

GLOUCESTER RUGBY
HERITAGEONE
HUNDRED
YEARS AGO

The Gloucester Club was in fine fettle financially in 1921, and during the summer they invested in various ground improvements. Additional seating was put into the pavilion on the north side, the terracing on the south side was renewed, and new terracing was installed at the Worcester Street end.

On the playing side, Gloucester embarked on the 1921-22 season with a new captain in Sid Smart. Born and bred in Gloucester, he captained the side from Number 8. Before the Great War Sid had played for England throughout two successive Grand Slam triumphs, and at the start of the war he was instrumental in persuading both his teammates and hundreds of supporters to enlist. Twice wounded himself, he picked up his rugby career after the war, earning more representative honours for County and Country. By 1921 he enjoyed legendary status at Kingsholm, and as captain it was reported that he "worked untiringly both on and off the field", and played in 35 games, more than any other player.

Tom Millington, the vice-captain, directed operations from fly-half, and he had a wonderful understanding with his scrum-half, "Father" Dix, and between them they conjured up many sparkling tries. Smart, Millington



Tom Millington and 'Father' Dix



Norman Daniell and Sid Brown

and Dix provided skill and experience down the spine of the team – over their careers the three of them would end up making 689 appearances for the Club.

Most of the kicking duties were given to Millington, who contributed 154 points, which set a new record for points by one player in a season, surpassing the 152 scored by George Romans in 1905-06. Millington's total included 13 tries, and the other leading try scorers were the speedsters on the wings - Norman Daniell with 19 and Sid Brown with 12. Norman passed on his genes to his son, Ken, who had an equally successful career on the wing for Gloucester after World War Two. Sid's career came to a tragic halt in 1926 when he died of injuries suffered whilst playing for the Club at Kingsholm.

However, the strength of the team lay in the pack, where Smart was ably supported by George "Biddy" Halford, a previous captain and international, who captained the County side in 1921-22. Tom Joyce, a permanent fixture in the England side that season, was reckoned to be the most effective forward in the country in both attack and defence, and Frank Ayliffe, Joe Harris and Arthur Hall added lots of experience, power and ability.



Sid Smart, 'Biddy' Halford and Tom Voyce

A loss at Newport was followed by a narrow win over Llanelly at home, but an up-and-down December was brightened over the holiday period with three good wins in the space of five days against Old Merchant Taylors (28-0), Bath (13-3 away) and Northampton (26-3).

The New Year started well, when a weakened team squeezed a 10-9 victory at Leicester, but a win against Moseley and a draw against Swansea, led into four successive defeats by Guy's Hospital, Swansea, Cardiff, and Newport.

It was a familiar pattern for the rest of the season, with four defeats at the hands of Welsh opposition, but nine

victories against English clubs. This included London Welsh, and completing the double over Bristol and Leicester, as well as three wins in four days over Easter against Headingley, Bradford and Lydney.

The season was a moderately successful one for the Club, although the record against English opposition was much better than against the Welsh. Of the 41 games played, 24 were won and 14 lost, ten of those defeats inflicted by Welsh clubs. The overall points difference was favourable, with 500 for and 322 against.

It started well, including "a capital win" 24-8 away at Northampton. In October, Harlequins were seen off, there was "a great win" 14-6 at Bristol, Guy's Hospital, regarded at the time as the strongest side in England, were defeated 13-0, and Cardiff were beaten 5-3 in atrocious weather at Kingsholm. And then there was "an astounding result" at Oxford University, where the students "gave a dazzling display of passing and running" to win 33-3. It was the first defeat of the season, and was soon followed by the first loss at Kingsholm, 0-3 to Pontypool.

Some of the setbacks could be attributed to the loss of players called away for representative honours. The Club was heavily represented in a Gloucestershire side, which won their three South West matches, finishing with a 34-3 demolition of Cornwall at Kingsholm, with nine Gloucester players in the team, the second string Club selection losing at Coventry that day. The semi-final was initially drawn against Surrey, but the replay was won 30-0 at Kingsholm, with ten Gloucester players involved on each occasion. It was back to nine Gloucester men in the final against North Midlands at Villa Park, where a comprehensive 19-0 victory saw "Biddy" Halford holding the Champion's trophy aloft.



Frank Ayliffe, Joe Harris and Arthur Hall