

AND SO TO THE COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL

By Malc King

The Final, Cumberland v Gloucestershire, was played on Saturday 1st March 1913. The team and officials left Gloucester on Friday afternoon, travelling by train in a reserved restaurant car to Leeds, where they stayed overnight before reaching Carlisle at noon on the Saturday. The match was played on the Carlisle United Association Football Club ground at Brunton Park.

Of the team which played in the semi-final, Johnston and Merry were unable to travel because of business commitments. The reserve for Johnston was C Cook (Gloucester), but he reported sick, and then Watkins and Bowkett missed the train from Leeds. The start of the game was delayed until 3:30 in the hope that enough players would turn up to form a complete team, but in the event Gloucestershire had to kick off one short.

The Gloucestershire team was:

Back – B Davy (Cheltenham)

Three-quarters – W Washbourn, L Hamblin (Gloucester), Stanley Cook (Cheltenham Training College), and C H Kingston (Bristol University)

Half-backs – A Hall (Bristol) and J Baker (Cheltenham)

Forwards – W Johns, G Vears, S Smart, N Hayes (Gloucester), A Redding, J Watkins (Cinderford), L H Peckover (Cheltenham), and W Bradshaw (Bristol)

At the start of the game, Gloucestershire struggled to keep Cumberland out, but the belated appearance of Watkins and the tide started to turn. Hamblin opened the scoring with a penalty when Cumberland were penalised for off-side close to their own line. With the last action of the first half, Oglethorpe scored a try for Cumberland in the corner, but the conversion was missed, and the teams turned round tied at 3-3. In the second half Gloucestershire were playing with a strong wind behind them, and they started to apply pressure in the Cumberland half. Several scoring opportunities were spurned, before Hamblin finished a lovely passing move with a try to put Gloucestershire ahead. In the last ten minutes, a forward rush took Peckover across the line for a try which Hamblin converted. Cumberland pressed hard, but Hall broke away within his own 25, before feeding Kingston, who sprinted clean away and scored behind the posts. Hamblin missed the conversion, but Gloucestershire had won the game, 14-3, and were County Champions once more.

MEANWHILE AT KINGSHOLM

In those days there were no concessions in the Club fixture list for absences due to representative honours, so, despite Gloucester missing nine first choice players on County duty or injured, the Club had a fixture to fulfil at Kingsholm on the same afternoon as the County Final. The Gloucester reserves rose to the occasion against a Cardiff team at almost full strength, and fought out a 3-3 draw.

WB of the Citizen watched the match and commented: *“I badly wanted to go to Carlisle and see the County perform, but after to-day’s grand game I would not have missed it for forty trips North. In sixteen years’ regular attendance at Kingsholm I have rarely, if ever, seen better football, and never seen more intense excitement, and keen enthusiasm than was engendered by the magnificent performance put up by the Gloucester boys. It was a match calculated to do the Club and the game incalculable good in the district, and a result absolutely justifying the so-called reserves, who rose to the occasion with the greatest possible spirit and resolution, making a fight against their famous Welsh rivals which will long live in the memories of those who were privileged to see it, and which will for ever shine with brilliant lustre as a red-letter day in the annals of the good old Gloucester Football Club.*

The Gloucester forwards held their redoubtable opponents at every phase of the game, and the work of the City front in the loose was without any exaggeration some of the finest that has ever been shown at Kingsholm. Every man was out to the last half-ounce to do his best for the honour of the Club and its sporting traditions. That they rose to the occasion nobly is but their bare due. They surpassed the hopes even of their greatest partisans, and I tender them my very heartiest congratulations on a performance that has not been surpassed for pluck, resolution, hard work and tenacity in the recent history of the Club.”