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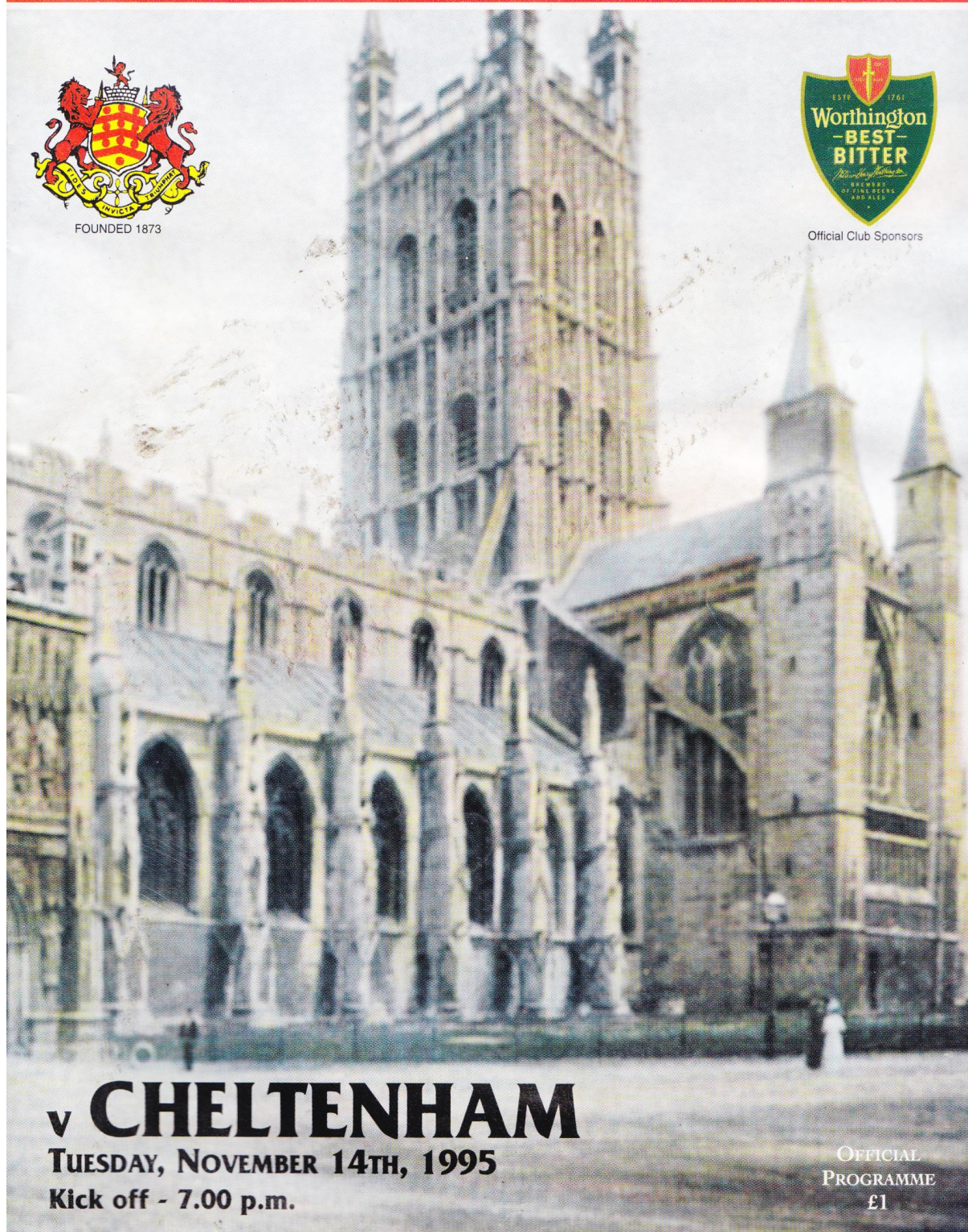
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v CHELTENHAM

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14TH, 1995

Kick off - 7.00 p.m.

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Peter Arnold ...

WHAT A DIFFERENCE NINE MILES MAKES



With another of my several hats on, I have had occasion, recently, to study the Boundary Commission's recommendations about new local government arrangements for the City of Gloucester. It was with a wry smile that I noted that the worthy Commissioners had cited the close proximity of Cheltenham as one of their reasons for recommending that the present arrangements remain unchanged.

I'm not going to get into that argument here, but I do think that they really ought to have attended one of these annual occasions before coming to such a remarkable conclusion. If they had taken that precaution then they would have seen everything which both unites and divides Town and City in one eighty-minute capsule. We might co-exist only walking distance apart, but that nine-mile gap makes all the difference in the world - and '*Vive la difference!*' say I. It's analagous to Oscar Wilde's famous observation that England and the USA are 'Two nations divided by a common language'.

The fact is that Gloucester and Cheltenham are two completely different places. Neither is better than the other - just different, and the rugby scene exemplifies this perfectly.

Attitudes are different, styles are different, even aspirations, similar in principle, differ in detail. While Cheltenham are busting their proverbial and collective gut to improve their standing in the national rankings, Gloucester are similarly risking hernias trying to stay where they are. I leave it to you to decide which outfit is making a better fist of it at the moment.

Of course, the Boundary Commissioners might take comfort from the long tradition of free movement of players between our two historic clubs. Indeed, the present playing formation of two half-backs and four three-quarters arose in the first place when Newport, travelling to Cheltenham a man short, called in at Gloucester and borrowed a three-quarter. They had really needed a half-back, but none being available, they settled for a centre. Instead of playing two stand-offs and three three-quarters, they tried the present formation, to the bemusement of their Cheltonian opposition. The experiment worked, Newport stuck with it, and the rest, as they say, is history.

One could also point to a long list of Cheltenham players who have sought fame and fortune by moving to Kingsholm, with varying degrees of success. Some have achieved International status, some have sunk without trace, but that's in the very nature of things. More recently, we have had a fairly steady flow of players, mostly fellows who have felt they have achieved all they could with Gloucester, in the opposite direction. Malcolm Preedy, for example, went to Cheltenham as Captain, and immediately made an enormous impact, a circumstance which surprised no one from this neck of the woods in the least.

Nowadays, our old friend, Sam Masters, is very much at the helm in Cheltenham. A recent conversation I had with a Cheltenham player reveals that he's regarded very highly at the Prince of Wales Stadium, as well he might be. Once voted the Gloucester player one would least like to meet in a dark alley, the forthright Sam has a lot to offer our friendly rivals from down the road, and knowing him, he's probably offering it with both hands.



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I suppose the tide of professionalism might put a severe crimp in this exchange of players, which would, in my opinion, be regrettable. There isn't any doubt at all that both clubs have benefitted greatly from it over the years, and long may it continue.

The fact is, that Gloucestershire needs both our clubs. In their very different ways, they contribute mightily to the rugby scene in particular, and the sporting dimension of the County in general. Although I have heard some people state that, in these high-pressure days, the fixtures should be discontinued, I take leave to disagree. I've no doubt that Cheltenham value the opportunity to try their strengths against a First Division club, and the matches do give Gloucester the chance to give aspiring players a run against opposition which they know is going to play its heart out.

Anyway, a season without Gloucester v. Cheltenham is surely unthinkable. We're always glad to see them, we thoroughly enjoy their company, and hope they have a great evening with us.

SO IT'S WALSALL

Quite a nice Christmas present actually. A home Pilkington Cup draw on the day before Christmas Eve would seem to be a great way to get the Festive Season rolling. But spare a thought for the players. Cup on Saturday, and Bath in the League on the eve of New Year's Eve, would appear to limit their latitude for merriment and celebration more than somewhat.

In case you hadn't heard, Gloucester have been drawn at home to Walsall, last season's Division Five Champions, and at the time of writing, sitting handily at fourth in the Division Four table.

My latest information, which to be fair, isn't all that up to date, is that they play in scarlet shirts and black shorts, which could, I suppose, cause a strip clash. Their ground, in Delves Road, Broadway, Walsall, accommodates some 2,500 souls, and they're rather proud of their food and their beer. A few years ago, they were running no fewer than five senior sides, with four Youth teams, and *eleven* minis, so they've obviously got a very strong youth policy.

That policy does seem to be bearing fruit. Richard Mills was the country's top points scorer, last season, with 369, while they also provided the top try scorer in Jon Rowe, who touched down a slightly staggering 30 times. Gloucester will have to watch out for him, and by the sound of it, won't be able to afford to give penalties away, either.

One famous face in the Walsall line-up is scrum-half Richard Moon, late of Harlequins, and I believe, brother of the Moon who turned out for Wales in the same position a season or so ago.

But I've saved the best until last. One face we'll be glad to see is our old friend, Steve Lazenby, an RAF man who played here for a few seasons a few years ago. In fact, if memory serves, he turned out at just about every position from full-back to outside-half.

It is in that latter position which I best remember him. On one occasion, a late onset of flu caused a last-minute re-jig of the Gloucester side. Lazenby came in to allow Mike Hamlin to move back to centre, and Tim Smith played one of his first games on the wing. The opposition was, would you believe, Leicester, Dusty Hare and all. We feared the worst.

In the event, we actually won the game, and Master Lazenby had no small hand in that. So it will be nice to see him back.

Should be a fine occasion, and don't forget, that being a Pilkington Cup game, it will be an all-pay affair. Not our fault - rules of the Competition. I wouldn't be surprised if it's an early kick-off, too.

So there you are. December 23rd. Pilkington Cup. At home. Walsall. See you there.

TICKETS

Mention of the Bath game on December 30th, reminds me that Ground tickets are already available from the office for that very occasion. We shall probably be squeezing people in with a shoehorn on that afternoon, so it might be an advantage to acquire yours before the general busy-ness of Christmas drives the thing from your mind. Please note: this doesn't mean that it's an all-ticket game. It's simply a ploy to relieve pressure on the turnstiles.

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While on the subject, we also have tickets for the South West v. Western Samoa match scheduled for December 9th, and surely, if any International side has captured the imagination over recent years, those boys are It. It would be a pity to miss them.

A Stand ticket will cost you £12.00 (no concessions), while you can get into the ground for £8.00 - £4.00 for OAP's and Juniors.

CONGRATULATIONS IAN

Which reminds me that our own Ian Smith will be having a taste of Western Samoan rugby long before that. We're all delighted that he has regained his place in the Scottish side to take them on at Murrayfield on Saturday, and hope it's just the start of a substantial run in the International scene.

On his form this season, he richly deserves it, and we wish him all the luck in the world.

We should also congratulate him on becoming one of the very few players to have turned out in 100 Courage League matches. Not bad for a lad who had the bad luck to be sent off in his very first match for Gloucester ! He obviously learned that particular lesson early, and is now, since his appearance in the Scottish World Cup squad, recognised all over the world as a force to be reckoned with.

Keep on keeping on, Ian !

CHERRYETTES

I was a little late getting into the ground for the Harlequins game, so only saw the very tail-end of the performance by our new cheerleading Cherryette troupe. I'm therefore in no position to comment, but everyone else seems to be only too willing to do so.

Opinions seem to be sharply divided. Correspondence and comment has been brisk, and reveals what the politicians would doubtless call a 'full and frank debate'.

Just a couple of examples. A nice letter from our old friend, Mike Stoate, Managing Director of Stoate & Bishop Printers, who produce this programme efficiently week after week, reveals one side of the argument. He writes:

*'What about the dancing girls ? Pity about the sound recording
- not booming out loud enough. Why not change the music to Tina
Turner's "Simply the Best" ? If we're going to do it, let's go big.'*

I'll pass the idea on, Mike, but there might be a Performing Rights problem. The other point of view is put by someone simply signing himself - or herself - 'Rumpus', who trenchantly observes:

*'I'm sure they're all talented. Lovely. But what are they FOR ?
Considering that 90 per cent of the crowd is mature, sensible, dare I
say older, and perceptive, what was it FOR ?
The accompanying music was dreadful. A racket. Too loud. Not
Vivaldi by any means.'*

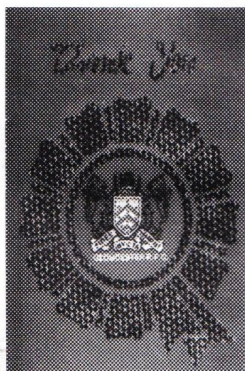
We're never going to be able to reconcile those two standpoints. And incidentally, Mr (or Miss, or Mrs, or even Ms) Rumpus does give me the opportunity to state my position on people who send me anonymous letters. I'm quite happy to use them, where appropriate: after all, the writer could have been at Kingsholm when he's phoned into work, sick, or something. However, I do need to know the name and address - hopefully phone number as well - of my correspondent. I made need clarification, or perhaps I can't read some part of the handwriting. I'm afraid that if those aren't supplied, I normally won't be able to print the letter concerned, under a nom-de-plume or otherwise.

On the subject of the Cherryettes, as far as I am concerned, anything which adds a spot of life and colour to the occasion is welcome, particularly in that dead period before the match when nothing much is happening. That's particularly true on big match days, when you may well have ensconced yourself in your chosen spot well before kick-off.

It's a far cry from the old days when the good old Cinderford Band used to trudge round the pitch oompahing like crazy. And that was in the days when brass bands used to play nothing but Strauss waltzes and Sousa marches. Much more entertaining now, of course.

Remember, these girls are doing the whole thing for *fun*. No one press-gangs them into performing for us in this way. Good on them, I say, and thanks for their time and their efforts. It's early days, yet, and we should all sit back and see how it all develops.

ON THE CARDS



For reasons which need not concern you, I received a nice 'thank-you' card the other day. On closer inspection, it transpired that the very pleasant piece of correspondence had been provided by Gloucester RFC. A visit to Geraldine's Lair in the office, revealed a rack, fairly busting with a whole range of greetings cards for several occasions. All available for sale to anyone who wants one.

On enquiry, I find that they're also available from our excellent Club Shop, situated at the Worcester Street end.

They really are very nice cards indeed, and Geraldine tells me that Christmas cards are also going to be available, any time now. I've no doubt they will be produced to the same standard as the existing range, and I certainly intend to send some to certain favoured people on my own card list.

Why don't you do the same? It's a good way to support the Club, and probably, to impress appropriate recipients. Take a look and see what you think.

COACH TO NORTHAMPTON ?

The question mark is there because the proposed club coach to Franklin Gardens on Saturday, November 25th, won't run unless it proves to be a viable proposition. In other words, not enough punters - no coach.

On the face of it, there wouldn't seem to be any doubt that at least one coach load of supporters will want to go and see Gloucester take on the side which travels to Bath for the Pilkington, and which is running away with Division Two of the Courage League in a quite indecent manner. But there is a snag.

November 25th is the day when the South West takes on the Midlands, here at Kingsholm in the Divisional Championship, soon to be scrapped, if the RFU Commission on Professionalism's recommendations are accepted. Many local supporters will want to watch that, and there might also be Northampton and Gloucester names on the team sheet for that game, which would devalue the away game, somewhat.

So it's up to you. You takes your choice, and you pays your money. And, incidentally, tickets for the Divisional game are also available from the office, right now. £8.50 for the Stand (Concessions £5.00), Ground £6.00 (£3.00).

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How Reg Collins Sees It



We may soon be able to buy, sell and swap players like postage stamps, but as the Soccer experience shows, there's never going to be any substitute for growing your own. Reg Collins, and his remarkable coaching team, bear much of the responsibility for this, as far as Gloucester is concerned. Every now and then, Reg does me the honour of updating me on happenings on the Colts front. Here's his latest contribution, in letter form, just the way he wrote it.

Dear Peter,

It doesn't seem 12 months since I last wrote to you reviewing the Colts progress for season 1994/95. However looking through my records I see that my last review was contained in the programme dated 25th November 1994. Thankfully we have had much better fortune in the number of games played. Last season due to various reasons we had only managed four games and were looking forward to playing and winning against Bath. Unfortunately we lost 12-17. To date we have played eight games, winning six and losing the other two by margins of 2 points and 3 points so I think we can say a fairly successful record. Again we are due to play Bath on 22nd November and again hoping for a winning outcome.

It is a remarkable fact that due to injuries, players leaving to go to universities, and others being rested due to county and divisional call's we can still maintain an excellent playing standard. No fewer than 36 players have so far represented Gloucester Colts this season.

The interest and wish to play for Gloucester Colts is remarkable. Last season Ben Williams joined us from Worcester and gained his place in the Welsh Under 18's XV team. This season though still of Colts age he has played regularly for an Under 21's XV together with several other Colts who combined playing Colts and Under 21's rugby. Ben's connection with the club has prompted several other Worcester lads to try their luck with Gloucester.

We have also attracted two Monmouth Grammar School players in Jonathan Goodwin and Nick Bennett. Jonathan at centre has

proved a great asset and has played in all eight games so far. We have missed outside half Nick Paisley since the opening games. Nick a former Kings School pupil now at Loughborough may be available for the Bath game. He, together with Reg Daldry (hooker) and Virgil Hartland (loose head prop), all county players, are included in the South & West regional trials at the weekend. A further new recruit is centre Thomas Ramsden ex Northampton Colts now at Hartpury Agricultural College.

We are fortunate in our continuity of coaching with John Powell and John Dix still giving unstintingly of their time and I am sure that a lot of our success is due to a settled structure.

With the drastic and momentous changes now taking place in our game of rugby it is not too clear what the future holds but although the talk is of recruiting talented and established players I am sure that many of the players required for the future of the Gloucester Club will come from local sources and that the Colts system will still serve a very useful purpose. I was pleased to see that in the club's recent league game against Harlequins six of the forwards were ex colts. It is also pleasing to see that in the recent shake up for the league match at Sale, Tom Beim has been included in the wing. Tom who is still not yet twenty years old played at full back for the Colts in 1992/93 and proved to be very competent player. I am sure he will make the grade and I am also sure that many of today's Colts will follow in his footsteps.

Yours sincerely, Reg Collins

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Reg rang later to tell me of another former Gloucester Colt who looks as though he may be following in the footsteps of Ian Smith and Peter Jones. He is none other than Peter Phillips, who played a couple of games for us last season, and impressed everyone.

Last weekend, Peter was selected for the Scottish Schoolboys Trial. So were a lot of other lads, but none of them was a grandson of Her Majesty the Queen. As you may recall, Peter Phillips is the son of Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, who is of course, Patron of the Scottish Rugby Football Union.


You don't get to play in that sort of game just because of who your Mum happens to be. After all, Her Royal Highness, herself, represented Great Britain in the Olympic Games purely on merit, and who's to say that the next generation can't do something similar? If that does prove to be the case, then it will be nice to think that we had a hand in it.





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10. Lee Osborne
9. Paul Salter

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2. John Hawker
3. James Broady
4. Mark Cornwell
5. Rob Fidler
6. Andy Stanley †
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Bruce Fenley
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Peter Arnold (cont)

STOP PRESS !!!

*Next week's home game against Bedford has been brought forward to
FRIDAY EVENING Kick-off, 7.15 DON'T MISS IT !*

BEST WISHES, BOB

Since I started to write these notes, I've learned that one of Gloucester's best-known rugby personalities has, sadly, suffered a heart attack and is now in Gloucestershire Royal Hospital. One is always sorry to hear this sort of news, and that feeling is compounded when the person concerned is someone so widely liked and appreciated. In this case, the unfortunate chap is Bob Hannaford, father of Marcus, and brother of Graham, and former International, Charlie. And we also have Cass, making a name for himself at United level, and the latest edition, another Charlie, who has started turning out for the Colts.

I glad to say that I'm told that all is as well as it can be, and that Bob is resting comfortably in Ward 13 of the GRH. I'm certain that many people will wish to add their good wishes to mine, and I'm sure that a card from you would be much appreciated, and would go some way to restoring the normally ebullient Bob Hannaford to his usual cheerful self.

Get well soon, Bob. We miss you.

REMEMBER PETER DAY ?

Something of a 'where are they now' spot. this one.

There was I, enjoying a few days in Cornwall the other week, when I had news of a former player who has shaken the dust of the City from his sizeable footwear, and repaired to the delights of the Duchy to pursue new challenges.

Accompanied by my Beautiful and Talented Wife, I was paying a highly enjoyable family visit to the very pleasant village of Veryan. In typical Cornish fashion, the local hostelry is called the 'New Inn',* because it's the oldest pub for miles around. As one does, I made my number with the local landlord and the other important people who dispense liquid refreshment, when a chap called Bryant, who happened to be serving behind the bar at the time, volunteered the information:

"We have a regular in here who used to play for Gloucester. His name's Peter Day."

"Oh yes !" responded my cousin. "Meant to tell you. He says he knows you !"

Unfortunately, that was the last day of our visit, so I wasn't able to follow things up, but it was nice to know, anyway.

For the information of anyone who doesn't know, former policeman Peter Day is the son of our highly respected President, Tom Day, and returns to Gloucester regularly.

Of course, the aforesaid BTW had to make her usual remark "Can't take you anywhere without your blessed rugby club cropping up !" And she's right, you know.

'Excellent pub grub, actually. Highly recommended if you should happen to find yourself in the vicinity.

GIFTS GALORE

If you see a few characters around wearing Mad Hatter-style top hats in cherry-and-white, then they've bought them from the Club Shop. That might not be everyone's idea of What the Well Dressed Elver Eater should be wearing, but it's just one indication of the range of goodies available from Santa Townsend's Grotto this Christmas.

Perhaps the egregious topper isn't suitable for any Christmas gift you have in mind, but there's plenty more to choose from. You can, for example, buy an excellent, waterproof wax jacket for £35.00, a GRFC body warmer for £16.00, or a hooded fleece jacket, complete with club logo, for £18.00 - and you'll find that those prices compare well with those of similar items obtainable elsewhere.

On the 'stocking filler' front, you can acquire a tie for as little as £7.00, an enamel badge for £2.00, or even a button for 75p.

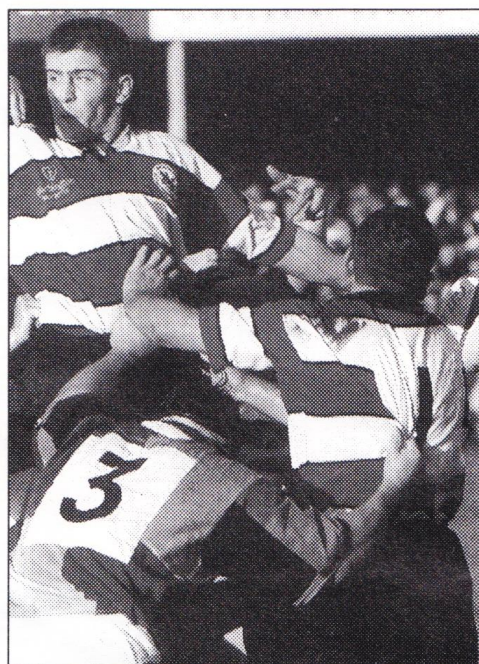
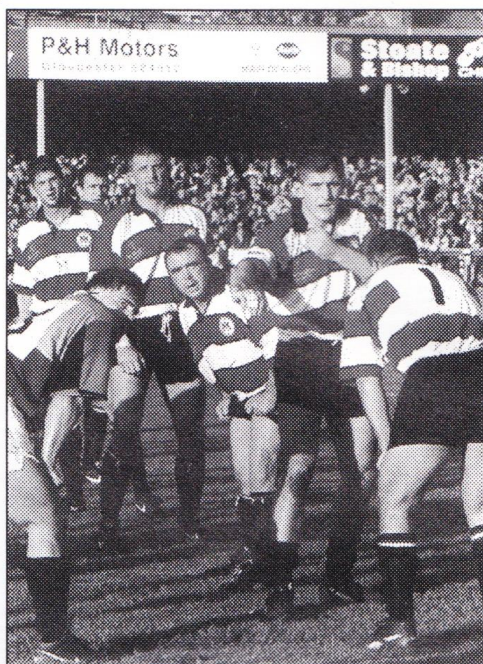
It's all very worth investigating. And let's face it, you can always tell the missus, "Shan't be long, dear. I'm just going Christmas shopping !" You never know. You might get away with it.

TAILPIECE

If you see anyone around the ground keeping their hands stuffed firmly in their pockets to prevent their trousers descending around their ankles, I might just have the answer.

Geraldine, the other day, sent me a package containing several letters which various people had written to the Programme Editor. When, having scrutinised them, I was crumpling up the envelopes to throw away, a small, green button fell out of one of them. Don't know which one, or what it was doing there in the first place.

Most Gloucester supporters have all their buttons sewn on (I think.) but if someone finds themselves resource-challenged in that particular department, I'm carrying the thing around in case someone claims it.



*Action from the recent Harlequins game
(Photo: Tony Hickey)*

Ed Martin ...

The inquiries have been coming in thick and fast – everyone wants to know just how the current season stacks up against others when the Cherry and Whites have not got off to the best of starts.

Alas, this is the worst start to a season that Gloucester has ever experienced since moving into Kingsholm in 1891 – and it appears to be the worst in club history. The first eleven matches have reaped just two wins, giving an 18.2 per cent winning record. Since 1891, Gloucester has normally produced a winning record (over 50 per cent) in its first 11 matches. In just nine seasons has the winning percentage dropped below the 50 per cent mark.

Three of those seasons saw Gloucester posting five wins and six losses (1892, 1955 and 1969), while four wins in the first 11 matches were recorded on a further four occasions (in 1903, 1904, 1982 and 1986).



Dave Sims takes to the air during the match against Harlequins

(Photo courtesy of Tony Hickey)

Until this season, the worst start to a season in the first 11 matches was recorded just 100 years ago in 1895 when Gloucester struggled to three wins, six losses and two draws for a 36.4 per cent record (twice this season's percentage figure). The season started on September 21 with a home match against Cardiff and District, the Welsh winning 3-0. After being beaten 6-0 at Leicester, Gloucester beat Weston-Super-Mare 22-0 at Kingsholm. Then came the visit to the Arms Park, with Cardiff winning 5-3. Back at Kingsholm on October 19, Gloucester chalked up its second win with a 9-3 verdict against Old Edwardians. The following week it was down to Bristol and an 8-0 loss before the visit of Newport to Kingsholm and another Welsh win – this time by a painful 30-3 margin.

The eighth game of the season was at Kingsholm on November 16 (almost 100 years ago to the day) when Stroud

paid a visit and were beaten 6-0. Coventry's 6-0 verdict was Gloucester's sixth loss in the first nine matches of the season. Then came two tied matches – on December 7 Swansea visited Kingsholm for a scoreless encounter and a week later Gloucester travelled to Bath for a 3-3 afternoon.

On the other side of the coin, Gloucester has never won all of its first 11 games. But on two occasions the club has gone unbeaten – in both 1897 and 1953 Gloucester opened with ten wins, no losses and one draw. Incidentally, the 1897 opening was part of the club's memorable 20 games without loss that stretched from April 17 1897 to Jan 15 1898.