

FIRST DIVISION

RUGBY

P R O M A G



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RUGBY



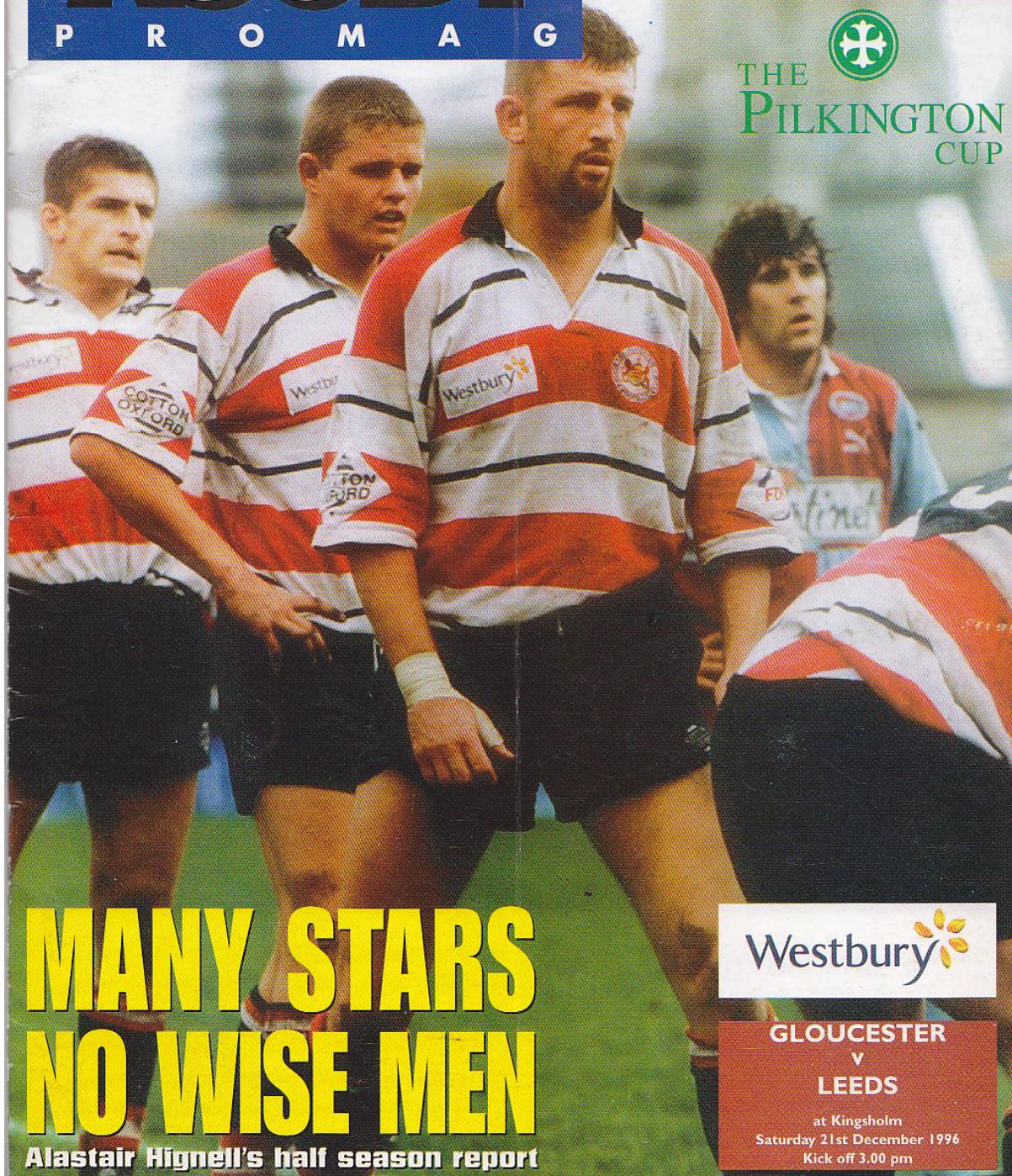
FOUNDED 1873

Vol 1/11

£2.00



THE
PILKINGTON
CUP



MANY STARS NO WISE MEN

Alastair Hignell's half season report

Westbury

GLOUCESTER
v
LEEDS

at Kingsholm
Saturday 21st December 1996
Kick off 3.00 pm



FOUNDED 1873



Saturday 21st December 1996 Kick-off 3.00pm

GLOUCESTER

Cherry & White

LEEDS

Royal Blue, Old Gold & White

15	Chris Catling	Full Back	Sateki Tuipulotu <i>cc</i>	15
14	Mike Peters	Right Wing	Richard Mathias	14
13	Don Caskie	Centre	Diccon Edwards	13
12	Martyn Roberts	Centre	Paul Johnson <i>o/s</i>	12
11	Mike Lloyd <i>T</i>	Left Wing	Mark Appleson	11

10	Mark Mapletoft <i>PAPTC</i>	Outside Half	Gerry Ainscough <i>PP</i>	10
9	Scott Benton <i>T</i>	Scrum Half	Mike Cawthorn	9

1	Tony Windo	Prop	Gavin Baldwin	1
2	Phil Greening (I)	Hooker	Mark Luffman	2
3	Andy Deacon	Prop	Mike Shelley	3
4	Rob Fidler	Lock	Phil Davies	4
5	Dave Sims <i>*T</i>	Lock	Christian Radacanu	5
6	Pete Glanville <i>T</i>	Flanker	Nick Green	6
7	Ian Smith	Flanker	Phil Griffin	7
8	Simon Deverux	No.8	Jason Ashcroft	8

16	Laurie Beck	Replacements	Rhys Morgan <i>T</i>	16
17	Nathan Carter		Stewart Kneale	17
18	Craig Emmerson		Martin Whitcombe	18
19	Phil Vickery		Simon Henry	19
20				
21				

Referee

T Fisher (Manchester Soc.RFU)(I) International
* Captain

Touch Judges

D Lewis (RFU)
D Thomas (RFU)

3.0
3.3
6.3
9.3
9.6
14 6
19 6
21 6
26 6
26 11
26 13
27 13
29 18
29 20
34 20
36 20
41 20
46 20
48 20
53 20
55 20

cc
PP
WJ
WJ

No Change out of Leeds

Peter Arnold

Ian Smith will have been fascinated to read that a recent magazine survey identified Scots as this year's most generous people when it comes to spending money on Christmas presents. The whole side will have been less surprised to learn, from the same source, that the least open-handed in this regard are Yorkshiremen. In fact, Gloucester can't expect today's welcome opposition to give away anything this afternoon. Moreover, as everyone knows, the Pilkington Cup is different. You can tear up the form book, and disregard high-flying reputations. If ever there were a great leveller in rugby terms, the Cup is it.

My spies around White Rose country tell me that Leeds are coming to Kingsholm with a fair degree of confidence. They are well aware that we were Semi Finalists last year, having beaten the much-fancied Wasps side. With a little more luck, and perhaps skill, we would have made our fourth trip to Twickenham in the best possible way - by defeating Bath on their own patch. None of that cuts any ice with Leeds, however.

They are looking at Gloucester as the side which has clung to Division One of the Courage League by their collective finger nails over the past couple of seasons, and could well be in that position again come next April. In contrast, Leeds have been climbing Division Three steadily over the past few weeks, and now sit threateningly behind Fylde in second place. They can observe that Wakefield shot us out of the Cup two years ago, and beat us again only a few weeks past. I've no doubt that they feel that anything their neighbours can do, they can, and then some.

I can assure everyone who has made the chilly trip down from the North, today, that Gloucester are not regarding this afternoon's little wingding as any sort of an easy option. Far from it. Leeds may not be a side whose name you hear every time the talk turns to rugby, as it invariably does around the pubs and clubs of Gloucester, but any outfit which arises from the amalgamation of two such venerable organisations as Headingly and Roundhay has a lot of pride and passion going for it. Leeds may be a Division or two down from Gloucester in the official pecking order, but in this melting pot of a season, that

doesn't mean as much as it did.

In any case, the Cup almost always throws up a giant-killer or two, and Gloucester have no intention whatever of becoming a nine-days wonder by being on the wrong end of such a phenomenon today. We may not be expecting to get any change out of Leeds, but they can't anticipate much Yuletide generosity from us, either.

On the field, that is. Everywhere else, the whole Leeds contingent - players, officials, local press, supporters, camp followers, groupies, whatever - will, I'm perfectly sure, be made to feel very welcome. This whole affair is a very good way to open the Festive Season, quite apart from giving us the chance to meet up with a whole new bunch of like-minded people from a fair distance away.

Nice to see you all. Have a great time at Kingsholm.

DR. GRAHAM VOSS

The sudden death of a close family member or friend is about the worst shock any of us is ever called upon to endure. Such a tragedy occurring around Christmas time adds a poignancy which is hard to appreciate unless one has had to endure it. It is therefore with extreme sadness that I am called upon to report the passing of Dr. Graham Voss at the untimely age of just 49. His departure will leave a gap which will be hard to fill.

Graham Voss qualified at Guy's Hospital in the Sixties, and played for them in the days when Guy's were still very much a power in the rugby firmament, still producing the occasional International player. After qualification he moved to Amberley, and played for Stroud for a while. In recent years, he was one of Gloucester RFC's Medical Officers, and as we all know, no club can do without excellent support in that direction these days.

Graham certainly gave us that. More, he was an immensely likeable man, and fitted into the Kingsholm scene as if he had been born here. We shall miss him a very great deal, and the sincere sympathies of all of us go out to his family.

New Deal for Members

Peter Arnold

I ought to record a couple of interesting developments on the subscription front, although if you're a Member you may have heard them by now via your Christmas post.

From here on in, it will be possible to buy a season ticket covering just half the season. Seems sensible to me: everyone is very well aware that the unavoidable increase in fees does put a strain on the budgets of some very ardent supporters, and this is one way of easing the burden a little. After all, if the Water Company can do it, why not GRFC?

There's another interesting initiative too. Any Member who introduces a new one will be able to claim 10% off his own sub. which is very handy inducement, and does everyone a bit of good.

Good thinking. Be fascinating to see how things work out.

OPENING HOURS

If you haven't booked your seat on the Bristol coach, better do it today, or you'll have to take your chances on the Friday before the game.

That's the thing which immediately springs to mind when telling you about the times when the Office will be open over the holiday period. To amplify:

After today, the office will be CLOSED until Friday, December 27th. It will be OPEN on that day, and on MONDAY December 30th. It will then be CLOSED again on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. After which, things will revert to normal.

Having seen the pressure under which everyone has been working over the past few months, all I can say is that they deserve a few days' break.

CATCHING 'EM YOUNG

Geraldine's enforced absence did disrupt things a bit for a while, and one of the casualties was information about our Match Mascot for the London Irish game, a couple of weeks ago. I did promise to rectify the omission, so here goes.

The lad who ran out for us on December 7th was Wayne Smith, who is four years old, and attends Calton Road School. Good on you, Wayne. Us Calton Road lads must stick together!

He lives locally with his Mum and Dad, and his Nanny and Grampy. And thereby, as they say, hangs a tale.

The most surprised man on the Ground that day, was Wayne's Grandfather. He had been celebrating his birthday, just a few days before the game, and had long nursed an ambition to see young Wayne running out in cherry-and-white. The oracle was worked, and a great birthday surprise organised. What a super idea!

Now to today's Match Mascot. His name is Hayden Fry, he is ten years old, and he lives at King's Stanley with his parents and his younger sister. He attends King's Stanley Junior School, where he plays football, and runs in the cross country team. He's also actively involved in Karate, but makes no bones about his ambition to play rugby for Gloucester.

"Good for him!" you might say, visualising a lively young man, with a healthy interest in sport. But there's more to it than that. Hayden Fry is asthmatic. Perhaps he can teach us all a few lessons in perseverance, and the determination never to be beaten.

In spite of all his interests, Gloucester RFC is his abiding passion. You can usually find him in the Shed with his Uncle Kev, and his mates, Chris and Andy.

This season, he has started collecting photographs of the players, which I am told, he will show off, at the drop of a hat, to anyone who will stand still long enough. I hear that his particular heroes are, Mark Mapletoft, Phil Greening, Dave Sims and Scott Benton.

Mrs Fry concludes her notes, which she so kindly supplied with:

"For Hayden, to be running out with his heroes today, has made one young boy extremely happy."

Well - isn't it that time of the year?

Geraldine's Back!

Peter Arnold

After a period of illness, our own Geraldine is back at the administrative helm again. Good to see you, Geraldine! Things haven't been the same without you.

TAILPIECE

Where did 1996 go to ? It doesn't seem anything like a year since I was writing this particular piece last. And yet so much has happened, and is happening. Who knows where we shall all be this time next year ?

So there has been a great deal of change. But some things are constant and immutable. No

matter how much RFC remonstrates and EPRUC expostulates, the pitch still has to be kept up to scratch, the litter collected after a game, the turnstiles manned... the list of jobs which simply have to be done, week in, week out, is a long one, and seems to get longer.

So, in humbly offering you my traditional Best Wishes for the Festive Season, I hope you will allow me to give special attention to all those unsung stalwarts who are never going to get rich from rugby, but without whom there simply wouldn't be a Gloucester Rugby Football Club.

Have a super Christmas, everyone. See you in the New Year.



Ed Martin

One thing about The Cup is that sometimes the draw produces a first-time fixture. Gloucester and Leeds have never played each other - that is until today.

So, as we start with a totally clean sheet, the players, supporters and committee from Leeds are entitled to a little preamble about this cauldron called Kingsholm, if the habitués (and sons of habitués) will excuse me being polite to the visitors on their first visit.

The best place to savour the game - and get first hand comments from a referee's point of view - is The Shed. This is on the opposite side of the pitch from the grandstand. On a good day, The Shed holds about 2,000 referees who are there to assist the chap in the middle of the park with a whistle and the guy on the sideline with the flag.

But whether you watch the game standing in The Shed or sitting down in the stand (only us English could have the seated area called the stand!), there is one important thing to remember about Kingsholm.

Since the ground opened in 1891, the Gloucester First XV home record is as

follows: Played 2,247; Won 1,665; Lost 436; Drawn 146; Points For 37,624; Points Conceded 15,804; Overall Winning Percentage 77.35.

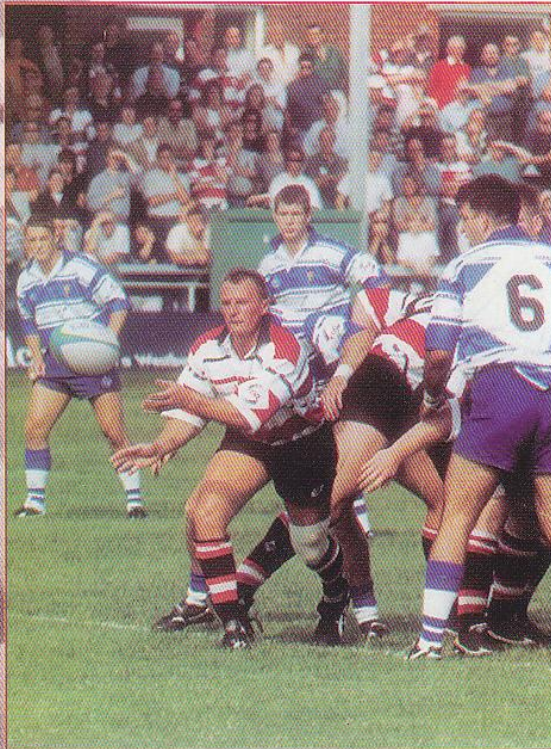
LEAGUE TABLES FROM LAST CENTURY

Regular readers of these musings might recall mention earlier in the season of "league tables" produced in The Citizen over 100 years ago. Well, "Professor" Andy White, who is researching Gloucester Rugby Football Club for his PhD thesis, has let me have a photocopy of a page in the "Dancey Scrapbook" of 1891/92. The exact date of The Citizen cutting is not known, but it is thought to have been from about the end of March 1892. Note the reference to Leeds, which is, in all probability, the Rugby League club - but I might be corrected on this today! The full text of the clipping:

As the end of the football season approaches interest in the doing and relative positions of the big clubs of the country increases day by day, and we have accordingly prepared the following table to show what the present system is. Of course there are innumerable difficulties to be met in attempting to classify clubs. If the position depends on wins only, or wins and draws, or on losses only, innumerable anomalies crop up

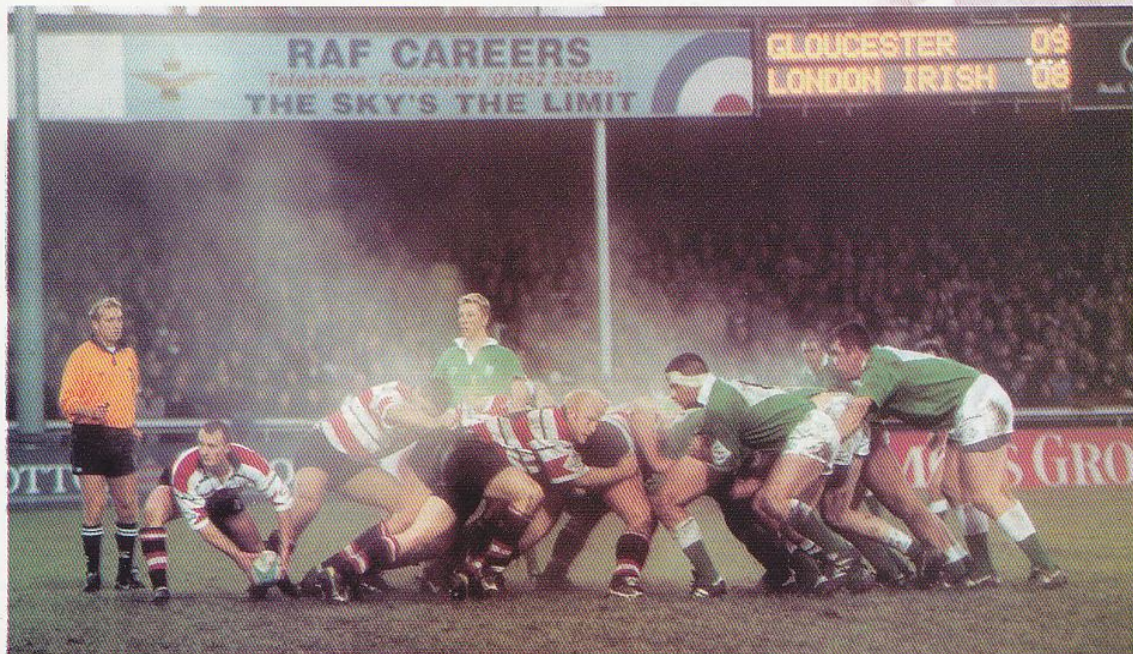
The most satisfactory plan, though, of course, it has its objections, is to give a club credit for everything it does, and discredit everything done against it. We have accordingly ascertained the position of the clubs in the table by the following method. We have credited two points for every win, one point for every draw, and one point for every ten points scored for the club. From the total thus obtained we have subtracted two points for every loss and one point for every ten points scored against.

The most noted clubs of the country are given and the best of those met by Gloucester. The points of the first seven came out as follows:- Newport 82; Blackheath 48; Bristol 45; Swansea 44; Bradford 43; Gloucester 42; and London Scottish 37. Of course, Bristol's position is anomalous, that club playing only occasionally with clubs of first rank. Brighouse Rangers (23 wins, 3 losses) and Leeds (24 wins, 4 losses) are not included as we have not the scores for and against.

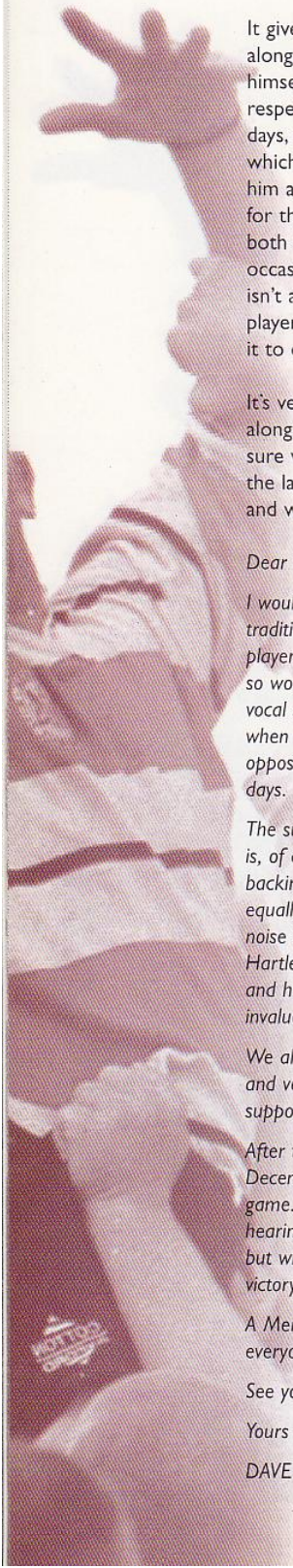


Ed Martin

	Won	Lost	Dr	Points	
				For	Against
Newport	22	0	4	353	18
Blackheath	15	3	2	271	48
Bristol	16	4	0	270	57
Swansea	15	4	5	206	42
Bradford	20	5	3	205	97
Gloucester	17	5	3	201	51
London Scottish	13	2	1	172	35
Cardiff Harlequins	15	5	3	177	50
Old Merchant Taylors	12	3	5	134	22
Oxford University	13	5	1	180	52
Swinton	17	9	0	172	87
Kensington	9	3	4	101	34
Old Edwardians	12	4	1	120	62
Cambridge University	12	6	1	209	120
Stratford	9	6	3	113	63
Coventry	14	10	0	167	110
Leicester	10	9	2	135	87
Cardiff	10	9	3	105	119
Barton	7	13	0	71	124
Moseley	5	13	0	109	116
London Harlequins	4	12	2	50	109
Clapham Rovers	4	11	2	49	161
Richmond	4	12	0	35	180



We Get Letters



It gives me great pleasure, as they say, to pass along to you a letter from the Club Captain himself. Dave Sims is surely the most respected personality around the club, these days, not only for his abilities on the field, which are quite good enough to have earned him an England Cap or two before now, but for the way he conducts himself as Captain both on and off the field, whatever the occasion, and whatever the company. 'Dignity' isn't a word one easily associates with rugby players, but there is a strong case for applying it to our Mr.Sims.

It's very good, therefore, to be able to pass along his Season's Greetings in this way. I'm sure we all reciprocate, and assure him, and all the lads, of our fervent support at all times, and wherever the game takes them.

Dear Peter,

I would be grateful if you would relay the traditional Compliments of the Season from all the players to everyone who supports Gloucester RFC so wonderfully throughout the season. Their highly vocal support really does help to lift our game when we're out there on the pitch, facing tough opposition, as almost all games seem to be these days.

The support the side invariably gets at Kingsholm is, of course, world-famous, but we appreciate the backing we get when we play away from home equally as much, and sometimes even more. The noise from the Gloucester fans at both West Hartlepool and Orrell was really quite remarkable, and helped us achieve two vital wins - and four invaluable points - in no small measure.

We all thank everyone, most sincerely, for that, and very much hope we can rely on similar support for the rest of the season.

After today, the next severe test will come on December 29th at Bristol, another 'must win' game. We shall all look forward to seeing, and hearing you, there. It won't be an easy mission, but with your help, I'm sure we can bring back a victory for you.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to everyone from all of us.

See you at Bristol.

Yours very sincerely,

DAVE SIMS

Peter Arnold

WHILE ON THE SUBJECT...

Please note the date in Dave Sims' letter. Your fixture list may indicate an earlier date, but a comparatively late change - not unconnected with soccer fixture requirements - means that we now have an extra day to get over the Christmas pud, and wander gently off to Bristol.

There will be a coach or coaches. At the last count, I hear that the cost will be just £5.00 and the safari will be setting off at 12.30, with the intention of quaffing the odd noggin before the game.

Just to remind you of the situation, at the moment we're heading Bristol by just two points, but they have a game in hand over us. A win there would go a very long way towards cancelling out that advantage, and a four-point cushion would be very handy indeed.

One thing about the Cup. If you win a game you rejoice, and then wait to see who you've got in the next round, and whether you have to travel or not. If you lose, you shrug philosophically, and reflect that there's always another season.

The League isn't like that. Every game increases the consumption of finger nails, and leads to feverish mathematical computations as the other results come in. I don't suppose there are any academic statistics about the comparative divorce rates among rugby supporting families, but whatever the virtues of the Courage League, it can't be making we afficionados any easier to live with.

Nevertheless, I've no doubt at all that hordes of us will be heeding the Skipper's exhortation to support the lads on Operation Bristol. Should be quite an occasion.

And, although you may have heard rumours to the contrary, the game will be played at the Memorial Ground, as usual.