected the club's return to competitiveness.

It was not until 1931 that Irish found a proper home ground at Avenue Road, Sunbury on Thames. It remained the club's ground until 1999, except for World War 2 when it was requisitioned for food production. For one season (1999-2000) Irish shared the Stoop with Harlequins, and from 2000 to 2020, their home games were played at the Madejeski Stadium, Reading. Starting this season London Irish have found a new home at Brentford sharing with the football team.

London Irish were comparative newcomers to Gloucester's fixture list, the first game being played in 1973.

## 24 NOVEMBER 1973 GLOUCESTER 27 LONDON IRISH 9

**Gloucester team:** Eric Stephens; John Dix, Bob White, Richard Jardine, Ron Etheridge; Nick Evans, John Spalding; Keith Richardson, Mike Nicholls (captain), Steve Boyle, Phil Winnell, Nigel Jackson, Dave Owen, Jim Jarrett, Dick Smith.

**Tries:** Dix, White, Smith

**Conversions:** Stephens (3)

**Penalties:** Stephens (3)

This was a very good win for Gloucester, as no fewer than nine regulars were missing, playing for Gloucestershire in the County Championship.



Eric Stephens and Steve Boyle

Nevertheless, this was still a very useful combination. Eric Stephens was playing his last season, and would finish up having scored 1559 career points. One very interesting thing a lot of readers will spot, is Steve Boyle playing at prop! This was only his second appearance for the first XV, and he would later, of course, move to the back row where he was very effective and scored a lot of tries. He won three England caps and was a British Lions tourist

## 20 MAY 2000 LONDON IRISH 40 GLOUCESTER 42

**Gloucester team:** Chris Catling; Joe Ewens, Terry Fanolua, Chris Yates, Rob Jewell; Simon Mannix, Elton Moncrieff; Adey Powles, Jawad Djoudi, Andy Deacon, Rob Fidler, Ian Jones, Adam Eustace, Kingsley Jones (captain), Ed Pearce.

**Replacements:** Brian Johnson, Neil McCarthy, Ian Sanders, Mark Cornwell, Byron Hayward, Stefan Sanchez

**Tries:** Powles (2), Catling (2), Jewell, Eustace, Cornwell

**Conversions:** Mannix, Hayward

**Penalty:** Mannix



Adey Powles

This was the last game of the season, and played at the Stoop, which Irish were sharing with Harlequins that season. It was an amazing contest of 13 tries. Gloucester played a quarter of the game with 14 men, having Deacon and Powles yellow carded. From the start it was apparent that both teams were determined to throw the ball about. After 18 minutes a wonderful Gloucester move which involved nearly every player, resulted in a penalty. Adey Powles took a quick one and burrowed over. It was his 74th appearance, and his first try! Although Catling scored before the interval, Irish had also been scoring tries, in fact three of them, and they turned round 25-13 to the good.

In the second half Gloucester produced exhilarating rugby. After 46 minutes Mannix and Yates combined to put Jewell over. Two minutes later Ian Jones stormed up the middle, and eventually Catling crossed. Not to be outdone, Irish responded with three tries of their own, and led 40-25. Yet again the pendulum swung and Eustace scored after selling a dummy, and a length of the field move resulted in a try for Cornwell. Finally, Ian Jones hacked on. Powles gathered and burrowed in for his second try.

Even then Irish could have won, but kicker Jarrod Cunningham missed a penalty from half-way. The final whistle resulted in a pitch invasion from the visiting Cherry & Whites supporters.

21 MAY 2006

## EUROPEAN CHALLENGE CUP FINAL GLOUCESTER 36 LONDON IRISH 34 (AET)

**Gloucester team:** Rob Thirlby; James Simpson-Daniel, Mike Tindall, Anthony Allen, Mark Foster; Ryan Lamb, Peter Richards; Patrice Collazo, Mefin Davies, Jack Forster, Jonathan Pendlebury, Alex Brown, Peter Buxton, Andy Hazell, James Forrester.

**Replacements:** Ludovic Mercier, Olivier Azam, Adam Eustace, Gary Powell, Luke Narraway, James Bailey.

**Tries:** Foster, Hazell, Simpson-Daniel, Forrester

**Conversions:** Lamb, Mercier

**Penalties:** Lamb (2), Mercier (2)

Another exciting game that went down to the wire. Irish were first on the board with two Barry Everitt penalties, before Foster following up a Tindall kick ahead to the touchdown. Lamb having a good game until injured, converted from the touch-line, and added a penalty before Hazell burst through from a line-out to score. Delon Armitage pulled back a try for Irish, before Lamb and Everitt exchanged penalties before half-time, at which the score was 18-13 to Gloucester.



James Simpson-Daniel

Soon after the start of the second half, Everitt dropped a goal. Everitt and Mercier with two, exchanged penalties, before Simpson-Daniel intercepted and ran in from 70 yards, with Mercier converting. Gloucester were 12 points ahead, but Irish then set up siege in the Cherry & Whites 22, scoring two close range tries to square the score at 31-31. Everitt only had to kick the conversion and Irish were home, but he missed, and that meant extra-time.

Irish dominated that period but could only score from an Everitt penalty. Then Forrester kicked ahead, but appeared to have overdone it. He followed up with remarkable speed to touch down perilously close to the dead-ball line. Reference was needed to the video to confirm the score. Even then Irish could have won, first by a missed dropped goal from Leguizamon, and then at the very death when Everitt missed with a penalty chance.

