



## The Spa 1874 - 1891

The first game played by Gloucester RFC took place in 1873 on a piece of land in Deans Walk (where Kingsholm Stadium was to be built, many years later). The following year, though, the Club re-located to the Spa, a move which immediately had the effect of increasing both interest and membership, as the fixture list grew in length and importance. Towards the end of the 1878-79 season the Club, in the hopes of getting extra revenue, arranged to play a match by artificial light, but unfortunately one of four lights failed, and the performance of another was uncertain. As a result the spectators caused a great deal of damage to the shrubs and walks and the Corporation reacted angrily by giving the Club notice to quit.

This notice was subsequently withdrawn following a petition signed by 3,000 citizens and, after playing a few games at Deans Walk, the Club returned to the Spa, where all seems to have been sweetness and light until the 1890-91 season, when the Corporation had reason to be upset again. In preparation for a clash against Swansea, officials attempted to beat an expected hard frost by acquiring loads of salt, with which they liberally sprinkled the pitch. It worked fine, the game was played and won by Gloucester, but it turned out that far too much salt had been used and it ruined the grass...and the Club quickly received its second notice to quit. This was a severe blow, but in the end it proved to be a blessing in disguise, as previous attempts to purchase a new ground had been unsuccessful, and the crisis led to a move to form a company for this express purpose. The site chosen was on what was known as the Castle Grim estate in Deans Walk; the purchase was quickly made, and work immediately started to prepare the pitch. The formal opening of Kingsholm took place on 10 October 1891.

