



## Club History – Through the decades.

1870 – 1880

*Journal Saturday 11 October 1873: **FOOT BALL.** – A football club has recently been formed in Gloucester, and on Saturday last the season was opened with a scratch match between ten members and fifteen of the College School, which was played on the ground of the latter. The College fellows played well in the scrimmages, in which they generally had the best of it; but it is hardly expected they could prove a match for their older and more weighty opponents. Eight tries at goal were obtained for the Club, 3 by Hartley, 3 by J. P. Riddiford, 1 by W. A. Lucy, and 1 by W. A. Boughton. The Club was therefore victorious by 2 goals and 6 tries to nil. The following members played:- F. Hartley (captain), J. P. Riddiford, W. A. Lucy, E. L. Blossie, A. King, John Boughton, W. A. Boughton, J. A. Balfour, R. Ping and McKenzie. A game will be played to-day (Saturday) on the Spa Ground. Gentlemen wishing to join the Club will please communicate with the hon. sec., Mr. J. P. Riddiford, Northgate House.*

*Special Supplement published by The Citizen on 7 September 1951: **An overdose of salt***

***The long intriguing story of Kingsholm had its origin in ... some humble loads of common salt.***

*When Gloucester R.F.C. was founded in September 1873, the first-ever game was staged on land in Deans Walk where Kingsholm Stadium was later to grow.*

***The following year a move was made to the Spa where the Club remained until season 1890-1, when the Corporation, for the second time, issued a notice to quit. This notice was the consequence of pre-match preparations for a memorable clash against Swansea which ended in a famous win for the City fifteen. Fearing that the frost-bound Spa might be too hard to permit play, officials and members acquired loads of salt and liberally sprinkled the pitch.***

***THE GROUND WAS THAWED AND THE FROST DISPERSED BUT THE RUGBY ENTHUSIASTS HAD BEEN TOO ENTHUSIASTIC ... AND TOO LIBERAL WITH THE SALT.***

*As a result the salt ruined the grass ... and the Club quickly received notice to quit.*

### **Company formed**

*This was a severe blow to all concerned. But it proved to be a blessing in disguise.*

*Lovers of rugby soon launched a move to form a company for the purpose of purchasing a ground; meetings were called and various sites were inspected, and considered.*

*The site ultimately chosen was on what was known as Castle Grim estate in Deans Walk. Negotiations were opened; the new ground company quickly closed the deal; work was immediately started preparing a pitch and so expeditiously did the preparations proceed that the formal opening of Kingsholm took place on October 10 1891. Before the official opening two matches were played on a ground near Denmark-rd.*



## **First match**

*The first match at Kingsholm was staged in atrociously wet conditions. But the rain did not damp the enthusiasm of spectators and players.*

***Cheered lustily and encouraged by hundreds, Gloucester made it an auspicious occasion by defeating a strong Burton side by 18 points to nil.***

*The victorious Gloucester team were: A.F. Hughes, T. Bagwell (capt.), T.B. Powell, W. Jackson, W.H. Taylor, W. George. S.A. Ball, H.V. Page, A. Cromwell, A.E. Healing, C. Williams, A. Collins, J. Williams, A.E. Henshaw and T Collins.*

*Of this famous fifteen who made rugby history in Gloucester only two survive – Charlie Williams, popular host of the Theatre Vaults in Westgate-st, and Walter Taylor.*

## **Prophetic words**

*Official opening of Kingsholm was followed by a commemorative dinner at the Spread Eagle Hotel – the clubs H.Q., at that time by the directors of the Ground Company.*

***They were Messrs. A.W. Vears (chairman), G. Cummings, C.H. Dancey, T. Gurney, S. Davies, A.V. Halton and S.S. Starr.***

*Speaking at the dinner, Mr. Vears predicted that the day would stand in the annals of Gloucester as a red letter day. When the new ground was completed it would be second to none as the finest football ground in the West. How prophetic those words have proved.*

The club was formed in 1873 following a meeting held at the Spread Eagle Hotel in Gloucester. Messrs Francis Hartley, W.A and J Boughton, ET Gardon and Mr Riddiford were the moving spirits. Initial fixtures were played at the Spa home of Gloucester Cricket Club. The first match was played versus College School. Francis Hartley was the club captain during the first two seasons of existence. On 12<sup>th</sup> February 1876 the first gate taking fixture was played against The Flamingos. A floodlit match was staged at the Spa on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1879 versus Rockleaze from Bristol. There was an attendance of 2,000 present. However, due to the damage caused to the park during this match, the city council decided to ban rugby from being played at the Spa. Club captains during this decade were Frank Hartley and JF Brown. The latter captained the club for seven consecutive seasons, a club record.



# Learning Zone



1880 – 1890

In the season of 1880-81 attendances of 3000 to 4000 spectators regularly attended matches versus, Clifton, Moseley and Newport. The season of 1882-83 saw the club celebrate its first unbeaten season. Crowd attendances increased in 1882 and Alderman Edwards proclaimed that he wished to commend the club for 'providing an attraction for working men and in doing so keeping them out of public houses'. At the club's annual general meeting in 1893 a policy was adopted whereby the club agreed to pay players travel and hotel expenses for away matches. The local Citizen newspaper first published match reports in 1886-87 season. The club cancelled fixtures against Newport following violence from both their players and spectators. In the 1888-89 season the club appointed its first 'trainers'. In the same season ten of the clubs fixtures are against Welsh clubs, four of them against Cardiff. Club captains during this decade were JF Brown, H Boughton, Tom Smith, CE Brown and Tom Bagwell.

1890 – 1900

*'A general meeting of the Gloucester Football Club was held at the Ram Hotel last evening, for the purpose of confirming the action of the committee in instructing Messrs. Vears and Boughton to sign the contract for the purchase of the Kingsholm ground.'* From "The Citizen", Saturday 1 August 1891

"THE CITIZEN" – SATURDAY 10 OCTOBER 1891: **THE OPENING OF THE NEW GROUND**

## **GLOUCESTER V BURTON**

*When the inhabitants of the city rose this morning rain was falling heavily, and there seemed very little prospect of there being anything but a continuously wet day. As the weather did not clear up by midday many people began to entertain doubts as to whether the long-looked-forward-to match would take place at all, and some went so far as to predict nothing else but a postponement. The elements, however, seemed to favour the football enthusiasts, for soon afterwards the rain ceased, and as a consequence numbers of people of both sexes wended their way towards Kingsholm long before the time announced for the commencement of the game. Flags were stretched across the road just above the Spread Eagle Hotel, and a similar decoration was to be found at the bottom of Kingsholm-road. It was announced that the Burton team would arrive at the Gloucester railway station at 2.45, and would change at the hotel above mentioned. A large number of people assembled in front of the building a good hour before the time, however, for the purpose of catching a glimpse of the men with whom Gloucester footballists were to try conclusions. There were only a few hundred people on the ground when, shortly before three o'clock, a shout of applause announced the appearance of Mr. T. Robinson, M.P. Mr. Robinson was unaccompanied, but shortly afterwards, in company with another gentleman, he walked about the ground and seemed to be taking a deep interest in the surroundings. Near the temporary grandstand stood Mr. Kilminster's band, and they played a number of selections, which relieved the tedium of waiting. The number of spectators was by this time increasing wonderfully, and by half-past three the ground was thickly lined with an enthusiastic and thoroughly representative crowd.*

*Gloucester won by 2 goals, 4 tries and several minors (18 points) to 2 minors.*



# Learning Zone



The club's first directors were appointed in 1891, they were AW Vears, Merchant 100 shares, CH Priday, Land Agent – 100 shares, AV Hatton, Brewer – 100 shares, A Woodward – Gentleman 50 shares, G Cumming, Maltster 50 shares, S Davies, Haberdasher 25 shares, T Gurney, Builder 20 shares, CH Dancey, no occupation 25 shares. The Gloucester Athletic and Football Ground Company was formed to secure Castle Grim Estate for £4000 by mortgage and capital raised by 2,805 one pound shares. In 1891 the club had 1,100 members. On the 10<sup>th</sup> October 1891 the first match was played at Kingsholm and officially opened by Mr T Robinson, MP. The match ended in a comfortable 18 points to nil victory. The Gloucester team lined up as follows;

AF Hughes, T Bagwell (cpt), W Jackson, TB Powell, WH Taylor, N George, SA Ball, HV Page, A Cromwell, AE Healing, C Williams, A Collins, T Williams, A Henshaw, T Collins. Ref. Mr Rowland Hill

The honour of being the first player to score a try at Kingsholm fell to A Henshaw. He scored five minutes after kick off. The receipts for the match were £46.7s.3d. The attendance was 3,168. The first Count Championship match to be played at Kingsholm took place 17<sup>th</sup> December 1891 versus Devon. The first Gloucester player to receive an international England cap was Frank Stout in 1897. His brother Percy is the only player to have recorded the 'full hand' in one match. He did so with 4 tries, 5 conversions, 2 penalties and one dropped goal in 1898 versus Weston-super-mare. The first colour team photograph is dated 1897.

1900 – 1910

The decade opened with Gloucester Rugby Football Club remaining unbeaten versus English clubs in 1900-01. Kingsholm hosted the England versus Wales international match on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1900. The recorded attendance was 15,000. The club record for the most tries scored in a match is 18 versus Clifton in 1901. On 10<sup>th</sup> October 1905 the club played New Zealand at Kingsholm, a match where players had numbers on their shirts for the first time. The match was filmed in 'cinematograph' and shown in local cinemas. Arthur Hudson scored 4 tries in an international match between France and England, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1906 at the Parc de Princes, Paris. In total Arthur Hudson scored 9 tries in his 8 international appearances for England. In the season 1905-06 Arthur set a club record when he scored 41 tries. In 1907 Bristol defeated Gloucester in the county cup final and there was crowd violence at Kingsholm. In the 1908-09 season Arthur Hudson captained the club to its first tangible success when the club were winners of the Gloucestershire County League. Three players from Gloucester RFC were selected to play for England versus Wales, 15<sup>th</sup> January 1910 in the first international to be played at Twickenham. They were Dai Gent, Bill Johns, Harold Berry. Club captains during this decade were George Romans, Bill Johns, Dai Gent, Gordon Vears and Arthur Hudson.



# Learning Zone



1910 – 1920

In the 1911-12 season Gloucester RFC ventured into Europe to play Stade Toulousain in France. During this same season the Gloucester A team scored 24 tries versus Stow-on the Wold. The 1913-14 season witnessed the opening of the 'sixpenny stand' which today we refer to as the Shed. In 1913 Billy Hall left Kingsholm to join former Gloucester and England international Alf Wood at Oldham Rugby League Club. Alf had left the club in the previous decade. The years between 1914-18 witnessed the 'Great War'. The decade came to a close with the unfortunate enforced retirement of Arthur Hudson. A broken collar bone sustained when playing for Gloucestershire brought a premature end to his career. It was his 28<sup>th</sup> game for the county and in those matches he scored 14 tries. Arthur first played for Gloucester RFC in 1902 and records show that he scored 236 tries in 260 matches, a phenomenal record. He is one of only two players to have recorded over a century of points from try scoring alone. Club captains during this period were Arthur Hudson and George Holford.

1920 – 1930

From "The Citizen" Saturday 21 December 1929: **INTERNATIONAL ASPIRANTS AT KINGSHOLM**

## **TO-DAY'S BIG MATCH**

### **STRONG TEAMS IN SECOND ENGLISH TRIAL , SPECIAL BY "W.B."**

***For the second time in the history of the club, Gloucester staged a representative game at Kingsholm this afternoon, but there was no fear of a repetition of the 1900 fiasco, when, in connection with the England v Wales match, the City club suffered a big financial loss which took years to wipe off.***

***A crowd of 20,000 was provided for on that occasion, and special stand accommodation was erected at a cost of over £1,500. But the attendance reached about half what was expected; the "gate" only realised £984, and Gloucester had to meet a heavy deficit of £600!***

*In the intervening 29 years there has been a transformation at the Kingsholm ground, and there was no need for any extraordinary expenditure in the way of stand accommodation for to-day's International Trial. The members of the Gloucester Club are proud of their enclosure and playing pitch – one of the best in the country – and recognition by the Rugby Union of the splendid work of the City on behalf of the game for over half a century was duly appreciated.*



# Learning Zone



## **ALL ROADS LEAD TO KINGSHOLM**

### **Local and District Games Scratched**

*With practically all local and district Rugby matches scratched, Kingsholm was the centre of interest this afternoon, and there was every prospect of the accommodation of the ground being taxed. A wild night, with heavy rain, was succeeded by bright sunshine this morning, and the conditions overhead were full of promise for the big match.*

*With frost threatening in the early part of the week, the Gloucester Club officials – with Mr. Arthur Hudson supervising all the arrangements – took the precaution of covering the portion of the ground likely to be more effected. The downpour last night made the task of removing the hay and straw a hard one this morning, but the staff engaged worked with a will, and the playing pitch, under the circumstances, was in good order. It was naturally heavy and greasy on top, but in much better condition than one would have expected.’ From “The Citizen” Saturday 21 December 1929.*

### **Impressed With the Ground**

*Engineer-Commander S. F. Cooper, R.N., the Secretary of the Rugby Union – who, it is interesting to recall, played three-quarter for England in the match with Wales at Kingsholm in 1900 – and several of the players engaged in the match this afternoon visited the ground, and were greatly impressed with the enclosure and ground equipment at Kingsholm. The record boards of the City Club which hang around the gymnasium, and the Memorial to the gallant lads of the Gloucester team who fell in the Great War were objects of special interest to the visitors.*

In the 1920-21 season Gloucester RFC remained unbeaten at Kingsholm under the captaincy of Fred Webb. The club experienced its worst disciplinary season, a total of 14 players were dismissed for fighting, 6 for obscene language, and one for foul play and seven for arguing with the referee. Towards Gloucester. Tom Joyce was capped 27 times for England in consecutive matches between 1920 and 1926. Tom arguably the club's finest player played twice for the British Lions on their tour to South Africa in 1925. In a match versus Old Blues RFC, 1925-26 season, Gloucester player Stan Bayliss dislocated his neck in a tackle. Sadly Stan died a week later. The following season a further misfortune occurred when Sid Brown became the club's second player to die as a result of injury. Sid ruptured a kidney whilst playing against Aberavon at Kingsholm. In 1926 the main grandstand was erected at a cost of £2,500. Captains during that decade were; Fred Webb, Sid Smart, Frank Ayliffe, Tom Millington, Tom Joyce and Les Saxby.





1930 – 1940

**Fire set-back**

*One of the major set-backs suffered by the Club was at the beginning of season 1933-4. This blow was struck by fire. The usual opening match of the season against Lydney had been postponed owing to the hard state of the ground.*

**LATER IN THE DAY, FIRE, WHICH HAD STARTED IN A CIRCUS BEING HELD IN THE CLUB’S CAR PARK, SWEEPED THROUGH AND DESTROYED THE GRANDSTAND.**

*But such was the energy and enterprise displayed by officials and committee that the existing stand was planned, erected and completed for use in nine weeks from the day of the disaster.*

From “The Citizen” Saturday 22 April 1933: **FROM W.B.’S NOTEBOOK**

**GLO’STER’S BEST FOR 12 YEARS**

**NOTABLE TRIUMPHS IN BRILLIANT SEASON**

**BACK PLAY DEVELOPED: STRONG ATTACKING FORCE**

**LEADING FEATURES REVIEWED**

*Gloucester finished a splendid season with their victory over Halifax, the Yorkshire cup-holders, on Tuesday. The team’s victorious career since the first Saturday in March was checked on Monday by London Welsh, but the City’s record is the best the Club has enjoyed since 1920-21, when the results were pretty much the same.*

	Points					
	P.	W.	L.	D.	For	Agst.
1920-21 .....	37	25	10	2	453	262
1932-33 .....	37	24	10	3	423	257

In the 1932-33 season the main grandstand caught fire with a loss of 1,750 seats. The Bertram Mills Circus situated at the back of the grandstand saw the evacuation of the animals. The club celebrated its jubilee year in 1933. For the 1933-34 season a new grandstand was erected and with other improvements the ground capacity was increased to 20,000. The new stand was financed by the club insurers with 7,500 seats. Christopher Champion Tanner made five appearances for England in this decade, one of eighteen clergymen to have been capped for his country. Graham Parker the Gloucester full back was awarded an OBE. The last match played at Kingsholm prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War was versus Somerset Police. The outbreak of war saw the fixture list aborted for five seasons.



# Learning Zone



1940 – 1950

Club fixtures were resumed in the 1945-46 with Roy 'Digger' Morris and John A'Bear as joint captains. During the war years the Kingsholm stadium was used by the civil defence and military authorities, the club received £800. Also during this period Kingsholm staged Services Internationals and the Red Cross Internationals. Gordon Hudson, son of Arthur, whilst serving in the RAF scored four tries for England in a war time international. Percy Hordern was awarded the Air Force Cross in 1944. Christopher 'Kitt' Tanner was posthumously awarded the Albert Medal for saving life at sea. Willie Jones is one of only two players from this club to have scored a hat-trick of drop goals in a match, achieved against Bedford in 1946. The former Glamorgan County Cricket player also holds the club record for the most drop goals in a season – 17 in 1946. Club captains during this period were Harold Boughton, Tom Price, Roy Morris and Gordon Hudson.







1950 – 1960

From the "Citizen", Friday 12 October 1951: **NOTED PERSONALITIES AT GLO'STER RUGBY DINNER**

**Mr. H. CLEAVER (President of the Rugby Football Union), representatives of leading English and Welsh clubs, and many other famous personalities in the rugby world were among the guests at the Gloucester Club's Kingsholm diamond jubilee dinner at the Connaught Rooms, Gloucester, last night.**

*The gathering included members of Gloucester's 1<sup>st</sup> XV and the United and a strong muster of former captains. Local rugby clubs and organisations were also represented.*

*The King, Patron of the Rugby Union, was toasted at the bidding of Dr. Arnold Alcock (President of the Gloucester Rugby Football Club), who presided at the dinner.*

*The Rugby Union President proposed the toast of "The Gloucester Rugby Football Club" and, in doing so, confessed that although he had played on every other rugby ground in the Midlands, Gloucestershire and Somerset he had never had the pleasure of playing at Kingsholm.*

*"I could describe the Gloucester club as one of the strongholds of this great amateur game of ours but surely it is part and parcel of the great city and county of Gloucester," he declared.*

## **SALUTE!**

***Throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles, and in far-flung outposts of the world, Gloucester is famous for its Rugby Club and Kingsholm enclosure.***

***Not without justification has the club earned an indelible place in the annals of the great amateur winter game ... and in the hearts of all lovers of the code.***

***Thus on the eve of launching the 60<sup>th</sup> playing season at Kingsholm, the President of the E.R.F.U., leading public figures, rugby and soccer clubs, associate in saluting a club of which Gloucester and the whole of the County can well be proud.***

***The general public will endorse the tributes contained in this special jubilee supplement ... and join in extending the hope that the Club will continue to prosper and add more splendid pages to the lustrous rugby story of Kingsholm and Gloucester - Sports Editor***

The club's public announcement system was introduced in the 150-51 season. The first player to be capped by Wales whilst playing at Gloucester was John Gwilliam. The main grandstand was extended in 1954. The Worcester street stand was constructed for the 1954-55 season with concrete terracing.



# Learning Zone



## 1970-1980

In the 197-72 season the club won the first National Knockout competition by beating Moseley by 17 to 6 at Twickenham. A magnificent achievement considering that Gloucester was drawn to play away in every round of the competition leading up to the final. In the season of 1972-73 a club record of 1,145 points were scored including a record 161 tries. The club celebrated its centenary in 1973-74 and on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1973 an International XV visited Kingsholm. A 24-14 win for Gloucester. Full back Pete Butler became the clubs leading points scorer with 2,961 points accrued between 1972 and 1982. In 1976-77 season Adidas became the first sponsors providing free playing kit for the team. In 1977-78 the club win the first ever John Player Cup defeating Leicester in the final at Twickenham 6-3. Alan Brinn retired from playing in 1977 after making a record breaking 572 appearances for the club. Captains during this decade were; Mike Nicholls, John Bayliss, Keith Richardson, Mike Burton, John Watkins and Bob Clewes.

## 1980-1990

Former Gloucester and England stalwart Tom Voyce passed away on 22/01/1980. Lock forward John Fidler made his debut at international level for England, May 30<sup>th</sup> 1981 versus Argentina in Buenos Aires. Steve Mills captained the club to become joint winners of the RFU national clubs knockout competition at Twickenham drawing 12 points all with Moseley. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1984 Gloucester RFC provided the entire front row of forwards for the match against South Africa at Port Elizabeth, they were PJ Blakeway, SGF Mills and M Preedy. Mike Coley was appointed as the clubs first marketing manager in the summer of 1985. In 1986 the club spent £230,000 on safety measures at Kingsholm. Club captains during this period were; Steve Mills, Gordon Sargent, John Orwin, Malcolm Preedy, Marcus Hannaford and Mike Hamlin.

## 1990-2000

Mike Teague became the first Gloucester player to appear in a world cup match on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1991 versus New Zealand at Twickenham. At the end of the 1991-92 season the club competed in a Boston (USA) tournament defeating Washington 28-12 and Vancouver 23-0. Following this prior to the commencement of the 1992-93 season the club competed in the Leiden (Netherlands) Euro tournament defeating Cascais (Portugal) 50-21 and losing to Bridgend (Wales) 22-12. The clubs first match in European competition was 12<sup>th</sup> October 1996 when Ebbw Vale were defeated 59-7. The clubs first away trip in eurpoean competition was at Swansea on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1996, a game that resulted in a heavy defeat losing 62-12. During this time the game of rugby went professional and Dave Sims became the clubs first paid professional player in 1996. Tom Walkinshaw took a major stake in the club in April 1997, purchasing a 73% of shares. In 1997-98 the club won the inaugural C&G cup defeating Bedford 33-25 at Franklin's Gardens, Northampton on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1998. The club retained the cup the following season once again defeating the same opposition 24-9. Terry Fanolua and Richard Tombs became two of the club's first overseas players in 1997. Ken Nottage was appointed the club's Managing Director. Club captains during this period were Mike Hamlin, Ian Smith, Andy Deacon, Dave Sims and Peter Glanville.



# Learning Zone



2000 –

The club reached the European Heineken cup semi-final losing 15-19 to Leicester Tigers. Gloucester recorded their largest premier league victory against local rivals Bath 4<sup>th</sup> May 2002 defeating them 68-12. Gloucester won the Powergen cup 5<sup>th</sup> april 2003 at Twickenham defeating Northampton Saints 44-20. In the same season finishing top of the Zurich Premiership league but lost the newly innovated knock out final at Twickenham to London Wasps. Three of Gloucester players, Andy Gomersall, Phil Vickery and Trevor Woodman were awarded MBEs following their involvement in England's world cup winning triumph in 2003. Peter Ford, was appointed club president in succession of another club stalwart Reg Collins. The club won the European Challenge Final against London Irish played at the Harlequins' Twickenham Stoop ground. The club again topped the premier league at the end of the 2006-7 season although yet again lost in the knock out final to Leicester Tigers. In the summer of 2007 the main grandstand was demolished along with the old clubhouse and members bar. A new structure was built stretching the entire length of the touchline. This new grandstand incorporated bars, conference and hospitality facilities, the players' changing rooms and physiotherapy suites.

