

# AFTER 145 YEARS, THE CHERRY AND WHITES PLAY GAME NUMBER 5,000

ON 4 OCTOBER 1873, THE NEWLY FORMED GLOUCESTER FOOTBALL CLUB TOOK TO THE FIELD FOR THE FIRST TIME, TO PLAY THE COLLEGE, WHICH WAS IN FACT THE KING'S SCHOOL, GLOUCESTER. THE GAME WAS PLAYED ON THE OLD COLLEGE GROUND, WHICH WAS AT THAT TIME SITUATED AT THE DEANS WALK END OF THE PRESENT KINGSHOLM.

Gloucester won the game by two goals and six tries to nil. Did any of those players have any concept of what they had set in motion? This was the birth of what became known as Gloucester Rugby Club, an institution venerated by generations of local folk, who pass on their enthusiasm to sons (and increasing numbers of daughters as well) to this day.

The club flourished and Gloucester went through the 1882-83 season unbeaten. They were christened "The Invincibles". The first Gloucester born player to be selected for England was three-quarter, Walter Jackson, who won his single cap in 1894, but by then he was playing for Halifax.

The first Gloucester player to win England recognition was Frank Stout, a forward, who won the first of 14 caps in 1897. He also played seven times for the British Lions.

The greatest try scorer in Gloucester's history is Arthur Hudson (1906-20), the winger who won eight England caps. Arthur scored 242 tries from 268 appearances. He also holds the record for most tries in a season. He achieved this in 1905-06, when he crossed the try line 41 times from only 26 games!

Sid Smart (1911-26), a forward, won twelve caps either side of World War 1, quickly followed by Tom Voyce (1918-1927), one of the greatest

players to have worn the cherry and white shirt. He transformed wing forward play, and won 27 England caps. In addition, in 1924, he played twice for the British Lions, during their tour of South Africa.

In the thirties, Gloucester had an outstanding team that achieved great success, especially against Welsh clubs. In 1929 there was the first win at Cardiff since 1898, only to repeat the feat the following season!

In 1932-33 Gloucester achieved the double over Newport for the first time in 50 years, and the following season won at Swansea for the first time ever, and then later in that season completed the double over the Welsh club.

In 1936 there was the first win at Llanelli for 38 years. At full-back was Harold Boughton (1927-46), who made 372 appearances, scoring 1423 points, and was capped three times by England. Don Meadows at fly-half played 305 times and was captain in 1936-37. Back-row forward Les Saxby, won two England caps and was captain four times between 1927 and 1932. Legendary "Bumps" Carpenter, one cap, was a miner from the "Forest", and hooker in 354 games. And, of course, who could leave out "Digger" Morris, (1931-48) who played in the second row, made 317 appearances, and captained Gloucestershire to the County Championship final in 1947.



In the fifties George Hastings (1948-59, 260 games), a prop who could also play in the back-row, won 13 caps. About this time the fixture list grew longer and longer, so that by the seventies it was commonplace for well over 50 games to be played per season. Consequently, long-serving players posted impressive numbers of appearances.



I THINK THOSE VICTORIAN GENTLEMEN WHO VENTURED OUT IN THE AUTUMN OF 1873 WOULD BE PROUD TO THINK THAT FROM THAT SMALL BEGINNING, A FAMOUS AND MUCH LOVED RUGBY CLUB WOULD BE STILL THRIVING NEARLY 145 YEARS LATER

The "five hundred club" consists of five players who have played the most games for the club. These figures will never be beaten. Alan Brinn (1960-79) 574 games, Bob Clewes (1968-82) 541, Dick Smith (1958-77) 540, Richard Mogg (1974-92) 513, and Peter Ford (1951-68) 507.

With some reluctance the Rugby Union introduced a cup competition in 1971, refusing to call it that, but giving it the title of the National Knock-Out Competition. Under the inspiring leadership of Mike Nicholls (1961-77, 434 games), Gloucester were the first winners, beating Moseley in the final at Twickenham 17-6. Playing at blind side flanker was John Watkins (1969-82) who played in 389 games and scored 109 tries. A magnificent athletic player, he deserved more than the seven caps he won. Gloucester had played all their games away, and won a magnificent victory in the quarter-final against London Welsh, a team bristling with British Lions and Wales internationals. Gloucester were given no chance, but a typical full-blooded forward performance saw Gloucester home, with a try from Mike Potter and Eric Stephens adding a penalty and conversion. Stephens' career spanned 1961 to 1974, and he totalled 1,559 points.

Gloucester won the cup again in 1978



TOM VOYCE

defeating Leicester 6-3. Richard Mogg scored a try in the corner, and Peter Butler converted. Butler is the highest scorer in Gloucester's history, chalking up 3,006 points, and two England caps.

Gloucester continued to produce outstanding forwards in this period. Mike Burton (1964-80) made 366 appearances, and won 17 England caps. Phil Blakeway (1971-85), 140 games and 19 caps and Mike Teague (1978-95), 306 games, 27 caps, plus four for the British Lions. He was also made Man of the Series for the Lions tour of Australia in 1989.

Following the John Player Cup win over Leicester in 1978, it would be 24 long years before the Cherry and Whites won another major trophy, although in 1982 the John Player Cup was shared with Moseley, following a 12-12 draw in the final.

In 2002 Bristol were beaten 28-23 in the final of the Zurich League Championship, with Ludovic Mercier scoring 23 points. In 2003 Gloucester defeated Northampton 42-30 in the final of the Powergen Cup, in front of a crowd of 70,000 at Twickenham. Tries from James Simpson-Daniel, Marcel Garvey and James Forrester had already been scored when, late in the second half, the "Saints" were attacking strongly and threatening to turn the game, when Ludovic Mercier intercepted in his own 22, broke to half way where he passed to Simpson-Daniel who streaked home unopposed. The game was safe. "Ludo" was another fine kicker scoring 1325 points for the club in 105 appearances. James Simpson-Daniel or "Sinbad" was one of the finest wingers to play for Gloucester, scoring 119 tries. His career was punctuated by injuries, which was possibly why he did not win more than ten caps.

Three years later Gloucester won another final. This



MIKE TEAGUE

time it was the European Challenge Cup. In a very exciting game London Irish were beaten 36-34 after extra time. Forrester was involved again chasing a kick ahead and scoring almost on the dead ball line. He was a dynamic attacking flanker whose career was cruelly cut short by injury.

In 2011 Gloucester beat Newcastle to win the final of the LV= Cup. Nicky Robinson, in his second and final season, kicked four conversions and two penalties, whilst tries were scored by Tom Voyce, Charlie Sharples, Darren Dawidiuk and Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu, in the 34-9 victory.

More recently, in 2015, Edinburgh were beaten 19-13 in the final of the European Rugby Challenge Cup. Captain Greg Laidlaw, capped 63 times by Scotland, was the major contributor with four penalties and a conversion of Billy Twelvetrees' try.

And so today the Cherry and Whites play their 5,000th game. So far 3,037 matches have been won, 1,621 lost and 341 drawn. I think those Victorian gentlemen who ventured out in the autumn of 1873 would be proud to think that from that small beginning, a famous and much loved rugby club would be still thriving nearly 145 years later.